

Liberate the Colonies!

Liberate the Colonies!

Communism and Colonial Freedom

1917–1924

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VIJAY PRASHAD

INTRODUCTION

At the close of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote a line of great hope and mystery – *workers of the world, unite!* What did this phrase mean? In 1848, workers of the world had no motive or means for unity.

Almost seven decades later, Rosa Luxemburg wrote an ironic commentary on that phrase. War had wracked the European continent in 1914. Delegates of the trade unions and of social democratic parties had voted – almost unanimously – for war. The next year, in 1915, Luxemburg wrote, ‘proletarians of all countries, unite in peace-time and cut each other’s throats in war’!

Between the optimism of the *Manifesto* and the realism of Luxemburg sits the range of attitudes towards internationalism. Luxemburg was as optimistic as Marx and Engels about the necessity and possibility of internationalism. But she was acutely aware of the difficulties of internationalism: old prejudices sown amongst workers and peasants about people from other lands and against people in the colonized lands who were seen as racially inferior, deep resentments from far away produced amongst workers by the vagaries of international trade and the ‘crumbs’ given to some workers as a consequence of imperialism (producing a strand of workers that Lenin called the ‘labour aristocracy’).

The necessity of internationalism nonetheless pushed radicals to create a number of platforms for unity. Even as one failed, another came to take its place. The First International – the International Workingmen’s Association – was born in 1864 and ended in 1876. It was followed a decade later by the Second or Socialist International, which was formed in 1889 and which substantially ended its posture of radicalism when its principal member parties voted to fund their governments to fight the First World War. It was this vote by the parties of the Second International that provoked Luxemburg’s acerbic comment about unity in peacetime and divisions in wartime. The Second International remains active, but it is less than a pale shadow of what it was formed to become at its founding conference in Paris.

Finally, out of the radical energy of the 1917 October Revolution in the tsarist empire emerged a Third International – the Communist International (Comintern) – which, for the first time in world history, not only held fast to a radical politics, but brought together the peoples of the world into its organization. It was, unlike the two previous Internationals, a truly global project.

The Third International – the Comintern – lasted till 1943. It was a victim

both of the stresses and pressures of the Second World War as well as its reduction into being an instrument of Soviet foreign policy rather than fully an instrument of world revolution.

Today, there is no such international. This is largely as a consequence of the weakness of the left. Calls for international solidarity are frequent and the need for it is clear. There remain international associations of workers and peasants, reminders of the days of the Communist International. There are many platforms of left parties and of left movements, which often provide information and solidarity on a global scale. But these are much reduced forms of internationalism. They have neither the audacity of the Communist International nor its capacity.

Reading the texts of the meetings of the Communist International gives one a sense of the challenge that lay before the revolutionaries a hundred years ago as they struggled against the limitations of distance and culture to create the foundation for that line in the *Communist Manifesto* – workers of the world, unite! That phrase is an exhortation. But it does not take place by itself. It takes an immense effort, sacrifices of millions of people, diversion of resources that could have gone elsewhere.

PREHISTORY OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

Socialists and radicals of all stripes recognized by the mid-19th century that despite the difficulties, some kind of international forum was necessary. Marx and Engels were intimately involved in the formation of the International Workingmen's Association (1864), which was formed in Europe and had a distinctly European and North American character.

Marx was disappointed that the crisis of capitalism in 1857 had not produced an opening for the workers' movement. It became clear that capitalism would not collapse on its own – despite a major crisis in the banks due to widespread bad loans – and that organization of the workers was needed not only on a national but on a global level. That was part of the spur for the Association.

But, the Association – now known as the First International – was soon divided on political grounds. The communists – led by Marx – and the anarchists – led by Mikhail Bakunin – had diverse opinions about the organization of the Association and on the attitude of the Association to the State. It was this divide between the Reds (Communists) and Blacks (Anarchists) that crushed the Association.

In fact, the Association could not yet be fully true to the spirit of the *Manifesto*. It was largely a European movement, since there were no full-fledged radical organizations in Africa and Asia and few of them in Latin America. The first strike in Brazil dates to 1858, when typographers in Rio de Janeiro shut down their workplaces. But these strikes – of which there were many across Africa, Asia and Latin America – did not develop into organizations that could have been contacted

by the Association. The Association did set up a section in Buenos Aires (Argentina) in 1872, although it floundered in the debate between the Reds and the Blacks and in the linguistic divides amongst the workers (French, Italian and Spanish). No robust organization of the workers or of radical thought were available to receive an invitation from the International Workingmen's Association.

Even if they were present, the technology for building connections across the oceans was not available. In the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels wrote that the union of workers is 'helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry'. It needs to be pointed out that the first telegraph message between London and India was not sent and received until 1870, a full six years after the first meeting of the Association. The technology that Marx and Engels anticipated in 1848 had not yet created the possibility for unity. That would have to wait for decades.

Necessity pushed the socialists to try once more in 1889, when parties and trade unions from across Europe gathered in Paris to create the Socialist or Second International. This International had its roots in the slowly growing trade union organization across Europe, with some links to Latin America. The social democratic parties of the late 19th century had their main base in the trade union movement, so that the Socialist International was rooted as well in the unions and in their linkages. But, even here, the relationship with political forces outside Europe and North America was limited. Trade unions were not to be formed in Africa and Asia until the first two decades of the 20th century. The anti-colonial parties had no substantial contact with each other until the 1927 Brussels conference of the League Against Imperialism (which was facilitated by the Comintern). Links between North America and Europe with Africa, Asia and Latin America were sporadic and uncertain. They did not enable the creation of an International that included the entire world.

Once more, the early years of the Socialist International were dogged by debates within the socialist parties as well as between the Reds and the Blacks. These latter divisions produced alternative, but less known, Internationals set up by anarcho-syndicalists and by anarchists. Over the course of its early history, the Socialist International drifted ideologically into the view that the trade unions and the socialists must fight to make the capitalist system more humane and that socialists must be rooted in their national political world in order to make a difference.

It was this anti-internationalist attitude that led most of the socialist parties in Europe to vote to fund their militaries as they went off to the senseless continental war that began in 1914 and that ended in 1918. The vote to fund this war grievously damaged the Socialist International. It was never to recover its shine.

LENIN'S BREAKTHROUGH

Lenin and his closest comrades watched the collapse of the Second International with dismay. But they had anticipated it. They knew that there was weakness and rot in the heart of the socialist movement. The attitude of leaders of the German socialist movement – such as Eduard Bernstein – towards the German state and to German capitalism suggested that they would not be able to withstand the pressure of jingoism. It was clear too that they had not developed an adequate understanding of imperialism and of the self-determination of nations.

During the First World War, Lenin and his closest comrades met in Zimmerwald (Switzerland) in 1915 to dissect the collapse of the socialist movement into warfare and to find a way out. The Zimmerwald Manifesto wrote movingly that 'millions of corpses cover the battlefields' and that 'Europe is like a gigantic human slaughterhouse'.

Why did the Europeans go to war? The war, these radicals wrote, 'is the outcome of imperialism, of the attempt on the part of the capitalist classes of each nation to foster their greed for profit by the exploitation of human labour and of the natural treasures of the entire globe.' This assessment would be important to Lenin as he developed the ideas that would become central to his 1916 text *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

In the preface to the French and German editions of *Imperialism*, published in 1920, Lenin reflected back on the 'annexationist, predatory, plundering war' that had wracked Europe in the preceding years. This war, he wrote, had emerged as part of the normal development of capitalism, by the emergence of colonialism and finance to both plunder resources and shape markets as well as use debt to dominate most countries of the planet.

The nations of Europe and North America used their capitalist advantages to compete with each other for the right to annex the world. The antidote to this global catastrophe was to defeat imperialism in its colonies, to overthrow capitalism in its heartland and to build a proletarian world order. For Lenin, therefore, the colonial question was not a secondary question but essential to global revolutionary strategy.

The October Revolution in the tsarist empire proved Lenin correct. The vast, sprawling tsarist empire resembled the world of the colonies, with a small European elite in the north-western part of the empire dominating an enormous array of nationalities from one end of Europe to the other end of Asia. The worker-peasant alliance and the demand for self-determination of the nationalities provided the political framework for the 1917 revolution.

Not long after the U.S.S.R. was formed, the capitalist powers encircled it and attempted a counter-revolution led by the deposed Russian aristocrats. Revolutionary energy from Moscow radiated in all directions, towards Germany and Eastern Europe certainly but also outwards to the east. The German Revolution

(1918–19) and the Hungarian Revolution (1919) offered hope for the spread of the world revolution into Europe. But both of these were snuffed out. It was the defeat of the revolution in Europe that isolated the Soviet Republic and increased the determination to break the stranglehold by international revolutionary activity. The Soviet Republic had to turn to the colonies.

Lenin's admiration for anti-colonial politics goes back to before the First World War. He was dazzled by the pre-war revolutions in China, the Dutch East Indies, Iran and Turkey. 'Everywhere in Asia a mighty democratic movement is growing, spreading and gaining in strength,' Lenin wrote in 1913. 'The bourgeoisie there is *as yet* siding with the people against reaction. *Hundreds* of millions of people are awakening to life, light and freedom.' To Asia, Lenin offered, 'a reliable ally in the proletariat of all civilized countries.'¹ The term 'civilized' is here used bitterly, for these were countries whose civilization had been reduced to colonialism and capitalist brutality.

The idea of global unity between the advanced industrial workers of Europe and North America with the peasants and workers of Asia, Africa and Latin America was central to Lenin's political understanding. The right to self-determination of people who had been colonized was essential to Lenin's overall view of the political situation. Not only therefore did Lenin cast his eyes on the colonies as an essential site for political work, but he also saw the right of the colonized to self-determination as a core part of the global socialist agenda. These elements – most of them in place before the October Revolution of 1917 – would become the founding principles for the Communist International.

THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

In March 1919, in the capital of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (later the U.S.S.R.), delegates came from across the world to create the Communist International (Comintern). Of the 35 organizations that came to Moscow, most were from within the U.S.S.R. or else from Europe and the United States. The only representatives born outside this zone were from China and Korea. Not one delegate came from the colonies of Europe and the United States.

Comintern couriers were soon to travel the world and make contacts with radicals from Australia to Mexico. The most well known such courier was Mikhail Borodin, who travelled to Mexico to help found the Communist Party there and who had an enduring influence in China (alongside another courier Grigori Voitinsky). Egon Kisch and Fedor Andreevich Sergeev as well as Sanzo Nosaka and Omi Komaki were some of the lesser known couriers. They played an essential role in making connections with radicals and inviting them to become part of the Communist International work. In July 1921, at the Third Comintern meeting, the International

¹ 'Backward Europe and Advanced Asia', 1913.



Manabendra Nath Roy

Liaison Department was established, from where communists such as Osip Piatnitsky and Berthe Zimmermann worked hard to connect movements outside the Communist orbit to the International. The work was dangerous and unrelenting, but necessary. No such organization could be produced without this kind of work.

It was because of the work of people like Borodin that the second Congress of the Comintern in July–August 1920 had a more global representation and a more global debate. Delegates came from across the Soviet East – from Armenia

to Uzbekistan – as well as from Mexico to Indonesia, from China to Iran, from India to Korea. These delegates came from left political formations, some with close ties to the colonial Communist parties and others from fledgling left groups with little previous external contact. Many had very colourful lives. Abani Mukerji (1891–1937), who would later become an early member of the Communist Party of India, came because he met the Dutch Marxist S.J. Rutgers in Amsterdam, where Mukerji had been on assignment not for the Indian revolutionary struggle but for the struggle in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). Nonetheless, Abani Mukerji represented India.²

M.N. Roy came to Moscow after long conversations with Borodin and as the representative of the Mexican Communist Party, despite his long history in the early revolutionary movement in India.³ Roy and Evelyn Trent had been living in the United States, from where they fled the long arm of British imperialism to Mexico. Avetis Sultanzade (1889–1938) represented the Communist Party of Iran, even though he spent most of his revolutionary life organizing the Iranian workers who had come to work in the U.S.S.R.⁴ There was Tan Malaka (1897–1949) from Indonesia and Sylvia Pankhurst (1882–1960) from Great Britain, V.I. Lenin (1870–1924) and Alexandra Kollontai (1872–1952) as well as Leon Trotsky

² Gautam Chattopadhyay, *Abani Mukherji: A Dauntless Revolutionary and Pioneering Communist*, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1976.

³ Suchetana Chattopadhyay, 'Being "Naren Bhattacharji"', in *Communist Histories*, vol. 1, ed. Vijay Prasad, New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2016.

⁴ Cosroe Chaqueri, 'Sultanzade: The Forgotten Revolutionary Theoretician of Iran: A Biographical Sketch', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2/3, Spring–Summer, 1984.

(1879–1940) and Angelica Balabanova (1878–1965) from the U.S.S.R. Within a year, the Comintern gathered together some of the most important leaders of very significant revolutionary movements from all the continents of the world.

Before the delegates came to Moscow, Lenin – the leader of the U.S.S.R. – sent a document with twenty-one conditions to be met by organizations for membership in the Comintern. Condition 8 is worth quoting here,

Every party wishing to belong to the Communist International is obligated to expose the tricks of ‘its own’ imperialists in the colonies, to support every liberation movement in the colonies not only in words but in deeds, to demand that the imperialists of its country be driven out of these colonies, to instil in the hearts of the workers of its country a truly fraternal attitude toward the labouring people in the colonies and toward the oppressed nations, and to conduct systematic agitation among its country’s troops against all oppression of colonial peoples.

One of the key implications of this intervention is that it is addressed to the Communists in the states of the colonizers, not to the Communists in the colonized world. The response of the Communists in the colonizing states all too often proved to be a disappointment. By and large the Communists in the colonizing states would neither act to follow these guidelines nor would they respond – over the years – to the Comintern’s explicit instructions to do more towards the anti-colonial struggle.⁵ The clarity of Lenin’s thesis on imperialism and the importance of anti-colonial work for the world revolution simply did not seem to register with many of the radicals in Europe. Exceptions to the rule included the active support for the Rif War in Morocco, for the liberation war led by Augusto Sandino in Nicaragua, and for the struggle of the Ethiopians against Italian aggression. In pockets here and there – notably in the Americas – the role of Communists from states of the colonizers in the shaping of communist activity in the colonial world was significant and is only now being fully appreciated.⁶

On the last day of the First Congress of the Comintern, the delegates agreed to a manifesto that offered a strong criticism of the failures of European and North American radicals (see Chapter 2). Capitalism had laid waste to societies from one end of the planet to another. It had created a ‘kingdom of destruction where not only the means of production and transport but also the institutions of political democracy lie in bloody ruin’. In this context, the Comintern argued, the proletariat must ‘create its own apparatus’, solve the problems of capitalism by overthrowing

⁵ Fredrik Petersson, ‘The “Colonial Conference” and the Dilemma of the Comintern’s Colonial Work, 1928-29’, *Communist Histories*.

⁶ Margaret Stevens, *Red International and Black Caribbean: Communists in New York City, Mexico and the West Indies, 1919-1939*, London: Pluto, 2017.

capitalism. 'The old parties, the old organizations of trade unions have in the persons of their leading summits proved incapable not only of solving but even of understanding the tasks posed by the new epoch.' The unheard echo here was that the 'old parties, the old organizations of trade unions' had not taken seriously the colonial question, and the habits of the old had begun to slide into the new.

At the Second Comintern Congress (1920), Karl Radek rightly said, 'If British workers, instead of opposing bourgeois prejudices, support British imperialism or tolerate it passively, then they are working for the suppression of every revolutionary movement in Britain itself.' Anti-colonial work was the road to revolution in the states of the colonizers. It was not an act of *charity* but an act of revolutionary importance to the entire world. One of the key lessons of the Comintern was that it tried to *break* a habit amongst radicals in the states of the colonizers to replicate the colonial attitude towards anti-colonial struggles. There is no question that it was the Comintern that put the question of anti-colonial struggles on the table and demanded that radicals in the states of the colonizers move in a practical direction to undermine imperialism.

One of the key elements in these texts below is the work it took for the revolutionaries from the colonized states to get to Moscow and the work it took for them to make time to speak. The welcome letter to the Baku meeting evoked the romance of the journey. 'Formerly, you travelled across deserts to reach the holy places. Now make your way over mountains and rivers, through forests and deserts, to meet each other and discuss how to free yourselves from the chains of servitude.' The journey was dangerous, with delegates arrested and killed on the way. A boat with the Iranian delegates was attacked by the British air force, two delegates killed, while a British warship tried to block the Black Sea transit of Turkish delegates.⁷

When a young Salvadorian revolutionary – Aquilino Martinez – left the U.S.S.R. in 1934, he was detained and tortured by the Nazis (deported to El Salvador, he was condemned to life in an asylum).⁸ Nonetheless the delegates came, eager to find a way to build their own revolutionary armour.

At the conferences, the Comintern secretariat seemed often to leave far too little time for the delegates to discuss the 'colonial question'. At the Third Comintern meeting, M.N. Roy was furious about the time constraint. 'I have been given five minutes for my report,' he said. 'Since the topic could not be exhausted even in an hour, I will use these five minutes to launch an energetic protest.' The feistiness of the anti-colonial radicals can be heard in their relentless attempt to get more time for issues that mattered to them, to fight to extend sessions to learn about each other's struggles and to build a proper analysis of the world situation. The

⁷ *To See the Dawn*, ed. John Riddell, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1993, p. 21.

⁸ Rodolfo Cerdas-Cruz, *The Communist International in Central America, 1920-36*, London: Palgrave, 1993, p. 107.

spirited insistence of the delegates from across the colonized world is important to underscore. They are the ones who forced their comrades to take the 'colonial question' seriously.

At the Second Comintern Congress, Lenin pointed out that the work before the Communists should not be underestimated. It was one thing to force the radicals in the states of the colonizers to focus their energy on anti-colonial work. It was another thing to come up with a strategy and with tactics for comrades in the anti-colonial movement inside the colonized and 'backward countries'. The term 'backward' plays an important role in these texts. It refers to countries where capitalism has not developed fully and also to countries where the social benefits of wealth (literacy, well-being) have been forcibly denied to the population. The shattering impact of colonial conquest on Eastern societies is graphically portrayed by Roy in point 6 of his 'Supplementary Theses' and also by the second address of the Vietnamese freedom fighter Ho Chi Minh (Chapter 11). There was not always disdain in the use of the term 'backwardness', no indication in each of its uses that the people from the colonies were seen as inherently backward because of some cultural deficit.

The term 'backward' was a measurement of the harshness of colonial rule, which denied people the fruits of the wealth they had produced. To work in these conditions where literacy was – for instance – not available poses 'truly enormous' challenges. 'Yet,' Lenin said, 'the practical results of our work have shown that despite these difficulties it is possible to awaken independent political thinking and independent political activity even where there is almost no proletariat at all.'

It was one thing to admit that revolutionary work was possible, indeed necessary, in the colonies, and it was another to clarify the strategy and tactics for that work. No one doubted that the primary task was the defeat of the colonial power. M.N. Roy's 'Supplementary Theses' noted, for instance, 'foreign domination constantly obstructs the free development of social life; its removal must therefore be the revolution's first step'.

Should the radical forces emphasize building a broad alliance with national-revolutionary forces towards the defeat of the colonial power or should they balance work to defeat the colonial power with efforts to develop a revolutionary process to inaugurate a communist state? Lenin and Roy had a celebrated debate on this issue at the 1920 Comintern meeting. They settled their differences on the level of strategy (see the opening of Lenin's speech in Chapter 3) but given the uneven nature of political struggles in different colonies, the underlying issue cropped up again in the years that followed.

Maring, from the Dutch East Indies, for instance, pointed out that he could 'see no difference between Comrade Lenin's theses and those of Comrade Roy'. Rather, Maring (or better yet, Henk Sneevliet, a Dutch Communist who worked in Indonesia and China) sought out the 'correct attitude towards the relations

between the revolutionary nationalist and the socialist movements in the backward countries and the colonies.' Emphasis needs to be on the word *attitude*.

What was the role of the Comintern? Was it to direct the movements around the world or was it to provide internationalist assistance for the movements? It was clear that the Comintern would often be tone-deaf when it came to the dilemmas of movements in different parts of the world. The fact that it could only hold one major meeting of the Latin American Communist parties in 1929 – and then abandon the process – is a sign of the difficulties faced when Moscow attempted to drive its agenda in places as far off as Argentina.⁹ The Dutch Communist David Wijnkoop intervened in a Comintern discussion to say, 'We must create the necessary preconditions so that every colonial country can develop its own revolutionary movement.' This idea of creating the *precondition* was a way beyond the notion that Moscow should give the revolutionaries their marching orders.

From 1919 to its suspension in 1943, the Comintern struggled to define its role and the Communists around the world struggled within the Comintern to ensure it was useful for their own revolutionary work and yet not a hindrance to them. It is important to have a balanced attitude towards the history of the Comintern, to see the value of the massive connections it enabled between revolutionaries from around the world and of the sensibility of internationalism that it created within the communist movements. At the same time, it is imperative that we not miss the problems posed by the attitude that 'Moscow is the Mecca of revolution,' an attitude that made the Comintern's central office somehow more important than that of the communist movements around the world.

* * *

It is a great pleasure for LeftWord Books to have collaborated with John Riddell to make this book. Riddell tells the story about how the editors from Pathfinder Press – Mary-Alice Waters and Barry Sheppard – came to see him after his shift at a machine shop in Brampton, Ontario (Canada). They wanted John to take up the task of translating and editing the records from the Communist International meetings during Lenin's life from 1919 to 1923. It is important to bear in mind that in June 1983, when this meeting took place, there was virtually nothing available of the Comintern record – at least in English. The main documentary text in print was Jane Degras's remarkable three-volume work, *The Communist International, 1919-1943* (1956). In quick succession, John, aided by more than a hundred people, produced nine books of 6,791 pages from 1984 to 2019. For the full list, see 'About This Text' below.

⁹ *La Importancia de la Primera Conferencia Comunista Latinoamericana. Resoluciones Adoptadas por la misma*, Buenos Aires: La Correspondencia Sudamericana, 1929.

No question that John has established a record that is invaluable for revolutionaries and for scholars of revolution. This volume would not have been possible without his immense knowledge, his abilities and his good humour as well as his warm collaboration with our colleague Nazeef Mollah.

The significance of this volume is that it collects the work of the Comintern from 1919 onwards on the 'colonial question'. It offers a window into the debates inside the Comintern over how to build the world revolution, not only in Europe but, *crucially*, in the colonized world. This was a point hammered into the Communist International by Lenin. At the Third Comintern Congress, Lenin said of the anti-colonial revolutionary struggle:

It is important to emphasize the fact that, for the first time in our International, we have taken up the question of preparing for this struggle. Of course, there are many more difficulties in this enormous sphere than in any other, but at all events the movement is advancing. And in spite of the fact that the masses of toilers – the peasants in the colonial countries – are still backward, they will play a very important revolutionary part in the coming phases of the world revolution.

His comment was met with loud applause. It is a comment that stands the test of time. It is the essence of the Comintern's policy to *liberate the colonies*.

CHAPTER 1

SOVIET RUSSIA PROCLAIMS NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION

'You yourselves must be the masters in your own land'

Among the first acts of the revolutionary government of Russia established by soviets (councils) of workers and peasants on 7 November 1917 were the following two sweeping decrees proclaiming the freedom of minority peoples within the former tsarist empire.

DECLARATION OF SOVIET GOVERNMENT ON RIGHTS OF PEOPLES OF RUSSIA *15 November 1917*

The October workers' and peasants' revolution began under the overall banner of emancipation.

Peasants are now freed from the power of the landowners, since landownership by big landowners is no more – it has been abolished. Soldiers and sailors are now emancipated from the power of despotic generals, for generals are now elected by vote and subject to recall. Workers are now freed from the whims and arbitrary caprice of capitalists, since workers' control is now established over factories and plants. Everything living and viable is being freed from hateful shackles.

That leaves only the peoples of Russia, the past and present victims of oppression and tyranny. Their emancipation must be undertaken immediately; their liberation must be achieved decisively and irrevocably.

Under tsarism, the peoples of Russia were systematically incited against one another. The results of this policy are well known: massacres and pogroms on the one hand, enslavement of the peoples on the other.

There must be no return to this shameful policy. From now on, it must be replaced by a policy of voluntary and honest union of the peoples of Russia.

Following the February [1917] revolution, while imperialism still prevailed, power fell into the hands of the bourgeois Constitutional Democrats, an undisguised [tsarist] policy of incitement gave way to one of cowardly distrust of the peoples of Russia, one of backhanded chicanery and provocations, glossed over by verbal declarations on 'freedom' and 'equality' of the peoples. The results of this policy are well known: intensification of national hatred and the undermining of mutual trust.

We must put an end to this unworthy policy of lies and mistrust, of chicanery

and provocation. It must be replaced, from now on, by an open and honest policy leading to complete mutual trust among the peoples of Russia.

Only on the basis of such confidence can we build an honest and lasting union of the peoples of Russia.

Only on the basis of such a union can we weld the workers and peasants of the peoples of Russia into a single revolutionary force that can withstand every thrust by the annexationist imperialist bourgeoisie.

Last July the Congress of Soviets proclaimed the right of the peoples of Russia to self-determination.

In October the Second Congress of Soviets decisively and definitively confirmed this inalienable right of the peoples of Russia.

Carrying out the will of these congresses, the Council of People's Commissars has decided to base its activities on the nationality question in Russia on the following principles:

1. Equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia.
2. The right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination up to and including the right to secede and form an independent state.
3. Abolition of any and all privileges and constraints based on nationality or religion.
4. Unhampered development of the national minorities and ethnographic groups that inhabit Russian territory.

The specific decrees relevant to these matters will be worked out immediately, once a commission on the nationalities question has been formed.

Joseph Dzhugashvili (Stalin), Commissar of Nationalities
V. Ulyanov (Lenin), Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars

APPEAL TO ALL TOILING MUSLIMS OF RUSSIA AND THE EAST¹

7 December 1917

Comrades! Brothers!

Great events are taking place in Russia. An end is drawing near to the murderous war for the division of foreign lands. The supremacy of the plunderers, who have enslaved the peoples of the world, is tottering. The old structure of servitude and slavery is crumbling under the blows of the Russian revolution. The world of tyranny and oppression is living its last days. A new world is being born, a world of the toilers and those fighting for liberation. At the head of this revolution stands the workers' and peasants' government of Russia – the Council of People's Commissars.

¹ The 'East' was described during the Baku Congress as 'the countries of Asia and of the north coast of Africa, mainly Egypt'. See speech by Akhmed Matushev, p. 126.

All Russia is dotted with revolutionary soviets of workers', soldiers', and peasants' deputies. Power in the country is in the people's hands. The working people of Russia burn with the single desire to achieve an honourable peace and to assist the oppressed peoples of the world in winning their freedom.

Russia is not alone in this sacred cause. The Russian revolution's great call for liberation is being taken up by working people of the East and West. Exhausted by war, yearning for peace, the peoples of Europe are already reaching out to us. Already the workers and soldiers of the West are gathering under the banner of socialism, assaulting the strongholds of imperialism. Even far-off India, oppressed for centuries by the 'enlightened' predators of Europe, has raised the banner of rebellion by organizing its councils of deputies, throwing off its hated servitude, and summoning the peoples of the East to the struggle and to liberation.

The kingdom of capitalist plunder and violence is falling in ruins. The ground is slipping from under the feet of the imperialist robbers.

In the face of these great events we turn to you, the toiling and oppressed Muslims of Russia and the East.

Muslims of Russia, Tatars of the Volga and of Crimea, Kyrgyzians and Sarts of Siberia and Turkestan, Turks and Tatars of Transcaucasia, Chechens and Mountaineers of the Caucasus! All you whose mosques and shrines have been destroyed, whose beliefs and customs have been trampled on by the tsars and the Russian oppressors!

Henceforth your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions are declared free and inviolable. Build your national life freely and without hindrance. It is your right. Know that your rights – like those of all the peoples of Russia – are defended by the full power of the revolution and its organs, the soviets of workers', soldiers', and peasants' deputies.

Support this revolution and its authorized government!

Muslims of the East! Persians, Turks, Arabs, and Indians! All you whose lives and property, whose freedom and homelands were for centuries merchandise for trade by rapacious European plunderers! All you whose countries the robbers who began the war now want to divide among themselves!

The tsar's secret treaties for the seizure of Constantinople [Istanbul], confirmed by Kerensky's deposed government, are now declared null and void. The Russian republic and its government, the Council of People's Commissars, oppose the seizure of foreign territory. Constantinople must remain in the hands of the Muslims.

We declare the treaty providing for the partition of Persia [Iran] null and void. Once military activities cease, [Soviet] troops will be withdrawn from Persia and the Persians assured the right to determine freely their own destiny.

We declare null and void the treaty providing for the partition of Turkey, which was to despoil it of Armenia. Once military activities cease, Armenians will be assured the right to determine freely their own political destiny.

Do not fear enslavement from Russia and its revolutionary government. Fear it rather from the European imperialist robbers who have plundered and fleeced your homelands and transformed them into their 'colonies'.

Overthrow these robbers and enslavers of your countries! Today, war and ruin are demolishing the pillars of the old order; the entire world burns with indignation against the imperialist annexationists; the least spark of discontent flares up into the mighty flame of revolution; and even the Indian Muslims, cowed and tormented by the foreign yoke, are rising up against their slavedrivers. In such a time one must not remain silent.

Do not delay in throwing off the ancient oppressors of your homelands. Do not permit them to plunder your native lands any longer. You yourselves must be the masters in your own land. You yourselves must build your lives in your image and likeness. You have this right, because your fate is in your own hands.

Comrades! Brothers!

Firmly and resolutely we are advancing toward an honest, democratic peace.

We inscribe the liberation of the oppressed peoples of the world on our banners.

Muslims of Russia! Muslims of the East!

In this task of regenerating the world we look to you for sympathy and support.

*Council of People's Commissars of the
Federation of Russian Soviet Socialist Republics*

CHAPTER 2

MANIFESTO OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL TO THE WORKERS OF THE WORLD

‘Working men and women of all countries . . . unite’

The following statement, drafted by Leon Trotsky, was unanimously adopted on 6 March 1919 by 51 delegates from more than two dozen countries meeting in Moscow on the final day of the First Congress of the Communist International.

Seventy-two years ago the Communist party proclaimed its programme to the world in the form of a Manifesto written by the greatest heralds of the proletarian revolution, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. No sooner had Communism entered the arena of struggle than it was beset by baiting, lies, hatred and persecution of the possessing classes, who correctly sensed in it their mortal enemy. The development of Communism during this three-quarters of a century proceeded along complex paths: side by side with periods of stormy upsurge it knew periods of decline; side by side with successes – cruel defeats. But essentially the movement proceeded along the path indicated in advance by the *Communist Manifesto*. The epoch of final, decisive struggle has come later than the apostles of the socialist revolution had expected and hoped. But it has come.

We Communists, the representatives of the revolutionary proletariat of the various countries of Europe, America and Asia who have gathered in Soviet Moscow, feel and consider ourselves to be the heirs and consummators of the cause whose programme was affirmed 72 years ago. Our task is to generalize the revolutionary experience of the working class, to purge the movement of the corroding admixture of opportunism and social-patriotism, to unify the efforts of all genuinely revolutionary parties of the world proletariat and thereby facilitate and hasten the victory of the Communist revolution throughout the world.

* * *

Today, when Europe is covered with debris and smoking ruins, the worst pyromaniacs in history are busy seeking out the criminals responsible for the war. In their wake follow their servants – professors, members of parliament, journalists, social-patriots and other political pimps of the bourgeoisie.

For many years the socialist movement predicted the inevitability of the imperialist war, seeing its causes in the insatiable greed of the property-owning

classes of the two chief camps and, generally, of all capitalist countries. At the Basel Congress, two years before the war exploded, the responsible socialist leaders of all countries branded imperialism as bearing the guilt for the impending war. They threatened the bourgeoisie with the socialist revolution which would descend upon the bourgeoisie's head as the proletarian retribution for the crimes of militarism.

Today, after the experience of the last five years, after history, having laid bare the predatory appetites of Germany, is unmasking the no less criminal acts of the Allies, the state-socialists of the Entente countries continue in the wake of their respective governments, discovering the war criminal in the person of the overthrown German Kaiser. On top of this, the German social-patriots, who in August 1914 proclaimed Hohenzollerns' diplomatic *White Book*¹ to be the holy gospel of the peoples, are nowadays following in the footsteps of the Entente socialists and are with vile subservience indicting the overthrown German monarchy, which they had so slavishly served, as the chief war criminal. They thus hope to obscure their own role and at the same time to worm their way into the good graces of the conquerors. But in the light of unfolding events and diplomatic revelations, side by side with the role of the toppled dynasties – the Romanovs, the Hohenzollerns, and the Habsburgs – and of the capitalist cliques of these countries, the role of the ruling classes of France, Britain, Italy and the United States stands out in all its boundless criminality.

British diplomacy did not lift its visor of secrecy up to the very outbreak of war. The government of the City obviously feared to reveal its intention of entering the war on the side of the Entente lest the Berlin government take fright and be compelled to eschew war. In London they wanted war. That is why they conducted themselves in such a way as to raise hopes in Berlin and Vienna that Britain would remain neutral, while Paris and Petrograd firmly counted on Britain's intervention.

Prepared by the entire course of development over a number of decades, the war was unleashed through the direct and conscious provocation of Great Britain. The British government thereby calculated on extending just enough aid to Russia and France so that they would exhaust themselves, while crippling Britain's mortal enemy, Germany. But the might of German militarism proved far too formidable and demanded of Britain not token but actual intervention in the war. The role of a smug spectator, to which Great Britain, following her ancient tradition, aspired, passed to the United States.

The Washington government became all the more easily reconciled to the British blockade, which one-sidedly restricted American stock market speculation in European blood, given that the countries of the Entente reimbursed the American bourgeoisie with lush profits for violations of 'international law'.

However, the Washington government was likewise constrained by the

¹ The White Book was the statement by the German government, headed by the Hohenzollern monarchy, on why it entered the war.

enormous military superiority of Germany to drop its fictitious neutrality. In relation to Europe as a whole the United States assumed the role which Britain had taken in previous wars and which she tried to take in the last war in relation to the continent, namely: weakening one camp by playing it against another, intervening in military operations only to such an extent as to guarantee her all the advantages of the situation. According to American standards of gambling, [U.S. President Woodrow] Wilson's wager was not large, but it was the last one down, and consequently assured him of the jackpot.

As a result of the war the contradictions of the capitalist system confronted mankind in the shape of pangs of hunger, exhaustion from cold, epidemics and moral savagery. This settled once and for all the academic controversy within the socialist movement over the theory of pauperization and the gradual transition from capitalism to socialism. Statisticians and pedants who assert that contradictions were being blunted had for decades fished out from all the corners of the globe real or mythical facts testifying to the rising well-being of various groups and categories of the working class. The theory of mass pauperization was regarded as buried, amid contemptuous jeers from the eunuchs of bourgeois academia and mandarins of socialist opportunism. At the present time this pauperization, no longer only of a social but also of a physiological and biological kind, rises before us in all its shocking reality.

The catastrophe of the imperialist war has completely swept away all the conquests of trade union and parliamentary struggles. And this war itself was just as much a product of the internal tendencies of capitalism as were the economic agreements and parliamentary compromises which the war buried in blood and muck.

Finance capital, which plunged mankind into the abyss of war, itself underwent a catastrophic change in the course of the conflict. The dependency of paper money upon the material foundation of production has been completely disrupted. Progressively losing its significance as the means and regulator of capitalist commodity circulation, paper money became transformed into an instrument of requisition, seizure and military-economic violence in general.

The debasement of paper money reflects the general mortal crisis of capitalist commodity circulation. During the decades preceding the war, free competition, as the regulator of production and distribution, had already been thrust aside in the main fields of economic life by the system of trusts and monopolies. During the course of the war the regulating-directing role was torn from the hands of these economic groups and transferred directly into the hands of military state power. The distribution of raw materials; the utilization of Baku or Romanian oil, Donbas coal, Ukrainian wheat; the fate of German locomotives, freight cars and automobiles; the rationing of relief for starving Europe – all these fundamental questions of the world's economic life are being regulated not by free competition,

nor by associations of national and international trusts and consortiums, but by the direct application of military force, for the sake of its continued preservation. Just as the complete subjection of state power to the power of finance capital had led mankind into the imperialist slaughter, so too, through this slaughter, finance capital has succeeded in completely militarizing not only the state but also itself. It is no longer capable of fulfilling its basic economic functions otherwise than by means of blood and iron.

The opportunists, who before the world war summoned the workers to practise moderation for the sake of gradual transition to socialism, and who during the war demanded class docility in the name of civil peace and national defence, are again demanding self-renunciation of the proletariat – this time for the purpose of overcoming the terrible consequences of the war. If the working masses were to heed these preachings, capitalist development in new, much more concentrated and monstrous forms would be restored on the bones of several generations – with the prospect of a new and inevitable world war. Fortunately for mankind, this is not possible.

The statization of economic life, against which capitalist liberalism used to protest so much, has become an accomplished fact. There is no turning back from this fact – it is impossible to return not only to free competition but even to the domination of trusts, syndicates and other economic octopuses. Today the one and only issue is: Who shall henceforth be the bearer of state-ized production – the imperialist state or the state of the victorious proletariat?

In other words: Is all toiling mankind to become the serfs of victorious world cliques who, using the name of the League of Nations and aided by an ‘international’ army and ‘international’ navy, will here plunder and strangle some peoples and there cast crumbs to others, while everywhere and always shackling the proletariat – with the sole object of maintaining their own rule? Or shall the working class of Europe and of the advanced countries in other parts of the world take in hand the disrupted and ruined economy in order to assure its regeneration upon socialist principles?

The epoch of crisis through which we are living can be shortened only by measures of proletarian dictatorship, which does not look back to the past, which respects neither inherited privileges nor property rights, which takes as its starting point the need of saving the starving masses; and to this end mobilizes all forces and resources, introduces universal labour conscription, establishes the regime of labour discipline in order, in the course of a few years, not only to thus heal the gaping wounds inflicted by war but also to raise mankind to new and unprecedented heights.

The national state, which gave a mighty impulse to capitalist development, has become too narrow for the further development of productive forces. This renders all the more precarious the position of small states, hemmed in by the major powers of Europe and scattered through other sections of the world. These small states originated at different times as fragments chipped from bigger ones, as so much small change in payment for various services rendered and as strategic buffers. They retain their own dynasties, their own ruling cliques, their own imperialist pretensions, their own diplomatic intrigues. Prior to the war, their phantom independence rested on the selfsame thing as the equilibrium of Europe: the uninterrupted antagonism between the two imperialist camps.

The war has disrupted this equilibrium. By giving at first an enormous preponderance to Germany, the war compelled the small states to seek their salvation under the magnanimous wings of German militarism. After Germany was crushed, the bourgeoisie of the small states, together with their respective patriotic 'socialists', turned their faces to the victorious Allied imperialism and began seeking guarantees for their continued independent existence in the hypocritical points of the Wilsonian programme. At the same time the number of small states has increased; out of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, out of portions of the former tsarist empire, new states have been carved, which were no sooner born than they flung themselves at one another's throats over the question of state boundaries.

The Allied imperialists are meanwhile preparing such combinations of small powers, both old and new, to keep them tied down in mutual hatreds and common impotence. While oppressing and violating the small and weak peoples, while dooming them to starvation and destruction, the Allied imperialists, like the imperialists of the Central Empire a brief while ago, do not stop talking about the right of self-determination, which is today being trampled underfoot in Europe as in all other parts of the world.

The small peoples can be assured the opportunity of free existence only by the proletarian revolution which will free the productive forces of all countries from the tentacles of the national states, unifying the peoples in closest economic collaboration on the basis of a common economic plan, and offering the weakest and smallest people an opportunity to freely and independently direct their national cultural affairs without any detriment to the unified and centralized European and world economy.

The last war, which was by and large a war for colonies, was at the same time a war conducted with the help of colonies. The colonial populations were drawn into the European war on an unprecedented scale. Indians, Blacks,² Arabs and

² The German text uses the word '*Neger*', which was then equivalent to the English 'Negro' – the word probably used by U.S. delegates who spoke on this question at Comintern congresses. In recent decades, the English term 'Negro' has acquired a pejorative connotation and has

Malagasy fought on the territories of Europe – for the sake of what? For the right to remain the slaves of Britain and France. Never before has the infamy of capitalist rule in the colonies been delineated so clearly; never before has the problem of colonial slavery been posed so sharply as it is today.

That is why we see open insurrections and revolutionary ferment in all the colonies. In Europe itself, Ireland keeps signalling through sanguinary street battles that she still remains and still feels herself to be an enslaved country. In Madagascar, Annam [Vietnam] and elsewhere the troops of the bourgeois republic have more than once quelled the uprisings of colonial slaves during the war. In India the revolutionary movement has not subsided for a single day. This recently led to massive labour strikes in Asia, which the British government has met by ordering its armoured cars into action in Bombay.

The colonial question has been thus posed in its fullest measure not only on the maps at the diplomatic congress in Paris but also within the colonies themselves. At best, Wilson's programme aims merely at changing the labels with regard to colonial slavery. The emancipation of the colonies is conceivable only in conjunction with the emancipation of the working class in the metropolises. The workers and peasants not only of Annam, Algeria and Bengal, but also of Persia and Armenia, will gain their opportunity of independent existence only when the workers of Britain and France, having overthrown Lloyd George and Clemenceau, take state power into their own hands.

Even now the struggle in the more developed colonies, while taking place only under the banner of national liberation, immediately assumes a more or less clearly defined social character. If capitalist Europe has violently dragged the most backward sections of the world into the whirlpool of capitalist relations, then socialist Europe will come to the aid of liberated colonies with her technology, her organization and her ideological influence in order to facilitate their transition to a planned and organized socialist economy.

Colonial slaves of Africa and Asia! The hour of proletarian dictatorship in Europe will strike for you as the hour of your own emancipation!

* * *

The entire bourgeois world accuses the Communists of destroying freedom and political democracy. These are lies. Upon assuming power, the proletariat merely lays bare the complete impossibility of employing the methods of bourgeois democracy and creates the conditions and forms of a new and much higher workers' democracy. The whole course of capitalist development, especially during its final imperialist epoch, has acted to undermine political democracy not only by dividing nations into two irreconcilably hostile classes, but also by condemning

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fallen out of use.

numerous petty-bourgeois and proletarian layers, as well as the most disinherited lowest strata of the proletariat, to economic debilitation and political impotence.

In countries where historical development provided the opportunity, the working class has utilized the regime of political democracy in order to organize against capitalism. The same thing will likewise take place in the future in countries where conditions for the proletarian revolution have not yet matured. But broad intermediate masses not only in the villages but also in the cities are being held back by capitalism, lagging entire epochs behind historical development.

The peasant in Bavaria and Baden who still cannot see beyond the spires of his village church, the small French wine producer who is being driven into bankruptcy by the large-scale capitalists who adulterate wine, and the small American farmer fleeced and cheated by bankers and congressmen – all these social layers thrust back by capitalism away from the mainstream of development are called upon, on paper, by the regime of political democracy to assume the direction of the state. But in reality, on all the basic questions which determine the destinies of the peoples, the financial oligarchy makes the decision behind the back of parliamentary democracy. Such was previously the case on the question of war; such is now the case on the question of peace.

To the extent that the financial oligarchy still bothers to obtain the sanction of parliamentary votes, the bourgeois state has at its disposal for its acts of violence all the instruments of lies, demagoguery, baiting, calumny, bribery and terror, inherited from the centuries of class slavery and multiplied by all the miracles of capitalist technology.

To demand of the proletariat that it devoutly comply with rules and regulations of political democracy in the final life-and-death combat with capitalism is like demanding of a man, fighting for his life against cutthroats, that he observe the artificial and restrictive rules of French wrestling, which the enemy introduces but fails to observe.

In this kingdom of destruction where not only the means of production and transport but also the institutions of political democracy lie in bloody ruin, the proletariat is compelled to create its own apparatus designed first and foremost to cement the inner ties of the working class and to assure the possibility of its revolutionary intervention into the future development of mankind. This apparatus is represented by the workers' soviets [councils]. The old parties, the old organizations of trade unions have in the persons of their leading summits proved incapable not only of solving but even of understanding the tasks posed by the new epoch. The proletariat has created a new type of organization, a broad organization which embraces the working masses independently of trade or level of political development; this flexible apparatus can continually renew and extend itself. It is capable of attracting into its orbit ever newer layers, opening wide its doors to the toiling layers in the city and the country who are close to the proletariat.

This irreplaceable organization of working-class self-rule, this organization of its struggle for and, later, of its conquest of state power, has been tested in the experience of various countries and constitutes the mightiest conquest and weapon of the proletariat in our epoch.

In those countries where the toiling masses live a conscious life, soviets of workers' soldiers' and peasants' deputies will be built, now and in the future. To strengthen the soviets, to raise their authority, to counterpose them to the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie – this is today the most important task of the class-conscious and honest workers of all countries. Through the medium of soviets, the working class can save itself from the decomposition introduced into its midst by the hellish sufferings of war, by starvation, by the violence of the possessing classes and by the treachery of its former leaders. Through the medium of soviets the working class will be able to come to power most surely and easily in all countries where the soviets are able to rally the majority of the toilers. Through the medium of soviets the working class, having conquered power, will exercise its sway over all spheres of the country's economic and cultural life, as is the case at present in Russia.

The breakdown of the imperialist state, from the tsarist state to the most 'democratic' ones, is taking place simultaneously with the breakdown of the imperialist military system. The multi-millioned armies mobilized by imperialism could only be maintained so long as the proletariat remained obediently under the yoke of the bourgeoisie. The crack-up of national unity signifies the inevitable crack-up of the army. This is what happened first in Russia, then in Germany and Austria-Hungary. The same thing may be expected to occur in other imperialist countries as well. The uprising of the peasant against the landlord, of the worker against the capitalist, and of both against the monarchical or 'democratic' bureaucracy, inevitably brings in its train the uprising of soldiers against the commanders and, subsequently, a deep cleavage between the proletarian and bourgeois elements of the army. Imperialist war, which pitted one nation against another, has passed and is passing over into civil war which pits class against class.

The wails of the bourgeois world against civil war and against Red Terror represent the most monstrous hypocrisy yet known in the history of political struggles. There would be no civil war if the clique of exploiters who have brought mankind to the very brink of ruin did not resist every forward step of the toiling masses, if they did not organize conspiracies and assassinations, and did not summon armed assistance from without in order to maintain or restore their thievish privileges.

Civil war is imposed upon the working class by its mortal enemies. The working class must answer it blow for blow. Otherwise it would renounce itself and its own future, which is the future of all humankind.

The Communist parties will never provoke civil war artificially. Nonetheless,

if it becomes an iron necessity, the Communist parties seek to shorten it as much as possible; they seek to reduce to a minimum the number of victims and, above all, to assure victory to the proletariat. From this flows the necessity of disarming the bourgeoisie in time, of arming the workers in time, of creating in time the Communist army to defend the workers' power and to preserve its socialist construction inviolate. Such is the Red Army of Soviet Russia which arose and exists as the bulwark of the conquests of the working class against all attacks from within and without. The Soviet Army is inseparable from the Soviet state.

Recognizing the world character of their tasks, the advanced workers have from the very first steps of the organized socialist movement striven to unify it on an international scale. The beginnings were made in 1864 in London by the First International. The Franco-Prussian War [1870-71] out of which emerged the Germany of the Hohenzollerns cut the ground from under the First International and at the same time gave impetus to the development of national workers' parties. As far back as 1889, these parties came together in the Congress of Paris and created the organization of the Second International.

But the centre of gravity of the labour movement during that period remained wholly on national soil, wholly within the framework of national states, upon the foundation of national industry, within the sphere of national parliamentarianism. The decades of reformist organizational activity gave birth to an entire generation of leaders, the majority of whom recognized in words the programme of the social revolution but renounced it in deeds, becoming mired in reformism, in a docile adaptation to the bourgeois state.

The opportunist character of the leading parties of the Second International has been completely disclosed, and it led to the greatest collapse in world history at a moment when the march of historic events demanded revolutionary methods of struggle from the working-class parties. The war of 1870 dealt a blow to the First International, disclosing that there was as yet no fused mass force behind its social-revolutionary programme. The war of 1914 killed the Second International, disclosing that the mightiest organizations of the working masses were dominated by parties which had become transformed into auxiliary organs of the bourgeois state.

This applies not only to the social-patriots who have today clearly and openly gone over to the camp of the bourgeoisie, who have become the latter's favourite plenipotentiaries and trustees and the most reliable executioners of the working class. It also applies to the amorphous and unstable tendency of the socialist centre which seeks to re-establish the Second International, that is, to re-establish the narrowness, the opportunism and the revolutionary impotence of its leading summits. The Independent Party of Germany [USPD], the present majority of the Socialist Party of France, the Menshevik group of Russia, the Independent Labour Party of Britain and other similar groups are actually trying to fill the place

which had been occupied prior to the war by the old official parties of the Second International. As before, they come forward with the ideas of compromise and conciliation. With all the means at their disposal, they paralyse the energy of the proletariat, prolonging the crisis and thereby redoubling Europe's calamities. The struggle against the socialist centre is the indispensable premise for the successful struggle against imperialism.

Sweeping aside the half-heartedness, lies and corruption of the outlived official socialist parties, we Communists, united in the Third International, consider ourselves the direct continuators of the heroic endeavours and martyrdom of a long line of revolutionary generations – from Babeuf to Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.

The First International presaged the future course of development and indicated its paths. The Second International gathered and organized millions of workers. The Third International is the International of open mass action, the International of revolutionary realization, the International of the deed.

Socialist criticism has sufficiently lashed the bourgeois world order. The task of the International Communist Party consists in overthrowing this order and erecting in its place the edifice of the socialist order. We summon the working men and women of all countries to unite under the communist banner which is already the banner of the first great victories.

Workers of the World – in the struggle against imperialist barbarism, against monarchy, against the privileged estates, against the bourgeois state and bourgeois property, against all kinds and forms of class or national oppression – *Unite!*

Under the banner of workers' soviets, under the banner of revolutionary struggle for power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, under the banner of the Third International – *Workers of the World, Unite!*

CHAPTER 3

SECOND WORLD CONGRESS DEBATE ON ANTI-COLONIAL REVOLUTION

‘We cannot be satisfied with passing long resolutions’

As the liberation struggle in the colonies unfolded in the months following the Comintern’s founding congress, its leaders placed increasing emphasis on this movement’s weight in the world revolution. Thus on 22 November 1919 Lenin told a congress of the Communist Organizations of the Peoples of the East:

‘The socialist revolution will not be solely, or chiefly, a struggle of the revolutionary proletarians in each country against their bourgeoisie – no, it will be a struggle of all the imperialist-oppressed colonies and countries, of all dependent countries, against international imperialism. . . . [T]he civil war of the working people against the imperialists and exploiters in all the advanced countries is beginning to be combined with national wars against international imperialism.’¹

The Comintern’s Second Congress (19 July–7 August 1920) devoted two days to discussion of the ‘Eastern Question’. At least twenty-nine delegates attended from Asia and Latin America, representing 11 countries. Both Lenin and M.N. Roy (India) presented draft theses; each modified their text after discussions with the other. The Congress’s Commission on the East submitted both these texts to the Congress, and both Lenin and Roy gave reports.²

The following speeches and texts are taken from the published proceedings of the Congress.

‘Our basic idea: The difference between oppressor and oppressed nations’

V.I. LENIN: Comrades, I shall only give a short introduction and then Comrade Maring, the secretary of our Commission, will give an exact report on the changes that have been made in the theses. After that Comrade Roy, who formulated the Supplementary Theses, will have the floor. Our Commission adopted both the former and the latter unanimously. You will see from the theses that we have taken unanimous decisions on the most important questions, and I should like now just to make a few short remarks.

¹ V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 30, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974, p. 159.

² To consult these speeches in the context of the entire Second Congress, see Riddell, *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite!*

What is the most important, the fundamental idea of our theses? It is the difference between the oppressed and the oppressor nations. We emphasize this difference – in contrast to the Second International and bourgeois democracy. It is especially important for the proletariat and the Communist International during the epoch of imperialism to establish concrete economic facts and to approach all colonial and national questions not from the abstract but from the concrete point of view.

Imperialism is characterized by the fact that the whole world is now divided into a large number of oppressed nations and a very small number of oppressor nations that are enormously rich and strong in the military sense. The enormous mass, more than a billion, most probably 1.25 billion people, and thus if we estimate the population of the world at 1,750 million, some 70 per cent of the world population belong to the oppressed nations which are either in direct colonial dependence, or appear as semi-colonial states like, for example, Persia, Turkey and China, or which, defeated by a great imperialist army, have fallen into marked dependency after the peace treaties. This idea of the difference between nations, their division into the oppressed and the oppressors runs through all the theses, not only the first ones that I signed and which have already been printed, but also through Comrade Roy's theses. The latter were written predominantly from the point of view of India and the other great Asian peoples who are oppressed by Britain, and are thus particularly important for us.

The second main idea of our theses is that, in the current world situation, after the imperialist war, the mutual relations between states, and the world system of states as a whole, is determined by the struggle of the smaller number of imperialist nations against the soviet movement and the Soviet powers with Soviet Russia at their head. If we overlook this question, we cannot pose correctly a single national or colonial question even in the most distant part of the world. It is only from this standpoint that the political questions of the Communist parties, not only in the civilized but also in the backward countries, can be posed and answered correctly.

Thirdly, I would like to emphasize the question of the bourgeois-democratic movement in the backward countries. This was the point that gave rise to some differences of opinion. We debated whether it is correct in principle and theoretically



Vladimir Ilyich Lenin

to declare that the Communist International and the Communist parties have a duty to support the bourgeois-democratic movements in the backward countries. The outcome of this discussion was that we came to the unanimous decision to talk not about the 'bourgeois-democratic' movement but only about the national-revolutionary movement. There can be no doubt of the fact that any nationalist movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, because the great mass of the population of the backward countries consists of the peasantry, which represents bourgeois capitalist relations.

It would be utopian to think that proletarian parties, insofar as it is at all possible for them to arise in these countries, will be able to carry out communist tactics and communist policies in the backward countries without having a definite relationship with the peasant movement, without supporting it in deeds.

But objections were raised that, if we say 'bourgeois-democratic', we lose the distinction between the reformist and revolutionary movement which has become quite clear in the backward countries and the colonies recently, simply because the imperialist bourgeoisie has done everything in its power to create a reformist movement among the oppressed peoples too. A certain understanding has emerged between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies, so that very often, even perhaps in most cases, the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries – although they also support national movements – nevertheless fight against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes with a certain degree of agreement with the imperialist bourgeoisie, that is to say together with it. This was completely proven in the Commission, and we believed that the only correct thing would be to take this difference into consideration and to replace the words '*bourgeois-democratic*' almost everywhere with the expression '*national-revolutionary*'.

The significance of this is that as Communists we will support the bourgeois freedom movements in the colonial countries only if these movements are genuinely revolutionary and if their exponents are not opposed to us training and organizing the peasantry and the masses of the exploited in a revolutionary spirit. If that is not the case, then the Communists there also have a duty to fight against the reformist bourgeoisie, to which the heroes of the Second International also belong. There are already reformist parties in the colonial countries, and on occasion their representatives call themselves Social Democrats or Socialists. This distinction is now made in all the theses, and I think that our point of view is thus formulated much more precisely.

The next comment I wish to make is about peasants' councils. The practical work of the Russian Communists in the former tsarist colonies, in backward countries such as Turkestan and others, has posed the question of how communist tactics and policies are to be applied to pre-capitalist conditions. The most important characteristic of these countries is that pre-capitalist conditions still prevail there,

and therefore there can be no question of a purely proletarian movement there. Nevertheless, we have taken over the leading role in these countries and must take it over. Our experience has shown us that the difficulties there are truly enormous. Yet the practical results of our work have shown that despite these difficulties it is possible to awaken independent political thinking and independent political activity even where there is almost no proletariat at all. This activity was more difficult for us than for the comrades in Western European countries as the proletariat in Russia is overburdened with tasks of state.

Obviously, the peasants living in conditions of semi-feudal dependency can readily grasp the idea of soviets and also carry out practical work in this field. It is also clear that the oppressed masses, exploited not only by merchant capital but also by the feudalists and the state based on feudalism, can apply this weapon, this type of organization, in their conditions too. The idea of soviet organization is simple and can be applied not only under proletarian conditions but also under feudal and semi-feudal peasant conditions.

Our experiences in this area are not yet very extensive. But the discussions in the Commission, at which several representatives of the colonial countries were present, proved to us quite decisively that in the theses of the Communist International we must take up the question that peasants' councils, the councils of the exploited, are appropriate not only for capitalist countries but also for pre-capitalist conditions. It is the unconditional duty of Communist parties and forces prepared to build Communist parties to propagate peasants' councils and councils of working people everywhere, including the backward countries and the colonies, and to make the practical attempt to set up councils of the labouring people immediately wherever conditions permit it.

This opens up for us a very interesting and important field of activity. Our general experiences are not yet particularly extensive, but we will collect more and more material. There can be no doubt that the proletariat in the advanced countries can and must help the backward labouring masses, and that the backward countries will emerge from their present level of development once the victorious proletariat of the Soviet republics is able to extend a helping hand to these masses.

There was a somewhat lively discussion on this question in the Commission, not only in connection with the theses I have signed, but even more with those of Comrade Roy, which he will defend here. A few amendments to his theses were made unanimously.³

The question was this: can we accept as correct the idea that the capitalist development of the economy is necessary for those backward peoples who are now liberating themselves and among whom now, following the war, progressive

³ For a comparison of the text of Roy's theses before and after these amendments, see John Riddell, *Workers of the World*, vol. 2, pp. 846–55. For bibliographic data on Comintern books edited by John Riddell, see 'About This Text', pp. 283–4.

movements have developed? We have come to the conclusion that this is not so. If the victorious revolutionary proletariat organizes systematic propaganda, and the Soviet government comes to its assistance with every means at its disposal, it is incorrect to assume that the capitalist stage of development is necessary for such peoples. It is the absolute duty of Communist parties and forces prepared to build Communist parties to conduct propaganda everywhere in favour of peasants' councils and councils of working people. That includes in the backward countries and the colonies. Wherever conditions permit, they should at once make attempts to set up soviets of working people. And in addition, the Communist International must also declare and explain theoretically that with the help of the proletariat of the advanced countries the backward countries can arrive at soviet organization and, through a series of stages, and even avoiding the capitalist system, arrive at communism.

The necessary means for this cannot be stated in advance. Practical experience will tell. But it is established that the idea of soviets is accessible to all the labouring masses, even among the most isolated peoples, that these organizations must be adapted to pre-capitalist conditions, and that the work of the Communist parties all over the world in this direction must begin immediately.

The last remark I would like to make here is about the role of the revolutionary work of the Communist parties not only in their own countries but also in the colonial countries, and particularly among the troops used by the exploiting nations to hold down the colonial peoples.

Comrade Quelch of the British Socialist Party spoke about this in our Commission. He said that the ordinary British worker would regard it as treachery if he was to help the dependent peoples to rebel against British domination. It is correct that the jingoist and chauvinist mood of the labour aristocracy in Britain and America poses a very great danger for communism and a very great bulwark for the Second International. It constitutes the greatest treachery on the part of the leaders and workers who belong to such a bourgeois International. There was talk about the colonial question in the Second International also. The [1912] Basel manifesto spoke very clearly about it. The parties of the Second International promised to act in a revolutionary manner. But in the parties of the Second International there was no question of doing real revolutionary work to help the exploited and dependent nations in their revolt against the oppressing nations. I think that applies even to most of the parties that have left the Second International and seek entry into the Communist International. We must say this openly, it cannot be refuted. We shall see whether the attempt will be made to refute it.

Because of these considerations we arrived at resolutions that were, without doubt, too long. But I think that they will nevertheless be useful and contribute to encouraging and organizing really revolutionary work on the national and colonial question, and that is our main task.

M.N. ROY (INDIA): Comrades, I have submitted to the Congress and the Commission some supplementary theses, which I shall have to read out as they have not been printed. I shall start by reading these supplementary theses, which are as follows:

Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Questions

1. One of the most important questions facing the Second Congress of the Communist International is to establish exactly the mutual relations between the Communist International and the revolutionary movement in the politically oppressed countries dominated by their own capitalist system, like India and China. The history of the world revolution is living through a period which requires a correct conception of this mutual relationship. The great European war and its consequences have shown clearly that the masses of people in the oppressed non-European countries have, as a result of the centralization of world capitalism, been indissolubly bound up with the proletarian movement in Europe, which found an expression during the war for example in the sending of colonial troops and numerous masses of workers to the front.

2. European capitalism draws its strength in the main not so much from the industrial countries of Europe as from its colonial possessions. Its existence depends on control of extensive colonial markets and a broad field of opportunities for exploitation. Britain, the bulwark of imperialism, has already suffered from overproduction for a century. Without the extensive colonial possessions that are essential for the sale of her goods and at the same time form the source of her raw materials, the capitalist order in Britain would long since have collapsed under its own weight. By enslaving hundreds of millions of the inhabitants of Asia and Africa, British imperialism also keeps the British proletariat under the domination of the bourgeoisie.

3. The super-profits made in the colonies form one of the main sources of the strength of contemporary capitalism. The European working class will not succeed in overthrowing the capitalist order until this source has finally been stopped up. The capitalist countries try, not indeed without success, to restore their shaky position by extensive and intensive exploitation of human labour and the natural wealth of the colonies. As a result of the exploitation of the colonial population, European imperialism is in a position to grant the labour aristocracy in Europe a whole range of concessions. While on the one hand European imperialism tries to force down the absolute minimum level necessary to keep the proletariat alive by the import of goods produced by the cheaper labour power of the workers of the colonial countries, it is on the other hand prepared to sacrifice the increased profits it could make in the home country in order to receive the super-profits it can obtain by exploitation in the colonies.

4. The loss of the colonies and the proletarian revolution in the mother countries will bring the downfall of the capitalist order in Europe. In consequence the Communist International must extend its field of activity. The Communist International must enter into much closer connection with the revolutionary forces that are at present participating in the overthrow of imperialism in the politically and economically oppressed countries. The collaboration of these two forces is necessary for the complete success of the world revolution.

5. The Communist International is the concentrated will of the world proletariat. Its task is to organize the working class of the whole world for the overthrow of the capitalist order and for the spread of communism. The Communist International is a warlike unity that must unite the revolutionary forces of every country in the world. The Second International, permeated through and through with bourgeois culture and led by a handful of political dilettantes, underestimated the whole importance of the colonial question. The world outside simply did not exist as far as they were concerned. They did not recognize the necessity of the collaboration of the revolutionary movement in Europe with that in the other parts of the world. Instead of supporting the revolutionary movement in the colonies both materially and morally, the members of the Second International themselves became imperialists.

6. Foreign imperialism, violently forced upon the peoples of the East, has without doubt hindered their social and economic development and robbed them of the opportunity of reaching the same level of development that has been achieved in Europe and America. Thanks to the imperialist policies whose efforts are directed towards holding up industrial development in the colonies, the native proletariat has come into existence only fairly recently. The dispersed local cottage industries have given way to the centralized industries of the imperialist countries. As a result the vast majority of the population was forced to engage in agriculture and export raw materials abroad. On the other hand we can observe a rapidly growing concentration of land in the hands of big landowners, capitalists and the state, which again contributes to the growth of the number of landless peasants. The vast majority of the population of these colonies lives under conditions of oppression. As a result of these policies the underdeveloped spirit of outrage that lives in the masses of the people can find an expression only in the numerically small intellectual middle class.

Foreign domination constantly obstructs the free development of social life; its removal must therefore be the revolution's first step. The struggle to overthrow foreign domination in the colonies does not therefore mean underwriting the national aims of the national bourgeoisie but much rather smoothing the path to liberation for the proletariat of the colonies.

7. Two movements can be discerned which are growing further and further apart with every day that passes. One of them is the bourgeois-democratic

nationalist movement, which pursues the programme of political liberation with the conservation of the capitalist order; the other is the struggle of the dispossessed peasants for their liberation from every kind of exploitation. The first movement attempts, often with success, to control the second. The Communist International must, however, fight against any such control, and the development of the class consciousness of the working masses of the colonies must consequently be directed towards the overthrow of foreign capitalism. The most important and necessary task, however, is the creation of Communist organizations of peasants and workers in order to lead them to the revolution and the setting up of the Soviet republic. In this way the masses of the people in the backward countries will be brought to communism not by capitalist development but by the development of class consciousness under the leadership of the proletariat of the advanced countries.

8. The real strength, the foundation of the liberation movement, can no longer be confined to the narrow framework of bourgeois-democratic nationalism in the colonies. In the greater part of the colonies there already exist organized revolutionary parties which work in close contact with the working masses. The Communist International must make contact with the revolutionary movement in the colonies through the mediation of these parties and groups, for they are the vanguard of the working class. At present they are not numerous, but they express the will of the working class and lead the revolution behind them. The Communist parties of the various imperialist countries must work in the closest contact with the proletarian parties of the proletarian countries and through them support the revolutionary movement in general both materially and morally.

9. In the first period the revolution in the colonies will not be communist. If, however, from the very start the Communist vanguard emerges at its head, the revolutionary masses will be brought on to the correct path along which, through the gradual gathering of revolutionary experience, they will reach the hidden goal. It would be a mistake to try to solve the agrarian question straight away according to purely communist principles. In the first stage of its development the revolution in the colonies must be carried out according to the programme of purely petty-bourgeois demands, such as distribution of the land and so on. But from this it must not be concluded that the leadership in the colonies can be allowed to fall into the hands of the bourgeois democrats. On the contrary, the proletarian parties must carry out an intensive propaganda of communist ideas and found workers' and peasants' councils at the first opportunity. These councils must work in cooperation with Soviet republics established in the advanced capitalist countries for the ultimate overthrow of the capitalist order throughout the world.

Supplementary Report on the National and Colonial Questions

ROY: For the more precise information of the Congress I have the following to add.

I would like to draw the Congress's attention particularly to these very important questions. I am glad to have the opportunity for the first time to participate seriously in a discussion on the colonial question at a congress of the revolutionary proletariat. Until now the European parties have given far too little attention to this problem, for they were always occupied with their own affairs and usually passed over the colonial questions, although they are at the present moment of very great importance for the international movement. Since the war the colonial question has become a matter of the greatest importance.

Britain is now one of the greatest colonial powers in the world and has an enormous significance, an enormous strength and a strong social position as a result of its colonial possessions. Although the same cannot now be said of Germany, since Germany no longer has any colonial possessions, the question does not, nevertheless, have an exclusively British significance. The German comrades too, therefore, have to give this question their attention as it has become an international question.

The economic relations between Europe and the colonies have now become the foundation of capitalism. The surplus value that was in previous ages produced in Britain has now in part been invested in the colonies. Moreover, the surplus products that were produced in Britain itself have been taken to the colonial market. In this way Britain has so ordered her production that she can produce food for no more than three months of the year.

Britain has always exploited her workers in the most brutal manner. The same system of exploitation, expropriation and the suppression of the human being in the worker is now applied in the conquered countries. British India alone has a population of no less than 315 million. Apart from British India, Britain exploits many other millions of coloured peoples in the colonies.

Given that the Communist International understands clearly that it must take this matter to heart, the second question, how the colonial movement can best be encouraged and developed, still remains to be solved. Until recently there were in the colonies only national-revolutionary movements of the middle class, whose only wish was to supplant the ruling foreigners in order themselves to exploit their own proletariat. If we do not look at the matter in too doctrinaire a manner, if we look at it somewhat more closely here at the Congress, then one can estimate correctly the great value to the Communist International of the national-revolutionary movement among the peoples of the East Indies also.

Great changes took place in India during and after the war. Whereas earlier British capitalism had always prevented the development of industry in British India, this has no longer been the case in recent years. Industry has developed at a greater pace in recent years in British India than anyone here in Europe can imagine. During the same period in which the industrial proletariat in British India increased by 15 per cent, the capital invested in British-owned industry

increased by 2,000 per cent. This gives an impression of the rapid development of the capitalist system in British India. This is also true of Egypt, the Dutch East Indies and China. The same development that is taking place in British India is also to be noted in these countries.

In recent years there has been a new movement among the exploited masses in India that has spread very quickly and expressed itself in mighty strike waves. This mass movement does not stand under the control of the revolutionary nationalists. It develops independently, although the nationalists try to use this movement for their own purposes. One can say of this mass movement that it is at all events revolutionary, although no one would say that the workers and peasants who form this movement are also clearly class-conscious. This is evident day by day in the forms it takes. Comrades, I think that at this stage of the revolutionary mass movement the field of work lies open for the Communist International. It is only a question of taking the correct measures to harvest the fruits of work among these masses very quickly. Naturally, a revolution by these masses would not at the first stage be a communist revolution; naturally, revolutionary nationalism will play a role in the first stage. But at any event this revolutionary nationalism too will lead to the collapse of European imperialism, which is of enormous significance for the European proletariat.

Finally, I direct an urgent appeal to all the delegates to the Congress under no circumstances to refuse the support that the colonial peoples of the revolutionary proletariat of British India are now offering. And I hope that the Congress will take my views very seriously into account. I hope that comrades will be moved by my theses to weigh their views against mine, and to use the opportunity that offers itself to them to create greater clarity among the Communists of Europe and America through debate. (*Applause*)

'Only social revolution will free the enslaved Black people'

JOHN REED (U.S.): In America there live ten million Blacks who are concentrated mainly in the South. In recent years, however, many thousands of them have moved to the North. The Blacks in the North are employed in industry while in the South the majority are farm labourers or small farmers. The position of the Blacks is terrible, particularly in the Southern states. Paragraph 16 of the Constitution of the United States grants the Blacks full civil rights. Nevertheless, most Southern states deny the Blacks these rights. In other states, where by law the Blacks possess the right to vote, they are killed if they dare to exercise this right.

Blacks are not allowed to travel in the same railway carriages as whites, visit the same saloons and restaurants, or live in the same districts. There exist special, and worse, schools for Blacks and, similarly, special churches. This separation of the Blacks is called the 'Jim Crow system', and the clergy in the Southern churches

preach about a Jim Crow paradise. Blacks are used as unskilled workers in industry. Until recently they were excluded from most of the unions that belong to the American Federation of Labor. The IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] of course organized the Blacks; the old Socialist Party, however, undertook no serious attempt to organize them. In some states the Blacks were not accepted into the party at all, in others they were separated off into special sections, and in general the party statutes banned the use of party resources for propaganda among Blacks.

In the South the Blacks have no rights at all and do not even enjoy the protection of the law. Usually, one can kill Blacks without being punished. One terrible white institution is the lynching of Blacks. This happens in the following manner: The Blacks are covered with oil and strung up on a telegraph pole. The whole of the town, men, women and children, run up to watch the show and take home as souvenirs a piece of the clothing or the skin of the Blacks they have tortured to death.

I have too little time to explain the historical background to the Black question in the United States. The descendants of the slave population, who were liberated during the Civil War, when politically and economically they were still completely underdeveloped, were later given full political rights in order to unleash a bitter class struggle in the South which was intended to hold up Southern capitalism until the capitalists in the North were able to bring together all the country's resources into their own possession.⁴

Until recently the Blacks did not show any aggressive class consciousness at all. The first awakening of the Blacks took place after the Spanish–American War, in which the Black troops had fought with extraordinary courage and from which they returned with the feeling that as men they were equal to the white troops. Until then the only movement that existed among the Blacks was a semi-philanthropic educational association led by Booker T. Washington and supported by the white capitalists. This movement found its expression in the organization of schools in which the Blacks were brought up to be good servants of industry. As intellectual nourishment they were presented with the good advice to resign themselves to the fate of an oppressed people. During the Spanish War an aggressive reform movement arose among the Blacks which demanded social and political equality with the whites. With the beginning of the European war, half a million Blacks who had joined the U.S. Army were sent to France, where they were billeted with French troop detachments and suddenly made the discovery that they were treated as equals socially and in every other respect. The American General Staff approached the French High Command and asked them to forbid Blacks to visit places used by

⁴ In fact, universal male suffrage was won in the U.S. South through a militant struggle by freed slaves, supported by many white workers and farmers and, temporarily, by sections of the northern capitalists. By 1877 northern capitalists withdrew support for Black civil rights, opening the door to the reign of racist Jim Crow and annulment of Black suffrage in the South.

whites and to treat them as second-class people. After the war the Blacks, many of whom had received medals for bravery from the British and French governments, returned to their Southern villages, where they were subjected to lynch law because they dared to wear their uniforms and their decorations on the street.

At the same time a strong movement arose among the Blacks who had stayed behind. Thousands of them moved to the North, began to work in the war industries and came into contact with the surging current of the labour movement. High as they were, their wage rates trailed behind the incredible increases in the prices of the most important necessities. Moreover, the Blacks were outraged by the way all their strength was sucked out and the terrible exertions demanded by the work, much more than were the white workers who had grown used to the terrible exploitation in the course of many years.

The Blacks went on strike alongside the white workers and quickly joined the industrial proletariat. They proved very ready to accept revolutionary propaganda. At that time the newspaper *Messenger* was founded, published by a young Black man, the socialist Randolph, and pursuing revolutionary propagandist aims. This paper united socialist propaganda with an appeal to the racial consciousness of the Blacks and with the call to organize self-defence against the brutal attacks of the whites. At the same time, the paper insisted on the closest links with the white workers, regardless of the fact that the latter often took part in Black-baiting, and emphasized that the enmity between the white and Black races was promoted by the capitalists in their own interests.

The return of the army from the front threw many millions of white workers on to the labour market all at once. The result was unemployment, and the demobilized soldiers' impatience took such threatening proportions that the employers were forced to tell the soldiers that their jobs had been taken by Blacks in order thus to incite the whites to massacre the Blacks. The first of these outbreaks took place in Washington, where civil servants from the administration returning from the war found their jobs occupied by Blacks. The civil servants were in the main Southerners. They organized a night attack on the Black district in order to terrorize the Blacks into giving up their jobs. To everybody's amazement the Blacks came on to the streets fully armed. A fight developed and the Blacks fought so well that for every dead Black person there were three dead whites. Another revolt which lasted several days and left many dead on both sides broke out a few months later in Chicago. Later still, a massacre took place in Omaha. In all these fights the Blacks showed for the first time in history that they are armed and splendidly organized and are not at all afraid of the whites. The results of the Blacks' resistance were first of all a belated intervention by the government and secondly the acceptance of Blacks into the unions of the American Federation of Labor.⁵

⁵ An American Federation of Labor convention in June 1920 recommended desegregation in two of its 11 affiliates that then explicitly barred Blacks from membership. It was not until

Racial consciousness grew among the Blacks themselves. At present there is among the Blacks a section which preaches the armed uprising of the Blacks against the whites. The Blacks who returned home from the war have set up associations everywhere for self-defence and to fight against the white supporters of lynch law. The circulation of the *Messenger* is growing constantly. At present it sells 180,000 copies monthly. At the same time, socialist ideas have taken root and are spreading rapidly among the Blacks employed in industry.

If we consider the Blacks as an enslaved and oppressed people, then they pose us with two tasks: on the one hand a strong racial movement and on the other a strong proletarian workers' movement, whose class consciousness is quickly growing. The Blacks do not pose the demand of national independence. A movement that aims for a separate national existence, like for instance the 'back to Africa' movement that could be observed a few years ago, is never successful among the Blacks. They hold themselves above all to be Americans, they feel at home in the United States. That simplifies the tasks of the Communists considerably.⁶

The only correct policy for the American Communists towards the Blacks is to regard them above all as workers. The agricultural workers and the small farmers of the South pose, despite the backwardness of the Blacks, the same tasks as those we have in respect to the white rural proletariat. Communist propaganda can be carried out among the Blacks who are employed as industrial workers in the North. In both parts of the country we must strive to organize Blacks in the same unions as the whites. This is the best and quickest way to root out racial prejudice and awaken class solidarity.

The Communists must not stand aloof from the Black movement which demands their social and political equality and is spreading rapidly among Blacks, at a time of the rapid growth of racial consciousness. The Communists must use this movement to expose the lie of bourgeois equality and emphasize the necessity of the social revolution which will not only liberate all workers from servitude but is also the only way to free the enslaved Black people.

'All Latin America is a colony of the United States'

LOUIS FRAINA (U.S.): The last speaker talked about the Blacks as an oppressed people in the United States. We have at the same time two other kinds of oppressed people: the foreign workers and the inhabitants of colonies.

The terrible suppression of strikes and of the revolutionary movement in general is in no way a result of the war, it is much more a forceful political expression of the earlier attitude towards the unorganized and unskilled workers.

.....
1963, however, that the last segregated U.S. union dropped its bar against Black members.

⁶ Reed's view that Blacks 'feel at home' in the United States differs from the pan-Africanist perspective adopted by the Comintern's Fourth Congress (see Chapter 10).

These workers' strikes are suppressed violently. Why? Because these workers are in the main foreigners (they form 60 per cent of the industrial proletariat), who are in fact in the same position as a colonial population. After the Civil War (1861–65) capitalism developed at a great pace. The West, which had been underdeveloped until then, was opened up by the construction of the overland railways. The investment capital for this development came from Europe and the Eastern states. The immigrants, however, were the human raw material who were developed by imperialist violence in exactly the same way as the inhabitants of backward colonial countries.

The concentration and monopolization of industry, all these typical preconditions of internal imperialism, grew up before the United States could develop its foreign imperialism. The terror that the colonial population had to face was no different from that faced by workers who migrated to the United States. Thus in 1912 the coal miners in Ludlow went on strike. The miners were driven out of their homes with the help of soldiers and quartered in huts. One day, while the men were fighting the army some miles away, a troop of soldiers surrounded the huts and set light to them, and hundreds of women and children perished in the flames. Under these conditions the class struggle in the United States often becomes a racial struggle. And just as a Black revolt can be the signal for a bourgeois counter-revolution, and does not represent a proletarian revolution, so too the same thing can happen in a revolt of the immigrant workers. The great task is to unite these movements among the Americans into a revolutionary movement.

The whole of Latin America must be regarded as a colony of the United States, and not only its present colonies such as the Philippines, etc. Central America is under the complete control of the United States through her forces of occupation. The same control is, however, also exercised in Mexico and South America, where it has a two-fold expression: first of all through economic and financial penetration, which has increased since the expropriation of German business in these countries, and secondly through the application of the Monroe Doctrine, which has changed from being originally the defence of America against the monarchist system into being the tool of the hegemony and the strengthening of United States imperialism over Latin America. A year before the war President Wilson interpreted the Monroe Doctrine in such a way that it became a way for the American government to prevent British capitalists from obtaining new sources of oil in Mexico.⁷ In other words – Latin America is the colonial basis of imperialism in the United States. While the economic circumstances of the countries of the rest of the world become shakier and shakier, United States imperialism strengthens its position by throwing itself into the exploitation and development of Latin America. It is absolutely necessary

⁷ In April 1914 U.S. forces attacked and occupied the Mexican port of Vera Cruz, asserting U.S. domination over Mexico's oil-rich gulf coast.



Karl Radek

to fight against this imperialism by starting revolutionary movements in Latin America, just as it is necessary to proceed against British imperialism by setting up revolutionary movements in its colonies.

The movement in the United States did not previously pay any attention to the movement in Latin America. As a result the latter reached back to Spain for its ideology instead of to the United States. The movement in Latin America must free itself from this backwardness as well as from its syndicalist prejudices. The American Federation of Labor and the reactionary Socialist Party strive to build pan-American organizations, but

not for revolutionary purposes.

The Communist movement in the United States in particular and the Communist International in general must intervene actively in the movement in Latin America. The movement in the United States and in Latin America must be regarded as one single movement. Our strategy and tactics must start from the standpoint of an American revolution involving the whole of America. The fundamental task of the Communist International, the realization of which alone will secure the world revolution, is the annihilation of United States imperialism; and its annihilation will be made possible only by a giant revolutionary movement embracing the whole of America, where every national unit subordinates itself to the common problems of the American revolution.

'Practical support needed for struggle in colonies'

KARL RADEK: At every congress of the Second International numerous protests were raised against the brutality of imperialist governments in colonial countries. Even now the colonial question is discussed endlessly at conferences of the Second International, and we see how Huysmans, Henderson & Company dish out independence left and right to different nations, even when they do not even demand it.

If it was simply a question of trumpeting protests about imperialist policies out into the world and 'recognizing' the independence of colonial peoples, our task would be a very simple one. But in the area of the practical struggle in the colonial countries we are setting foot in completely new territory. Here it is not

simply a question of sketching the foundations of communist policies, of sucking them out of our fingers, but of developing them out of a study of concrete colonial conditions. It is a question of taking practical steps to support the struggle in the colonies.

Comrade Lenin quotes a statement by Comrade Quelch who declared in the colonial commission that if an uprising were to break out in India the jingoist press would succeed in influencing a section of the British workers into sacrificing themselves to suppress the uprising. If all that Quelch is pointing out is that there is among British workers a strong imperialist current, then that is a matter of fact. But if this fact is supposed to lead our British comrades to a passive posture towards a colonial revolt, and to saying that, because of this mood, they can do no more than pass protest resolutions, then one could say that the Communist International will first of all have to teach its members the A-B-C of politics. If British workers, instead of opposing bourgeois prejudices, support British imperialism or tolerate it passively, then they are working for the suppression of every revolutionary movement in Britain itself.

It is impossible for the British proletariat to liberate itself from the yoke that capitalism has laid upon it without stepping into the breach for the colonial revolutionary movement. When the time comes for the British workers to rise against their own capitalist class, they will face a situation in which Britain can, at the best, cover 30 per cent of her food needs out of her own production. They will face a situation in which American capitalism will try to blockade proletarian Britain. For even if the American capitalists' ships will not be able to cut off the food supplies of proletarian Europe for any length of time, since the Americans must sell, it is nonetheless very possible that the British capitalists will be in a position for a year or two to buy up American wheat in order to stop it going to Britain. In this situation the fate of the British revolution will depend on whether the peasants and workers of Ireland, India, Egypt, etc. are accustomed to seeing the British working class as the servants of the British imperialists.

The [1920] Labour Conference at Scarborough passed an important resolution in which it demanded the independence of India and Egypt. Not a single Communist stood up to tell the Conference that the MacDonalds support the British bourgeoisie, fooling British workers when they talk about the independence of India, Ireland and Egypt. It is simple hypocrisy and swindling that these same people, who could not even rise to the level of characterizing General Dyer as a common murderer in Parliament on the occasion of the Amritsar bloodbath, pretend to be the defenders of colonial independence.⁸ We greatly regret that our party comrades who are in the Labour Party did not tear the mask off these swindlers' faces. The International

⁸ On 13 April 1919 British troops, commanded by Gen. R.E.H. Dyer, fired on a protest meeting in Amritsar, India, killing about 400 unarmed civilians.

will judge the British comrades not by the articles that they write in *The Call* and the *Workers' Dreadnought*, but by the number of comrades who are thrown into gaol for agitating in the colonial countries. We would point out to the British comrades that it is their duty to help the Irish movement with all their strength, that it is their duty to agitate among the British troops, that it is their duty to use all their resources to block the policy that the British transport and railway unions are at present pursuing of permitting troop transports to be shipped to Ireland. It is very easy at the moment to speak out in Britain against intervention in Russia, since even the bourgeois left is against it. It is harder for the British comrades to take up the cause of Irish independence and of anti-militarist activity. We have a right to demand this difficult work of the British comrades.

We will have more to say on this question and on the question of parliamentarianism, but it is important here today to show the British comrades from the shop stewards' movement who want to support the communist movement how childishly they are behaving, how they are throwing away an opportunity to fight, if they do not participate in parliament. The peasants of India have no way of knowing that our shop stewards are fighting against their oppression. But if someone, without making a long speech, was to call things by their right name in parliament, quite certainly he would be thrown out by the Speaker of the House, and Reuters would tell the world that a traitor had been found in the British parliament who had called a murderer – a murderer.

British capital, based on a strong bourgeoisie, cannot be overthrown only in London, Sheffield, Glasgow and Manchester; it must also be beaten in the colonies. They are its Achilles heel, and it is the duty of the British Communists to go to the colonies and to fight at the head of the rising masses of the people and to support them.

We scarcely know of a single case in the old International where a Social Democratic Party made itself the champion of the liberation of the colonial peoples. When the Hereros were being driven in their thousands into the desert, the German Socialists abstained from voting because they declared that they did not know the causes of the revolt and had no opinion on the matter.⁹

It is the duty of the Communist International to create an atmosphere in which it is not possible to take part in the Congress here without proving that one has helped the revolt in the colonies practically. This is one of the biggest and most important life-or-death questions for the Communist International. Just as in every country we must try to win for our struggle those petty-bourgeois elements who are driven in the direction of the working class, the Communist International

⁹ Although advocacy for rights of colonial peoples by the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) left much to be desired, the party did denounce German atrocities against the Herero and Khoi Khoi peoples. In December 1906, the party's parliamentary deputies voted against further appropriations for the German war in present-day Namibia.

must be a beacon to light the way to the rebellious peoples in Asia and Africa. The Communist International must defeat world capitalism not only through the popular masses of Europe but also those of the colonies. Capitalism will draw not only economic but also military support from the colonial peoples. The social revolution in Europe will have Black troops to deal with yet.¹⁰ The duty of the Communist International is to proceed to deeds.

The Russian Soviet Republic has taken this path. If people in Britain interpret our painstaking work in the East, our conscious agitation for the formation of soviet organizations in Turkestan and in the Caucasus, and our sending out the first feelers to Persia and Turkey, as things that the Soviet Republic does in order to make difficulties for the British, then that is a misunderstanding of the foreign policy of the Soviet government. It is part of the programme of the Communist International; it is Soviet Russia fulfilling her duties as part of the Communist International. We do not regard the agitation in the East as a makeshift expedient in the fight against European capitalism; we regard it as a struggle we have a duty to carry out in the lasting interests of the European proletariat.

Our assistance does not consist in building artificial Communist parties where there is no basis for them. It takes place when we help these people.

Comrade Lenin has pointed out that there is no theoretical necessity for every nationality to pass through the stage of capitalism. Not all the peoples who today are capitalist got to capitalism through the stage of handicraft production. Japan passed straight from feudal conditions to the phase of imperialist civilization. If the proletarian masses in Germany, France and Britain succeed in winning socialism, then we will go to the colonial peoples not only with the most modern means that capitalism has left us, but also with the production methods that socialism will create. We will help them to find a direct path from feudal barbarism to a form of production where they can apply the resources of modern technology without having to go through the stages of craft and handicraft production.

We stand at the beginning of a new epoch. European capitalism fears the awakening of the Oriental peoples; it talks about the 'Yellow Peril', and one can say that as long as capitalism exists there will be a Yellow Peril. The proletarianized peasants of China or Turkey, who are being skinned alive, will have to emigrate to seek work, will have to defend themselves in great mass migrations. But communism has no Yellow Peril to fear, it can reach out its hand to all oppressed peoples, for it brings them not exploitation but fraternal aid.

¹⁰ 'Black troops' refers to soldiers in the French army levied in France's African colonies, which the French government hoped to deploy against European workers. Earlier in the Second Congress, Lenin expressed 'deep gratitude' to the bourgeoisie for having in this way drawn 'the dependent peoples into world history'. For a fuller discussion, see Riddell, *Founding the Communist International*, pp. 342–4.

Debate on Motion to Close Speakers' List

GIACINTO SERRATI (ITALY): I propose that the speakers' list be closed. There are still 12 to go.

ALFRED ROSMER (FRANCE): A motion has been made to close the speakers' list.

DAVID WIJNKOOP (NETHERLANDS): I do not think that the list can be closed now. The matter is important, at least for the future. The debate has not even started. Perhaps there will be no debate.

SERRATI: I noted that another twelve speakers have put their names forward. Perhaps Comrade Wijnkoop is right. I can see that the debate is taking a direction in which we are encountering a series of separate questions. What we have to do here is deal with the questions in general. I think we should adjourn the question until tomorrow and close the list of speakers in the sense that we ask the individual comrades to consider the question in general and not go into details.

HENRI GUILBEAUX (FRANCE): I suggest that we close the session now but not the list of speakers. The question is very important and it is absolutely necessary that all the representatives of the colonial peoples report to the Congress. The time available for each speaker could be cut, but the comrades should not be prevented from speaking.

MARING (HENK SNEEVLIET, DUTCH EAST INDIES): I would like to insist that Comrade Serrati's motion should not be accepted. It would not be good if we failed to give the representatives of the colonies an opportunity to say a few short words on the movement. Comrade Serrati himself knows that not one of the Italians was represented at the Commission today. It is very surprising that he should make such a proposal.

RADEK: I am opposed to the proposal from the Presidium. I understand that those present are familiar with the question. But in the discussion you cannot start from the standpoint that one or the other person is acquainted with things. It is the political significance of the colonial question that we are concerned with here. We have a political interest in the fact that workers will read the minutes of the Congress and see that the representatives of the oppressed colonial peoples spoke here and took part in our discussions. It is impossible to set up general rules of communist tactics for everybody, but even a simple worker can contribute a lot to the depiction of conditions in his own country. It is a question of everybody saying what he knows, and the more concretely he speaks the better. I see that the representatives from Ireland want to speak. It is very important for British imperialism to see that there are forces there that are allied to us and want to fight with us.

SERRATI: I do not want anybody to think that I suggested we should not have a discussion. Most of all I must state that I did not make my proposal either in the

name of the Bureau or in the name of the Italian delegation. We have already spent ten minutes here talking about the question of the Blacks in Chicago. We cannot split the question up into its smallest parts, we must summarize it in very clear and very concrete speeches. I would not like anybody to think that I am opposed to the representatives of the backward countries, as they are called in Comrade Lenin's theses, speaking. If I have proposed the closure of the list of speakers, then it is because all the representatives of the backward countries – China, Persia, Korea, Japan and Turkey – have already been entered. If there are still more comrades from backward countries who put their names forward we will have the histories of all the different nationalities in the world to listen to here. I propose, however, that we close the session and wait and see whether we close the list or keep it open.

WIJNKOOP: I propose that we vote on Comrade Serrati's motion. We will see in the next session how we are to proceed.

SERRATI: I withdraw my motion.

(The session ends at 2:30 A.M. and discussion resumes the next day, 28 July, at 11 A.M.)

'The first thorough discussion of the Colonial Question'

AVETIS SULTANZADE (IRAN): At most of its congresses the Second International studied the colonial question and drew up choice resolutions which, however, were never to be put into practice. Very often these questions were debated and decisions taken without the participation of representatives of backward countries. What is more, when the first Persian revolution was suppressed by the Russian and British hangmen and the Persian Social Democracy turned for help to the European working class, which was at that time represented by the Second International, it was not even given the right to vote on a resolution on that question.¹¹

Today, the Second Congress of the Communist International marks the first time that this question has been dealt with thoroughly and, moreover, with the representatives of almost all the colonized or semi-colonized countries of the Orient and of America. The resolution adopted by our Commission completely fulfils the expectations of the labouring masses of the oppressed peoples and serves especially to stimulate and encourage the soviet movement in these countries.

At first glance it may seem peculiar to speak of a soviet movement in completely or partially dependent countries. However, if we pay full attention to the social position of these countries our doubts disappear. Comrade Lenin has already talked

¹¹ Although the Second International in general paid scant attention to liberation struggles in Asia, it did adopt a resolution at its 1910 congress, three years after Russia's forcible intervention into Iran (Persia), condemning Russian armed intervention against the constitutional revolution in Iran.

about the experiences of the Russian Communist Party in Turkestan, among the Bashkir, and in Kyrgyzstan. Given that the soviet system is successfully ripening in these countries, the soviet movement must spread powerfully in India and Persia, that is to say in countries where class differentiation is proceeding with giant steps.

In 1870 all these countries were dominated by merchant capital. The position has only changed slightly. The colonial policies of the great powers turned these countries into markets and sources of raw materials for the great European centres by preventing the development of their national industries. The imports of European consumer goods into the colonies finished off indigenous industry.

Although the rapid growth of capitalist industry quickly proletarianized the old mass of craft workers in the European countries and gave them a new ideology, this was not the case in the Orient, where conditions forced thousands of unfortunates to emigrate to Europe and America. In these colonized or semi-colonized countries there are also masses of peasants whose living conditions are truly almost impossible. The burden of taxes and dues falls mainly on this unfortunate part of the population throughout the Orient. Since the peasants are almost the only people who produce food, they have to feed the legions of merchants and exploiters, employers and tyrants. As a result of the oppression that bears down on them, this suppressed class in the Orient has not been able to build a powerfully organized revolutionary party.

A great diversity of demands can be observed among the ruling classes. The interests of the trading circles demand the continuation of the colonial policies of the great powers, while those of the bourgeoisie on the other hand are damaged by foreign intervention. While the priesthood protests against the import of goods from countries with different religious beliefs, the merchants, on the other hand, do not hesitate to ally themselves with those countries. There is no unity among the ruling classes, nor can there be.

These facts have created a revolutionary atmosphere, and the next storm of nationalism in these countries can quickly turn into a social revolution.

That is in general the situation in the majority of Asian countries. Does it follow from this that the fate of communism throughout the world depends on the victory of the social revolution in the East, as Comrade Roy assures you? Certainly not. Many comrades in Turkestan are caught up in this error. It is true that the behaviour of the capitalists in the colonies awakens a revolutionary spirit. But it is just as true to say that through capitalist exploitation in the centre a counter-revolutionary spirit is created among the labour aristocracy. Capitalism seeks consciously to hold up the revolution by trying to win small privileged layers of workers for itself.

Let us assume that the communist revolution has begun in India. Will the workers of that country be able to withstand the attack by the bourgeoisie of the entire world without the help of a big revolutionary movement in Britain and

Europe? Of course not. The suppression of the revolution in Persia and China is clear proof of the fact. If the revolutionaries in Turkey and Persia are now throwing down the gauntlet to omnipotent Britain, it is not because they themselves are now stronger, but because the imperialist bandits have become powerless. The revolution that has started in the West has also warmed the soil in Turkey and Persia and strengthened the revolutionaries. The epoch of the world revolution has begun.

The point in the theses that provides for support of the bourgeois-democratic movement in the backward countries can, it seems to me, refer only to those countries in which this movement is in its very early stages. If one were to try to proceed according to the theses in countries which already have ten or more years of experience, or in those where the movement has already had power, it would mean driving the masses into the arms of the counter-revolution. The task is to create and maintain a purely communist movement in opposition to the bourgeois-democratic one. Any other judgment of the facts could lead to regrettable results.

‘Not “support” but “active interest”’

ANTONIO GRAZIADEI (ITALY): I should like to remark first of all that I shall present only my own personal views.

After the latest amendments made to Comrade Lenin’s theses in their final form, after the improvements and explanations carried out by the Commission, particularly with respect to the second thesis, which created many difficulties for me in its original form, I can announce that I am prepared to sign everything that Comrade Lenin proposes.

If I have understood correctly, Comrade Lenin poses the question in the following way: just as in every nation there are exploiters and exploited, so too in international relations there are nations that are exploited by other nations. The petty-bourgeois conception and abstract idea of human rights adopted by the Second International had the role of masking the class struggle. The idea of the equality of nations amounts to covering over the economic and moral opposition that exists between the imperialist and the oppressed nations.

Previously, two opposite errors used to be made. The Second International tended to take the national problem as it was presented by the bourgeoisie. On the other hand another group of socialists who fought against this first and fatal error thought they could free themselves from this important problem by simply ignoring it.

Comrade Lenin, however, has tried to look at this problem realistically and as a Marxist. I say ‘Marxist’ in the sense that Comrade Lenin remains true to the only part of Marxism that is inviolable: the method. In fact Comrade Lenin’s critical and materialist conception corresponds to the situation before the war and even more to the situation that exists at the end of the imperialist war.

There is no contradiction between Comrade Lenin’s theses and our definition

of the war in 1914. The war, which we called an imperialist war, was not imperialist in the same degree for every nation. This distinction must be drawn since the smaller nations and especially the colonies were drawn into the war together with the great powers and were rather the victims of imperialism.

Only the richest and strongest nations could draw any advantage from such a long and destructive war; it cost the smaller nations the greater or lesser extent of economic independence they previously had. Even where their earlier territorial frontiers have remained the same, their position has become exceptionally difficult.

Two facts that emerge from this are now predominant: on the one hand the struggle of the great imperialist powers against Soviet Russia, against whom the smaller nations (Poland, Rumania, etc.) are sent into the field, and on the other hand the possibility that Soviet Russia can forge in the revolts of the smaller nations, and of the colonies against the exploitative imperialism of the capitalist countries, a mighty weapon against imperialism.

However true all this is, I should still like to comment that one cannot, it seems to me, separate the Communist International from the Soviet government. The victory of the latter alone made the foundation and success of the Communist International possible, just as the fall of the Paris Commune brought with it the collapse of the First International. It cannot, however, be denied that the work that our Russian comrades have performed with such heroism and talent in the face of a crowd of enemies could, under the pressure of necessity and against their will, lead to a left opportunism that an organization like the Communist International should try to avoid. A very strict definition of principles is also necessary. It is important to emphasize that action in countries where true imperialist capitalism exists should be distinguished from that in backward countries and colonies. The local parties should moreover be given certain guarantees. That is all that I propose to add to Comrade Lenin's theses. In doing so I would like to say that I insist on the spirit of these additions rather than the word.

I propose to start Thesis 11 as follows:

'In those countries where the position of the ruling class permits them to carry out a national imperialist policy, and where as a consequence there is a sufficiently strong industrial proletariat, the Communist Parties must start an open and inexorable struggle'. The text will then continue: 'in relation to', etc.

Further on in Thesis 11, section 1 line 1, instead of 'the necessity to support', read: 'the duty of an active interest'.

Lines 3-4, instead of 'the duty of supporting them', 'the duty of an active interest'.

Section 5 line 5, instead of 'should not support them', read: 'should not take an interest in'.

Line 13, instead of 'must make temporary alliances', read: 'must maintain temporary relations'.

Instead of the Commission's amendment 'and the form must be discussed

with the Communist Party in question', read: 'The interest of the Communist International in such a movement is determined at any given time by the fact that the Communist Party in question have discussed the nature of their activity and that the following conditions are fulfilled, as well as all the other conditions dictated by the situation and by experience.'

In Thesis 12 the last part of the penultimate sentence, from the words 'and the duty' to the words 'of this distrust', must be left out.

The conception of the word 'support' which is used in the theses is narrower than that of the term 'active interest'. The duty of 'active interest' implies 'support', but only as one among many possibilities. It would be better if nationalist movements could be quickly used everywhere to create a revolutionary movement. The same can be said of 'contacts'. They are only individual cases, and by no means the most desirable.

'China: A wide field for revolution'

LIU SHAOZHOU (CHINA): The end of 1918 found China embroiled in a civil war. The South was under the temporary rule of a provisional revolutionary government whose chief purpose was to wage a most bitter struggle against the Beijing government. At the head of the southern government stood at first the famous leader of the first Chinese revolution, Sun Yat-sen. He soon withdrew from the government as a result of the conflicts that broke out between him and the representatives of the old bureaucracy who had remained within the southern government. Since then he has not officially participated in the business of government.

The southern government is still carrying on the struggle against the Beijing government. This struggle proceeds under the slogans proclaimed by the Sun Yat-sen group, whose basic principle is the restoration of the rights of the old parliament and the old president and to force the resignation of the Beijing government. This struggle is being carried out with varying success, but the southern government has undeniably more prospects of a successful outcome than the northern, although the latter has a better right to expect it given its strong financial position. In the last few days we have been informed that the southern government's troops have occupied Hunan, that is, one of the central provinces bordering on Beijing.

When the old reactionary Beijing government first joined with the Allies in the coalition against Germany in 1917, they promised the country the most varied advantages from participation in the war. The revolutionary parties protested in vain; war was declared. The Chinese people, however, had some faith in these promises, and until the calling of the Versailles conference they nourished hopes. How great then was their disappointment when Versailles gave nothing to China, but on the contrary assured to Japan the rights and territorial conquests she had won during the war at China's expense.

After the return of the delegation from Versailles, a movement began against the government and against the Japanese which must not be underestimated. Students organized in associations centred in Shanghai placed themselves at the head of this movement. The students started a widespread agitation with mass meetings, strikes, manifestos, etc. They also agitated for a boycott of Japanese goods. The results of this movement were extremely small; they were forcibly suppressed. In a few cases demonstrators were even shot. Nevertheless, the movement played a significant role in that it awoke a feeling of outrage against the government in the masses.

Recently, since they have realized that they can achieve nothing on their own, the students have begun to draw the mass of workers along with them. The Chinese workers too have begun to show what they are capable of, though they represent an industrial working class that is still very young. Thus, in the course of the past year we have experienced a series of strikes in Shanghai, although admittedly with purely economic aims. The Socialist Party of Shanghai is winning more and more popularity among the workers. This party is Marxist. From the weekly newspaper it publishes it can be seen that this movement is to be taken seriously.

In its May 1 issue we find the slogans: 'Those who do not work should not eat'; and 'The whole world should belong to the proletariat'. This newspaper uninterruptedly propagates the idea of socialism in opposition to nationalism. It insists on a fraternal alliance with Soviet Russia. It protests against last year's Sino-Japanese Treaty whose aim was conquest of Siberia. In all its articles the newspaper defends the point of view that the proletariat should fight the bourgeoisie and that the principle of nationalism and state independence should give way to the principle of internationalism. This newspaper is extremely popular. Thus we see here the beginnings of an organization that embraces not only the industrial proletariat but also the craftsmen.

The crisis of European industry also found an echo in China. China is flooded with an extraordinary amount of foreign goods. Chinese industry does not develop and the Chinese proletariat is in a pitiable position. Put briefly, China's intellectuals, the students and the working class possess rich material for revolutionary agitation. Although there are no great landed properties in China, we can nonetheless already see how, where the peasantry is concerned, the richer peasants are gradually buying up the land, which has as a result the growth in the number of poor peasants. It goes without saying that this part of the population readily follow the urban proletariat in the revolutionary movement.

China consists at present of a series of almost autonomous provinces headed by governors with full powers. All these governors are, like the members of the government, members of the Anfu military party, that is to say the party of the bureaucrats, most of whom had important posts under the monarchy. All of these governors are almost completely independent of the Beijing government, and if

they stay in the fight against the South then they do so for their own interests. The fiscal system is entirely in the hands of the governors, who determine the income of the central government as they think fit.

As a result the government's means are of course extremely slender, so that it is forced to raise loans, which it does mainly in Japan. Since this kind of service is naturally not performed for nothing, Japan is winning more and more privileges and material advantages in China in return. In a whole series of Chinese provinces Japan is all-powerful, as if it were conquered territory. On the other hand the autocracy of governors we have described and the existence of an undisciplined and corrupt army of two million offer a picture of complete anarchy. When we take this into consideration, the opposition and the continual revolutionary ferment among the masses also become comprehensible.

At present the whole opposition against the two existing governments in China is to be found in Shanghai in the persons of its main representatives. Sun Yat-sen is to be found there with the supporters of the first revolution. The Central Federation of Students, the workers' unions and the Socialist Party are also to be found there. In the fight against Japan, against the Chinese government and against the bourgeoisie, all these groups are permeated with a uniform revolutionary consciousness.

To summarize what I have said, it must once more be emphasized that there is at present in China a wide field for revolutionary propaganda. The Congress of the Communist International must pay great attention to this circumstance. Support for the Chinese revolution is of importance not only for China but for the revolutionary movement throughout the world, for at the moment there is only one single factor to oppose the avaricious Japanese imperialism that has taken firm root in Asia. This single factor is a strong and mighty Chinese revolutionary movement among the working masses of China.

'Korea: A most unhappy country'

PAK CHIN-SUN (KOREA): We are discussing the colonial questions here under conditions that are quite different from those at the time of the foundation of the Second International thirty years ago. The whole task of the Communist International in the colonial question consists in correcting the mistakes made by the leaders of the Second International. The whole history of the ignominious collapse of the Second International has shown that the western European proletariat cannot win the fight against its bourgeoisie as long as the bourgeoisie has a source of strength in the colonies.

The official leaders realized this; however, these ideologists of parliamentarianism stood aloof from the heroic struggles of the colonial peoples, and whenever they approached the problem of the East, the problem of the colonial peoples, they

trembled no less than the ideologists of the bourgeoisie. But here, at our Congress, the work of the Commission has already shown that all the delegates from the East as well as those of the western European proletariat are conscious of the fact that the happy day – the day of the triumph of the Communist International, the day of the social revolution – will only dawn when all the colonial peoples rise in revolt, when the western European proletariat deliver the death blow to their bourgeoisie, when the colonial peoples strike the bourgeoisie of the West to the heart.

Consciousness of the need for a common struggle has grown more and more, and Russia – the link between the whole proletarian West and the revolutionary East – has now really given us the opportunity to discuss the sore point that was the origin of opportunism, the origin of the indecision of the Second International. I hope that our Congress will now take decisions on the colonial question which will speed the revolutionary ferment, the revolution in the East.

I should now like to say something about the revolutionary movement under way in our country, in Korea. We have already decided some questions. I should just like to spend a short time on the practical realization of some of the questions that have been raised here, since many of these questions have also arisen in the revolutionary movement there.

Ten years ago the Korean people were completely apathetic towards the annexation of Korea. They were equally apathetic towards the fiery speeches about democracy, the independence of Korea and a free and happy life. And now, all at once, they have been fighting for 18 months and showing exemplary dedication and self-sacrifice. We cannot say that the general cultural level of the Korean people has improved so significantly in the course of ten years. In these ten years, the Japanese were not only unable to raise the class consciousness of the Korean masses, they were unable to raise the national consciousness of the masses either. If our teachers here have said that the revolution is the locomotive of history, then we must say that the fuel that drives the locomotive along the track of history is economics.

And at present, what with the occupation, Korea is a most unhappy country. Let us take the peasantry. They are laden with taxes that are 300 per cent to 350 per cent higher than they were before annexation. Naturally, that ruins the peasantry, and the policy of the Japanese Agrarian Bank, which wants a forced emigration from Japan proper to Korea, annoys the majority of the peasants, particularly the middle peasants. Moreover, the Japanese do not give the Koreans the opportunity to achieve an education that is any use in life and do not permit young students to go to institutions of higher education that train engineers and good military instructors. That is why not only a section of the intellectuals but also the whole of the students are opposed to the Japanese occupation.

Let us now look at the bourgeoisie. Through its colonial policy of treating Korea as a colony, the Japanese rob the Korean bourgeoisie of the possibility of

building factories and mills in Korea. That is also one of the reasons why the Korean bourgeoisie is hostile to Japan. Thanks to these reasons the Korean bourgeoisie has fought in alliance with the working masses, and in the last two or three years we have been unable to draw a boundary between the two. And we will be unable to do so until economic circumstances make this possible.

Our party will, however, take pains to carry out this class differentiation and to lead the revolutionary movement, which in Korea bears the stamp of an agrarian movement. Every landlord and every landed proprietor in Korea now knows what the national liberation movement is in Korea. It is a movement that is directed not only against Japanese imperialism but also against its own bourgeoisie, which in Korea consists mainly of big landed proprietors. Finally, when the time comes for Korea to shake off the national yoke, perhaps two or three years will be sufficient for the bourgeoisie to grasp that an independent Korea cannot bring them the happiness that they expected. It knows that an independent Korea means the withdrawal of all their material advantages, and therefore they are against the Korean revolution and tie their fate to that of Japanese imperialism.

The Versailles conference was at the heart of the differences of opinion among revolutionaries in the last year. The right wing, which unites all the nationalists, the big political parties that form a united national bloc, and the associations of petty-bourgeois organizations, who were all in favour of the League of Nations and expected that Wilson, that supposed saviour, would bring freedom to the enslaved peoples of the East – all these forces insisted on sending a delegation to the peace conference. We knew very well that under no circumstances would the imperialists of America, Japan and Britain be so generous as to give up advantages their colonies gave them. Therefore we posed the question: Paris or Moscow?

Our historical evaluation proved to be correct. Our Korean delegation had no success at the Versailles conference and our influence among the masses began to grow and is still growing. Our party is now one of the big parties, enjoying significant influence on the masses. And I hope they will accept the theses adopted by the present Congress as their guidelines. Our party, which always marches under the banner of the Communist International, has now linked its fate indissolubly with the revolutionary movement of the proletariat throughout the world and will do its duty. United with the revolutionary proletariat throughout the world it will march to the final goal – the construction of communism. Our party will be one of the main forces that will turn enslaved Korea into a part of the federated World Soviet Republic.

‘Channel support through Communist groups’

RODERIC CONNOLLY (IRELAND): Comrade Lenin's theses have sketched the basic features of the Communist International's overall line of march towards the

national revolutionary movement in the oppressed countries. In order actually to apply these theses, the Communist International must be correctly informed about the economic and historical movement in these countries and moreover have the opportunity to be able to assess the revolutionary significance of the various forces at work in the countries in question. Therefore we would like, without discussing the theses as a whole, to give a detailed report on the situation in Ireland.

The Irish question can be considered as a question of national oppression from three standpoints: that of the national revolutionary movement, that of the petty-bourgeois social democrats and liberals, and that of the Communist International. The first tendency considers Ireland as a separate national unit economically and politically oppressed by Britain over the last seven hundred years and sees the solution to the question purely and simply in the complete independence of Ireland from Great Britain. For that purpose, however, a bourgeois-democratic Irish state must be set up after the pattern of the democratic republics of Western Europe. In no other case could Ireland ever succeed in developing fully in the economic and cultural respect.

From the standpoint of the liberals, which is shared with slight differences by the petty-bourgeois social democrats, Ireland is already economically and politically a part of Great Britain. Therefore, satisfaction of the national demands requires only sensible political concessions within the framework of limited self-government. Meanwhile, this independence must be prevented from becoming a danger to the realm.

From the standpoint of the Communist International the matter is not so easy. In the last phase of capitalism the position of all national minorities and colonies is exceptionally complicated. Among the majority of these oppressed peoples and races there is a revolutionary movement directed against imperialism. Even if the struggle of the Communist International is proceeding in another direction, it cannot simply turn its back on these revolutionary uprisings, whose purpose also is to free themselves from imperialism. It must rather support every movement that can contribute to the advancement of the world revolution. The Communist International must encourage and support every movement that strives to weaken the imperialist powers and to advance the growing world revolution. The Communist International must strengthen and unite all Communist groups involved in such struggles. Such policies would lead to the formation of a Communist Party in which, under the pressure of the military dictatorship of imperialism, a strict centralization and a good discipline develop. It will be rendered capable of carrying on a bitter struggle for power against its own national bourgeoisie, after liberating itself from the imperialist yoke.

Taking these circumstances into account, we demand that the Communist International support national-revolutionary movements. The only means which promises success is the active support of national movements with the help of the

Communist groups in the countries in question, however weak they may be.

This is especially true of Ireland, where support for the national movement by the Communist International and its British section, without the inclusion of Communist groups, would only weaken the latter. Support by the Communist International is the only means that permits them, even in the very first stages of revolutionary struggle, to play a significant role. In their struggle against British imperialism the Irish nationalists will use any means necessary. If the struggle of the Communist International is carried out only through the mediation of the little Communist groups I have mentioned, the nationalists will be forced to remain neutral towards the Communists, who will meanwhile be able to develop and attract new forces. Indeed, they may perhaps have to support these Communist groups actively, thus unconsciously facilitating their propaganda.

Regardless of whether Ireland remains subject to the present military dictatorship or forms a bourgeois state, the absence of a communist movement in Ireland would turn the country into the basis for the counter-revolutionary attack on the coming social revolution in Britain. And here we must pay particular attention to the fact that in the British struggles the Fleet would play no small role, and that Ireland possesses splendid harbours and submarine bases for a White fleet destined to blockade Britain.

This takes us back to the first part of our report which considered the importance of Ireland's strategic position for communism. If we consider the international situation as a bitter struggle between the centre of the world revolution, Soviet Russia, together with the small states grouped around Russia on the one hand, and the League of Nations led by British imperialism on the other, then Ireland, that constant hearth of revolution in the heart of the empire, which keeps a British army of 200,000 men permanently occupied, is of great importance for the international revolutionary movement. On the other hand we must strain every nerve to prevent Ireland from being converted into a base for the hangmen of the British revolution in the sense that we mentioned above.

As for the Irish who live in America and scattered throughout the British Empire, everybody knows of the lively interest that they take in the political development of their homeland, as well as of the speed with which they react to events there. This being so, as Irish politics tend towards communism, this will attract the masses of Irishmen living in British possessions and in the United States, strengthen the communist movement in these countries, and lend power to the international proletarian movement in general.

(Comrade Connolly then reads a report that is published unabridged in issue 12 of The Communist International.)

'British labour has failed to understand Ireland'

EAMONN MACALPINE (IRELAND): I would like to draw the attention of the Congress to Thesis 12:

The centuries of enslavement that the weak and colonial nationalities have suffered at the hands of the great imperialist powers has left in the toiling masses of the enslaved countries a feeling not only of combativity, but also of mistrust towards the nations that have exploited them, including against the proletariat of those nations. As an example of this one can quote the attitude towards the British proletariat of the working masses of Ireland, who often make no distinction between the ruling class of Britain and the British workers. This attitude on the part of the Irish workers also explains the fact that the British labour movement has up to now failed to understand the problems raised by Ireland.

Most of the Polish revolutionaries I have talked to about current conditions in Ireland are amazed by the similarity with conditions in Poland in 1905. The similarity is striking, and while the revolutionary times are favourable to us we cannot afford to ignore the possibility that Ireland's national claims can be exploited by the British bourgeoisie during a social crisis.

The attitude of the British revolutionary movement towards Ireland has up to now been distinguished neither by tolerance nor by the support manifested by social democrats who give verbal support to the demands of the Irish nationalists. The fact that Ireland is an important weapon against British imperialism and that, on the other hand, it can be turned into a dangerous tool against the social revolution seems to have been forgotten. It seems that the Shop Stewards' movement is the first to give full recognition to the importance of the Irish question and its relationship to the British revolutionary movement. The discussions that took place at its conference in London at the beginning of the year, and its resolutions, aroused the interest of Irish workers in this movement and contributed to creating better relations between the proletariat of the two countries.

It is extremely important that the British Communists actively support Ireland, that they agitate among the British troops in Ireland and that they prevent troops and munitions from being shipped to Ireland. It is interesting to note that the activity of the British labour movement on this question resulted in the withdrawal of the Irish railwaymen from the National Union of Railwaymen, and that in the last few months the engineering workers in the southern part of Ireland have left the Amalgamated Engineering Union.

Nevertheless, no direct links can be permitted between the British Communists and the Irish nationalist movement except through the mediation of the Irish

Communists or after consultation with them. Equally important is the condition that, while the British Communists support the national struggle, they nevertheless distinguish strictly between the national and the communist revolution. They must point out that their attitude towards Ireland is no bourgeois humanitarian reaction to oppression but the result of common class interests between the proletariat and the peasantry of the two countries.

Herman Gorter recently said that the attitude of the British workers towards Ireland is the barometer of revolutionary socialist feeling in Great Britain. We can add that the attitude of the British Communists towards Ireland is the measure of the clarity of communist thought in Britain. In relation to the claim made in the Commission that British workers would regard support for the revolutionary struggle of the colonies against British imperialism as treason, it must be said that the faster British workers learn to commit such treason against the bourgeois state the better it will be for the revolutionary movement. Such support is very necessary, even if it is only limited to the education of the British working masses.

I protest vigorously against our Italian comrade Graziadei's proposal to put 'show active interest' in place of 'give support' in number 11 of the theses. That is a Wilsonian phrase and is meaningless, like all that gentleman's phrases. It is an underhand way of abolishing this point completely, and is reminiscent of the methods applied by the Second International towards the smaller nationalities.

I wanted to touch upon various other points, but since I have very little time available I will only mention them briefly. The position in Ulster or at least in the northern part of that province is different from that in the other parts of Ireland. In many respects it offers the Communists a less complicated problem than is the case in the other parts of Ireland.

The majority of the inhabitants of this part of Ireland consists of anti-nationalists and of opponents of the other part of Ireland. Even if at first glance this makes the situation more complicated, the necessity of class struggle is thus clearer here. Political oppression is not confused with economic oppression by the workers. The circumstance that Ulster is the industrial centre of Ireland and that it thinks itself to be an equal component of the British Empire puts it on an equal footing with the great industrial centres of Britain.

I would gladly also speak about the question of co-operatives which are becoming an important part of Irish economic life, but I cannot do so because of lack of time. The growth of co-operatives in the countryside is neutralizing the ideology of private property, which creates so many problems for Communists, especially when it is present among the peasantry. The co-operatives are developing the idea of large-scale production on a communist basis and are combating the land hunger of the rural labourers and the semi-proletarians.

We support the theses including the additions proposed by Comrade Roy.

'A liberation movement has arisen in Turkey'

ISMAEL HAKKI-PASHA (TURKEY): I would like to talk about Comrade Lenin's theses, particularly the part that deals with Islam. This is a question that demands of us that we become better acquainted with it.

From the time when the Turkish sultans conquered Syria and Assyria [Iraq], when the road to the holy places of Islam fell into their hands, the Turkish rulers have striven to unite all those peoples living in the East, Africa and other countries inhabited by followers of Islam. From the time when the holy places and particularly the railway fell into the hands of the sultans, from the time when the heart of Islam fell into their hands, the Turkish sultans have preached every kind of Pan-Islamism and have tried to unite around Turkey all the Muslim peoples and countries in the East and in Africa.

When, however, the Young Turk revolt broke out in 1908, power passed into the hands of the Young Turks. The liberal bourgeoisie which took power into its hands began to seek new ways to unite all these peoples. At the same time, in Russia, the Tatars, the Turkestanis, the Bashkirs and a whole series of other peoples were groaning under the tsarist knout, and here at the same time the idea of Pan-Turkism emerged, which was opposed to Pan-Islamism. Pan-Islamism was unable to unite all the different nationalities with their different languages. The idea of Pan-Turkism which the Young Turks later took over – this idea strove to fuse all the Turkish peoples from Kazan to Turkestan and to the Caucasus with the whole of Turkey and a part of Persia. The Young Turks sought to unify this huge territory. But all these dreams were condemned to remain on paper.

After the Russian Revolution and the partition of Turkey by the European imperialists, when the Janus face of the British and French capitalists showed itself openly to the Turkish people, a new movement began in Turkey, a liberation movement. The Anatolian movement, which is now led by the Democratic Party, is the best answer to the ruthless exploitation to which Turkey was subjected by the countries of the Entente. The [Allied] occupation of Constantinople in particular, poured oil on the flames and the movement grew even faster. Now, the revolutionary state in Anatolia, which is gathering around itself all the forces hostile to the Entente, forces driven by a century-old hatred of imperialism, is preparing for the struggle against European imperialism. The toilers of Turkey will not permit themselves to be enslaved once more by the Entente, and thanks to the Russian Revolution, which is the best friend of toiling Turkey, the Turkish people will very shortly achieve complete freedom and, together with the toilers of every country, take up the struggle against imperialism throughout the world.

Renewed Debate on Closing Speakers' List

SERRATI: It is proposed to close the list. There are still 12 comrades on the list. Are there any other proposals?

JAKOB WALCHER (GERMANY): There is still a lot to say on the subject under discussion. I do not think, however, that one can arrive at a positive outcome through this kind of discussion. For that reason I propose that we close the debate.

MARING: I must warn you strongly against accepting Walcher's motion. It is absolutely senseless. We have just decided to give the representatives of the backward countries the opportunity to speak their minds to the Congress. I would like to point out that the representatives of all the colonies have spoken apart from Java [Dutch East Indies], and that this is the major colony after British India, that only on Java is there a Marxist experience and has the work been carried out in a Marxist spirit. I should like to hope that the German delegation is just slightly interested in hearing about conditions about which we know nothing.

I ask the Congress to give the representatives of the colonial peoples this opportunity, as was agreed last night.

SERRATI: Comrade Frumkina moves that we give the floor to those who have proposed a motion.

WIJNKOOP: I am against the floor being given to those who have proposed a motion. We have already heard important motions which have not been discussed at all. We must have the opportunity of discussing the most important motions. I think that the floor must be given to all speakers.

SERRATI: I should like to note that nobody has said that the speakers whose names are on the list should not be given the floor.

S.A. LOZOVSKY (RUSSIA): I propose that the floor be given only to the representatives of those countries that have not yet spoken.

SERRATI: But a general proposal has been made, that is to say the closure of the debate. All those in favour of the proposal to close the debate please raise their hands. The majority is against.

We will take the vote on Comrade Lozovsky's proposal. It is carried by a large majority of votes.

Comrade Maring has the floor.

'A religious movement against evils of capitalism'

MARING (DUTCH EAST INDIES): Comrades, the question of the Dutch East Indies is one of the most important. I would like to talk about three points here. In the first place I would like to tell you of some of the experiences of the movement in the East Indies; secondly to make some comments on principle on the theses; and thirdly to make some practical suggestions for the work in the colonies. I hope that

some Javanese and Malayans will be present at the next congress in order to be able to take part in the debates. Nevertheless, since in the last seven years my work has been as closely bound up as possible with the movement in the East Indies, I hope the Congress will be interested in the experiences that I have had as a revolutionary Marxist in those countries.

In my opinion there is not a single question on the agenda that is as important for the further development of the world revolution as the national and colonial question. The other questions are only controversies which are always cropping up again and again in the labour movement when the revolution stagnates. There is no time at all for such discussions when the revolution starts to march forward.

The Dutch colonies are the most important after British India. They are among the richest colonies in the world. Their population is larger than that of Japan and almost as large as that of Germany. Of the 50 million inhabitants the majority live on the four main islands – Java, Sumatra, Bali and Lombok – with 40 million inhabitants. Of the three hundred years of colonial exploitation in these countries it is the recent period which is most important for us. Since 1870 there has been capitalist development there. In contradiction to what the Italian comrade said, since 1905 an imperialist period has begun in the Netherlands which has developed very markedly. Within ten years the Dutch rule over a great part of Sumatra, over Borneo, Celebes [Sulawesi] and New Guinea was consolidated. What Comrade Rosa Luxemburg said on this matter in her *Accumulation of Capital* and what Comrade Henrietta Roland-Holst established is exactly right here, that is to say that capitalism's hunger for booty is boundless. It stirs as soon as it hears of new goldfields, oil wells, etc. that are not being exploited, it incites the government to mount new expeditions, and it never thinks that enough money and men are being used to plunder the world and to suppress the tribes and the peoples of the backward areas.

Since 1905 the development of capitalism in these Asian countries has been very rapid. We need only note that 1.5 billion guilders – a third of the whole of the Netherlands' capitalist property – has been invested in the colonies. In 1917 at least £25 million flowed from the colonies into the Netherlands, and besides Dutch capital, American, Japanese and British capital is making money out of the sugar, cocoa, coffee and other plantations. That gives a picture of the importance for the whole reconstruction of world capitalism of the new capital in the Far East. I should like to point out that the most respectable Dutch capitalist newspaper has said that, even if it were possible to nationalize all the firms in Europe, if we were to abolish private property here, there are new possibilities in the colonies, richer and greater than in Europe, for the whole capitalist class.

To finish this short sketch I would like to say a few words on the position of the population. The Far East is robbed by 150,000 Europeans, and what Rudyard Kipling says of their daily practice is true, that is to say that, east of the Suez Canal,

the Ten Commandments cease to apply.

Apart from the Europeans there are also a million Chinese and a number of Japanese who are now bringing about a development of large-scale industry on Java. One only needs to hear the one statistic, that on Java alone there are now two hundred large sugar refineries with a big proletariat, in order to understand that the Orient too is important for the revolution. The position of the peasants who make up the majority of the population – on Java alone there are 25 million including families – is such that they have a yearly



Maring (Henk Sneevliet)

budget of 110 Dutch guilders taxed at a rate of 20 per cent, and that for the upkeep of their homes they can spend only six guilders a year and for their agricultural implements only three guilders. The peasants have possession of their land, but in reality they are thoroughly proletarianized as they must lease part of their land to European capital and are completely exploited by the privileged classes of Java, so that they cannot live as peasants and must go into the sugar refineries. In Java now there is a proletariat of over a million with an average income of half a guilder a day. Java is also caught up in the price increases and most Javanese do not even have their rice each day all the year round.

Considering these facts, you can imagine how ripe the soil is here for revolutionary propaganda. Illiteracy is so widespread that out of a thousand grown men only 15 can read or write, and of the children not even ten per cent go to school. It is thus understandable how a Marxist feels who sees what mighty work is being done in Russia in the field of education and how his heart yearns to see the people of the East also taking part in this cultural work.

I shall not now go into more detail on the position of the population. I have handed in to the Secretariat a written report which will be published in *The Communist International*. I have only given these facts here because I have the impression that, with a few exceptions, even this Congress of the Communist International has not fully understood the significance of the Oriental question.

I would like to say something about the movement in Java which arose in 1907 as a nationalist movement and was at the beginning a revolutionary movement.

An Indian Zubatov changed its character, and one can say that the influence of the really revolutionary nationalist movement in the Dutch East Indies is very slight. Much more important than this movement is the mass movement which has about 1.5 million members and since 1912 has united workers and peasants in one association and has made rapid progress. This organization, although its name – Sarekat Islam – is religious, has taken on a class character. The programme of this movement embraces the fight against the evils of capitalism, a struggle directed not only against the government but also against the Javanese nobility. From this you can judge that it is a duty for the socialist revolutionary movement to knit firm links with this mass organization, with the Sarekat Islam. In 1916 the government tried to interest this movement in its military propaganda, but the result was that a strong opposition developed on the part of young members from Samarang.

When the European socialists finally decided to do their duty in the Far East and develop a movement there, they succeeded in forming links with the local Sarekat Islam associations. A significant part of this mass organization is not consciously socialist, but they are nevertheless revolutionary in the sense that Comrade Roy established for British India.

In the Commission yesterday, I heard from a British comrade that mass action in India can lead only to failure and bloodshed because the masses are not yet ripe. I am of the opinion that a really socialist movement of mass resistance can be organized only through mass action. That this is the only way that a real force can be opposed to capitalism.

We found in Java that the middle class had no success in its attempts to interest the masses in the national question. However, when we went to the workers in the towns and in the sugar districts and talked about the low wages and the mortality figures, the heavy taxes and so forth, a degree of confidence was won in the revolutionary socialist movement. The feeling exists in the masses. They are very sensitive to our propaganda. In every Malayan newspaper in Java one can read of the progress that the ideas of Soviet Russia are making in the world. That has a great significance for a congress such as this. While the socialist movement has for years been neglecting the colonies, the capitalists have assessed the significance of the colonies far better than many a revolutionary socialist. The capitalists grasped what Oriental development can bring to capitalism.

In 1917 a strong movement among the revolutionary socialists developed. The reformists openly sided with the government, saying of our friends that these men are bringing us exactly the same misfortune as Trotsky and Lenin brought in Russia. When one hears that in 1918 there were no mass meetings in the towns and the area of the sugar industry attended by fewer than 3,000 to 4,000 workers, one can understand that a new spirit has arisen among these brown people that has the greatest importance for our whole movement. We have also, of course, as is proper for revolutionaries, worked among the sailors of the colonial fleet and the soldiers.

At the end of this year a strong reaction emerged. The leaders of the soldiers and the sailors and myself were chased out of the East Indies by the government, and several friends were arrested and sentenced. The 13 members of a soldiers' council were given 90 years in prison. Since then we have heard reports that this movement has developed further, not because of the agitators but because the economic conditions have developed to the point where a mass movement is possible and the basis is there for revolutionary agitation and propaganda.

On the second point I would like to say that I can see no difference between Comrade Lenin's theses and those of Comrade Roy. They are at one with another in their meaning. The difficulty consists only in finding the correct attitude towards the relations between the revolutionary nationalist and the socialist movements in the backward countries and the colonies. In practice this difficulty does not exist. It is essential to work together with the revolutionary nationalist elements, and we are doing only half the job if we deny this movement and play at being doctrinaire Marxists. Rather than adopting the so-called Marxism of Cunow for the colonies, we must grasp that capitalist development can be by-passed in the colonies. Just as Comrade Radek showed that the development of Japan was different from that in Europe, so too the colonies can develop in a different way.

I was especially delighted that Comrade Radek made it clear to the Congress last night that we do not go to India to exploit but to bring them the best achievements of the proletariat, the hope of a new life and of cultural and economic freedom. He pointed out to the British working class their duty not to forget the colonies in their political and trades union agitation. If they do not support the revolutionary struggle in the colonies they are merely aiding the capitalists. Until the British workers understand that, they may be able to win a lot of votes at the elections but they have done no work of any real revolutionary significance. We cannot be satisfied with passing long resolutions; we must perform some practical service to the Far East.

I have shown what possibilities exist for agitation. We are shortly going to the Congress in Baku. But we do not have any illusions that this Congress will have any great significance for the Far East. That is impossible. I propose that the Communist International publish the theses adopted here in a number of Eastern languages and distribute them particularly among Chinese and Indian revolutionaries. I would like further to propose that a propaganda bureau of the Communist International should be set up for the Far East too and also for the Middle East. Since the movement is so important now it would be very useful to unify the work that already exists there and to carry on concentrated propaganda, which cannot be led satisfactorily from Moscow.

To finish, I have one more request. Comrade Reed said yesterday that the Blacks must come here to see conditions in Russia for themselves. I propose that the Communist International gives the Far Eastern leaders the opportunity

to live here for six months and study some courses on communism so that they understand correctly what is happening here and can carry out the ideas of the theses, so that they can achieve the soviet type of organization in practice and perform Communist work in the colonies. I demand this because Moscow and Petrograd form a new Mecca for the East and the capitalist governments will all try to prevent our Communist *hajjis* from travelling to Moscow and Petrograd. We must give Oriental revolutionaries the opportunity of training themselves theoretically here in Russia so that the Far East can become a living member of the Communist International.

'Take into account national minorities'

MARIYA FRUMKINA (RUSSIA): I think that we should take into account the national minorities that do not possess a specific territory. I am amazed to see repeated here the error which the Second International permitted itself to make. Territorial autonomy is talked about and national minorities are not taken into account. I think that the national minorities in different countries ought to be taken into account. I propose to make an addendum to point 9.

First, however, I think that the experience of the Communist Party and of Soviet rule in Russia ought to be taken into account. The organizations of the Communist Party of Russia and the Soviet institutions possess special departments for national minorities that attend to their affairs and everything to do with, for example, the Jewish question.

I propose the following addition on page 43 at the end of the thesis, before point 10:

At the same time the Communist parties in every country must carry out a decisive struggle, not only in their propaganda but also in their general policies, against the bourgeois concept of the exclusive right of this or that national majority to possess the territory they inhabit and against the concept held by national socialists who consider the national majority as absolute rulers and treat extra-territorial national minorities of workers who live on their territories as foreigners (Poland, the Ukraine).

Unless revolutionary groups categorically defend the practical exercise of the rights of the national minorities living in various countries (rights which can only be absolutely guaranteed by the dictatorship of the proletariat), the unconditional support of the revolutionary tendencies in oppressed countries with variegated populations could turn the previously oppressed petty-bourgeois masses into oppressors.

The experience of the Soviet power and of the Communist Party of Russia, which gives the working masses of all nations a real opportunity to develop intellectually, thanks to the great ramification of the organs of state (sections

for the education of national minorities, Commissariats for National Affairs, etc.), whereby a truly fraternal co-existence between all nations is achieved, must form the basis of the national programme valid for all Communist parties.

One is tempted to regard all minorities without a territory as foreigners. That is what it is like in Poland and the Ukraine. It is important for every country to take as its example the Communist Party of Russia, which gives the toiling minorities of every nationality the opportunity to develop culturally by placing the necessary organizations at their disposal, such as, for example, organizations for the enlightenment of national minorities and commissariats to defend the interests of national minorities.

This example must be taken into consideration by every Communist Party during the discussion of the national question.

I also propose to add to Thesis 11, page 46, under the heading (g) section 6 after the words 'in these countries' the following words: 'as also in those where a struggle by the national minorities to extend their rights is taking place.'

Section 6, after the words 'the backward countries' add: 'and nations.'

After section 6 the following comment:

An example will show what lies the working masses of an oppressed nationality have had to fall victim to, lies which are great assets to the Entente and to the bourgeoisie of the nations in question. This is the case of the Zionists in Palestine who, under the pretext of founding an independent Jewish state, suppress the working population and the Arabs who live in Palestine under the British yoke, although the Jews are still the minority there.

This unparalleled lie must be combated, and in a very energetic way, since the Zionists in every country work by approaching the backward masses of Jewish workers and trying to create groups of workers with Zionist tendencies (Poale Zion), which have recently been striving to adopt a communist turn of phrase.

I would like to cite here one of the most striking examples of the Zionist movement.

In Palestine we are not dealing with a population whose majority is Jewish. We are dealing with a mere minority which is trying to subjugate the majority of the workers in the country to the capital of the Entente.

We must combat these efforts in the most energetic way. The Zionists are seeking to win supporters in every country, and through their agitation and their propaganda serve the interests of the capitalist class. The Communist International must combat this movement in the most energetic way.

JOHN MURPHY (SHOP STEWARDS MOVEMENT, BRITAIN): Since we were forced to leave the hall we were not able to take part in the vote on the election of the representatives of the individual nations who were to speak on the colonial question. I ask you to allow the British delegation to choose two of its comrades, that is to say a representative of each of the two tendencies represented here.

SERRATI: Does the Congress agree to re-open the vote and to grant the British delegation's request? (*Signs of agreement. The British comrades are asked to choose two delegates.*)

'Help all movements against British rule'

WILLIAM MCLAINE (BRITAIN): I shall not waste any time over the question of which of the British revolutionary movements has done more to fight British imperialism and to support the oppressed colonial people.

The British revolutionary movement is not a strong one and has done little in this direction. Nevertheless, I must protest against Comrade Radek's claim that the British did nothing to prevent Britain's attacks on Russia apart from passing a few resolutions on the question. To that we can answer what General Golovin said to Sozonov in a secret report, in which he reported an interview with Churchill who regretted that he could not give more support to Kolchak and his friends, and that the help Great Britain had sent to the Whites had to be set in motion secretly because of the opposition of the British working class.

A false construction has been placed upon the words of Comrade Quelch, who said in a session of the Commission that a great revolutionary uprising in India could be thought of as treason to Great Britain and could give the British government the opportunity, through the control of the press, to incite the British people against Indian workers. Comrade Quelch did not mean that we should therefore give up our revolutionary activity, but that we should keep sight of the facts and avoid events like those at Amritsar.

The task of the Communist International consists in establishing guidelines for the activity and the principles that lead to the world revolution. The biggest obstacle to the world revolution is imperialist capitalism, and the biggest capitalist state is Great Britain. Therefore the colonial question consists to a great extent of the question of how best to attack British capitalism. British capitalism is powerful by virtue of the exploitation of workers at home and the colonial population. When British capitalism began, it needed support itself, but now the whole world must pay tribute to it. All the oppressed peoples are exploited by the parasitical capitalism of Britain. Imports are now far larger than exports – a proof of the fact that Britain is a 'parasite'. In future British capitalism will try to measure workers'

wages by the full value of the work that they do, but only on condition that they cast their votes for the exploitation of the oppressed peoples.

Therefore it is our duty to take part in the revolutionary struggle at home and to support all truly revolutionary movements. Every national revolutionary movement that fights for liberation from Great Britain contributes to the development of the world revolution, since it fights against imperialist reaction. All such movements must be supported.

‘Work in the colonies: The test of every party’

WIJNKOOP: I said yesterday that the question discussed here is a very important one, and that is now evident. We should think about the fact that imperialism and the world war have made it downright impossible for the industrial countries to continue to send the necessary machines and finished products to the agrarian countries. Conversely, the political expressions of the world war have also prevented agricultural products from reaching the mass of the proletariat in the industrial countries. If we think it through seriously, then we know that this problem goes much further than all the others on the agenda.

Now we must keep clearly in sight what issues are actually resolved in Comrade Lenin's and Comrade Roy's theses. The theses were agreed upon jointly through discussion. These theses actually say that we should work in the colonial countries not for national rule, as the bourgeoisie preaches, but for the soviets of workers and peasants, and that in order to achieve this goal we must support the revolutionary movements.

The word ‘support’ is used concretely, because we really mean it, we really want to give support. We want to support the revolutionary action of these masses, even if it is not a socialist movement, through the mediation of whatever Communist parties there are in the colonies. The starting point for this tactic is that it is not necessary for foreign imperialism to bring capitalism into non-capitalist countries as an inevitable stage in the transition to communism. On the contrary, we want, whenever possible, to prevent this by our tactics and by support of the revolutionary movement. We are therefore fighting not only against the political rule of foreign imperialism but also against the growth of national capitalism. Viewing the question in this light, then, I think that the support of the revolutionary nationalist mass movements, and opposition to the claim that the penetration of capitalism into the colonies is a necessary precondition for the transition to socialism, are the main things in the theses of Comrades Lenin and Roy.

If we look at the matter in this way we cannot agree with Comrade Graziadei's amendment, for if I have understood him correctly he is proposing not to apply these theses to Italy, so that the rising nationalist movement there will receive no support on the part of the Communists. He is afraid that we are perhaps counting Italy

among the backward countries, and for this reason he thinks that his amendment is necessary. I, however, think it is superfluous, since it seems to me that nobody here could assume that the paragraphs listed here under section 11 could apply to a country like Italy. These only refer to those states and nations that have a backward character, so that a country like Italy cannot at all be brought under this heading.

We also considered in the Commission whether it would not be useful to describe in greater detail what we mean by a backward country. We decided against this. If we were to accept Comrade Graziadei's proposal there would immediately be new difficulties with, for example, Bulgaria and Greece. Such questions will always arise and they can only be solved practically by the Communist parties of the individual countries with the help of the theses and of the guidelines that the Communist International will give here. It would therefore not be wise to accept Comrade Graziadei's addendum here, although I think that his practical aim is good.

It is the same with the other specific amendments that he proposes. The Irish comrade has already polemicized against his proposal to amend 'active support' to 'active interest'. Perhaps this speaker did not understand Comrade Graziadei but if this construction can be placed on these words then by that fact alone we must oppose it. We want the workers to have an active interest in the struggles of the Communists. We want them also to support revolutionary nationalist movements. Comrade Graziadei wants the same thing but he thinks it is expressed better in the words he uses. Support is precisely what we say in the theses. I therefore do not agree with accepting Comrade Graziadei's wording.

I agree with what Comrade Frumkina said. I do not know whether the motion is good. If it does not fit some country or other we must deal with that in the Commission.

Comrade Maring said so much about Java that we do not need to say any more here. I fully agree with him. In order to show that there is really a capitalist development there with all its characteristics it is sufficient to say that the two hundred sugar refineries of which Comrade Maring spoke are in the hands of three trusts which are also expanding into other firms and industries. That is the phenomenon of the highest stage of capitalism. The proletarians must fight it and that is what they are doing.

Now, to talk about Comrade Radek's remarks. I am glad that Comrade Radek said that British imperialism can be beaten not in London but in the colonies. I really believe that many British comrades do not understand this. Comrade Radek understands it very well but it must be understood in general and not in a petty manner. Comrade Radek asks how many of the British comrades have been to jail for agitating in the colonies. I say that the British comrades do not need to answer such a question. We do not ask whether comrades have been to jail or not. We ask whether comrades have done their duty and Comrade McLaine has answered that to a certain extent. In this respect Comrade Radek has in my opinion exaggerated

the role of parliamentarianism. He thinks that if a comrade speaks out against imperialism in parliament Reuters will report it. In fact Reuters does not carry such reports. We in the Netherlands did not learn until much later and from different sources that some women held a demonstration in parliament. Reuters does not report such things.

WALCHER: Comrade Radek did not say that at all.

WIJNKOOP: And now I would like to finish off with one more question. They say that we must go to the colonies. That is of course not the most important thing for the Communist parties of each country. We cannot send all our agitators to the colonial countries. We must create the necessary preconditions so that every colonial country can develop its own revolutionary movement. If you take the work in the colonies as the barometer of a party's revolutionary significance, then precisely the Dutch party has done everything in its power. It had comrades in the colonies who support and developed the revolutionary movements of the natives. The Tribunist and the Dutch Communists were the most active at this. So it is wrong to speak about their party as has just been done. It was precisely the Dutch party which showed what a close connection existed between this question and the revolutionary struggle. If we are hated and persecuted in the Netherlands that is not because we can start a revolution there, for in fact we cannot do it without uniting with Britain or Germany, but because we create problems for the capitalist gentlemen in their colonial affairs.

'Oppose anti-Jewish pogroms'

A.N. MEREZHIN (RUSSIA): The Jewish sections of the Communist Party of Russia are in complete agreement with the assessment of Zionism and of the Jewish Communist Party Poale Zion given in Comrade Frumkina's speech and I do not wish to repeat this. I would like now to deal with another question, the question of the defence of the rights of national minorities living in territories with a mixed population. The parties of the Second International found a way of defending these rights through national personal autonomy (the theory of Otto Bauer and Renner). In the Ukraine, in White Russia and in Lithuania, the attempt has been made to put this theory into practice. There, under the Central Rada and other petty-bourgeois governments, national personal autonomy was created. This attempt must be considered and evaluated. We can only conclude that this experience shows that national personal autonomy does not work.

The transfer of power from the big bourgeoisie to the petty bourgeoisie, to the democratic republican government, has in no way lessened the national pressure. The social traitors who had come to power, while in words granting national personal autonomy, in fact performed more cruelties in the fight against the dictatorship of the proletariat than even tsarism. Inexorably, a forcible nationality was imposed,

despite the official proclamation of national personal autonomy. But what are we to say about this when the same petty-bourgeois parties who had on paper declared themselves ready to recognize national personal autonomy even went so far as to introduce physical annihilation of the national minority, particularly through the so-called 'Ukrainian People's Directory' and the governments of Pilsudski, Moraczewski, etc., etc. (the cruellest pogroms, raids, etc.).

However, we must make a further comment. It must be established that, in and of itself, national personal autonomy worsens the position of the proletariat of the national minorities. This comes from the fact that the petty bourgeoisie of the national minorities is predominantly urban, and that this urban petty bourgeoisie is significantly less revolutionary than the petty bourgeoisie of the national majorities. For in the national majorities the petty bourgeoisie, particularly in Eastern Europe, consists predominantly of peasants who are revolutionized in the struggle with the landlords. In fact the proletariat of the national minorities have frequently had to appeal to 'foreigners' against the national personal autonomy 'granted' to them. In the face of its own bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie it was isolated and in a worse position than if it had never possessed national personal autonomy.

For the reasons that I have mentioned I propose to add the following thesis after the third thesis:

The experience of mutual relations between the majority and minority nationalities in territories with a mixed population (in the Ukraine, in Poland and in White Russia) has shown that the transfer of power from the hands of the big bourgeoisie into the hands of petty-bourgeois groups forming democratic republican states does not reduce national tensions but on the contrary sharpens them in the extreme. The republican democracy, which is forced, in the struggle against the working class, to confuse the class struggle with national war, is quickly permeated with xenophobia and easily adapts itself to the experience of older teachers of national oppression. This experience is eagerly repeated in the area of the incitement of one mass of people against another and in the area of the organization, with the help of the state apparatus, of mass national violence for the purpose of fighting against the dictatorship of the proletariat.

There is the example of the growth of anti-Semitism in the Ukrainian 'democracy' at the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918 under the Central Rada, the vicious race riots organized at the end of 1918 and in the first half of 1919 by the organs of the 'Ukrainian People's Directory', and the pogrom movement in the 'Polish Democratic Republic', not only under the mixed regime (Pilsudski-Skulski) but also under the rule of the party of the Second International (PPS – the Moraczewski government). The same experience has shown that there are no 'democratic' forms (and that includes the national personal autonomy defended by the Austrian Social Democracy) that can

secure the rights and the cultural interests of the national minorities in areas of mixed population under the republican-democratic order, and guarantee true equality and equal influence on the course of the business of state. National personal autonomy, based on universal suffrage, leads not only to the division of the proletariat into national groups, but also to the complete cessation of the revolutionary struggle and even to the worsening of the cultural position of the working class in the national minority. This arises because within every national minority the national petty bourgeoisie, which is larger and stronger than the proletariat and consists predominantly of town dwellers, is significantly more reactionary than the petty-bourgeois majority of the nation, which consists of peasants revolutionized by the fight against the landlords.

I would like also to touch on the special problem of pogroms.

The Jewish section of the Communist Party of Russia proposes the following resolution on this question:

1. In its bloody campaign against the dictatorship of the proletariat the world counter-revolution falls with especial cruelty on the poorest Jewish population of Russia, the Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, Palestine, etc.

2. Through its oppression of the poorest Jewish inhabitants, beside which the atrocities not only of tsarism but also of the medieval inquisition pale into insignificance, the world counter-revolution is striving to introduce splits and disagreements into the ranks of the workers of different nationalities in order to distract their attention from the immediate struggle against the bourgeois order.

The Second Congress of the Communist International declares before the entire world:

1. That responsibility for all the pogroms against the Jews in recent times in the Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Palestine, etc. falls fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the Entente, which heads all counter-revolutionary enterprises against the communist revolution.

2. The Entente supplies with every possible means of destruction and justifies morally the White Guards of every stripe, who cover the territory they occupy with hundreds of thousands of innocent victims. They do not move a finger to check the instigators of the pogroms and do not pay the slightest attention to the protests of the toiling masses against the pogroms.

Indeed the agents of the Entente whom we find in the counter-revolutionary armies of Russia, the Ukraine, Poland, Hungary and other countries take a direct part in these pogroms. We saw this most clearly in the pogrom in Jerusalem in April of this year, which was organized by the agents of the British government.

3. That the parties of the yellow Second International in power, in the

shape of the 'Ukrainian Peoples' Directory' in the Ukraine and of the Pilsudski government in Poland, are moral and physical participants in the pogroms which have resulted in the extermination of hundreds of thousands of women and children. In their struggle against the dictatorship of the proletariat they have drowned the Ukraine and Poland in floods of innocent blood.

The Second Congress of the Communist International, which expresses the will of the revolutionary proletariat of the world, therefore raises the most decisive protest against the pogroms against the Jews, which are the work of the international counter-revolution. It calls on the workers of every country to fight against them actively in word and deed in order to unmask the hypocritical diplomats of the 'League of Nations', reveal their true shameful role and to set up everywhere the dictatorship of the proletariat which alone is able to put an end to all pogroms, to do away with all national prejudices, to tear down all the barriers that divide nations and to bring about the true fraternity of nations all over the globe.

In particular the Second Congress of the Communist International addresses itself to the workers of all the enslaved nations with the call to form up more closely around the banner of the Communist International, which brings to all of mankind the final liberation from the injustices of the capitalist order.

* * *

MURPHY¹²: I cannot say everything that I wanted to say because the British delegation has not been given the opportunity of deepening the discussion to a sufficient degree.

I shall content myself with drawing the attention of the Congress to the close links that exist between the revolutionary movements in Europe and those in the colonies. The movement in Egypt is one of the most serious revolutionary movements. The struggle in India is assuming significant proportions. The Communist International has the duty of supporting these movements. It is a question of grouping them together so that all together they produce a mighty international movement in which national interests are subordinated to international interests. The Communist International must build sections in every country so that it is able to bring the different revolutionary movements into harmony and transform them into an international communist movement.

¹² For a longer text of Murphy's speech, see Riddell, *Workers of the World*, vol. 1, pp. 270-1. In this text, Murphy complains of the inadequacy of English translations at the congress, which was in fact the reason why the version of his speech in the edition of the proceedings translated here is so abbreviated.

'Assure rights of national minorities'

MICHAEL KOHN (PALESTINE): Because some speakers have intervened in the debate in an unexpected fashion, the debate has taken a turn with which no one can agree who knows the exigencies of a communist policy towards the nationalities. I would like to make one remark before I deal with the motions of Comrades Frumkina and Merezhin, who have brought this turn into the discussion.

The main emphasis in the theses is on peoples living in territorial concentrations, that is to say, on oppressed nationalities who are ruled by a foreign power. There is no talk in general of minorities living in mixed populations. Only Thesis 9 talks about guaranteeing the rights of national minorities. In the Commission I moved an addendum to this thesis, to the second sentence of the paragraph following the words 'united in struggle with the bourgeoisie', to read as follows: 'secondly, to fight for social institutions which make possible the satisfaction of the cultural and socio-economic needs of the toiling masses of the minorities'. It is necessary to create quite specific organizational preconditions which the Communist parties in the individual countries should encourage and defend.

The Commission agreed, however, that Thesis 9 expresses quite clearly, although only in general, the defence of the rights of the national minorities and the creation of the social institutions that are to realize these rights, and that they should avoid adopting detailed demands in the theses. For that reason I was prepared to withdraw my addendum. Faced with the danger, however, that for lack of opposition Merezhin's motion may perhaps be passed, I am re-submitting what I just read out and propose it to the Congress. This thesis corresponds exactly to the demands of the party I represent, the Poale Zion. The Jewish proletariat would be completely satisfied to be granted social institutions that satisfy their cultural and socio-political needs, insofar as this can be carried out within the framework of the Soviet constitution and does not contradict the needs of the soviets in struggle.

Comrade Merezhin's resolution on national personal autonomy is based on an incorrect view of the facts and above all on incorrect conclusions. When he says that the attempts to introduce national personal autonomy in the Ukraine had damaging results, in that as a result the majority in the institutions of national autonomy fell into the hands of the Jewish bourgeoisie, which is reactionary, he forgets that this happened at a time when there was a democratic government, that universal suffrage had just been introduced into these institutions and that these results could not have been a surprise for any Communist. If on the other hand institutions are set up to satisfy the cultural and socio-economic needs of the national minorities with specific, sharply delineated autonomy under the control of the Soviet power and under the leadership of the Communist proletariat of the nation in question, then no greater degree of damaging results are to be expected than would be the case from any other social institution.

In any case, I do not think that either Comrade Frumkina's motion or my own need to be put explicitly, since the Soviet power, driven by the needs of the proletariat and on the basis of their own constitution, will have to grant the opportunity for self-government to the national minorities as well.

I would also like briefly to point out that Comrade Merezhin has fallen victim to a misunderstanding which is, it must be said, characteristic. He says that Renner and Otto Bauer adopted a theory demanding national personal autonomy. That is incorrect. These two leaders of the Austrian opportunists developed the theory of national autonomy only for the majorities, and merely demanded legal guarantees for the minorities.

As far as Comrade Merezhin's resolution on anti-Semitism is concerned, I must merely point out the passage that was added to Thesis 10 by the Commission and that sufficiently emphasizes the necessity of combating this reactionary phenomenon. Comrade Merezhin's long resolution leaves the impression that we are trying to use the Congress to mount a campaign on the role of the Entente on this question too among the representatives of the Jewish proletariat. I think that the Congress has more important things to worry about.

What has to be said on the phenomenon of national hatred and xenophobia and the pogroms created by the reactionary powers is said clearly enough in the thesis I have mentioned.

Partly for the same reason I would like to speak out in the most decisive way possible against Comrade Frumkina's resolution. We are of course in agreement with the content of the first part. Bourgeois Zionism, if it is not to stand condemned from the start as utopian, must necessarily enter the service of British imperialism. This bourgeois movement must of course be fought as sharply as possible under all circumstances. And it is precisely the communist Poale Zion movement which is the most energetic in this fight. But what the Congress and the whole of the Communist International has to say about this has already been expressed in Thesis 11, paragraph 6.

Comrade Frumkina's resolution is therefore completely superfluous and not at all inspired by the intention to fight bourgeois Zionism. Otherwise we could have the Congress passing long-winded resolutions on other bourgeois nationalist so-called liberation movements in the service of individual Entente powers. The real aim of this resolution can be seen in the second part. You have here an absolute model of the kind of evil squabbling that has for years poisoned the political life of Jewish workers. Comrade Frumkina's party, the Communist Bund, is simply trying to use the opportunity to start a petty fight between parties at the Congress. Comrade Frumkina, the representative of a party which only yesterday supported all the counter-revolutionary governments in Russia, whose leaders Dan and Lieber were among the most important figures in the Menshevik counter-revolution, claims that we – Poale Zion – are hiding our activities under a communist veil. She

says that about us who were the first of the Jewish parties in Russia to take the side of the Bolsheviks in the fight against the counter-revolution and who took up the struggle for the world revolution in all the other countries too before all the other tendencies in the Jewish working class.

She justified her resolution with some general statements that show no knowledge of the territories in question. I shall give some information on this as we are dealing with countries that have not been discussed today although they come within the sphere of British imperialism and will in the future play a role that will be important in every respect. I am talking about the countries of Arab Asia: Mesopotamia [Iraq], Syria and Arabia.

Frumkina would like to pass off the movement which seized the Arabian Orient during the world war as a national liberation movement. What we are in fact dealing with is the attempt by the nomad tribes of the Arabian desert, mainly the Hejaz, under the influence of their religious leaders, to impose on the settled population of these countries the oldest kind of slavery, that is to say the feudal organization of the rule of the tribal leaders over the peasants. The Communist International supports this movement and its leader the king of the Hejaz, the Emir of Fezzan and similar 'liberation fighters' – a remarkable beginning!

What is the real situation in the Arabian East? The great mass of the population consists of Arab *fellahin* who have remained in the most primitive economic conditions under the heavy pressure of the Turkish government. But there was one favourable circumstance which seemed to prevent complete impoverishment, and that was the existence of a kind of common ownership of the land and of property which seemed to be based on certain primitive communist regulations in the law of Islam. The Bedouins who are leading the allegedly 'national' movement are striving to set in motion the worst exploitation of the working population by expropriating the land of the fellahin. They are completely supported in this by British imperialism. The British bourgeoisie after all started off by 'liberating' the peasant population from the land in the most radical manner, as we read in Volume I of *Capital* on primitive accumulation. Comrade Frumkina would like to see the Communist International encourage this 'liberation' carried out by the Bedouin chiefs under the protection of the British bourgeoisie.

How do we stand, then, the communist Poale Zion, in relation to Palestine? First of all, we do not want to set up a state, least of all with the support of British imperialism, but we are convinced that in the process of rendering the Jewish masses productive, of attracting them to useful and socially necessary work, a certain number of Jews will emigrate from the countries in which they at present live in their masses, such as, for example, the Ukraine, Lithuania and especially Poland. Some of these emigrants will also go to Palestine and there be attracted to agriculture.

The only thing that follows from that, as far as we are concerned, is the demand for the opportunity to emigrate and to colonize this country as long as it is in the

hands of the British or any other bourgeoisie. We raise this demand only in order to regulate the emigration and the colonizing activity of the Jewish and every other proletariat with the support and the fraternal help of the Communist International and in the sharpest struggle against the Jewish and the world bourgeoisie, to the extent that such activity is at all possible for the working class under the capitalist order.

If in the development of the social revolution Palestine becomes a Soviet state that joins the federation of other Soviet states, then the question of the Jewish colonization of this country will become part of the question of the attraction of the Jewish masses to productive work, of their participation in the construction of the free society of working people. The solution of this question occurs in the framework of the rational use of the natural resources in the lightly populated colonial countries and the appropriate application of the hitherto unused or very badly used human labour power in industry.

But these views of ours have nothing to do with the thought of a bourgeois state. On the contrary our movement, which has arisen in every country out of the needs of the Jewish proletariat, is everywhere in the front rank of the struggle against imperialism. In Palestine, indeed all over Arab Asia, the Socialist Party of Palestine (Poale Zion), affiliated to us, is the only proletarian communist group that fights British imperialism under the most difficult conditions and has the task of leading the working masses of the Arabian Orient in this struggle.

(The chairman interrupts the speaker.)

The proposed resolution also ignores the most important social facts and tries to lay the Congress open to ridicule. It is namely a fact that, just as the Jewish bourgeoisie was the first to introduce modern capitalist economic forms of exploitation into the country (forms which, moreover, if we were to be given a choice between the various forms of exploitation, as the Communist Bund wishes, we would still prefer this to the feudal forms that Comrade Frumkina recommends), so too the Jewish immigrant workers are the only modern, truly propertyless proletariat which is for that reason filled with class consciousness and inspired by the revolutionary will to fight. The Arab masses who work on the estates of Jewish landlords and Arab effendis usually possess their own land and can only be characterized as semi-proletarians. Our party there is their natural champion, and has to draw them into the revolutionary struggle and fill them with proletarian consciousness. True to the principles of the Communist International, our party has carried out very lively revolutionary propaganda among them.

(The speaker is called upon to wind up his remarks.)

Comrade Frumkina's resolution contradicts not only all the given facts but also the spirit and the letter of the theses, which demand support of the proletarian communist groups against the efforts of the bourgeois national revolutionaries wherever the former exist. Her resolution would do extraordinary damage to the communist movement of the Jewish proletariat all over the world and to the

communist movement in the Arabian Orient in particular. I therefore ask the Congress not to permit itself to be used for the purposes of the worst sectarian squabbling and to reject this resolution, in whose favour I have not a single polite word to say.

FRUMKINA: I protest against the accusation raised against the Bund. It has always stood on the side of the Soviet power, even when it was not in the ranks of the Communist Party.

Preparation for vote on the Theses

ZINOVIEV: I propose that we take a vote for and against the theses and send the proposals to the Commission. I hope that in its evaluation the Commission will reach a unanimous verdict. Should differences of opinion arise, they will be put before the Congress.

SERRATI: Actually, I wanted to speak on this question further, but I prefer now to limit myself to making a statement on my vote.

In the theses proposed to the Congress by Comrades Lenin and Roy on the national and colonial question I find not only several contradictions but also a great danger for the position of the Communist proletariat in the advanced countries, which must reject any kind of class collaboration particularly in the period leading up to the revolution.

The definition of the 'backward' countries is too indefinite and too imprecise for it not to be open to various chauvinist interpretations.

In general, action for national liberation undertaken by bourgeois-democratic groups is not revolutionary action even if it adopts the methods of insurrection. It is undertaken either in the interests of a developing national imperialism or in the struggle of capitalist imperialism of a new state against the previous ruling state. National liberation can never be revolutionary unless the working class participates in it. Even in the so-called backward countries the class struggle can only proceed if the independence of the working class is preserved from all its exploiters, even from the bourgeois democrats who call themselves 'revolutionary nationalists'.

The true liberation of the enslaved peoples can only be carried out through the proletarian revolution and the Soviet order, and not by a temporary and accidental alliance between the Communist parties and the nominally revolutionary bourgeois parties.

On the contrary such alliances can only lead to the weakening of proletarian class consciousness, particularly in those countries that are less accustomed to the struggle against capitalism.

The theses' lack of clarity conceals within itself the danger of giving weapons to the pseudo-revolutionary chauvinism of Western Europe against truly communist international action.

I therefore declare that I shall not cast my vote.

WIJNKOOP: This is outrageous. If Comrade Serrati is going to abstain then that of course is his own affair. But he has not contributed on any point in this discussion to present his arguments, which he could have done and which he had a duty to do. Instead of that he stands up now and says that these very well-prepared theses are counter-revolutionary. That has got to be discussed. By waiting until now to bring his claims forward he robs us of the opportunity of speaking against him. And the comrade who does this is very well known. The bourgeoisie and the workers who stand to the right and to the left of us will come and say that all our policies on the colonial question are counter-revolutionary.

If the Congress has any self-respect it must force Comrade Serrati to discuss this matter here, and I therefore propose to start a discussion on the content of this protest and abstention here and now.

SERRATI: I do not know if Comrade Wijnkoop has as much respect for me as Comrade Levi claims to have for him. I have never given reactionaries a pretext to attack my party. My activity in the international communist movement is so clear that none of my declarations can be used as a weapon by our opponents. I have never deviated from my revolutionary standpoint; I have never made statements in favour of Germany or France in order to collect votes in an election, as Comrade Wijnkoop is accused of doing. I have always been very independent, and that is why my statements have had weight in the international movement. I have duties towards this movement which I shall fulfil. I do not care what the bourgeoisie think of me or whether they think I am a 'traitor'. The reasons why I made this statement here and did not join the discussion are quite different.

I think it is quite obvious that the theses read out here can and must be adopted as such by the Congress. I, however, am in a completely different position. For six years I have struggled against the nationalist movement in my country, and if I were to vote for such a resolution it would give grounds for the claim that there was a contradiction between my attitude in Italy and the resolution that I vote for here.

ZINOVIEV: I would like to declare on behalf of the Russian delegation that we find Comrade Serrati's statement very uncomradely. Comrade Serrati had every opportunity to take part in the discussion in the Commission and raise his objections. That is what discussions are for. The International Congress has met to test individual experiences and draw the balance. It is incomprehensible why the Congress should be put in such a position. We cannot force anybody to discuss, but if Comrade Serrati has made an official statement against us then we must make an official statement in reply.

He is trying to make out that we say that we want to support bourgeois revolutionary movements. That is not what we want. What has been said here is that the Communists support every revolutionary movement. I do not know what particular struggles have come up in Italy. We have experience in a number of countries and we think that, as Communists, we must support each and every revolutionary movement.

I repeat, we have no choice but to make a counter-statement. We cannot understand why Comrade Serrati did not wish to voice his objections in the Commission. We cannot start a new discussion. Let the Italian workers judge who is right and who is wrong, and I believe that out of 100 Italian workers, 99 will say that the Congress was right, and not Comrade Serrati.

ROY: Serrati has called my theses and Comrade Lenin's counter-revolutionary.

SERRATI: No, no!

ROY: I am firmly convinced that no proletariat in any country can see support for reaction in the support of oppressed peoples in the fight against their oppressors. In the backward countries the national revolution is a step forward. It would be unscientific to distinguish between different kinds of revolution. All revolutions are various stages of the social revolution. The population of the exploited countries, whose economic and political evolution cannot advance, must pass through revolutionary phases different from those experienced by the European peoples. Whoever thinks that it is reactionary to help these peoples in their national struggle is reactionary himself and speaks the language of imperialism.

I protest against Comrade Serrati's declaration and ask for it to be struck from the minutes.

WIJNKOOP: No representative of the revolutionary movement has the right to say that kind of thing. Serrati has boasted that he has never made a statement in favour of France or Germany. In my opinion that is an innuendo. I propose to protest what has been said here, and I ask for an inquiry to be set up into this matter. I ask for Comrade Serrati's statement to be struck from the minutes since it was not discussed in the Congress. Comrade Serrati will be quite free to submit all his ideas to the next congress of the Italian Party.

SERRATI: I can see nothing improper in an investigation being set up into the allegations that have been made against the Dutch Party. I did not make any accusation. I merely called to mind what Comrade Levi said.¹³ That is something completely different. I would remind you, since the comrade offers me the opportunity to do so, that there is no need to speak on a declaration on how a vote is to be cast. I have not raised this question because I do not want a discussion, but I think it strange that the comrades allow me to speak when in fact they do not have the right to discuss my declaration on how I am going to vote. I find it even stranger that a comrade claims that my declaration should be struck from the minutes. I could have proposed that all the stupid things that have been said here should be struck from the minutes. I could have proposed that the accusation Comrade Levi hurled at Comrade Wijnkoop should not be mentioned in the minutes. It is much more serious than the specific, clear and precise statement that I made and which I ask to be included in the minutes.

Comrade Roy did not understand my statement. I say that he did not understand

¹³ Serrati is apparently referring to a remark made by Paul Levi in a Congress commission.

it because I think I have expressed myself with sufficient clarity. I was trying to say that in the form proposed the theses are not clear enough and could give rise to chauvinist and nationalist interpretations. If I had thought, my dear Comrade Roy, that it was a question of adopting counter-revolutionary theses, then I am honest and open enough to vote against them, and there would have been nothing wrong with somebody voting against an already formulated proposal at a communist Congress.

Comrade Roy said that every revolution has a social character, but that means that during the war we would have had to serve as the agents and servants of the bourgeoisie. They told us that revolutionary war is social war, and that we must participate in it. And we answer: No, we will not participate in it.

Comrade Zinoviev made a statement on behalf of the Communist Party of Russia in which he calls on me to speak clearly and simply. I have always done so. But I have also said quite clearly that I feel incapable of discussing this question which cannot be debated in the form in which it is put. I had intended to propose a motion, and I did not do so because I thought that it would not be possible to keep to a certain objective discussion.

I wanted to propose the following motion:

The Congress sends warm fraternal greetings to all those peoples suffering under the oppression of imperialist states. It expresses its full and active sympathy for their struggle directed against all exploiters, and declares that, in its struggle against the oppression of capital, the working class has the right to use national uprisings in order in the end to transform them into the social revolution.

The thought behind this is very simple. Instead of saying that in specific cases under specific circumstances and with specific guarantees the Communist Party and the working class can unite with the petty-bourgeois movement, I say: No, the working class can use a petty-bourgeois revolutionary movement for the purposes of a social revolution. But it may not support the bourgeoisie, particularly in backward countries, since it would otherwise run the danger of losing its class position and its class orientation. The masses in backward countries can lose their class orientation more readily than those in the more advanced countries because, in the backward countries, the proletariat does not yet have a firm class consciousness and often follows its leaders blindly.

Comrade Zinoviev declared that the workers must judge the behaviour of their representatives at the International Congress. It goes without saying that on their return the delegates will have to give an account of themselves to those who sent them. And the masses will judge our behaviour.

I have always adopted an implacable attitude towards the petty bourgeoisie. I also maintained this attitude at the national congress in Florence [January 1920], and the congress approved of my attitude.

WIJNKOOP: Comrade Serrati has tried to cast suspicion on our party, and he has tried to cast suspicion on me, and that because I have already spoken once. But he wants to speak twice. I scarcely think that Comrade Serrati, who himself moved the closure of the discussion, will be given the right to speak a second time in his own defence. I would like to propose that I am at least given the right to speak.

ZINOVIEV: I propose that we take a vote on the motion to close the debate. It is useless to continue these personal attacks. Comrade Serrati has the right to insist that the declaration he has made should be included in the minutes. (*Interjection from Wijnkoop.*) The minutes reflect what has taken place, and for that reason it must go down in the minutes. We propose that all resolutions and motions be referred to the Commission.

WIJNKOOP: Not without a discussion.

PAUL LEVI: We will take the vote on the closure of the debate.

(*The motion to close the debate is adopted with five votes against.*)

WIJNKOOP: I made a motion that the discussion absolutely must not be ended.

LEVI: Who is in favour of Comrade Wijnkoop's motion? Who is in favour of opening the debate when it has just been closed?

(*Comrade Wijnkoop's proposal is rejected, with eight votes in favour.*)

LEVI: Comrade Wijnkoop's motion has been rejected by an overwhelming majority. We come now to the vote on the theses as a whole. The vote on the theses is to take place now. All amendments will be referred to the Commission. If differences of opinion arise in the Commission it will make a second report to the Congress.

(*A vote takes place on whether all outstanding questions should be referred to the Commission. This is passed unanimously.*)

FRUMKINA: It has been said that the Bund participated in the counter-revolutionary agitation of the Second International. The Bund never participated in the agitation against the socialist revolution, but on the contrary applied all its energies to the defence of the Soviet government even before the Bund was communist. If the question of the Second International arises, then somebody ought to remind Comrade Kohn that the Poale Zion Party in Palestine turned to the Second International for support and got it. The Executive rejected Poale Zion's request to have their representative admitted.

SERRATI: Comrade Wijnkoop said that he would like to institute an inquiry into the allegations I made against the Dutch Party. I must emphasize that I did not make any allegations but merely repeated what Comrade Levi said without any refutation on the part of Comrade Wijnkoop and what the comrades on the Executive also said without arousing any protest.

NICOLA BOMBACCI (ITALY): I declare that I do not share the opinions expressed in Comrade Serrati's declaration.

WIJNKOOP: I did not ask for the right to speak for personal reasons, but in order to make a proposal. Now that I have the floor, however, I must state that

everything that Comrade Serrati has said in this connection about our party bears no relation to the truth. Whether or not he leans on Comrade Levi in spreading these untruths is no affair of mine. They are and remain untruths, so much must be established. The comrades on the Executive did not say the same as Comrade Serrati. The Amsterdam Bureau is not identical with the Dutch Party, and our party has nothing to do with the allegations that Comrade Serrati was free to bring against it because I criticized him. I propose that Comrade Serrati's protest should be struck from the minutes because it has not been discussed here.

ANGEL PESTAÑA (SPAIN): Since I represent not a political party but a syndicalist organization and cannot assume any responsibilities that I am not sure I can fulfil, I shall abstain.

GRAZIADEI: My attitude is known from the statement that I have already made here. I shall vote for the theses including the amendments I proposed.

ZINOVIEV: We have a motion from Comrade Wijnkoop to strike Comrade Serrati's statement from the minutes. We are of the opinion, and I ask comrades to support the Bureau's opinion, that such a vote is impossible. All those who agree with this opinion please raise your hands. Who is against? There seems to be no one against. The Congress now proposes to take the vote on the theses and close the debate.

(The proposal is passed.)

ZINOVIEV: The next item on the agenda is the theses on the colonial and national question, which read as follows:

THESES ON THE NATIONAL AND COLONIAL QUESTIONS

1. An abstract or formal conception of the question of equality in general and national equality in particular is characteristic of the bourgeoisie by its very nature. Under the pretence of the equality of the human person in general, bourgeois democracy proclaims the formal legal equality of the proprietor and the proletarian, of the exploiter and the exploited, and thus deceives the oppressed classes in the highest degree. The idea of equality, which is itself a reflection of the relations of commodity production, is transformed by the bourgeoisie, under the pretext of the absolute equality of the human person, into a tool in the struggle against the abolition of classes. The true significance of the demand for equality lies in its being a demand for the abolition of classes.

2. As the conscious expression of the proletarian class struggle to throw off the yoke of the bourgeoisie, and in accordance with its main task, which is the fight against bourgeois democracy and the unmasking of its lies and hypocrisy, the Communist Party should place the main emphasis in the national question not on abstract and formal principles, but, in the first place, on an exact evaluation of the historically given and, above all, the economic conditions. Secondly, it should

emphasize the explicit separation of the interests of the oppressed classes, of the toilers, of the exploited, from the general concept of the national interest, which means the interests of the ruling class. Thirdly, it must emphasize the equally clear division of the oppressed, dependent nations which do not enjoy equal rights from the oppressing, exploiting, privileged nations, as a counter to the bourgeois democratic lie which covers over the colonial and financial enslavement of the vast majority of the world's total population by a tiny minority of the richest and most advanced capitalist countries, which is characteristic of the epoch of finance capital and imperialism.

3. The imperialist war of 1914 has shown all the enslaved nations and oppressed classes throughout the world with particular clarity the mendacity of bourgeois-democratic phraseology. The war was justified on both sides by phraseology about peoples' liberation and the right of nations to self-determination. Yet the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest on the one side and the Treaty of Versailles and St. Germain on the other have shown that the victorious bourgeoisie determines even 'national' frontiers to suit its economic interests. For the bourgeoisie, even 'national' frontiers are merely objects of trade. The so-called 'League of Nations' is merely the insurance policy by which the victors in this war mutually guarantee their booty. The strivings to re-establish national unity, for 'reunification with ceded territories', are for the bourgeoisie nothing other than the attempts by the vanquished to gather strength for new wars.

The reunification of nations that have been artificially torn apart also corresponds to the interests of the proletariat. The proletariat can, however, achieve real national freedom and unity only by the path of revolutionary struggle and over the body of the defeated bourgeoisie.

The League of Nations and the whole post-war policy of the imperialist states reveal this truth even more clearly and sharply, everywhere strengthening the revolutionary fight not only of the proletariat of the advanced countries but also of the toiling masses of the colonies and the dependent countries, and hastening the collapse of petty-bourgeois illusions in the possibility of peaceful co-existence and the equality of nations under capitalism.

4. It follows from these principles that the whole policy of the Communist International on the national and colonial question must be based mainly on the union of the workers and toiling masses of all nations and countries in common revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the landlords and of the bourgeoisie. Only such a union can secure victory over capitalism, without which the destruction of national oppression and inequality is impossible.

5. The international political situation has now placed the dictatorship of the proletariat on the order of the day. All events in international politics are concentrated inevitably around one single central point, the struggle of the international bourgeoisie against the Russian Soviet Republic. The latter rallies

around itself, on the one hand, the soviet movements of the vanguard of the working class in every country and, on the other hand, all the national liberation movements of the colonies and the oppressed nationalities who have been convinced by bitter experience that for them there is no salvation outside an alliance with the revolutionary proletariat and the victory of Soviet power over world imperialism.

6. Consequently, it is impermissible today to limit oneself to mere recognition or proclamation of sympathy with the toilers of various nations. It is necessary to pursue a policy of bringing about the closest possible alliance between all the national and colonial liberation movements with Soviet Russia. The forms of this alliance will be determined by the stage of development of the communist movement among the proletariat of every country, or of the revolutionary liberation movement in the backward countries and among the backward nationalities.

7. Federation is a transitional form on the way to the complete unification of the toilers of all nations. Federation has already showed its expediency in practice, not only in the relations between the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic and the other Soviet republics (the Hungarian, Finnish and Latvian in the past, those of Azerbaijan and Ukraine at present), but also within the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, even in relation to nationalities who possessed neither political existence nor self-government (for example the Bashkir and Tatar republics in the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, which were set up in 1919 and 1920).

8. The task of the Communist International in this respect consists not only in the further development of this federation based on the Soviet order and the soviet movement, but also in its study and the testing of our experiences with it. Recognizing that federation is a form in the transition to complete unification, we must strive for an ever closer federal link. We must take into consideration, first, the impossibility for the Soviet republics, surrounded as they are by the militarily significantly stronger imperialist states of the whole world, of continuing to exist without closer links with other Soviet republics; secondly, the necessity of a close economic alliance between the Soviet republics, without which it is impossible to restore the productive forces destroyed by capitalism and assure the welfare of the toilers; and thirdly, the efforts to create a unified world economy according to a common plan regulated by the proletariat of all nations. This tendency has already emerged quite openly under capitalism and insistently seeks its further development and completion under socialism.

9. In the sphere of relations within states the national policy of the Communist International cannot confine itself to the bare formal recognition of the equality of nations, expressed only in words and entailing no practical obligations, to which the bourgeois democracies confine themselves, even those that call themselves 'socialist'.

The Communist parties must expose *unflinchingly* in their propaganda and

agitation both on the parliamentary tribune and elsewhere the continually repeated offences in every capitalist state, in spite of all the 'democratic' constitutions, against the equality of nations and the guaranteed rights of national minorities. In addition, it is also necessary, first, to clarify constantly the point that only the Soviet order is capable of assuring nations true equality by uniting first the proletariat and then the whole mass of the toilers in the fight against the bourgeoisie, and, secondly, that all Communist parties must directly support the revolutionary movement among the nations that are dependent and do not have equal rights (for example Ireland, the Blacks in America, and so forth) and in the colonies.

Without this last particularly important condition, the struggle against the oppression of the dependent nations and the colonies and the recognition of their right to a separate political existence remains the kind of mendacious hypocrisy that we see in the parties of the Second International.

10. Recognizing internationalism in words alone and watering it down in practice with petty-bourgeois nationalism and pacifism is a common phenomenon not only among the parties of the Second International but also among those that have left the International. This phenomenon is frequently seen even in those parties that now call themselves communist.

The fight against this evil, against the most deeply rooted petty-bourgeois nationalist prejudices, which appear in every possible form such as racial hatred, the baiting of minorities and anti-Semitism, must be brought all the more into the foreground as the question becomes more urgent of transforming the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national dictatorship (that is, a dictatorship existing only in one country and incapable of pursuing an independent international policy) into an international one (that is, dictatorship of the proletariat in at least a few advanced countries which is capable of exercising a decisive influence on international politics). What petty-bourgeois nationalism means by internationalism is the mere recognition of the equality of nations (irrespective of the fact that such recognition is granted in words alone) which leaves national egoism untouched. Proletarian internationalism on the other hand demands, first the subordination of the interests of the proletarian struggle of the one country to the interests of this struggle on a world scale. It also demands the ability and the readiness on the part of the nation that carries out its victory over the bourgeoisie to make the greatest national sacrifice in order to overthrow international capitalism.

Therefore, the first and most important task in countries that are already completely capitalist and have workers' parties that really do represent a vanguard of the proletariat is to combat the petty-bourgeois pacifist distortions of the conceptions and policies of internationalism.

11. In relation to those states that have a more backward, predominantly feudal, patriarchal or peasant-patriarchal character, special attention must be paid to the following points:

a) All Communist parties must support with deeds the revolutionary liberation movements in these countries. The form the support should take must be discussed with the Communist Party of the country in question, should such a party exist. This obligation to offer active assistance affects above all the workers of those countries on which the backward countries are in a position of colonial or financial dependence.

b) An unconditional struggle must be carried out against the reactionary and medieval influence of the clergy, the Christian missions and similar elements.

c) A struggle is necessary against Pan-Islamism, the Pan-Asiatic movement and similar currents which try to tie the liberation struggle against European and American imperialism to the strengthening of the power of Turkish and Japanese imperialism, the nobility, the big landlords, the clergy, etc.

d) Support for the peasant movement in the backward countries against the landowners and every form and remnant of feudalism is particularly necessary. What must be striven for above all is to give the peasant movement as revolutionary a character as possible and wherever possible to organize the peasants and all victims of exploitation in soviets and thus bring about as close a link as possible between the Western European Communist proletariat and the revolutionary movement of peasants in the East, in the colonies and in the backward countries.

e) A resolute struggle is necessary against the attempt to portray as communist the revolutionary liberation movements in the backward countries that are not truly communist. The Communist International has the duty to support the revolutionary movement in the colonies and the backward countries only on condition that the components are gathered in all backward countries for future proletarian parties – communist in fact and not only in name – and that they are educated to be conscious of their particular tasks, that is, the tasks of struggling against the bourgeois-democratic movement in their own nation. The Communist International should arrive at temporary agreements and, yes, even establish an alliance with the revolutionary movement in the colonies and backward countries. But it cannot merge with this movement. It must unconditionally maintain the independent character of the proletarian movement, be it only in embryo.

f) It is necessary continually to lay bare and to explain among the broadest masses of all, but in particular of the backward, countries the deception committed by the imperialist powers with the help of the privileged classes in the oppressed countries when, under the mask of politically independent states, they bring into being state structures that are economically, financially and militarily completely dependent on them. The Zionists' Palestine affair can be characterized as a gross example of Entente imperialism and the bourgeoisie of the country in question pooling their efforts to deceive the working classes of that oppressed nation. Zionism in general delivers the Arab working population of Palestine, where Jewish workers only form a minority, to exploitation by Britain, under the cloak of the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. In today's economic conditions there is

no salvation for the weak and dependent nations outside of an alliance with Soviet republics.

12. The centuries of enslavement that the weak and colonial nationalities have suffered at the hands of the great imperialist powers has left in the toiling masses of the enslaved countries a feeling not only of combativity, but also of mistrust towards the nations that have exploited them, including against the proletariat of those nations. The base betrayal of socialism by the majority of the official leaders of that proletariat between 1914 and 1919, when the social-patriots masked the defence of 'their' bourgeoisie's 'rights' to enslave and plunder the financially dependent countries as 'defence of the Fatherland' – this betrayal could only strengthen that completely justified mistrust. Since this mistrust and national prejudices can only be rooted out after the destruction of imperialism in the advanced countries and the radical transformation of the whole basis of economic life in the backward countries, the removal of these prejudices will only be able to proceed very slowly. This means that the class-conscious Communist proletariat of every country has the duty of giving particular care and attention to survivals of national feelings in those long-enslaved countries and nationalities, and at the same time the obligation to make concessions in order to overcome this mistrust and these prejudices all the more rapidly. The victory over capitalism cannot be successfully accomplished without the voluntary alliance of the proletariat and the toiling masses of every country and nation in the world, united as one.

(The Congress proceeds to the vote. The theses are unanimously accepted with three abstentions. Applause.)

ZINOVIEV: All outstanding questions will be referred to the Commission. If the Commission is unanimous in its decisions they are to be reported to the Congress, otherwise they will have to be submitted to the decision of the Congress. I will put this motion to the vote. *(The motion is carried.)*

Greetings from the Toiling poor of Khiva

Five days after the Congress adopted theses on the national and colonial questions, it heard greetings from a delegate from the newly established independent Soviet republic of Khorezm, formerly the Khanate of Khiva, in Central Asia. Samilov's address to the Congress provoked criticism in Social Democratic circles; see Radek's remarks in Chapter 8, p. 226.

BABA AKHUNDE SAMILOV: Dear comrades, as authorized representatives of Khorezm (Khiva), we greet you in the name of the toiling poor of Khorezm. The present Second Congress of the Communist International is the symbol of the unification of the toilers of the whole world. We therefore congratulate you for having the opportunity to join together in this great assembly and we count it to be our great good fortune to be able to be present here on this happy occasion.

Comrades, when the European capitalists ruled Khorezm, it was stifled by the political and economic yoke of their tsars and parliaments, for they caused small nations like our own to languish in chains, and granted freedom only to the rich.

At present, with the aid of the Russian Soviet government, we the oppressed have drawn ourselves erect, liberated ourselves from the heavy hand of the oppressor and declared our country an independent Soviet Republic.

We sincerely believe that, with the help of the East which, thanks to Soviet power in Russia, has recently awakened, the toilers of the whole world will in the near future be liberated from the rapists and capitalists. The peoples of the East will not put down their weapons until the toilers of the whole world have united into a single family.

Long live the unity of the toilers of the whole world!

Long live the European proletariat and the vanguard of the world revolution, the Communist Party!

Long live the Communist International!

Long live the world Soviet republic!

Long live the leader of the world revolution, Comrade Lenin, and Comrade Broido, who established the revolution in Khorezm!

Long live the Communist Party of Khiva and the Soviet Republic of Khiva!

EXCERPTS FROM RELATED SECOND CONGRESS RESOLUTIONS

From the Statutes of the Communist International

. . . The Communist International breaks once and for all with the heritage of the Second International, which – in reality – recognized the existence only of people with white skin. The Communist International sets as its goal the liberation of working people of the entire world. The ranks of the Communist International unite people whose skins are white, yellow and black in a fraternal union . . .

(Adopted unanimously, 4 August 1920.)

From the Conditions of Admission to the Communist International

8. In countries whose bourgeoisies possess colonies and oppress other nations, it is necessary that the parties have an especially clear and well-defined position on the question of colonies and oppressed nations. Every party wishing to belong to the Communist International is obligated to expose the tricks of 'its own' imperialists in the colonies, to support every liberation movement in the colonies not only in words but in deeds, to demand that the imperialists of its country be driven out of these colonies, to instil in the hearts of the workers of its country a truly fraternal attitude toward the labouring people in the colonies and toward the oppressed

nations, and to conduct systematic agitation among its country's troops against all oppression of colonial peoples.

(Adopted with two votes cast against, 6 August 1920.)

CHAPTER 4

BAKU CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLES OF THE EAST

'A living bridge between East and West'

*'The First Congress of the Peoples of the East', convened by the Communist International, met from 31 August to 7 September 1920 in Baku, capital of the Azerbaijani Soviet republic established in April of that year. Although the congress call was addressed primarily to 'popular masses of Persia [Iran], Armenia and Turkey', delegates came from more than 30 peoples of Asia, including many living under Soviet rule. More than 2,000 delegates met both in plenary sessions and in two 'fractions', one of Communist delegates and one for those with no party affiliation. Published here are major excerpts from the proceedings.'*¹

SUMMONS TO THE CONGRESS

20 July 1920

To the Enslaved Popular Masses of Persia, Armenia and Turkey

The Executive Committee of the Communist International is convening on 15 August 1920, in Baku, a congress of the workers and peasants of Persia, Armenia and Turkey.²

What is the Communist International? It is the organization of the revolutionary working masses of Russia, Poland, Germany, France, Britain and America. Awakened by the thunder of the world war and driven by hunger, they have risen in order that they may work not for the rich, but for themselves, and in order that they may never again take up arms against their own suffering and deprived brothers, but instead bear arms to defend themselves against the exploiters. These working masses have understood that their only strength lies in unity and organization, that these alone can guarantee their victory. Last year they formed a mighty organization in the shape of the Third International. Despite all persecutions by capitalist governments, this International has in its 18 months of existence become the moving spirit of all the revolutionary workers and peasants striving for liberation throughout the world.

Why is the Communist International convening at this time a congress of Persian, Armenian and Turkish workers and peasants? What has it to offer them?

¹ The fullest record of the Baku Congress is found in Riddell, *To See the Dawn*. The texts included here are edited versions of a translation by Brian Pearce and are reproduced with kind permission of Marxists Internet Archive.

² The Baku Congress actually began on 31 August 1920.

What does it want from them? The workers and peasants in Europe and America, fighting against capital, are turning to you because you, like them, suffer under the yoke of world capitalism and, like them, are obliged to fight against the world's exploiters. If you join with the workers and peasants of Europe and America, this will hasten the downfall of world capitalism and ensure the liberation of the workers and peasants throughout the world. . . .

You yourselves, we see, are now beginning to understand your own needs. And so we address ourselves to you, in our capacity as representatives of the European proletariat, possessing great experience accumulated in our struggle, in order to help you achieve your emancipation. We say to you: the time when the European and American capitalists could suppress you by means of their own forces has passed, never to return. Everywhere in Europe and America the workers have risen in arms against the capitalists and are waging bloody war against them.

While we have not yet vanquished world capitalism, the capitalists are already no longer able to dispose of their people's blood at their own discretion. For two and a half years the Russian revolution has been struggling against the whole world. The French, British and American capitalists have tried by every means – armed force, famine – to conquer the Russian workers and peasants, to tighten a noose round their necks, and make them their slaves. They have not succeeded. The Russian workers and peasants have staunchly defended their government and formed an army of their own which has utterly smashed the reactionary forces supported by the capitalists of the Entente.

Workers and peasants of the Near East! Organize yourselves and set up your own workers' and peasants' government. Arm yourselves, uniting with the Russian workers' and peasants' army. If you do this, you will beat the British, French and American capitalists, get rid of your oppressors, and find freedom. You will be able to create a free world republic of the working people, and then use the riches of your native land in your own interests and those of the rest of working mankind, which will be glad to take them in exchange for the products you need, and will joyfully come to your aid. We want to talk about all this with you at the congress.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International, as the representative of the British, French, American, German and Italian workers, are coming to Baku in order to discuss with you the question of how to unite the efforts of the European proletariat with yours for struggle against the common enemy.

Spare no effort to ensure that as many as possible may be present on 1 September in Baku. Formerly, you travelled across deserts to reach the holy places. Now make your way over mountains and rivers, through forests and deserts, to meet each other and discuss how to free yourselves from the chains of servitude, so as to unite in fraternal alliance, so as to live a life based on equality, freedom and brotherhood.

We appeal first and foremost to the workers and peasants of the Near East, but we shall be glad to see among the delegates also representatives of the popular masses

who live much farther off – representatives of India as well as of the Muslim people who are developing freely in association with Soviet Russia.

On 2 September thousands of Turkish, Armenian and Persian workers and peasants must peacefully come together in Baku for the liberation of the Near East.

May the congress proclaim to your enemies in Europe and America and in your own countries that the age of slavery is past, that you are rising in revolt and that you will be victorious.

May this congress proclaim to the workers of the whole world that you are defending your rights, that you are uniting with the mighty revolutionary army which is now fighting against all injustice and exploitation.

May your congress bring strength and faith to millions and millions of the enslaved throughout the world, may it instil into them confidence in their own power, may it bring nearer the day of final triumph and liberation.



Nariman Narimanov (1913)

*The Executive Committee of the Communist International,
20 July 1920.*

SESSION 1: TASKS OF THE CONGRESS

1 September 1920

(The meeting opened at 9:40 P.M.)

‘Two worlds are meeting here today’

NARIMAN NARIMANOV: In the name of the Central Committee of the Communist International I declare the First Congress of the Peoples of the East open. (*Loud applause. ‘The Internationale’.*)

Comrades, it is today my happy lot to open a congress which is the first of its kind, something unprecedented and unheard-of in the world – the Congress of the Peoples of the East.

The grey-headed East, which gave us our first notion of morality and culture, will today shed tears, telling of the sorrow, of the grievous wounds inflicted upon her by capital of the bourgeois countries.

These peoples of the East, each living its own distinct life, could not be unaware of the terrible, oppressive effects of this capital.

But today, here, when we learn about each other's situations, the whole picture will unfold before us, and then only will all these peoples of the East realize all the terrible, oppressive effects of this capital. And the knowledge will impel all these peoples to unite, and they will come to one conclusion: to use their united strength to throw off and smash the chains of capital.

The speeches we heard yesterday enable me, however, to stress another significant aspect of this first Congress. It seems to me that two worlds are meeting here today: the world of the oppressed and the world of the oppressors. We can be sure that if the representatives of the world of the oppressors were delegates of the bourgeois class, the tears of the grey-headed East would have perhaps no influence at all. But it is our good fortune that the delegates who are here represent the working class of the bourgeois countries; they will understand what these tears mean, and they will hasten the development of events, making it possible for us to announce triumphantly, in the near future, the reign of the Third International. (*Loud applause. Translation into Turkic.*) . . .

‘We summon you to a holy war’

GRIGORII ZINOVIEV: Comrades, you know how many hundreds of millions of people live in India, which is being so ruthlessly pillaged by British capital. You have perhaps heard about the latest events there. Quite recently there was another case in India of Indians being fired on for only a feeble attempt at resistance – what has become known as the Dyer [Amritsar] affair. An unarmed crowd was lured to within range of machine-guns and mown down.

And when a Parliamentary inquiry into this affair was made newspapers published in London had to write about this scene, immortalized by photography, showing how the British enjoyed themselves when order had been restored: armed British soldiers forcing Indians to crawl on their bellies through the streets of a city. This is the method used by the civilized British imperialists and their sons who have attended several universities. They send out their officers in order that by putting a rifle muzzle to the ear of an Indian and making him crawl on his belly they may gladden the eyes of a British officer.

And the correspondent of an Italian newspaper has sent similar pictures from China with the caption: ‘A matinee in South China.’

Comrades, these little pictures which are to be seen in considerable numbers in any issue of a foreign newspaper depict for us the unheard-of horrors that are being suffered by the peoples of India and China. Comrades, do not forget that the white British capitalist beasts of prey who so shamefully oppress the Indian people have also contrived to enlist tens of thousands of Indian soldiers, whom they send to suppress the proletarian movement. Indian soldiers are at the present time fighting on no less than seven fronts, under the conductor's baton of British generals. Indian soldiers are in action in the Constantinople theatre of war, in

Arabia, in Mesopotamia, in Egypt, in Palestine, in North-Eastern Persia and in North-Western Persia.

There, comrades, you see the accursed situation of our oppressed class: they seize Indians by the throat and force them to crawl on their bellies in order to amuse a British officer, and at the same time our brothers, the oppressed peasants of India, are so ignorant that the same British can enlist Indians in their army, provide a few hundred officers drawn from the landed gentry to command them, and send them off to suppress the national revolutionary movement in Egypt or Persia – that, comrades, is what is horrible about the position we are in! We are helping our executioners with our own hands, helping the British and French capitalists. This is what we must put an end to!

We must at last slam shut this book of the accursed past, so that it may never return, and must open a new page of history, when the oppressed peoples of the East will no longer be slaves, when they will not allow British officers shamelessly to plunder the Indians and the Persians, killing, insulting and mocking at everyone.

Comrades! Much has been said about ‘holy war’ in recent years. The capitalists, when they were waging their accursed imperialist war, tried to present that slaughter as a holy war and made many people believe this. When in 1914–1918 they spoke of a ‘holy war’, that was a monstrous deception. But now, comrades, you, who have for the first time assembled in a congress of peoples of the East, must here proclaim a real holy war, against the robbers, the Anglo-French capitalists. Now we must say that the hour has sounded when the workers of the whole world can arouse and raise up tens and hundreds of millions of peasants, can form a Red Army in the East as well, can arm and organize a revolt in the rear of the British, can hurl fire against the bandits, can poison the existence of every insolent British officer who is lording it in Turkey, Persia, India and China.

Comrades! Brothers! The time has now come when you can set about organizing a true people’s holy war against the robbers and oppressors. The Communist International turns today to the peoples of the East and says to them: ‘Brothers, we summon you to a holy war, in the first place against British imperialism!’ (*Loud applause, prolonged shouts of ‘Hurrah’. Members of the Congress stand up, brandishing their weapons. The speaker is unable to continue for some time. All the delegates stand up and applaud. Shouts of ‘We swear it’.*)

May this declaration made today be heard in London, in Paris, and in all the cities where the capitalists are still in power. May they heed this solemn oath sworn by the representatives of tens of millions of toilers of the East, that the rule of the British oppressors shall be no more in the East, that the oppression of the toilers of the East by the capitalists shall cease!

Long live the fraternal alliance of the peoples of the East with the Communist International! May capital perish, and long live the reign of labour! (*Burst of applause.*)

VOICES: 'Long live the rebirth of the East!' (*Shouts of 'Hurrah'. Applause.*)

VOICES: 'Long live the Third, Communist International!' (*Shouts of 'Hurrah'. Applause.*)

VOICES: 'Long live those who have united the East, our honoured leaders, our dear Red Army!' (*Shouts of 'Hurrah'. Applause.*)

SESSION 2: WORLD POLITICAL SITUATION

2 September 1920

(*Following a report by Karl Radek, Dadash Buniatzadeh of the Communist Fraction speaks in Turkic. Musazadeh and Efendiev give the Russian translation.*)

'The East is rising hand in hand with Russian workers'

BUNIATZADEH (*as translated by Musazadeh*): The East has been an apple of discord among the imperialists of the West for a very long time. In order to get control of the East and to exploit it the predators of Europe have applied themselves to forming a comprehensive alliance. This was the basis on which the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance were formed, for these groupings both had the same aspiration, to become masters of the East, to exploit the peoples of the East for the benefit of their robber members.

A result of this alliance, or of this Triple Entente, was the Italo-Turkish War, which was promoted by Britain. The unprovoked attack by Italy upon Karakalise was prepared by the British Cabinet. Hardly had this war in Tripolitania [Libya] ended than Russia promoted and formed an alliance between the Balkan states and started a new war in the Balkans with the same aim as before, to get control of the Turkish Straits. Furthermore, the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente sent their troops for the same purpose into ancient and unfortunate Persia, where they pursued the same aim of subjecting and exploiting the country.

After the Russian Revolution of 1905 the revolution made its way into Persia. The oppressed peoples rose up, as the Russian workers had done, and proclaimed Soviet power, but the defeat of the Russian revolution entailed the burial of the Persian revolution as well by the hand of General Lyakhov and the other generals sent by [Tsar] Nicholas into Persia. The Persian revolution was crushed as well as the Russian.

The first Persian revolutionaries, expelled from their country by the Persian tyrant Mahomet Ali Shah, were executed here. With the aim of partitioning the unfortunate, benighted East, tireless activity was carried on by the Western powers and the plunderers of the West. At the same time as war was being waged in Tripoli and in the Balkans, France was pushing into Morocco and strangling that unfortunate independent Eastern state. These aggressive strivings and actions



Dadash Buniatzadeh

were, of course, activities of the Triple Entente, which could not be watched with indifference by the Triple Alliance – the German group. At the same time unprecedented intrigue, aimed against the Entente, was being carried on by the German group in the countries of the East. And then came the international war of 1914, aimed at completely subjecting the East. It ended with the great Russian Revolution.

After the fall of the bourgeois republic of Kerensky power in Russia passed into the hands of the proletarians, the peasants and workers. The peasants and workers

of Russia, after taking power, addressed the peoples of the world, and especially the peoples of the East, and said: 'We have stopped the war, we extend the hand of brotherhood to you, and we urge you to stop the war that has been started against us.' Since then the Russian workers and peasants have directed their attention towards the East. This Eastern orientation has now been crowned with success, and the risen East is today advancing hand in hand with the Russian proletariat, with combined forces, and will put an end to all the outrages which have been committed up to now. (*Uproar. Voices*: 'The translations are incomplete, we want a full translation.')

CHAIRMAN: Comrade Efendiev will now deal with those parts of the speech which were omitted by the first interpreter.

EFENDIEV: Comrade Buniatzadeh spoke at length about the events which took place in 1917 in Caucasia, and this is what was mainly omitted in the translation given by the previous interpreter. Buniatzadeh said that the imperialists of Turkey, various Enver Pashas and suchlike, yielded to incitement by Germany, which looked upon Turkey and the East as a tasty morsel that it wanted to enjoy and treat itself to. This was already included in Bismarck's programme. In bringing about independence in the East the Germans were guided by the well-known slogan: *Drang nach Osten* [drive to the East].

And so the Turkish forces, helped by German bayonets and with the aid of the German imperialists, conquered Azerbaijan, the richest part of Transcaucasia, with its resources of petroleum, the precious liquid that enticed the imperialists to come here. But in Caucasia there were groups and parties which understood this

war in a different sense. They considered that Turkey, with Enver Pasha at its head, had come here in order to save the people, in order to deliver the Azerbaijanis from Russian imperialism, in order to bring to this territory a republic, self-determination, independence, and so on.

This is not true . . . It was a lie, because Turkey liberated Azerbaijan from one imperialism, Russian imperialism, and at the same time handed it over to another imperialism. This was a one-sided liberation, which, after driving out the British, sat itself in their place, in order to suck the lifeblood of these countries. This was a mistake, a delusion which is now passing. This intoxication is now passing, and the masses of Transcaucasia, of Azerbaijan, are waking up and beginning to understand things better and more correctly. Today, the Soviet forces, the Communist Party have assumed the initiative in liberating Caucasia from these groups promoted by the Turkish and German imperialists. The masses have at once begun to find their bearings with regard to what has happened and to evaluate better what is happening. Today, Soviet Azerbaijan has been freed from these groups, these parties, these puppets set up by Turkish and German imperialism, and it is now the threshold of Soviet policy in the East. Azerbaijan is bound to play a tremendous role in that respect. Culturally and materially it is one of the best and richest countries in the East.

All this while the masses have wholly gone over to Soviet power. The experience which the masses have had in the last few years has taught them something and is a political guarantee that these masses will in the future close ranks absolutely with the Communist Party, and adjust their political line to the line of the Soviets, and make every effort to ensure that Soviet power triumphs throughout the East.

CHAIRMAN: The second speaker will be Comrade Bahaeddin Shakir.³

‘Ottoman Turkey had no predatory aims’

BAHAEDDIN SHAKIR (*translated from Turkish into Russian*): I begin without comments and give only the essentials. When the European war began, Turkey went to war with no intention of conquest. It entered the war of necessity, to defend itself. There was only one issue at stake for Turkey, namely: either to safeguard its freedom or to fall under the yoke of one of the coalitions, either the German or the British. Before joining in the war the Turks thought for a long time. If they did not enter the war, then, when one of the contending sides proved victorious, that would mean the end of Turkey’s freedom. Even earlier Turkey did not follow a policy of conquest and had no predatory aims.

In our country, in Turkey, the officers belong to a different category from the

³ Bahaeddin Shakir addressed the congress on behalf of forces led by Turkey’s wartime head of government Enver Pasha.

Russian or European officers. The Turkish officer is a genuine proletarian. He has not been brought up in the spirit in which officers in Europe and in Russia were brought up. It is incorrect to hold that Turkey had a plan worked out beforehand, and had already come to an understanding with Germany.

The agrarian question in our country, in Anatolia, also has special features. It is a very simple question. There are no landlords there, no large landowners. Turkey has, in general, no powerful bourgeois class, and so neither the Turkish government nor the Turkish people could pursue a merely aggressive policy. They had only one policy: 'Don't trouble us and we won't trouble you.'

Comrades, I prove this by the fact that when the war had continued for a long time, and the German coalition felt that it was winning, the Turkish people and the Turkish government wanted to establish buffer states, that is to say, an Armenian, an Azerbaijani and a Georgian state. If it is said that Turkey was pursuing an aggressive policy, how can it be explained that the Turkish people and the Turkish government held to this policy alone, that they wanted to protect themselves by establishing buffer states between Russia and Turkey? No, neither in the West nor in the East did Turkey intend to annex other people's lands, and, in general, Turkey did not pursue an aggressive policy.

ZINOVIEV: The next speaker will be Comrade Haydar Khan from the Communist fraction.

'Turkey acted as a tool of imperialists'

HAYDAR KHAN AMU UGHLI (*speaks in Turkic and translates his own speech into Persian. The following is the Russian translation*): Comrades, first and foremost I call your attention to that part of the speeches by Comrades Zinoviev and Radek in which Comrade Zinoviev said that we have come here frankly and sincerely to extend our hands to our brothers in the East and do not want to employ any diplomacy here. Comrade Radek also said that we have come here to offer our hand, and if we die, we die along with you, and if we live we live along with you. This is of enormous importance for the peoples of the East, for the peoples of the East have not heard this for two hundred years. All that time they saw and heard how European capital was slaughtering them.

I want to give you a few examples of how European capital sought to stifle the liberation movement of the Eastern peoples. Let us take Persia. A revolution broke out there, and this revolution was put down by the European capitalists, headed by tsarist Russia and British imperialism. India too, in the same way, with its 350 million inhabitants, and without even a penknife in its pocket, was also deprived of the ability to defend itself and continually exploited in an inhuman way by British capital. The Indians are dying of hunger, but the British capitalists are living in splendid palaces at their expense.

I want to say the same thing about Turkey. A comrade spoke here saying that Turkey waged a defensive war, that Turkey was not a tool in the hands of German imperialism and had no imperialistic aspiration of its own. This does not square with the facts, comrades. Turkey had great imperialistic aspirations. It acted wholly as a tool in the hands of European imperialists. If Turkey had not involved itself in this war with imperialists who were striving for conquest, then at the present time the European imperialists would not be tearing to pieces the working peasantry of Turkey. Comrades, as you see, the East has already woken up, a revolution has broken out in Persia itself against Britain, just as a certain movement has begun in India, and also in Turkey.

Gathered here are representatives of these and other peoples who are hostile to British and every other kind of imperialism. I am sure that these peoples will reach agreement here and will organize a rebuff to the British and other imperialists and liberate the East from the yoke of the capitalists. (*Applause*)

SESSION 3: TURKESTAN AND THE MOUNTAIN REPUBLIC

4 September 1920

ZINOVIEV: I declare the third session of the Congress of the Peoples of the East open. We will continue with discussion of the first two reports. I call on Comrade Narbutabekov.

‘We must speak frankly of the real situation in [Soviet] Turkestan’

NARBUTABEKOV: My time is limited. In fifteen minutes it is, of course, impossible fully to describe the international situation of the working masses of the East. I shall be brief and I ask you to listen to me with attention and not to interrupt, as I have no voice left.

Comrade Zinoviev described the tasks before this Congress clearly and distinctly in his speech. I shall not touch on that. As far as the situation of the working masses in the East is concerned, that is a question of extraordinary importance not only for us, the peoples of the East, but also for the Soviet power itself, for any power which definitely sets itself the task of achieving certain aims among the many millions of the East, where there are so many languages and dialects (about 53), needs to listen to the voice of these peoples, and our duty as delegates is to put certain demands to the Soviet power, precisely and clearly.

We declare that our Muslim peoples and peoples of the East want no other power but the Soviet power. We have no choice. It is either the British capitalists or the working masses of Russia and the whole world. It is an either-or situation, as Comrade Radek said: the Soviet power must either perish, and all become slaves, or it must conquer, and then we shall be free.

In order that these words may be put into practice, we the peoples of the East must make it quite clear that there are two worlds: the world of the West and the world of the East. You know that the West has, during the many centuries in its historical development, several times changed its form of state structure, from the most despotic forms to liberal-democratic republics, whereas in the East the form of the state structure has not altered. Russia is the first of the European states to have brought forward a new form of state structure, the form of Soviet power. Comrades, the world of the East and the world of the West are complete opposites in this respect. The East is in a special situation, in its psychological, cultural, economic and religious aspects as in its social forms and the forms of its everyday life, and these peculiarities have got to be reckoned with.

Nicholas II and other plunderers of the working people never took account of these peculiarities. Our interests were always trampled on. In the first days of the revolution, when the Bolsheviks put forward the slogan of 'self-determination for the nationalities' in opposition to Kerensky's capitalist slogan of 'war to the victorious end', it found an echo in all 53 nations of the Russian state. This was one of the principal reasons why Kerensky's capitalist slogan failed. We, the peoples of the East, had faith in that slogan of 'self-determination for the nationalities', and to this day we have faith, faith in the ideological guides and leaders of the world proletariat Comrades Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev and others; but at the same time we must say to the Congress that what we want is for the voice of the Muslim working people and the peoples of the East to be heard. If this voice is heard the state power will find it easier to carry out its tasks and aims in implementing the great principles of the social revolution in the East.

We demand genuine realization of the principles of freedom, equality and brotherhood, in fact and not merely on paper. I am sure that if that were done not a single Muslim would venture to raise his hand against the Soviet power.

You all know, comrades, that in the East from time immemorial, beginning with Genghis Khan and Timur and ending with the bloody Abdul Hamid, there has been no other form of government but despotism: in heaven there is Almighty God, and on earth the sultan. The state structure has not altered as it has in the West. When the great Russian Revolution burst upon the world we were utterly unprepared for it. We were unable immediately to adapt the entire mass of our habits and ways of living to the framework of communism. It must be said that, apart from the Soviet power, there is no other kind of power acceptable to the East that can save the working masses of the peoples of the East from the hands of the capitalists. Everyone knows that the East is utterly different from the West, that its ideas are different – and so a rigid application of the ideas of communism will meet with resistance there. Accordingly, if we want the four hundred million in the Muslim world to join the Soviet power, we need to apply a special yardstick in their case.

The non-Party comrades wish to declare that the diverse interests and special features that exist in Caucasia and Turkestan and in all the former borderlands of the Russian state must be resolutely defended, and it is the duty of the Congress to stress them, to say to our government: Comrades, the Muslims will not abandon the Soviet power, but this is on condition that the peculiarities of the Eastern peoples be recognized, and the measures adopted by the Soviet power in this direction must be implemented not on paper but in fact. (*Applause*)

Comrade Radek said that the Soviet power is accused by the West European *Kulturträger* [upholders of civilization], the West European brigands, of carrying out a policy of Red imperialism. In order to refute this charge, it is necessary that our comrades, the leaders of the Communist Party and the Soviet power, declare that this is not so and will not be so.

We Turkestanis state that we have never before seen Comrade Zinoviev, or Comrade Radek, or the other leaders of the Revolution. They should come and see for themselves what is happening in Turkestan, what exactly is being done by the local authorities there, whose policy is such that it is antagonizing the working masses against the Soviet government. I regard it as my duty as a delegate to say this, because I am staunchly in favour of the platform of Soviet power.

I will be brief, for time is short. This Congress is made up not of creatures of the bourgeoisie but of genuine representatives of the working masses, who must support the Soviet power. Whether you are Chechen, Dagestani, Ajarian, Kyrgyz or Kazakh, everyone at this Congress must clearly and definitely state to the Soviet power what our needs are. We must say: 'Comrades, do not waver, go straight ahead along the road laid down by the working masses of the people, for there is no other road, no other way out. Even if the West European proletariat does not support the Soviet power it will be supported by the Muslims and the peoples of the East.'

For this reason I declare that the Soviet power can find no better ally at the present time than the working people of the East, for during the three years that our comrades, the best leaders of the world revolution, have been appealing to them, up to now the West European proletariat has shown no active support.

The well-known failure of the 21 July strike proved that the West European proletariat, owing to the conditions in which it carries on its political life, cannot help.⁴ Therefore, without wasting time, it is necessary to organize the East in the proper way, in accordance with its religious and socio-economic conditions. There is no other road for the Soviet power. (*Applause*)

We Turkestanis say that, from the moment of the October Revolution, the toiling masses of Turkestan rallied to the Soviet power just like their Russian

⁴ The Communist International initiated an international one-day protest strike on 21 July 1919, to defend the Soviet republics of Russia and Hungary. The strike was undercut by opposition of sectors of the trade union leadership in Europe.

comrades. Shedding our blood on the Turkestan fronts against the enemies of the Soviet power we bound up our lives closely with the toiling masses of all Russia. The accusations of chauvinist tendencies brought against Turkestani activists must be rejected, for our workers have proved the contrary with their blood.

For three years the working people of Turkestan have acquitted themselves with honour in this struggle. But what was needed to ensure this? Very little. Only the paying of close attention to the life of the Eastern peoples and the application of those principles which delegates have advocated. There is no question of counter-revolution here, any more than of chauvinism, for we, the representatives of our working people, have suppressed our narrow nationalistic tendencies; and we, the first revolutionaries of Turkestan, have no fear of any *ulemas*, of any Black Hundreds of the mullahs. We were the first to raise the standard against them (*Applause*) . . . and we shall not lower that standard, to the very end: we shall either perish or conquer. I tell you, comrades, our Turkestani masses have to fight on two fronts. On the one hand against the reactionary mullahs in our own midst, and on the other against the narrow nationalist inclinations of the local Europeans. Neither Comrade Zinoviev, nor Comrade Lenin, nor Comrade Trotsky knows the real situation, knows what has been going on in Turkestan these last three years. We must speak out frankly and draw a true picture of the state of affairs in Turkestan, and then the eyes of our leaders will be opened. They will come to Turkestan and set things right.

I throw this out to all, both the non-Party and the Party comrades from Turkestan. In order to prevent what happened in Turkestan from being repeated in other parts of the Muslim world, I warn our government that we know all the shortcomings of the policy which has been pursued in these three years. Remove your counter-revolutionaries, we say, remove your alien elements who spread national discord, remove your colonizers who are now working behind the mask of communism! (*Loud applause, cries of 'Bravo'.*)

Comrades, I will not say much, but will confine myself to recalling the sacred words of the world's leader Comrade Lenin, when he said that he is on his own and we must help him in every possible way.

You have his famous words before you and you keep them in your heart – and after these words nobody can say that the Soviet power wishes us ill. It may be that among its representatives there are provocateurs and demagogues, but these must be ruthlessly destroyed, just like counter-revolutionaries.

We are not afraid of open counter-revolutionaries, we have encountered them on the war fronts. But, comrades, there are among us persons who, behind the mask of communism, are bringing ruin upon the Soviet power as a whole, spoiling the entire Soviet policy in the East. We must declare, fearlessly: Down with these provocateurs and demagogues who corrupt the fundamental idea of Soviet power! (*Loud applause, shouts of 'Down with them!'*)

Now, in addition to what I have said I must go on to say the following. The theoretical position of the Soviet power in relation to the East was set out with the greatest clarity in the appeal to all the toiling Muslims of Russia and the East.⁵ The Council of People's Commissars issued in November 1917, over Comrade Lenin's signature, a special appeal to all the toiling Muslims of Russia and the East. In this historic appeal, besides the statement that the treaty which provided for partitioning Turkey and taking Armenia away from her had been torn up and annulled, and that Constantinople must remain in the hands of the Muslims, the following appeared: 'Henceforth your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions are declared free and inviolable. Build your national life freely and without hindrance. It is your right. . . . You yourselves must be the masters in your own land. You yourselves must build your lives in your image and likeness.'

After these words, is it conceivable that we should turn our backs on the Soviet power?

But now, as we travel about, Muslims come up to us and say that our beliefs are being trampled on, that we are not allowed to pray, not allowed to bury our dead in accordance with our customs and religion. What is this? It is nothing but a sowing of counter-revolution among the toiling masses.

It may be that the same thing is happening in other places too, but I declare, in the name of the non-Party delegates, and perhaps the Communists also will join in this, that with the remarkable congress we are holding today our Soviet power should introduce a definite policy in relation to the East. Then the Eastern peoples will rally to the Soviet power not only on paper but in arms, and then no power in the world will be able to resist the pressure of the many-millioned masses of the peoples of the East, together with the proletariat and peasantry of Russia.

Long live the oppressed East!

Long live those real Communists who, without reservation, want to put these principles into practice!

Long live our leaders, the leaders of the world proletariat – Comrades Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev and the others. . . .

CHAIRMAN: The last of the speakers on the list, Comrade Korkmasov, will now address us.

'The Mountain poor stand ready for battle'

JALALUDDIN KORKMASOV: Comrades, the fervent, inspiring call with which Comrade Zinoviev summoned us to struggle against world imperialism aroused in the hearts of all members of the Congress the feelings which already earlier filled the hearts of the [Caucasus] Mountain poor. When they drew their sabres and daggers, only recently wiped clean of Volunteers' blood, the Mountain poor

⁵ For the text of this appeal, see Chapter 1, pp. 25–7.

showed that today, as always, they are ready to follow their great leaders in order to join in the bloody decisive, final battle with the brigands and scoundrels of world imperialism for the sake of the emancipation of the oppressed peoples of West and East.⁶ (*Loud applause*)

Comrades, what speeches can be made, what discussion can take place after this decisive demonstration you have given? It would be incomprehensible and alien to the Mountain poor. Assembled in their own congress a month ago, the Mountain poor, and even the *ulemas*, issued a call for a *ghazavat*, a holy war, against all the oppressors of the East: not to lay down our arms until the enemy of all the poor of the world and the working people of all nations has perished! (*Applause*)

The Mountain poor do not need any words. From the beginning of the great social revolution they have waged a ceaseless struggle not only against the internal counter-revolutionaries – the Imam, the Mountain government – but also against the external ones – the Turks, the British and the British hirelings: Bicherakov's and Denikin's men. And, naturally, comrades, after experiencing all this incredibly hard struggle, the Mountain poor cannot utter any equivocal words here or lodge any complaints.

But let me tell you, comrades, in a few words, what has happened in these three years, so that these facts from the life of our region, from the life of the working masses of the North Caucasus, may form a living bridge between East and West, illustrating the great truths that have been expressed here regarding international politics and the struggle against international imperialism, by our comrades Zinoviev and Radek.

Thanks to their self-sacrificing struggle, comrades, after a struggle such as not a single revolution, not a single people has known, the Russian workers and peasants won freedom and they presented this freedom, as though on a plate, to the peoples of the East.

And what happened? It turned out that the ruling classes – the princes, the khans, the beys, the rich, the mullahs – thought they would erect a wall between the great social revolution and the harassed Mountain poor. Then these parasites, thanks to the intrigues of the Turkish imperialists and the British, brought onto the scene an idol, the Imam, as a religious weapon with which to oppress the toiling masses.

What a farce! The great Shamil defended the Mountain poor against the khans, the agents of the autocracy. And now Najmuddin Gotsinsky, a common criminal who was put in prison even by the tsarist government, was raised to the dignity of Imam. How did the Mountain poor react to this farce? Did they stand for it? No, the Mountain poor launched a civil war. However, none of the efforts of the Pan-Islamists and the Pan-Turkists and none of the attempts made by the British and the

⁶ The 'Mountain poor' belonged to various peoples inhabiting the northern foothills of the Caucasus Mountains. The Volunteer Army, against which they fought, was the main counter-revolutionary force in southern Russia.

agents of Nicholas were successful. After less than a year had passed the Imam was overthrown even by those who had particularly supported him. He was nicknamed 'not Imam but Ivan'. The poor of Dagestan, led by their own socialists, having linked up with the Red forces, proclaimed Soviet power in Dagestan. It is hard to convey to you the joy that was felt by the working people. This power is our own, the power of the poor, they said. After this, is it possible for us to utter words such as those that were uttered here just now? Such complaints are alien to our poor.

The Mountain princes, generals and landlords were beaten in the mountains in their gamble on the imamate. Nonetheless, comrades, knowing that there was strong sympathy with the Turkish people among the masses, they turned their gaze towards Turkey where various pashas, beys and so on ruled, sitting on the backs of the working people. Would they help in crushing the Mountain poor? Turks did actually come in. I am very sorry not to see here a leader who was very active in organizing the counter-revolution in the mountains – Enver Pasha, who in the palace of the old sultans, forgetting the ideals of the original Young Turks,⁷ organized along with Chermoyev, Kotsov and other generals of Nicholas II a counter-revolution to crush the Soviet power. (*Applause*)

Turks appeared – and what did they do? The Young Turks Yusuf Izet Pasha, Nuri Pasha and various other pasha-mashas and beys, who ought to have won victories on various fronts of the imperialist wars dear to their hearts, but did not, turned up in Dagestan in order to establish a front against the working people and, thanks to help from Bicherakov's Cossacks and officers of Nicholas's army, they were able for a time to subvert Soviet power in Dagestan.

But what did they give to the poor of Dagestan instead of that power? The one-man dictatorship of Prince Tarkovsky. That was how the ideology of the Young Turks had developed at the great moment of the social revolution. They found no other way of solving their problems. Around this counter-revolutionary, around this traitor to his own people, all sorts of rascals subsequently gathered – Kotsovs, Chermoyevs and suchlike – and proclaimed the mythical Mountain Republic. They plundered the working people and sold the weapons left behind by the Turks, who had fled for home before the stronger, British imperialist. After only a few months, having nothing more left to plunder, this gang of adventurers handed over the Mountain people to be victims of the Volunteer bands. That was how the wretched farce under the tide of the 'Mountain Government' was played out.

The Volunteers found that the Turks and their creatures had not finished the job of crushing the Bolsheviks. Backed by the British they launched a furious campaign against all adherents of the Soviet power, both particular individuals and whole communities. The Turks had arrested Bolsheviks and exacted contributions from Bolshevik settlements, but the Volunteers decided that they had not done

⁷ The Committee of Union and Progress, which came to power in the Turkish revolution of 1908–9, was known in the West as the 'Young Turks'.

enough, that counter-revolutionaries must do still more, and opened a real front against the Mountain poor. This heroic struggle, which lasted nearly a year, is known to you, comrades: it has dyed Dagestan in the colour of its own blood, shed for the glorious Red flag. (*A storm of applause*)

You also know, comrades, how the Mountain poor in those same long months of struggle had to repulse Musavatist agents as well, and Turkish counter-revolutionaries who opened an internal front, in the person of Nuri Pasha, another counter-revolutionary, the brother of Enver Pasha. The struggle was a tragic one. Comrades, the Mountaineers wanted to make their small contribution to helping the great Red Army, which was also there fighting the counter-revolution on the steppes of Russia. The struggle was crowned with victory. At the end of twelve months the Red Mountain partisans had captured the towns of Temir-Khan-Shura [Buinaksk], Derbent and Petrovsk [Makhachkala], and greeted with red banners the first detachments of the great Red Army.

And so, comrades, for the Mountain poor there can be no talking about this or that detail, some parochial matter, such as the Turkestanian comrade was talking about, when what is at stake is the world revolution. What faces us is a great world war. We must say, and we do say, to the scoundrelly world imperialists of France, Britain and America that, even before the Congress of the Peoples of the East, before the call issued by our leaders, we began a *ghazavat*, a holy war, against you, and tomorrow we shall go into action against you, arms in hand! (*Loud applause*) And so, comrades, let me end with the call:

Long live the oppressed peoples of the East!

Long live the oppressed working masses of the West!

Long live their alliance under the red banner of the Third International!
(*Shouts and applause*)

Long live their fraternal alliance under the guidance of our great leaders, Comrades Lenin, Trotsky and Zinoviev, to smash the enemy, world imperialism and capitalism! (*Applause*)

SESSION 4: INDIA AND TURKEY

4 September 1920

Indian revolutionaries appeal for aid

*Declaration by the Indian Revolutionary Association in Turkestan*⁸

⁸ The Indian Revolutionary Association was formed in Kabul by about 150 of the thousands of Muslims in India who headed west in 1920, hoping to prevent the Entente powers from dismembering Turkey and threatening the Islamic caliphate. Twenty-eight of its members made the arduous mountain journey to Soviet Turkestan, and 14 went on to Baku. Meanwhile, some Indian soldiers in the British Mideast army defected to the Soviet side. By the end of 1920, some 200 revolutionaries from India were on Soviet soil.

To the comrade delegates to the Second Congress of the Communist International, in Baku.

The Indian Revolutionary Organization in Turkestan asks, on behalf of the three hundred million oppressed people in India, that the delegates to this Congress and the representatives of Soviet Russia gathered here with the aim of liberating mankind help India, which is in such great need of their help. All who are striving for liberation hope that this help will be given without any interference in the internal and religious life of those who await liberation from the yoke of capitalism and imperialism. All revolutionaries appeal for help to Russia in their struggle to put their national programmes into effect. In the Eastern question as a whole, one important fact especially stands out, the importance of which cannot be denied, namely, that India, and India alone is the real cause of serious conflicts in this world. History has shown more than once that freedom for India means freedom for the world and an end to all wars. From the huge population of India the brutal British forcibly take men for their army in order to attack other nations.

The Indian Revolutionary Organization is in a position to prove this fact, and to do this before the First Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku. The organization asks that the Congress give it as soon as possible the very great help which India so much needs.

Chairman of the Indian Revolutionary Organization,
Mohammed Abdur Rabb Barq
Tashkent, 10 August 1920

ZINOVIEV (CHAIR): Next, comrades, two prominent Turkish leaders, not delegates to our Congress, who are here in Baku, have sent the Presidium statements in writing, and as these statements are of great political importance, the Presidium has decided to make them public, both from this tribune and in the press. One of these statements is by Enver Pasha and the other by Ibrahim Tali, the representative of the Turkish People's Government of Anatolia.⁹ We shall now read both of those statements. (*Voices*: 'Please, please. Translation.') . . .

'We march with the Third International'

Enver Pasha's Declaration

Comrades, on my own behalf and on that of my comrades I thank the Third International and its Presidium, who have enabled us fighters against world imperialism and capitalism to assemble in Baku today.

Imperialism and capitalism are not satisfied with robbing us and stripping us

⁹ The Turkish People's Government, established in 1919 under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), led the struggle to defend Turkey against dismemberment by the Entente powers. This independence struggle benefited from the aid of Soviet Russia and was victorious in 1923.

naked but are trying to drink our blood and destroy us. We consider ourselves fortunate, comrades, that in contrast to this and in opposition to the lying politicians of Europe, we today stand shoulder to shoulder with a true and honest ally, the Third International.

Comrades, when Turkey entered the war, the world was divided into two camps. In one was imperialist and capitalist old tsarist Russia and its allies, and in the other Germany, also imperialist and capitalist, with its allies. Of these two groups, we, fighting against tsarist Russia, Britain and their friends, who wanted to strangle and destroy us utterly, took the side of Germany, which at least agreed to let us live.

German imperialism used us for its bandit aims. But our desire was only to safeguard our independence.

Comrades, the sentiment which caused us to leave a calm, refuge-seeking life for the burning deserts of Tripoli and the poor tents of the Bedouin, forcing us to spend there the most difficult time of our lives, was no sentiment of imperialism.¹⁰ We were trying to save Tripoli for the Tripolitarians, and we are glad that now, after nine years of war, they have succeeded in driving out the Italian imperialists. Nor did we have any different intention where Azerbaijan was concerned. We consider that Azerbaijan belongs to the Azerbaijanis. If we fell into a false situation, that was our bad luck.

Comrades, during the world war, I occupied a very important post. I assure you that I regret that we were obliged to fight on the side of German imperialism. I hate and curse German imperialism and the German imperialists just as much as I hate and curse British imperialism and the British imperialists. In my view all who have made it their aim to enrich those who do not work deserve to be destroyed. That is my viewpoint where imperialism is concerned.

Comrades, I assure you that if the Russia of today had been in existence then, and had been fighting the war with its present aims, we should have been fighting on your side, just as today, with all our energy. So as to show more clearly that my idea is correct I will tell you that when we decided to act together with Soviet Russia, and did so, Yudenich's army was near Petrograd, Kolchak held the Urals, and Denikin was approaching Moscow from the South. The Entente, advancing its forces and regarding the game as already won, was showing its predatory teeth and rubbing its hands with glee. That was the situation when we began to be friends with Russia. Had the Black Sea storms not forced me back, breaking the mast of my vessel, if the prison bars of Kovno and Riga, and crashes by the aeroplanes in which I was flying, had not delayed me, I should have been with you in Russia's most difficult hour, and it would not have been necessary to relate these personal details in order to explain matters to certain comrades.

¹⁰ The reference is to Italy's war in 1911-12 against Ottoman Turkey aimed at conquering the Ottoman provinces that now make up Libya.

Comrades, you know that in the imperialist conflict of this world war we were defeated. But from the standpoint of the war of the oppressed I do not regard us as having been defeated, for Turkey, as a result of the closing of her Straits, became one of the factors which brought about the collapse of insatiable tsarist Russia and its replacement by the natural ally of all the oppressed, Soviet Russia. Thereby Turkey helped to bring it about that a new road has been opened for the salvation of the world. From the standpoint of the oppressed I see this as a victory.

Comrades, the army which at the present time is waging a heroic struggle against imperialism and which draws its strength from the peasantry, was, as I have said, not defeated; it only temporarily laid down its arms. And now, after fighting against the same enemy for 15 years it is still, despite the greatest privations, fighting on for another year. It is impossible to compare the present struggle with the previous one. Now that the Eastern world has come forward in alliance with the Third International, and the oppressed of the whole world support its just claims, this struggle is filled with resolute hope of victory.

Comrades, the intense phase of imperialist war, which began at the time of the Transvaal war [1899–1902], continued with the war between the imperialists from 1914 to 1917, which has now ended. But the war at the present time has entered a decisive period, and it will certainly end in victory for us, that is, victory for the oppressed, and not just with imperialism and capitalism piling their arms, but with their complete destruction.

The present Congress brings fresh strength to the Red Army, which has shed its blood in defence of the oppressed, and also to the Turkish fighters. In the same way this Congress contributes to ensure that the struggle will end in our victory, that is, in the victory of justice. It is not only our endeavour to find support in the struggle we have begun that has caused us to draw near to the Third International. It may be that another factor is the similarity of our principles. We have always drawn our revolutionary strength from the people, that is, from the peasants. If our factory workers had been a strong force, I should have mentioned them first. However, they too were with us. They worked with us, body and soul. That is how it is now, too. Consequently, we base ourselves upon the oppressed section of the people. We feel their pain, and we live and die along with them.

Comrades, taking account of the people's desires, we stand for recognizing their right to self-determination. We consider ourselves bound by the strongest ties for the whole of our lives to those who want to live together with us: as for those who do not want to do this, we are willing to recognize their right to decide their fate for themselves. That is our view on the national question.

Comrades, we are against war, that is, we are against people strangling each other for the sake of power. And in order to achieve permanent peace we march with the Third International, and therefore we are now, despite all obstacles, waging a bloody struggle and shall continue this struggle.

Comrades, we want happiness for the working people, that is, we are against speculators, whether foreign or native, profiting by the fruits of others' labour. It is necessary to oppose that without any hesitation. We want our country to enjoy the fruits of common labour through the development of agriculture and industry on a large scale. That is what we think about the economic question.

Comrades, we are convinced that only a conscious people can achieve happiness and freedom. We want sound knowledge, associated with labour and guaranteeing us genuine freedom, to bring enlightenment to our country, and in this matter we recognize no distinction between men and women. That is what we think about social policy.

Comrades, I declare to you that the union of revolutionary organizations of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Tripoli, Egypt, Arabia and India, which has sent me here as its representative, is in full solidarity with you in this respect. It is fully convinced that, by using all revolutionary means, it will succeed in breaking the teeth of the wild beasts and depriving them of their strength for good.

Comrades, the hands raised for this purpose reach out to each other. I shake the hands of all those who will work with us to the conclusion of this struggle, which will go on for a long time, but which will end in our victory. I wish them success.

Long live the alliance of the oppressed!

Down with the oppressors, who tremble before this alliance!

ZINOVIEV: Comrade Ostrovsky will now read the statement by the representative of the Ankara government, Ibrahim Tali.

'Anatolia accepts the hand of Soviet friendship'

Statement by Ibrahim Tali of the Ankara Government

World imperialism, which led Central Europe to an explosion and stretched out its hands to the vital arteries of Turkey, brought Turkey at the end of four years to a state of complete breakdown.

The Turkish peasant took up arms with no aim other than to protect his national frontiers and defend his productive forces from foreign exploitation. He believed the promises of the lying American professor [Woodrow Wilson] who said that every people would be ensured the right to life and freedom and that all workers would be happy, and he laid down his arms.

But then these arms were turned against him. All his sacred rights were beginning to be destroyed for the benefit of the Western capitalists, and they wanted to take from him his last crust of bread. When the Turkish peasant saw that, he straight away rose up in anger and rebelled.

Comrades, I will now explain to you the causes and factors which led to this revolt, and also its essential character, and the story of how the government born

of this revolt came into being. The Anatolian revolt was due to causes of two kinds, external and internal. The external ones were these: The Turkish peasant, who had for four years been fighting on more than eleven fronts against the most powerful bourgeois states, at last felt a strong desire to eat in peace the bread he had won with the sweat of his brow and to live in peace in his own village. But the Western capitalists decided to send against this Turkish peasant, who had laid down his arms, the myrmidons in their service – from the West the Venizelist Greeks and from the East the Dashnak Armenians. The Turkish peasant knew that the imperialists and their myrmidons acted with fire and sword and bombs wherever they went, and that these were robbers, a small group of whom were seizing by force the fruits of the labour of the working class. Thinking that this monstrous decision would not be put into practice the Turkish peasantry remained calm for a while.

However, France, which had said that it was fighting for the freedom of the peoples, not satisfied with having taken Syria, seized in addition, amid conflagrations and acts of violence, Adana, Marash and Yurkesh. At the same time the French Prime Minister, who had said that he was acting in the interests of civilization, after he had made sure of victory over our country, threw off the mask and announced in the Palais Bourbon, for all to hear: ‘In order to safeguard her economic interests in the East, France must have control of all the mineral resources situated in the zone extending to Mosul. And so we consider it necessary to continue our advance as far as Mardin. We must take into account the importance of the natural resources to be found there, from the standpoint of France’s industry.’

Comrades, as a result an offensive was launched against our only outlet to the Mediterranean Sea, Smyrna [Izmir]. This brought about a union of the defenders of national rights, in the West and in the East, against the robbers. After the seizure of Smyrna, in the East, on the initiative of the opponents of the imperialists, that is, on the initiative of the population of Erzerum and Trebizond [Trabzon], a national assembly was convened in Erzerum, at which it was resolved to defend our rights. Subsequently, at congresses in Sivas and Ankara, this decision was reiterated and confirmed.

The internal causes were these: The poor peasant of Anatolia had for centuries suffered from the violence and tyranny of the bourgeoisie, he was oppressed, he was worn out by the disease that came from Stambul [Istanbul] – the bureaucracy, the dictatorship both of the Sultan’s government and of the aristocrats, and also the parasitic officials sent to him by the government. There now awakened in him a feeling of holy anger against those aristocrats and pashas who had never spent one day of their lives with him when he was working in his fields and dying of hunger. Instead, in splendid palaces and villas on the shore of the Bosphorus, they had given themselves up to the vilest pleasures, consuming the results of the work of the poor class and always acting provocatively towards the peasantry. By this revolt the peasant made it clear that in future he would give not a single crust of

his bread to Stambul, its pashas and beys and their parasitical hangers-on. There, comrades, are the causes and factors of the recent revolution in Anatolia, so that this is not in the least a movement based on the bourgeoisie, as is supposed in the West.

The accomplices of Western capitalism in the East – the Dashnaks, the supporters of Venizelos, and the old courtier pashas too, their tools, who have used the Sultan's court in the interests of British capitalism – have thrown themselves into the arms of the Entente. Speaking frankly, I can tell you that since this development, the Anatolian revolutionaries have turned to the East, where the Red revolution has risen like the dawn. The classes whose interests are endangered by this popular movement have striven with their combined forces to advance the counter-revolution everywhere. And the counter-revolutionaries – parasites who prey upon the people like Sheikh Rejeb in Sivas, Sheikh Eshref in Bayburt, and also the Chabanoglu family (accustomed for centuries to leading a carefree, debauched life at the expense of the poor people) and likewise Yuzgada and other such persons – all these together organized a revolt in Stambul, where it seemed natural to them for the Anatolian peasantry to live in slavery, and along with Anzavur Pasha set themselves to defend religion.

Comrades, the Anatolian peasants and the revolutionaries who had remained among these criminals and brigands reacted with enthusiasm and rejoicing to the international revolution, which they felt sure would bring liberation and happiness to all mankind, and they are convinced that their destiny is bound up with that of the Third International.

This was confirmed by the delegation sent to Moscow by the revolutionary people's government (organized by the defenders of the people's rights after the dispersal of the parliament by the imperialists) and the national congresses. They are happy that the hand sincerely extended from Anatolia has been clasped with the same sincerity, and they are ready to utilize the social and moral results of this revolution, the principles of which they consider salutary for mankind.

Comrades, this explanation has made clear that Anatolia, on the road to developing enlightenment, has resolved to defend its fate and its independence to the last breath of the last of its sons. And it accepts with complete sincerity the hand of friendship extended to it by Soviet Russia.

Long live revolutionary Russia which has set out on this road, and revolutionary Russia's backer – the revolutionary East!

ZINOVIEV: In connection with the declarations we have just heard, the Presidium proposes that a resolution be adopted. The text of this resolution will be presented to you by our Hungarian comrade, Béla Kun.

'Carry Turkish emancipation through to the end'*Resolution Adopted by the Congress Delegates*

BÉLA KUN: The Presidium of the Congress of the Peoples of the East has unanimously resolved to present this resolution to you:

Having heard Enver Pasha's statement on the Turkish national movement, the Congress of the Peoples of the East adopts the following resolution:

1. The Congress expresses its sympathy with all Turkish fighters in combat against world imperialism, the oppressor and exploiter of the Eastern peoples, which holds in slavery the working people of the whole world – and first and foremost against the British and French imperialist bandits. Like the Second Congress of the Communist International, the First Congress of the Peoples of the East declares that it will support national revolutionary movements which seek to free the oppressed peoples of the East from the yoke of foreign imperialists.

2. However, the Congress notes that the national revolutionary movement in Turkey is directed only against foreign oppressors, and that success for this movement would not in the least signify the emancipation of the Turkish peasants and workers from oppression and exploitation of every kind. The success of this movement would not entail the solution of questions of the greatest importance for the Turkish toiling classes, namely, the agrarian question and the question of taxes, and would not eliminate the principal obstacles to the liberation of the East, namely, national discords.

3. The Congress finds it necessary to show particular caution in relation to those leaders of the movement who in the past led the Turkish peasants and workers to the slaughter in the interests of one of the imperialist groups and thereby subjected the toiling masses of Turkey to two-fold ruin in the interests of a small group of rich men and high-ranking officers. The Congress proposes to these leaders that they prove in deeds that they are now ready to serve the toiling people and make amends for their false steps in the past.

In calling on the toiling masses of Turkey and the entire East to support the national revolutionary movement in Turkey, the Congress urges the peasants and workers of Turkey to come together in independent organizations, to be ready to carry the cause of emancipation through to the end. They must not allow the foreign imperialists to hinder the work of emancipation by making use of their connections and influence among the Turkish rich, kulaks, bureaucrats and generals (the pashas, derebeys, and so on). Only in this way can the toiling people of Turkey succeed in freeing themselves from all their oppressors and exploiters, and only then will the land, the factories, the mines, and all the country's wealth be put at the service of the toilers and the toilers alone. Only in this way.

CHAIRMAN: I now put to the vote the resolution which the Presidium has unanimously recommended to you. (*Uproar. A voice: 'I want to speak.'*)

The Presidium proposes that the vote be taken without discussion. According to the rule you should have handed up a note. (*A voice: 'I did hand up a note.' The vote is taken.*) All in favour of the resolution that was read to you, please raise your hands. (*Uproar. Voices: 'I handed up a note.' 'Let me reveal the truth.'*)

Please do not make a row. There are 1,800 of us here. It is impossible to carry on like this. Please put your hands down. Who is against? Any abstentions? The resolution is carried. (*Applause.*)

SESSION 5: THE NATIONAL AND COLONIAL QUESTIONS

5 September 1920

Election of Women to Congress Presidium

CHAIRMAN: Comrades, . . . we should like to put a proposal to you. In order to underline the aspirations of the Congress and hasten the emancipation of women in the East, we ask you to confirm the inclusion in the Presidium of these three women: Bulach, from Dagestan, Najiye Hanum, from Turkey, and Shabanova, from Azerbaijan. (*Voices: 'Yes, yes.' Applause, rising to an ovation.*)¹¹

Comrade Najiye Hanum will say a few words.

(*Najiye Hanum speaks in Turkish. Loud and prolonged applause.*)

CHAIRMAN: Long live the emancipation of the women of the East! (*Loud applause. Shouts of 'Hurrah!' All stand. Ovation.*)

Yashasun shargin azad hanum lari! (Long live the free women of the East!)

SHABANOVA: Long live our comrades Lenin, Zinoviev and Trotsky! (*Shouts of 'Hurrah!' Applause. Ovation. Exclamations in various languages resound through the hall, covered by the roar of clapping.*)

'The proletariat brings cultural assets to the East'

Discussion: Matushev on the National Question

AKHMED MATUSHEV (COMMUNIST): Comrades, my time is very limited, so I request your co-operation as regards silence and attention. The picture of the national and colonial question as it stands today has been drawn for you so far as its general features are concerned.¹² It is fitting to add to the strokes drawn by

¹¹ After the congress, Zinoviev reported that the proposal to elect women to the Presidium had aroused strong objections from some delegates and that the issue had been debated at length in the congress' Non-Party Fraction.

¹² The speeches by Matushev and Ryskulov were preceded by a report by Russian delegate Mikhail Pavlovich.

the comrade reporter a few words about national-colonial policy – to look at the question, so to speak, in movement, from a definite point of view.

Comrades, we have to approach this serious question in a realistic way. It is not a question that is raised merely for effect, but an extremely vital one, on the correct solution of which the entire fate of the revolution depends. In the short time which I have at my disposal I shall try to give you a brief account of the actual, objective situation.

What is the East? The division between East and West has its own history, but, in the last analysis, we mean by the East today the countries of Asia and of the north coast of Africa, mainly Egypt. In particular, by the Muslim East we mean: Turkey, Persia, Baluchistan, Afghanistan, Bukhara, Khiva and all the regions of Turkestan, India, and part of China. That is what is meant by the Muslim East. Naturally, in such an extensive territory as this there is tremendous heterogeneity, an enormous exotic bouquet of nationalities, speaking a variety of languages, but they are all united by common features in their culture – by Islam.

It is, of course, impossible in ten minutes to embrace this ocean of concepts called the East. Accordingly, in speaking about national-colonial policy, we shall examine this question within the limits of our programme.

Comrades, taking stock of an objective situation means assessing reality in practical terms and as accurately as possible. It means looking to see how property is distributed, what the means of production are, and what the production relations are. Furthermore, it means taking into account the colossal ideological stock of spiritual culture which has been conditioned by the given economic basis. That is, strictly speaking, what is meant by taking stock of an objective situation, and to do that I unfortunately lack the time.

By developing revolutionary tactics the Soviet power, which heads and inspires the revolutionary movement in the East, gives guidance to this movement and brings to the East the totality of its proletarian soviet culture. Is there such a culture, is there a proletarian culture, and, if so, what is it? I take it as my task to show to you that, in the situation which has come about, the only way out for the peoples of the East is through very close alliance and living contact with Soviet Russia, as the leader of the revolutionary movement on the world scale.

Let us first of all note what exists in the areas concerned before we proceed to what is entering the East. In the East we have masses of peasants and, with rare exceptions, an almost complete absence of a factory proletariat. We ask ourselves: where is the centre, where is that main point around which the social revolution in the East has to be accomplished? The answer is: the peasant masses, agrarian relations, the barbarous despotism of the local rulers, and the imperialism of the West. And we understand the revolutionary movement in the East as meaning: organization of the peasantry against the feudal survivals with which the sad life of the East is so filled, and overthrow of the shameless, predatory imperialism of the West. Just as in past times the movement of the peoples from East to West was

agrarian, concerned with land, so also now, in the twentieth century, the movement of the revolution from West to East will be basically a movement concerned with land. We bring to the East emancipation of the land and of the working peasantry.

Let us look at Turkey, which has played so big a role throughout the East. It is a striking picture, at which we have only to glance in order to feel the social ghastliness of rural life as led by the Turkish peasantry. Twelve years of unbroken rule in Turkey by the party of 'Disunion and Regress', crowning the previous nightmare history of the sultans' absolutism, has brought the Anatolian peasants to a state of pauperism.

Here is the picture. Far off on the horizon we see a Turkish *aul* [village]. In the foreground a grey-haired old Turk is ploughing the land: he has harnessed to the plough, along with his one and only ox, his own daughter. The tremendous social significance of this picture is clear. All the young men have been taken away from productive work to fight in wars, and almost all the draught animals have been killed. This is the economic dead-end into which Turkish absolutism, with the benevolent co-operation of Western imperialism, has led the Turkish peasantry. This is the fulcrum upon which the lever of the revolution must accomplish social revolution in Turkey.

There is, however, a spark of proletarian organization in Turkey, there are Communist cells which carry on propaganda both legal and illegal. Mustafa Kemal's movement is a national liberation movement. We support it; but as soon as the struggle against imperialism is concluded we are sure that this movement will advance to a social revolution.

Let us proceed to Persia. The dreadful situation of unheard-of poverty in which the Persian peasants live has lasted for many years. It is enough to look round in the streets of Baku and you will see a mass of people who are dragging out a most miserable existence – products of an inhuman capitalist economy, the so-called *ambali* [labourers]. When you look at these human beings who have been deprived of the elementary meaning of life, who spend the whole day engaged in the heaviest labour merely so as not to die of hunger that same night, you realize that in Persia there is 'an excess of working population', that the soil exists there for social revolution.

It is not hard to appreciate what goes on farther off, in Afghanistan, Baluchistan and India, under the 'paternal' care of British imperialism. From India the European brigands extort countless treasures, while the legitimate owners of these treasures – the workers and peasants of India – die like flies from hunger and epidemics. I think that everyone understands that the whole essence of our work at this Congress is to explain that Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, awareness of the common interests and tasks of the whole of toiling mankind, is the *sine qua non* for the victory of labour over capital and the emancipation of the oppressed masses of mankind from the yoke of imperialism.

What cultural assets does the proletariat possess and what does it bring to the East? The scientific basis of communism is furnished by the works of Marx, Engels and many other learned men. This trend in social science is called Marxism, historical materialism. Thus, in working out their proletarian conception of the world the toilers possess a scientific asset to which the bourgeoisie has no equal.

It must be added that the proletariat sees itself as a class which cannot free itself from the yoke of capital without also freeing all the other classes of society. From this it is clear that the proletariat is the only class which strives to realize a culture truly common to all mankind. It brings to the East not disunity but the unity of all the working people of the human race, towards which purpose it has created great cultural assets in the shape of the trades unions and co-operatives. This is the outstanding strength of the proletariat, expressed in the mutual solidarity it has established – mutual confidence and firm determination to go forward together to the final, life-and-death battle with capital.

Moreover, the proletariat has created an unprecedented form of governmental organization – Soviet power. This is a very great achievement by the proletariat in the political field: very simple in structure, brilliant in concept. These are the cultural assets which the proletariat is bringing to the East in the name of the emancipation and liberation of the oppressed masses.

Of course, every human movement has its shortcomings: here too, matters do not proceed without unevenness, and so it is necessary to say a few words about the peculiar features of proletarian culture, so that you may realize that shortcomings are inevitable, that it is pointless to talk about some shortcomings, and that, finally, there are and will be shortcomings about which it is dishonest to remain silent.

The famous Christian theologian Thomas Aquinas distinguished between the church militant, fighting for its place in the world arena, and the church triumphant in its victory. The former is romantic, the latter classical. But it is not only the church that experiences this fate – the same is true of art and culture. Every culture is at first a militant culture, a culture fighting for the right to exist. Proletarian culture is a culture of struggle, of quest for the true roads by which mankind must advance: it is a romantic and not yet a classical culture. There is no triumphant tranquillity in it, it is all passion and fervour, and this is why it includes both mistakes and shortcomings.

Do not forget, either, that the class struggle, the social revolution, is a life-and-death battle between two irreconcilable camps. From this battle either labour or capital will emerge victorious, or else they will both perish. The salvation of the East lies in the victory of the proletariat, and so our only road is that of contact with Soviet Russia. Under its leadership and instruction, along with it, we must go forward against the common enemy – world capital.

I have briefly spoken to you about what exists in the East and what is entering the East. The policy of the proletariat on the national and colonial question is

expressed in the resolutions of the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, the main burden of which is as follows: unity of the proletariat and semi-proletariat of all countries and all nations, that is, what we see before us in the shape of the Third International; and abolition of the privileges and domination of one nation over another, with federation as the transitional form of the union of all the working people –

CHAIRMAN: (*Announces that the time allowed for the speech is up.*) (*Voices: 'Please continue.'*) The comrade has spoken for 20 minutes. That's more than ten minutes, but, if the Congress is willing, he can, of course, be allowed to finish his speech. (*Voices: 'Please, please.'*)

Will those in favour of Comrade Matushev finishing his speech please raise their hands? Who is against? There is a majority 'for'. So, then, the Congress wants Comrade Matushev to go on with his speech. Comrade Matushev, please continue.

MATUSHEV: (*Applause*) Comrades, I was interrupted and I don't remember what I was saying at that moment. Although I have been enabled to continue, it is not possible to enlarge very much owing to the lack of time.

My only desire is that you may take away from this Congress one simple idea, one firm consciousness, namely, that we shall either perish together with Soviet Russia or shall together with Soviet Russia live a bright new life based on communist principles – that there are on our planet two centres: the centre of bourgeois domination, Versailles, and the centre of proletarian struggle, Red Moscow.

Comrades, I should like to remind you that our ancestors at one time advanced from the East to the West as predatory conquerors, and while there is distrust among the oppressed peoples of the East towards the oppressor countries of the West, there is also the same distrust, as a survival from the past, in the countries of the West towards the peoples of the East. The days of Timur and Genghis Khan have not been forgotten. The working masses of the East and the West must not permit such mutual distrust to continue, for they have a common foe – world capital and imperialism.

Let me remind you of some lines from the verses of the great Lermontov: "The East shall not affright my ease," Kazbek made answer fair; "Already nine long centuries the race of men sleeps there".¹³ Today we can say with pride that the East is awakening from its sleep of centuries and coming out on to the common human road of social construction in fraternal unity and contact with the proletariat of the West, embodied in Red Russia.

I should like to convey for you one sharp image so as to portray in your

¹³ In his poem, 'The Dispute', Mikhail Lermontov imagines Kazbek, a peak in the Caucasus mountains, receiving a challenge to beware of the 'teeming, powerful East.' The quotation here is from Kazbek's answer, which concludes, 'No, I have no great need to fear/ the "old, decrepit East".'

imaginations that 'culture and civilization' which Western imperialism is bringing to the East, to the colonies. The poet Gorodetsky expressed in his poem 'Coffee', which was published in the Baku workers' paper *Voyenmor*, the whole power of poetic protest against this 'culture'. On the island of Java a native girl with a dark-red skin is picking coffee. On the quay a Britisher, whip in hand, is supervising the packing of the coffee, and when the work slackens however slightly he urges the slaves on with cruel blows of his 'civilized knout'. And on the island of Java wounds and groans poison life for the dark-red native girl.

The poem continues. The coffee has been picked and sent off to Europe and America. In restaurants in Paris, London or Chicago, the bourgeois, accompanied by prostitutes, guzzles on profit extracted from the sweat and blood of the proletariat. And he drinks the coffee that the Britisher got from Java. The poet writes, inspired by all the power of his poet's heart: 'This is why, when the black coffee bubbles with a golden glint in the porcelain cup, there rises to the brain a wave of desire for violent actions, and the heart suddenly, yearns for catastrophe. Blow up Europe! Sweep away with fierce will the evil shamelessness of buying and selling! No whip is needed for the flowers of the magnolia, no guard for the sun that shines on the ocean.' (*Applause*)

CHAIRMAN: Please take your seats. I call upon Comrade Ryskulov. (*Applause*)

'Only social revolution brings liberation'

Discussion: Ryskulov on the National Question

TURAR RYSKULOV: The colonial and national questions, which we are discussing today, are of very great importance for us. These questions are also very important for the capitalist system.

The last half-century of the existence of the capitalist system has been mainly based on this colonial, national policy. If we follow the activity of the capitalist powers during the last half-century we see that this last stage is a completely new form of the capitalist system, what Comrade Lenin has called monopoly capitalism, that is, the stage of capitalism in which large markets have been concentrated in the hands of separate alliances of capitalists, trusts, and in which competition proceeds between these separate alliances and groups.

As a result of this policy, this competition, we see the frenzied grabbing of colonies and of particular markets, and the forcible transformation of the inhabitants of these colonies into slaves subject to inhuman exploitation.

We see that the territories of the Black continent of Africa and of Asia have been more and more completely divided up between particular big states. As a result of this colonial policy, the world powers which are at the head of this policy clashed in their interests, formed two coalitions, and brought about the five-years' war which we have experienced, and this has resulted in the social revolution

which has taken place in Europe and has begun in the East.

At the present time it is quite pointless to dwell upon the different features of particular forms of colonial exploitation, for we have left this period behind us.

When the Second International existed colonial policy was discussed, but only on paper, in words. Essentially, the Second International endorsed the striving of the great powers for conquest. Today the Eastern question presents itself in quite a different way.

With the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia, with the victory of the Communist Party, we see that light has been thrown upon the colonial question from a different angle. There is no longer that fear which the leaders of the Second International entertained that the peoples of the East would destroy the culture of Europe. The leaders of the Second International feared this. They feared to offend the feelings of their bourgeois rulers. But there is nothing of this, nothing at all in the Communist Party, in the Third International.

The slogan of unity of the Western proletariat with the revolutionary tendency in the East, the peasants' and working people's movement in the East, has been firmly advanced.

Despite the fact that the Communist tendency is growing stronger in all countries, despite the fact that the Third International is a mighty force which is shaking the foundations of capitalism, despite the achievement of the victory of socialism, nevertheless the colonial question is of paramount importance for our policy, along with the agrarian question.

Solving these questions correctly is enormously important, and we can promote the solution of our tasks by presenting these questions correctly.



Turar Ryskulov

At the present time conditions in the East are completely favourable for the introduction of a revolutionary movement, for drawing the mass of the working people into the socialist movement. A precondition for this is the situation of the peasants which has come about as a result of the colonial activity of the great powers. A precondition for this is the legacy of the five-years' war, which has created a mass of poverty, oppression and ruin in the colonies. As a result the working people of the colonies are prepared for revolt, prepared for a revolutionary offensive against imperialism.

But while in the West the socialist movement takes the form of a communist movement, we certainly cannot count on a purely communist movement. In the East the movement assumes a petty-bourgeois character, the form of a movement for national self-determination, for the unity of the East. But this movement will undoubtedly develop into a social movement, an agrarian movement. (*Applause*)

The task of the Communist International is to wrest the working class of the West, which is still in part under the influence of the opportunists, of the compromisers, finally from under their influence, to train conscious supporters of communism, and at the same time there is the most important task, that of uniting the scattered revolutionary movement in the East with the movement in the West. This is the most important task facing the Third International.

It is for this question that we have assembled here and this is the question we shall solve here, or rather, we shall show the way to achieve its solution, we shall show how to bring about as quickly and soundly as possible the unity of the West with the East, for the final smashing of the foundations of capitalism.

In relation to the East the Third International proves, not only on paper, in appeals, in words, but in practice, in deeds, that 50 million of the peoples of the East have joined the Soviet power. We see that Soviet republics have been formed from the former colonies, in Turkestan, Caucasia and other countries with a Muslim population, and these Soviet republics are entering as federal units into Soviet Russia; and now these Soviet republics, inhabited by oppressed toilers, are developing culturally, raising their cultural level. They are now liberated and are building their own social life.

That is truly a great deed which the Communist International has performed. The break which these borderlands, these republics, have experienced, what has happened there, must serve as an example to the entire East. Let all the working people not just hearken to our appeals, to our ideas; let them look at these republics, which are examples for them. In these borderlands the Communist Party has shown that its programme is applicable not only for the Western proletariat but also in the East.

However much the supporters of the Second International and the compromisers may have argued that the colonies of the East are inhabited by slaves who can never come up to the level of Europe, who are so backward that no labour,

no effort can make them progress, despite such views as these, we see that this East, held in such low esteem by bourgeois Europe, has shown that it can join forces with Communism and Soviet power precisely among these backward Muslim peoples.

The forms of state structure and the methods of reforming economic life in the borderlands will undoubtedly serve as a graphic example for those countries of the East which have not yet freed themselves and which must be freed.

In countries of the East where revolutionary organizations are weak, where the organizations of the working people are weak, the movement is assuming, of course, a bourgeois-national character. At the head of this movement stand supporters of a petty-bourgeois revolution, supporters of democracy, but not supporters of Soviet communism. This movement, which was more united, more powerful at its inception, is of course rendering us a great service, for this force acts against the Entente, against world capital, and that helps us greatly.

The Third International, the Communist Party, must, of course, support this movement, but at the same time we have to say that it is not this movement that will finally liberate the toiling masses. Liberation of the toiling masses can be effected only through the social revolution. The petty-bourgeois revolutionaries in the East, though opposing capitalism, at the same time have nothing in common with Communism and necessarily want to set up their own independent national republics. These independent republics will exist as such only on paper, but will never be really independent. Either they must remain in the camp of the bourgeoisie, of the capitalists, or they must enter the camp of the world proletariat – there is no middle way between these two positions.

This we can see in reality. Such states as Armenia, Finland and Poland are examples which are all too eloquent. These states are not distinct entities. They were deliberately set up by the Allies, they are quite simply particular organized gangs which by special assignment from world capital are fighting against Soviet Russia. Consequently, if, somewhere in the East, say in Turkey or in other places, supporters of the revolutionary movement who are at the same time opponents of Communism should try to set up such independent states, these states would not survive: they would fall under the influence of the imperialists, of world capital, and would turn their weapons against the proletariat, against the working people of the East. The situation is clear, therefore – it is clear that the working people of the East have only this one choice: to organize themselves as quickly as possible under the slogan and banner of the Communist International, to carry through the agrarian revolution, to take the land and to take power into their own hands. This is the only solution, the only way, the only means of achieving real self-determination of the peoples, real emancipation from the yoke of world capital. (*Applause*)

Comrade Lenin in his theses on the colonial and national question at the Second Congress defined quite exactly and realistically the tasks of the Communist Party, the tasks of the Third International in the East. Although he has not been

in the East, in his theses he registers everything as though it has been taken from life. These theses point, first and foremost, to the need for liberation from the yoke of world capital and for a call to struggle against world capital not only by the Communist tendency but also by the bourgeois-national tendencies. We appeal to these bourgeois-national tendencies for alliance, but at the same time the theses show concretely that they do not provide for the final emancipation of the toilers. This movement cannot bring liberation. Furthermore, the social bases for such liberation are indicated: in this respect, the principal support for this revolution is constituted by the agrarian question.

For all the toiling classes the moment has unquestionably arrived when they must, having organized themselves, go forward together with the Western proletariat, go forward resolutely against world capital. And the precondition for this is that the oppressed peoples of the East, crushed for centuries by capitalism, that very East which once gave light to Europe, and which was also crushed by that same Europe, must rise up. In the depths of the East are hidden mighty forces, a tremendous power, which is now rising up in one mighty stream, and which, uniting with the stream of the communist movement, will finally smash the rule of world capital.

The basis for this is the fact that many Communist parties have been formed, which have been joined by the leaders of the working people of the East. This is shown by the fact that a number of Soviet republics have been formed out of former colonies. Our precondition for this is the fact that there is now in session a Congress of the Peoples of the East, of the working elements of the peoples of the East. We are on the threshold of that powerful, tremendous movement which will begin in the near future, a movement which, united in a mighty Eastern International, will, together with the Western proletariat, strike finally at the very heart of world capitalism.

Long live the Communist International, leader of the world proletariat and of all the world's toilers!

Long live the leaders of the Third International!

Long live the toilers of the East, who are now rising up powerfully and unitedly against capital! (*Applause*)

SESSION 6: SOVIETS AND THE AGRARIAN QUESTION

6 September 1920

'Soviets: So the poor can build their own destiny'

Theses on Soviet Power in the East

1. The revolution of the peoples of the East against external and internal oppression, against the foreign imperialists and the local exploiters, puts on the agenda

the question of the state system in all the countries of the East. The European bourgeoisie has succeeded for a long time, by means of all sorts of intrigues, in concealing from the propertyless and those with little property, the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements, the essential nature of state power as an instrument of oppression. In contrast to this, in the states of the East the coercive nature of the ruling power is quite obvious.

The lives and all the products of the labour of the poor, who are totally without political rights, are objects to be bought and sold by various sultans, shahs, emirs and tribal leaders, and by the rich and the bureaucratic cliques associated with them. This situation prepared the way for the imperialist exploiters, who, in the colonial countries and those reduced to a semi-colonial condition, always concluded their deals with the help of the state rulers and the higher officers and officials, at the expense of the poor.

2. As in Western states, the rich exploiting strata of the population in the Near-Eastern countries have tried to give their rule an appearance of democracy. Turkey and Persia have been parliamentarized. Georgia (under the leadership of the Mensheviks), Armenia (under the leadership of the Dashnaks) and Azerbaijan (under the leadership of the Musavatists) have been transformed into democratic republics. This has taken place under the slogans of freedom and equality.

All these policies proved useless, however, even for creating a facade of democracy. Unheard-of poverty of the masses continues, together with prosperity for the agents of the foreign imperialists. The land remains in the power of its previous owners, the old tribute system continues, bringing immeasurable harm to the working people, and not only is usury tolerated, it is backed by the state power, to the detriment of the poor. All this has revealed the falsity of the slogans about equality put forward by the Turkish, Persian and Azerbaijani national-democratic parties, and also by the Menshevik and Dashnak parties, which operate under cover of socialist slogans.

3. Even after the rule of the foreign imperialists has been eliminated, the revolution of the toiling masses of the East will not come to a halt. It will not cease with a system which, under the false slogan of democracy, under cover of slogans of equality, seeks to maintain the power of the sultans, shahs, emirs, pashas and beys, seeks to maintain the oppression of the working people, inequality between the haves and the have-nots, the oppressors and the oppressed, between rich and poor, those who pay tribute and those who live on this tribute. The revolution will not halt at the estate boundaries of the landlords, proclaimed to be sacred. The Eastern peasantry, like the Russian, will develop their revolution to the dimensions of a huge agrarian peasant revolution, as a result of which the land must pass into the possession of the working people and all exploitation must disappear.

The Russian peasantry carried through their agrarian revolution with the support of the industrial workers under the leadership of the Communist Party. Now, welded together in soviets, they are defending the land they took from the

landlords and the power they took from the exploiters – in the same way the oppressed peasantry of the East will in their revolutionary struggle count upon the support of the revolutionary workers of the West, on the support of the Communist International and on that of the present and future Soviet states.

4. Soviet power and soviet organization are not only the instrument of power and the organizational form of the industrial proletariat, but also constitute the only appropriate system whereby the working masses, after excluding from power the privileged, and consequently hostile, elements (landlords, speculators, higher officials, officers) can themselves build their own destiny. Only Soviet power gives power exclusively to the toiling poor. Unity of the Soviets, and their federation, is the only way to secure peaceful co-operation between the toiling elements of different peoples who have hitherto slaughtered each other in the East, and to help them to join forces to destroy the power of their oppressors, both foreign and native, and repel the oppressors' attempts to restore the former position.

5. So-called democratic self-government, putting the administration exclusively into the hands of the privileged strata (khans, beys and so on) prevents the toiling masses from managing their own affairs. It deprives them of the possibility of learning to govern, stops them from acquiring the knowledge they need for this purpose. In contrast to this, experience among the peasants of Soviet Russia, Siberia, the Bashkir-Kyrgyz republic and Turkestan has shown that the peasants of the Eastern countries are capable of managing their own affairs.

6. The victory of the Communist Party in the West will put an end to the exploitation of the Eastern peoples. But victory for the communist revolution in the West will not mean that East and West can then get on without mutual economic links. On the contrary, the victory of the revolution in the East and in the West will mean that in relations between different countries there will be, instead of exploitation, reciprocal support and aid. After the victory of the communist revolution, economic intercourse will take place between states, and so the economic intercourse of those Eastern states which have not adopted the soviet system would only serve the interests of the small group of capitalists who, having obtained corn and raw materials, would carry on trade with the Western Soviet states in exactly the same way as they do at the present time with the imperialist states exploiting for this purpose the toiling masses of the East.

In the interests of complete liberation from imperialist exploitation, with transfer of the land to the toilers and emancipation from the power of speculator-exploiters, what is needed is removal from power of the non-working element, of all foreign colonialist elements (generals, officials, etc.) and of all privileged persons. It is also necessary to organize the rule of the poor on Soviet principles. And all the other interests of the working people demonstrate to the East that it is imperative to establish Soviet power.

(Delegates vote unanimously to adopt the theses.)

'Refuse obligations towards feudal landlords; overthrow their power'*Theses on the Agrarian Question*

1. The peasantry of the countries of the East, being the sole productive class and sustaining by their labour not only the landlords but also the entire bourgeoisie and bureaucracy, are crushed beneath a burden of survivals of feudalism, relations of bondage, landlords' extortions and state taxes, and find themselves in an absolutely unbearable situation of utter ruin, chronic hunger, endless indebtedness and work for landlords, tribute-collectors and usurers.

The oppression and exploitation of the peasants of the Eastern countries by the ruling authority, by foreign capitalists and by their own landlords have reached such a degree that not only development but even a more human existence has become impossible for the peasants. They have been degraded to the position of downtrodden and perpetually hungry beasts of burden.

2. The sources of the oppression and exploitation of the peasants are:

a) the retention of feudal relations, which place the peasants in both personal and economic dependence upon the landlords;

b) the seizure of the land by the landlords, which enables them, owing to the inadequate availability of free land, to reduce the peasants to bondage and turn them, though legally free, into *de facto* serfs;

c) the seizure of the land by the ruling authority, which leases out considerable tracts to the privileged classes and the capitalists, thus giving the latter a monopoly of landownership and obliging the peasants to become sub-tenants and labourers, under very burdensome conditions;

d) the unbearable burden of taxes and the predatory way these are levied, by the irresponsible bureaucratic organs of the despotic ruling power;

e) the lack of personal security, anarchy, and systematic brigandage by half-savage nomad tribes, which are backed by the ruling authority in their attacks on the peasants;

f) the extreme ruin of the peasants caused by all these conditions, resulting in their complete impoverishment, and the monstrous indebtedness of the cultivators, arising from this ruin, so that they fall into a state of absolute economic dependence on usurers and the object of their work becomes the unending repayment of loans and the interest on loans to various banks, landlords, kulaks and usurers;

g) the peasants' complete lack, as a result of their ruin, of means and instruments of production – money, agricultural machinery, draught animals, seed-corn, etc. – which means that it becomes impossible for the peasants to work for themselves on their own land, even when free and accessible land is available to them.

3. In order to bring about liberation from the unbearable burden of oppression, exploitation and ruin and to create the conditions necessary for them to work for themselves so as to satisfy all their needs and make further development possible, the peasants of the Eastern countries must:

a) remove the prime source of all their oppression and exploitation, the power of the foreign capitalist conquerors and of their own despotic tyrants, the sultans, shahs, khans and beys, with their entire parasitic train of bureaucrats and spongers, and take power, with all its administrative, economic and financial functions into their own hands, by forming local and central peasants' soviets and setting up peasant Soviet republics of the East, linked in one indissoluble federation with the Soviet republics of the countries of the West;

b) refuse to fulfil any obligations towards the feudal landlords; overthrow their power; abolish all personal and economic dependence upon them; abolish large-scale landownership, under whatever legal form it may be concealed; take the land from the landlords without any purchase-price or compensation, and divide it among the peasants, tenants and labourers who till it; take the herds of animals belonging to the landlords and divide them, in the first place among the labourers who possess no animals at all, and then among the tenants and poor peasant cultivators; turn over the implements found on the landlords' estates to collective ownership by the peasants who have occupied the land. The peasants should unite in groups, concentrating the implements made available to them for use in collective cultivation of the land, which ensures the best results and the most rapid development of the peasants' economy and of their prosperity;

c) take over all lands belonging to the state and to its various institutions, both secular and spiritual (including *waqf* lands) and divide them among the peasants and tenants, sub-tenants and labourers who work these lands, with complete abolition of all the rights of the big tenant-farmers who act as intermediaries between the state and the peasants, and confiscation for the benefit of the peasants of all the animals and implements belonging to these tenant-farmers;

d) cancel all existing land legislation and all restrictions on the right to use the land and to make changes on the surface of the holdings; proclaim that all land, regardless of its origin and independently of the rights of any owners or occupiers, belongs to the state and that it can be utilized free of charge by anyone who works it with his own labour; establish by means of a single land law the rule that 'whoever works a plot of land with his own labour is the possessor of that land and the owner of its produce', and at the same time declare that the small-scale holdings of peasants who do not use others' labour are inviolable, and nobody has the right to encroach upon them for any purpose whatsoever;

e) regulate the utilization of local irrigation water supplies and irrigated land, this to be the responsibility of the peasant soviets, both local and central;

f) secure the interests of the nomadic tribes, assigning for their use areas of pasture-land sufficient to meet their needs, and at the same time take all measures required to ease the transition of the nomads to a settled way of life;

g) cancel all existing taxes, including the tithe, replacing them with a single assessed levy of a proportion of all the peasants' produce, this being necessary for the maintenance of the urban workers and of the army; the amount of this

levy, its assessment and also the actual process of collection to be determined and implemented by the peasant soviets, and everything taken from the peasants by means of this levy to be compensated by an assessed payment to the peasants of all the goods produced by urban industry which they need;

h) cancel all peasants' debts of every kind, to the state and to its various secular and spiritual institutions, to banks, landlords, and traders, and recognize as invalid all manner of peasants' debt liabilities;

i) undertake, after organizing peasant soviets and peasant Soviet republics in the East, with the help and support of the Soviet republics of the industrial West, the supply to the peasants, on an extensive scale, of agricultural machinery, tools, draught animals and other means of production needed for carrying on agriculture; arranging for joint use of these means of production by all the peasants; undertake the organizing of agronomic aid to the peasants and collective working of the land, without any compulsion of individual cultivators to participate in this; undertake the organizing of peasant producers' co-operatives, both for agriculture and for handicrafts, with extensive state support and gradual statization; undertake the organizing among the peasants of consumers' co-operatives with extensive state support and gradual statization, arranging through these co-operatives the supply to the peasants of all the products of urban industry needed by them; organize on free, uncultivated land, in step with the supplying of the peasants with all the means of production needed for agriculture, communist soviet farms, to be run, under state supervision, by agricultural workers organized in production associations; endeavour to develop these communist soviet farms on as wide a scale as possible, with a view to using their surplus produce for exchange for needed urban-industrial goods which are produced by the industrial countries of Europe.

4. The mere establishment of the political independence of the Eastern countries, such as Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, etc., and the proclamation of the merely political independence of the colonial countries – India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Arabia, etc. – cannot liberate the peasants of the East from oppression, exploitation and ruin. If the capitalist system is retained in Europe and Asia, the countries of the East which win freedom from political dependence upon the imperialist countries of the West, being more backward industrially, inevitably remain in complete economic dependence upon the latter, and, as before, serve as areas for the application of the finance-capital of the European industrial countries, which is associated with capitalist exploitation of the peasants and workers. If the capitalist system is retained, then, even in the event of the conquest of complete political independence by the countries and colonies of the East, the peasants of these countries must inevitably pass through an agonizing period of primitive capitalist accumulation, associated with their final ruin, eviction from the land, proletarianization and transformation into wage-earning factory hands or agricultural labourers, deprived of their own holdings and compelled to sell their labour power.

The peasantry of the East, now marching arm in arm with their own democratic bourgeoisie to win independence for their countries from the West European imperialist powers, must remember that they have their own special tasks to perform, that their liberation will not be achieved merely by the winning of political independence, and that therefore they cannot halt and rest content when this is won. The peasantry of the East must go forward, continuing to fight even after the independence of their countries has been won – they must continue the fight against their dependence on their own landlords and their own bourgeoisie, who will certainly try, after the achievement of independence, to replace exploitation of the peasants by the West European capitalists by exploitation of these peasants by themselves, the local landlords and bourgeoisie.

For complete and real liberation of the peasantry of the East from all forms of oppression, dependence and exploitation, it is also necessary to overthrow the rule of their own landlords and bourgeoisie and to establish Soviet power of the workers and peasants in the countries of the East. Only the complete abolition of the capitalist system, in West and East alike, will enable the peasants of the East not to lose but to retain and develop their holdings, and, avoiding the necessity of passing through an agonizing phase of primitive capitalist accumulation, to advance, with the help of the working class of the more advanced countries, through a certain period of development, to the communist order, which will ensure for every peasant full freedom and full use of all the products of his labour.

Only the complete triumph of the social revolution and the establishment of a world-wide communist economy can free the peasantry of the Eastern countries from ruin, want, poverty, famine, oppression and exploitation. And so for the peasants of the East, in their struggle for emancipation, there is no other road than that of struggle, together with the advanced revolutionary workers of the West, in close alliance with the Soviet republics these have formed, both against foreign capitalist conquerors and against their own despots – landlords, bourgeois and other oppressors – carrying on this struggle without retreating until complete victory has been won over the world bourgeoisie, until the complete victory of the social revolution, until the final establishment of the communist order, which alone can bring true liberation to all the peoples of West and East alike, abolishing all oppression of one people by another and every kind of exploitation of man by man. (*Translation*)

(Delegates vote unanimously to adopt the theses.)

SESSION 7: CONCLUDING REMARKS*7 September 1920***‘Organize the activists in the East’***Resolution on Council for Propaganda and Action*

The First Congress of the Peoples of the East resolves to form, under the aegis of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, a permanent organ uniting the peoples of the East to be called ‘the Council for Propaganda of the Peoples of the East’. The council will be made up as follows (the secretary will read the list of members separately); that means that 47 persons will be elected to it. Eastern peoples not represented at the First Congress are entitled to send delegates to the Council in addition to these.

The Council for Propaganda and Action will organize propaganda throughout the East; publish a journal, to be called *Narody Vostoka* (The Peoples of the East) in three languages; organize the publication of pamphlets, leaflets, etc.; support and unify the liberation movement throughout the East; organize a university of the social sciences for activists in the East; and so on. The Council for Propaganda and Action of the Peoples of the East will be centred at Baku until the next Congress of the Peoples of the East, which will be held not later than one year from now.

Plenary (full) meetings of the Council for Propaganda and Action, to deal with all matters arising, will be held not less often than every three months, in Baku.

Between plenary meetings of the Council for Propaganda and Action all questions will be dealt with by a presidium of seven, to be elected by the Council.

The Council will organize branches in Tashkent and in other places where these may be needed.

All the Council’s work will be carried on under the guidance and supervision of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, which will appoint two of the seven members of the Council’s Presidium, and these representatives will have the right of veto.

‘Peoples of Bukhara have been freed at last’*Report by Rodzhabov on triumph in Bukhara*

RODZHABOV (*speaking in Turkic*): Comrades, very important events have taken place in Bukhara. ‘Bukhara the Magnificent’, that wellspring of learning which a few centuries ago was named the Magnificent and regarded as a centre of learning, has for some years now been transformed into a mere wretched *kishlak* [village]. This has happened because a despotic form of government has existed in Bukhara. The Emir of Bukhara has ruled in such a way that out of the 25 million inhabitants only five million have in recent times been left under his yoke. The remaining

20 million have been split up and conquered by the imperialists and the Russian Imperial Government. Imperialism has seized purely Bukharan dominions. Until now the Bukharans have not led a human existence. They have been oppressed, they wept day and night and were unable to live like people in other countries.

Now things have changed. After the October Revolution the Emir of Bukhara sought his happiness under the wing of the British imperialists, sent presents to British officers and so on, but nevertheless the people continued to be oppressed. The workers made their preparations, and now they have done what needed to be done, and we see the revolution already on the march in Bukhara. Bukhara, Qarshi, Chardzhou [Turkmenabat], Xatyrchi and Kerki have been captured by the Red troops. The red flag is flying from the towers of these five towns hoisted there by the Soviet and workers' forces.

Comrades, the workers and peasants of the Red Army greet you on this day! The peoples of Bukhara have been freed at last – and the other peoples will very soon be freed as well! (*'The Internationale'*)

'We will prove your most loyal comrades . . . we are not afraid'

Najiye for Women of the East

CHAIRMAN: The Presidium has decided also to call upon a representative of the women, Comrade Najiye. (*Applause*)

(*Najiye speaks in Turkish. Her speech is interrupted by applause.*)

CHAIRMAN: I call upon Comrade Shabanova.

SHABANOVA: Comrades, Comrade Najiye said: The women's movement beginning in the East must not be looked at from the standpoint of those frivolous feminists who are content to see woman's place in social life as that of a delicate plant or an elegant doll. This movement must be seen as a serious and necessary consequence of the revolutionary movement which is taking place throughout the world. The women of the East are not merely fighting for the right to walk in the street without wearing the *chador*, as many people suppose. For the women of the East, with their high moral ideals, the question of the *chador*, it can be said, is of the least importance. If the women who form half of every community are set up against the men and do not have the same rights as they have, then it is obviously impossible for society to progress: the backwardness of Eastern societies is irrefutable proof of this.

Comrades, you can be sure that all our efforts and labours to realize new forms of social life, however sincere and however vigorous our endeavours may be, will remain without result if you do not summon the women to become real helpers in your work.

In Turkey, owing to the conditions caused by the war, women have been obliged to quit the home and the household and take on the performance of a



Najiye Hanum

variety of social duties. Women have had to take over the responsibilities of the men who have been called up for military service, and women in the roadless localities of Anatolia, inaccessible even to pack-animals, have been themselves dragging artillery equipment and munitions to where the troops need them.

These facts cannot, of course, be called a step forward in the conquest of equal rights for women. People who see the fact that women are making up with their labour for the shortage of beasts of burden as contributing to the cause of equal rights for women are unworthy of our attention. We do not deny that at the beginning of the 1908

revolution some measures were introduced for women's benefit. In view, however, of the ineffectiveness and inadequacy of these measures, we do not regard them as highly significant.

The opening of one or two lower and higher schools for women in the capital and in the provinces, and even the opening of a university for women, does not accomplish one thousandth part of what still needs to be done. From the Turkish government, whose actions are based on the oppression and exploitation of the weaker by the stronger, one cannot, of course, expect more fundamental or serious measures on behalf of women held in bondage.

But we know, too, that the position of our sisters in Persia, Bukhara, Khiva, Turkestan, India and other Muslim countries is even worse. However, the injustice done to us and to our sisters has not remained unpunished. Proof of this is to be seen in the backwardness and decline of all the countries of the East. Comrades, you must know that the evil done to women has never passed and will never pass without retribution.

This conference of the Congress of the Peoples of the East is drawing to its close. We are therefore obliged through lack of time to refrain from discussing the position of women in the various countries of the East. But let the comrade delegates who are entrusted with the great mission of taking back to their homelands the great principles of the revolution not forget that all the efforts they devote to winning happiness for the peoples will remain fruitless unless there is real help from the women.

The Communists consider it necessary, in order to get rid of all misfortunes, to create a classless society, and to this end they declare relentless war against all the bourgeois and privileged elements. The women Communists of the East have an even harder battle to wage because, in addition, they have to fight against the despotism of their menfolk. If you, men of the East, continue now, as in the past, to be indifferent to the fate of women, you can be sure that our countries will perish, and you and us together with them: the alternative is for us to begin, together with all the oppressed, a bloody life-and-death struggle to win our rights by force. I will briefly set forth the women's demands. If you want to bring about your own emancipation, listen to our demands and render us real help and co-operation:

1. Complete equality of rights.
2. Ensuring unconditional opportunity for women to make use of the educational and vocational training institutions established for men.
3. Equality of rights of both parties to marriage. Unconditional abolition of polygamy.
4. Unconditional admission of women to employment in legislative and administrative institutions.
5. Everywhere, in cities, towns and villages, committees for the rights and protection of women to be established.

Without any doubt we are entitled to raise these demands. The Communists, recognizing that we have equal rights, have reached out their hand to us, and we women will prove their most loyal comrades. True, we may be stumbling in pathless darkness, we may be standing on the brink of yawning chasms, but we are not afraid, because we know that in order to see the dawn one has to pass through the dark night.

CHAIRMAN: Comrades, Comrade Bibinur will also speak, on behalf of the women of Turkestan. (*Loud applause*)

'A bright sun has reached us'
Bibinur for Women of Turkestan

BIBINUR (*in Turkic*): I bring you greetings, dear comrades, from the working women, both Russian and Muslim, of the town of Aulie-Ata [Dzhambul].

Dear comrades, you have gathered here in this Congress of the Peoples of the East to take decisions about the tremendous tasks that confront you. You represent the very best forces of the toiling and oppressed masses. All the oppressed nationalities of the East who have been ruthlessly exploited by tsarism and imperialism for hundreds of years look to you, their deputies, with hope.

We, the women of the East, are exploited ten times worse than the men, and the ugly sides of the life led by those recluses, the Muslim women of the East, affect us more closely.

But now, dear comrades, a bright sun has reached us, warming and comforting us like little children in their cradles. It is the first we have known, it is the power of the Soviets of workers, peasants' and *dekhkans*' deputies. Soviet power is our mother and we are its children. The soul of this Soviet power, the liberator and vanguard of the working people of the whole world, is the Russian Communist Party and the valiant Red Army, which has won justice for the oppressed with the blood of its fraternal workers. We too must fight tirelessly, working for the emancipation of all the oppressed peoples of the East. We women have awakened from our nightmare of oppression, and every day are strengthening your ranks with our best forces. We look forward to your fruitful work.

Long live the Congress of Peoples of the Red East!

Long live all the oppressed peoples of the East! Long live the Third International!

Long live the women's section of the town of Aulie-Ata and of all Turkestan!

'Workers of the world and oppressed peoples, unite!'

Closing remarks by Zinoviev

ZINOVIEV: And so, comrades, the Congress of the Peoples of the East, convened by the Executive Committee of the Communist International, has not only taken place but has successfully concluded its work, and crowned it by setting up a permanent centre for the revolutionary struggle of the Peoples of the East. (*Applause*)

Comrades, in my many years of revolutionary activity it has been my lot to take part in more than one big congress. Nonetheless, I must in all conscience say that I have never had to organize or take part in a more significant congress, fraught with greater revolutionary consequences than this one, a congress as gigantically important as this one, dealing with something so new and unprecedented. Such is the congress we have just been holding. It went down in the history of mankind from the moment when it began and when the enslaved oppressed, exploited peoples of the East assembled here.

The first tinkle of the chairman's bell on this platform was the funeral knell of the world bourgeoisie.

Comrades, we have not always had the time to appreciate what a great historical event we are taking part in. Just think what has happened, what has gone on in this hall. Peoples who until now have been looked upon by the whole bourgeois world as draught animals whose task was to draw water for them, as peoples of inferior blood, as peoples whose special destiny it was, so to speak, to draw water for the bourgeoisie, peoples about whom the bourgeoisie always felt tranquil (no danger of fire there, they said) – these peoples are now rising in revolt. During the last few years the bourgeoisie has been afraid that the workers in the West would revolt. But as regards the peoples of the East the bourgeoisie has been quite tranquil until very recently. And then, just when it was sleeping sweetly on a soft pillow, when it

was sure that there was no danger to be expected from that quarter, at that very moment a congress of the oppressed peoples of the East assembles, gets organized and goes onto the attack with unprecedented, amazing, heart-lifting unanimity. (*Loud applause*) That is the most important aspect of our Congress.

Just think. Peoples who for decades were at daggers drawn with each other, who did not associate with each other, who baited each other – delegates from these peoples have felt from the first moment like members of one family, despite their not understanding each other's languages. A fraternal unanimity has arisen at once, so that it has seemed that we were one family, a fraternal, friendly family. This is the greatness of our Congress.



Grigori Zinoviev

This is a simple, elementary fact, but it is precisely for that reason that it is great. And we have the right to say that such a congress as the one which the walls of this building in Baku have witnessed, at the beginning of September 1920, is without precedent in the world. This congress means that the old, bourgeois, oppressors' world has come to its end; it means that the main reserves of toiling mankind have awakened, to create a completely new order, a wholly unprecedented way of life on earth.

Comrades, our Congress has been heterogeneous, many-coloured, in its composition. Represented at it have been peoples who have already won Soviet power for themselves, who are sister-republics of our Russian Soviet Republic, while, on the other hand, also represented here have been peoples among whom the struggle is still on the boil, where it is still only just flaring up. This heterogeneity has resulted in some misunderstandings. When we discussed the question of our executive organ, some comrades felt they were at a Congress of Soviets of the Peoples of the East. That does not yet exist. We look at India, which has only a handful of representatives here – a huge country oppressed by British capital, where there is still no Soviet republic, where the struggle has only begun to blaze up. We have countries like Turkey, where an overt civil war is in progress, where several governments are in conflict and the struggle between them has not yet ceased. We see a similar scene in Persia, where there are two governments and where the struggle is burning more fiercely with every passing day.

And here too we have bourgeois-democratic republics like Armenia. We have frequently spoken about Armenia here. There is not one Armenia. There is on the one hand workers' and peasants' Armenia, to which we extend a fraternal hand,

and on the other the accursed, bourgeois Armenia of the Dashnak hangmen. (*Loud applause*)

And the same situation exists in Georgia. Today the Georgian workers and the Georgian peasants are oppressed as nowhere else. Because Social Democrats are in power there the best veteran fighters of Georgia have been put in prison. And the present leaders of Georgia, such as Zhordania, have descended to such a level of shamelessness that their own old teacher, an old revolutionary like Comrade Mikha Tskhakaya, is being held in prison by these gentry. There is not one Georgia; there is the Georgia of Messrs. Chkheidze, Gegechkori and Co., who scurry around in the anterooms of bourgeois ministers in Europe, and there is the Georgia of the honest workers and peasants, our brothers, with whom we march arm in arm and shoulder to shoulder. (*Applause*)

It is all the more remarkable that a congress so mixed in composition should have been united on all fundamental questions.

Comrades, I want to touch upon one question which is a rather painful one for the Soviet republics, and in the first place for Turkestan and others. These republics are our sisters. The struggle there was very hard, the workers and peasants there achieved the soviet form of government only with great difficulty, and they are loyal to their fraternal alliance with Soviet Russia. There, alongside gigantic work to establish workers' and peasants' rule, along with tremendous changes and overturns, a phenomenon has been observed which we have to admit is extremely undesirable and regrettable, and about which we make a point of speaking in this very great, triumphant and historic assembly.

Yes, the Soviet power in Russia, the Council of People's Commissars and the Communist International know that in Turkestan and in the other fraternal Soviet republics in the East, certain elements which have attached themselves to the Communist Party act in such a way as to bring shame on the title of Communist, inciting one section of the population against another, offending the native peasantry, taking their land from them. Certain scions of the old bourgeois Russia who have settled there and have wormed their way into our ranks carry on the accursed tradition of the bourgeoisie and of tsarism, continuing to look upon the local population as an inferior race. And this gives rise to the most legitimate and justified indignation.

We address ourselves in this assembly to the Russian Communist comrades, to the Red Army men, to all the activists whose task it is to carry out the line of the Soviet power in the East – we turn to them and say: remember that you are at a post of threefold responsibility – every mistake you make, even a very small one (not to speak of straightforward abuses) will cost us dear. We address ourselves to the activists from Russia who are called upon to work in Turkestan and other Soviet republics of the East, to point out that our Party and the Communist International require of them to remain firmly at the height of the honoured title of Communist,

so that they never forget that the native working population are our brothers, so that they break once and for all with the accursed old heritage left to use by the bourgeoisie and tsarism, so that they do not dare to insult the toilers, the local inhabitants, so that they would rather cut off their hand than commit an injustice. (*Loud applause*)

There was a period, a dark, sad period, when Russian officers and a Russian army of serfs led by these officers were sent by the Tsar to suppress popular revolts and destroy the best section of the Polish people of those days. And at that time one of Russia's best writers, A.I. Herzen, exclaimed: 'When I see what my kinsmen are doing, what the Russian army and Russian officers are doing, I am ashamed to be a Russian.' So spoke A.I. Herzen. We do not live in such a time as that, none of us need be ashamed to be Russian, for Russia has been the first country to raise the red flag and the first to help other peoples to emancipate themselves. But it is a matter for shame that persons who have wormed their way into our ranks, through misunderstanding or self-interest, are behaving in our sister-republics in a way that compels us to blush and to remember the harsh words of A.I. Herzen.

Comrades, at this assembly we give a solemn undertaking to those present that our Party and the Communist International are doing everything in their power to clear the weeds right out of our garden (*Loud applause*), to purge our ranks, and to ensure that every one of us who is called upon to carry out Soviet policy in the awakening East understands that this is a holy place, that this work needs to be approached with clean hands and a clear head.

The distrust which decades of experience have implanted in the peoples of the East, their justified distrust of Europeans, who have always merely deceived and swindled them, only mocked them – this distrust is sometimes involuntarily, semi-consciously transferred today to the new, workers' Europe, and, in the first place to our Soviet power, to Soviet Russia. As people of labour, as serious revolutionaries, we have to understand where the roots of this distrust lie, and we have by our work and our fraternal support in these years – the most difficult years – to create the feeling that we are one fraternal family, all members of which look with the same horror on the old, accursed past, and all as one fight against those who divide us.

I hope, I am sure, that this Congress and the fact that we have heard here what you have told us at this Congress will bring us so close together and bind our fraternal family so firmly that no mistakes made by individuals, or even crimes committed by particular groups, will divide us from you, henceforth and forever. We are one single, fraternal family, with the same enemies and wanting the same friends, and knowing only the same ideas. (*Loud applause*)

Comrades, the revolution of 1905 in Russia which was essentially only a dress-rehearsal for that great revolution which we are experiencing today, that revolution, though it was soon crushed, nevertheless, as you remember, spread at once to the East, evoking echoes in Turkey, in Persia and in other Eastern countries. Just as

the 1905 revolution was, in comparison with the great revolution of October 1917, mere child's play, so the response with which our revolution is meeting in the East today is a million times greater than in 1905.

Yes, comrades, across thousands of versts, despite the distance and the differences of language, a great revolution in a great country will inevitably kindle the hearts of the toilers of other countries. And the greatest pride for a Russian revolutionary must be the knowledge that the sparks of our revolution have spread to the powder-magazine of the East, and that the effect of this is being borne back to us here in explosion after explosion. In this lies the great significance of our revolution. It has not only set fire to the West, but the East too is in conflagration before our eyes. Our Congress has stepped forward in the role of the greatest organizer and collective incendiary of the East, for it is kindling the greatest revolt on earth – against the bourgeoisie, against the serf-owners and capitalists. (*Applause*)

We have discussed only a few questions, but we have discussed them very seriously and have adopted completely unanimous resolutions. Comrades, we have had to translate everything said into various languages, but it has not been necessary to translate the word 'soviets', for this is known throughout the world, in West and East alike. The East will be Soviet! (*Applause*)

Comrades, we have set up a Council of Action. At the moment this is still a young organization, only just born, but no one sitting in this hall will say that I am a great optimist if I express the view that this Council of Action is already stronger in the East than the bourgeois cabinet in Britain, or than any other cabinet. (*Applause*) The cabinets of Britain and France will decline in power, will wane with every passing day, will perish before the eyes of mankind – they are living out their last days like dogs. But the peoples of the East are the rising star. We and you, comrades, will become a greater power with every day that passes. Paraphrasing Marx's words we can say that all the British and French imperialists are unable now to take a single step without first thinking: but how will the peoples of the East react? Won't they do something against us, against the imperialists?

We have not disputed here as to whether Soviets are necessary or not – that is clear to us. We have not disputed as to whether we need to be united – that also is clear. But look at how united the bourgeoisie are. They say, in all languages: 'Entente, Entente.' What does this word mean? An entente is a cordial agreement. But we say that in this agreement it is not so much the heart as the purse that is operative. (*Applause*) Look and see how this Entente is breaking up before our eyes. It cannot decide a single question, the partners are tripping each other up, they are quarrelling, they are travelling around all the spas of Europe discussing the 'Russian question.' They discuss the Russian question more than any other. It is a hard nut for them, which they cannot crack and never will. (*Loud applause*)

Comrades, after our Congress we are perfectly justified in saying that the brigands, the British and French imperialists, will never solve the so-called Russian

question which is such a curse to them – but we and you and the Communist International will within a few years completely solve the European question. (*Loud applause*) Comrades, the first two days of our Congress were spent in discussing what our attitude should be towards the Entente, towards imperialism. And for us that moment after the first report, when the assembled representatives of the peoples of the East swore to begin a holy war, that moment will be preserved in our hearts as a sacred experience. That was the basis for everything else, that is what unites us all. *Yes, a holy war against the plunderers and capitalists!* And all of you will, as practical people, translate that oath into the language of facts. When you return home you will tell the peasants, both men and women, you will tell all the working people, what we have decided, the oath that we took, the line we marked out. And we shall feel with every hour how our unity is growing, our forces strengthening, we shall climb still higher, drawing near to the last barrier, and this last barrier we shall take: we shall end the civil war, stretch out a fraternal hand to the West – to Europe and America – and unite in one family, so as, together, to build a new life! (*Applause*)

Karl Marx, the teacher of us all, issued 70 years ago the call: ‘Workers of all lands, unite!’ We, Karl Marx’s pupils, the continuators of his work, can expand this formulation, supplementing and broadening it, and say: ‘Workers of all lands *and oppressed peoples of the whole world, unite!*’ (*Loud applause. ‘The Internationale’.*)

Comrades, we cannot bring to the Communist International and to the workers of the whole world any more joyful news than that, after the uniting of the workers of the West and of America, the toilers of the whole East have united. Let us remember only what unites us. Let us tear out of our hearts whatever can disunite us. Let us remember that we have one enemy – British and French imperialism. Let each of us devote his life – even dozens of lives, if we had them – to the cause of liberating the peoples of the East and of the whole world! (*Loud applause. ‘The Internationale’.*)

Comrades, the Presidium congratulates you on the successful conclusion of the Congress and declares the First Congress of the Peoples of the East closed.

Long live the Third International!

(*Loud applause. Shouts of ‘Hurrah’. ‘The Internationale’.*)

CORRECTING ABUSES OF SOVIET POWER IN TURKESTAN

Immediately following the close of the Baku congress, 27 delegates of Eastern Peoples travelled to Moscow to raise with the Communist Party Political Bureau, its day-to-day leadership Party, the abuses of Soviet power discussed at the conference by Narbutabekov and Zinoviev. They took with them a lengthy statement signed by 22 delegates. In response, the Political Bureau adopted the following statement, drafted with Lenin’s close involvement.

Communist Tasks Among Eastern Peoples

Excerpt from minutes of the Political Bureau, Communist Party of Russia, 14 October 1920

Tasks of the Communist Party of Russia in areas inhabited by Eastern peoples:

The Politburo of the Central Committee has discussed the reports and statements made at its meeting with 27 delegates from the Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East from the Mountain peoples of the Caucasus in the districts of Terek and Dagestan (Chechens, Ingushes, Ossetians, Kabardians, Balkars, Karachays, and Mountain Jews) and from Turkestan, the Kalmyk region, Persia, India, Mongolia, the Buryat region, Tibet, and the Indian Association. The Political Bureau has decided the following:

1. To publish a manifesto in the name of the Supreme Soviet reaffirming the principles of the national policy of the Russian Soviet Republic (RSFSR) and establishing effective supervision over its implementation in real life.

2. On the agrarian question, to affirm the need to provide the landless Mountain People of the Northern Caucasus with land at the expense of kulak elements of the Cossack population. The Council of People's Commissars is to prepare appropriate decrees immediately.

3. To affirm the need to implement autonomy, in forms appropriate to local conditions, for Eastern nationalities that still lack autonomous institutions – first and foremost for the Kalmyks and Buryat Mongols. The task of drafting a decree on Kalmyk autonomy will be assigned to the Commissariat of Nationalities. The Commissariat of Foreign Affairs will communicate with the fraternal Far Eastern Republic about taking such measures in relation to the Buryat Mongols.

4. To carry out a strict investigation into abuses and acts of violence committed by the local Russian population toward the Eastern peoples (especially the Kalmyks, Buryat Mongols, etc.) and to punish the offenders.

5. To propose to the meeting's participants that they give the party Central Committee a list of persons belonging to the Eastern nationalities who, in their opinion, should be amnestied.

6. To affirm the need to organize a school under the Commissariat of Nationalities that will train Soviet and party cadres from among the workers and peasants of the Eastern nationalities.

7. To cut to a minimum the number of emissaries sent by various central institutions to regions of the RSFSR inhabited by Eastern peoples. Further, to give these emissaries detailed instructions stipulating, above all, the need to conduct all their work through local organizations and appropriate Soviet institutions.

8. To direct the attention of the All-Russia Cheka to the need to select Cheka personnel with particularly painstaking care in the outlying regions, and in particular in localities inhabited by Eastern nationalities.

9. To recognize that representatives of the Central Committee of the

Communist Party of Russia in regions of the RSFSR inhabited primarily by Eastern nationalities, and also in party organizations in these regions, have as their chief task to struggle against bourgeois and pseudo-Communist groups among the local population, while supporting the genuinely Communist groups and elements.

10. To strengthen the work of the Soviet of Nationalities under the People's Commissariat of Nationalities. A report on this work is to be made at the next meeting of the Council of People's Commissars.

MANIFESTO OF THE CONGRESS TO THE PEOPLES OF THE EAST

On 1 September 1920, in the city of Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, a congress was held of representatives of the peoples of the East. Our Congress was attended by 1,891 delegates from the following countries: Turkey, Persia, Egypt, India, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Kashgaria, China, Japan, Korea, Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Bukhara, Khiva, Dagestan, Northern Caucasia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Turkestan, Ferghana, the Kalmyk Autonomous Region, the Tatar Republic, and the Far Eastern District.

The Congress of the Peoples of the East was convened by the Communist International. Every peasant, every toiler, needs to know what the Communist International is. It is a union of workers and peasants, of the Communists of the whole world, which has set itself the aim of smashing the power of the rich and bringing about the complete equality of all.

At the Second World Congress of the Communist International, held in Moscow in August 1920, the following countries were represented: America, Britain, France, Austria, Italy, Spain, Poland, Bohemia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Persia, India, China, Japan, Korea, Indochina, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Khiva, Bukhara, Afghanistan, Argentina, Russia, Ukraine.

The Communist International wants to put an end not only to the power of the rich over the poor but also to the power of some peoples over others. For this purpose, the workers of Europe and America must unite with the peasants and other working elements of the peoples of the East.

The Congress of representatives of the Peoples of the East calls on these peoples to realize such unity, which is needed for the liberation of all the oppressed and all the exploited.

* * *

Peoples of the East! Six years ago there broke out in Europe a colossal, monstrous slaughter, a world war in which 35 million human beings were killed, in which hundreds of big towns and thousands of other centres of population were

devastated, a war which ruined all the countries of Europe and subjected all its peoples to the torment of unheard-of want and unprecedented starvation.

This colossal conflict has hitherto been carried on mainly in Europe, affecting Asia and Africa only partially. The war was fought between European peoples, with the peoples of the East participating in it only to a relatively small extent. Some hundreds of thousands of Turkish peasants took part, deceived by their rulers, who acted for the benefit of the German imperialists. Two or three million Indians and Blacks, bought like slaves by the British and French capitalists and, like slaves, hurled to their deaths on the fields of France, far-distant and strange to them, in the service of interests alien and unintelligible to them – interests of the British and French bankers and industrialists.

But although the countries of the East remained aloof from this gigantic conflict and the Eastern peoples played only an insignificant part in it, nevertheless this war was fought not only for the countries of Europe, not only for the countries and peoples of the West, but also for the countries and peoples of the East. It was fought for the partition of the world, and chiefly for the partition of Asia, of the East. It was fought to decide who was to rule over the countries of Asia and whose slaves the peoples of the East should be. It was fought to decide whether the British or the German capitalists should skin the peasants and workers of Turkey, Persia and Egypt.

The monstrous four-year carnage ended in victory for France and Britain. The German capitalists were crushed, and along with them the German people were crushed, destroyed and doomed to starvation. Victorious France, almost all of whose adult population had been wiped out by the war and all of whose industrial areas had been devastated, was bled white by the struggle and left quite powerless after its victory. As a result of the colossal, barbarous slaughter, imperialist Britain emerged as the sole and omnipotent master of Europe and Asia. Britain alone in all Europe was still able to muster sufficient strength, for it had waged the war with other peoples' hands, those of the enslaved peoples, the Indians and Blacks, it had waged the war at the expense of the colonies it oppressed.

As the victor and the omnipotent master of half the world, the British government proceeded to carry out the objectives for which it had waged the war – to consolidate its hold on all the countries of Asia and to enslave, fully and finally, all the peoples of the East.

Hindered by no one, fearing no one, the handful of greedy banker-capitalists at the head of the British state, casting aside all shame, set about openly and brazenly reducing to slavery the peasants and workers of the Eastern countries.

Peoples of the East! You know what Britain has done in India, you know how it has turned the many-millions masses of the Indian peasants and workers into dumb beasts of burden without any rights.

The Indian peasant has to hand over to the British government a proportion of his crop so large that what remains is not enough to sustain him for even a few

months. The Indian worker has to work in the British capitalist's factory for such a miserable pittance that he cannot even buy the daily handful of rice he needs for subsistence. Every year millions of Indians die of hunger and millions perish in the jungles and swamps where they are engaged in heavy labour undertaken by the British capitalists for their own enrichment.

Millions of Indians, unable to find a crust of bread in their own very rich and fertile homeland, are obliged to join the British armed forces, to leave their homeland and spend their whole lives enduring the hard lot of the soldier, fighting endless wars in all corners of the world, against all the peoples of the world, upholding everywhere the ruthless dominion of Britain. While paying with their lives and their blood for the unceasing expansion of the wealth of the British capitalists, securing monstrous profits for them, the Indians themselves enjoy no human rights: the British officers who rule over them, insolent sons of the British bourgeoisie which has grown fat on Indian corpses, do not regard them as human.

An Indian dares not sit at the same table with a Britisher, lodge in the same quarters, enter the same railway carriage, attend the same school. In the eyes of the British bourgeois every Indian is a pariah, a slave, a beast of burden, an animal which dare not have any human feelings or put forward any demands. Every demand, every expression of anger by the Indian peasants and workers when driven to extremities is met by ruthless mass shootings. Hundreds of corpses of those shot cover the streets of insurgent Indian villages, and British officers force the survivors to crawl on their bellies and to lick the boots of their enslavers for their own amusement.

Peoples of the East! You know what Britain has done in Turkey. Britain offered Turkey a peace by which three-quarters of Asia Minor, inhabited exclusively by Ottoman Turks, with all the country's industrial cities, was to pass into the possession of Britain, France, Italy and Greece, while what remained of Turkish territory was to be burdened with such payments that the Ottomans would become permanent undischarged debtors of Britain.

When the Turkish people refused to accept such a peace, which would have destroyed them, the British occupied Constantinople, a holy place to Muslims, dispersed the Turkish parliament, arrested all the people's leaders, shot the best of them, and exiled hundreds of others to the island of Malta, where they were imprisoned in the dark and damp dungeons of an ancient fortress. Now the British rule the roost in Constantinople: they have taken from the Turks everything that could be taken. They have taken banks, money, factories, railways, ships, they have closed all the approaches to Asia Minor, thereby depriving the Turks, who are without factories of their own, of the possibility of receiving any goods from Europe. There is now in the whole of Asia Minor not one piece of material, not one fragment of metal. The Turkish peasant is obliged to go about without a shirt and to plough the soil with a wooden plough.

The British used the Greek army to occupy the Vilayet of Smyrna, the French

to take Adana and colonial troops to take Brussa [Bursa] and Izmit. They have beleaguered the Turks on all sides and are steadily pushing into Turkish territory, trying to reduce to complete exhaustion the Turkish people who have already been as tormented and ruined as they can be by decades of continuous war.

In those parts of Turkey which the British have already occupied, they scoff and jeer intolerably at the Turkish people, in their usual way. In Constantinople the British have taken all the schools and universities for use as barracks, stopped all Turkish educational activity, closed down all Turkish newspapers, broken up all workers' organizations, filled the prisons with Turkish patriots and placed the entire population under the uncontrolled authority of British police who consider themselves authorized, in broad daylight in the streets of Constantinople and without any excuse, to hit over the head any persons wearing a fez. As the British see it, if a man wears the fez, if he is a Turk, then he is a creature of an inferior species, a pariah, a slave, a beast of burden, who can be treated like a dog.

In the places they have occupied in Turkey the British treat the Turks like dogs, subjecting them to forced labour and punishing them with blows, and endeavouring by means of all sorts of tricks, base methods and violence to turn Turkey into a conquered country, so that all the Turks may by blows be made beasts of burden to work for the enrichment of the British.

Peoples of the East! What has Britain done to Persia? After crushing a peasants' revolt against the Shah and the landlords, shooting or hanging thousands of Persian peasants, the British capitalists have restored the overthrown rule of the Shah and the landlords, taken from the peasants the landlords' land they had seized and thrust the peasants back into serfdom, making them once again *rayats*, slaves without rights of the *mulkadars*.

Then, having bribed the Shah's venal government, the British capitalists have by means of a base, traitorous treaty acquired all Persia and the entire Persian people as their absolute property. They have laid hands on all the wealth of Persia, they have installed in all the cities of Persia their garrisons of deceived Indian sepoys, bought into slavery, and have begun to behave in Persia as though in a conquered country, treating the nominally independent Persian people as a people who have become slaves.

Peoples of the East! What has Britain done to Mesopotamia and Arabia? It has, without any ado, proclaimed these independent Muslim countries to be its colonies, driven from the land the Arabs who have owned it for centuries, taken from them the best, most fertile valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates, taken the best pasture-land, which the people need in order to survive, taken the very rich oilfields of Mosul and Basra. Stripping the Arabs of all means of livelihood, it is trying to force them through hunger to become its slaves and its workers.

What has Britain done to Palestine? There, at first, acting for the benefit of Anglo-Jewish capitalists, it drove Arabs from the land in order to give the latter to Jewish settlers; then, trying to appease the discontent of the Arabs, it incited them

against these same Jewish settlers, sowing discord, enmity and hatred between all the communities, weakening both in order that it may itself rule and command.

What has Britain done to Egypt? There the entire native population has for eight decades groaned beneath the heavy yoke of the British capitalists, a yoke even heavier and more ruinous for the people than was that of the Egyptian pharaohs who built their huge pyramids with slave labour.

What has Britain done to China? Britain, together with its partner, imperialist Japan, turned that enormous country into a colony, exploiting and oppressing its 300 million people and poisoning them with opium. With its own and Japanese troops Britain is putting down with unheard-of cruelty the revolutionary ferment which has begun there. Restoring the old despots whom the people had overthrown, it strives with all its strength to prevent the many-millions Chinese people from winning their freedom, and keeps them as before under its yoke of despotism, oppression and poverty, so as the better to be able to exploit them.

What has Britain done to Korea, to that flourishing land with a thousand-years-old culture? It has handed over Korea to the Japanese imperialists for them to tear to pieces, and now with fire and sword they are making the Korean people submit to the British and Japanese capitalists.

What is Britain doing to Afghanistan? By bribing the Emir's government it has kept the people in maximum subjugation, in the greatest poverty and ignorance, trying to reduce this country to a desert, in order that this desert may guard India, which Britain oppresses, from any incursion from without.

What is Britain doing with Armenia and Georgia? There by means of its gold it keeps the peasant and worker masses under the yoke of the hated Dashnak and Menshevik governments it has bought, which terrorize and oppress their own peoples and drive them to fight against the peoples of Azerbaijan and Russia who have freed themselves from the bourgeois yoke.

Imperialist Britain penetrates even into Turkestan, Khiva, Bukhara, Azerbaijan, Dagestan and Northern Caucasia, its agents dart about everywhere, generously scattering, as bribes, British gold which has been extorted from the blood and sweat of the oppressed peoples. Everywhere these agents seek to uphold the tyrants and despots, the khans and landlords, to combat the incipient revolutionary movements, to keep all the peoples, at any cost, in a state of oppression and ruin, in want and ignorance.

Oppression and ruin, want and ignorance among the Eastern peoples serve as sources of enrichment for imperialist Britain.

Peoples of the East! To you belong the richest, most fertile, most extensive lands in the whole world; these lands, which were once the cradle of all humanity and could feed not only their inhabitants but the entire population of the world. And yet now, every year, ten million Turkish, Persian and Indian peasants and workers are unable to find a crust of bread or any employment in their wide and fertile homelands, and are obliged to go abroad and seek a livelihood in alien lands.

They have to do this because in their homelands everything – land, money, banks, factories, workshops – belongs to British capitalists. They are not masters in their own homelands, they dare not give orders there – on the contrary they themselves are ordered about by foreigners, the British capitalists.

This is how it has been up to now, this is how it was also before the war, when imperialist Britain still had rivals in the shape of the German, French and Russian imperialist predators, when it still hesitated to stretch out its paw over all the countries of the East, for fear of receiving a blow on this paw from some rival beast of prey. But now, when imperialist Britain has beaten and rendered powerless all of its rivals, when it has become the omnipotent master of Europe and Asia, now the capitalists who rule Britain are giving free rein to their wolfish appetites and without restraint or shame are sinking voracious teeth and claws into the bleeding body of the peoples of the East.

British capital feels cramped in Europe, it has grown, and cannot find places for investment. Besides, the European workers, enlightened by revolutionary consciousness, have become bad slaves: they are not willing to work for nothing, they want good wages. In order that capital may have elbow-room, in order that it may bring in a good profit, in order that the European workers may be thrown a sop so as to hold back the growth of their revolutionary mood, in order that it may be possible to bribe the leading strata of the worker masses, British capital needs fresh land, fresh workers – rightless and unenfranchised slaves.

And the British capitalists think they have found these fresh lands in the Eastern countries, and these rightless and voiceless slave labourers in the peoples of the East.

The British capitalists are trying to grab Turkey and Persia, Mesopotamia and Arabia, Afghanistan and Egypt, so as to drive all the peasants from the land. They buy from these ruined and indebted peasants, for trivial sums, all their holdings, which they want to merge into huge estates and plantations. On these the Eastern peasants, reduced to landlessness, will be driven to work as slave labourers. In Turkey, Persia and Mesopotamia, they want to use the cheap labour of the hungry Turkish, Persian and Arab labourers to build factories, lay out railways and work mines. They want to use the cheap goods produced by factory industry to destroy the handicrafts and the millions of local craftsmen with whom the cities of the East are filled, to throw them into the street, unemployed. They want, by setting up huge trading firms, to ruin the petty local merchants, throwing them too into the street, into the ranks of the proletariat which has only its labour power to sell.

The British capitalists want to proletarianize completely the peoples of the East, to ruin the economic activity of all the peasants, craftsmen and merchants and to force them all to work as hungry slaves on their plantations and in their factories and mines. And when they have so forced them, they intend to ruin their health with unbearable labour and starve them to death on wretched pay, squeezing sweat

and blood out of the enslaved peoples of the East. And this sweat of the workers, this blood of the peasants, they mean to turn into surplus value, into profit, into pure, ringing gold! This is the future which imperialist Britain is preparing for the peoples of the East.

Britain is a country of barely 40 million people, only one-fortieth of whom constitute the group of oppressors and exploiters, while the remaining 39 million are oppressed and exploited workers and farmers. Yet Britain wants to rule over half the world and to hold in slavery the 800 millions of the peoples of the East. One British bourgeois capitalist, having already forced 39 British workers to work for him, wants to force to work for him, in addition, 2,000 workers and peasants in Persia, Turkey, Mesopotamia and Egypt. Thus, 2,040 hungry and tortured people, enjoying none of the good things of life, are to work all their lives long for one idle parasite, a British capitalist. One million such exploiters, British bankers and industrialists, want to reduce 800 millions of the peoples of the East to slavery. And it must be said that they know how to achieve their aim – they have neither shame, nor conscience, nor fear; they have nothing but savage greed and unlimited thirst for gain. The ruin, hunger, blood, suffering and groans of 800 million people mean nothing to them. All that matters is profit, all that counts is gain!

And in pursuit of this profit and gain the British imperialists have taken a tenacious grip on the throat of the peoples of the East, and are preparing a dark future for them. A future of utter ruin, permanent slavery, rightlessness, oppression and unlimited exploitation – this is what is in store for the peoples of the East if the present government remains in power in Britain, if imperialist Britain keeps its strength and stabilizes its rule over the Eastern countries. A miserable handful of British bankers devour hundreds of millions of peasants and workers in the East.

But this shall not be!

In face of the British capitalists, the rulers of imperialist Britain, there is rising up the organized might of the peasants and workers of the East, united under the red banner of the Communist International, under the red banner of the union of revolutionary workers, who have made it their aim to liberate the whole world and all mankind from every form of exploitation and oppression.

The First Congress of representatives of the Peoples of the East loudly proclaims to the whole world, to the capitalist rulers of Britain: This shall not be! You dogs shall not devour the peoples of the East, you wretched handful of oppressors shall not reduce to everlasting serfdom hundreds of millions of Eastern workers and peasants. You have bitten off too big a piece, more than you can chew, and it will choke you!

The peoples of the East have long stagnated in the darkness of ignorance under the despotic yoke of their own tyrant rulers, and under that of foreign capitalist conquerors. But the roar of the world-wide conflict, and the thunder of the Russian workers' revolution, which has released the Eastern people of Russia from the

century-old chains of capitalist slavery, has awakened them, and now aroused from their sleep of centuries, they are rising to their feet.

They are waking up and are hearing the call to a holy war, to a *ghazavat*. That is our call! It is the call of the First Congress of representatives of the Peoples of the East, united with the revolutionary proletariat of the West under the banner of the Communist International. Thus we – representatives of the toiling masses of all the peoples of the East: India, Turkey, Persia, Egypt, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Kashgar, China, Indochina, Japan, Korea, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Dagestan, Northern Caucasia, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, Khiva, Bukhara, Turkestan, Ferghana, Tataria, Bashkiria, Kyrgyzia, etc. – united in unbreakable union among ourselves and with the revolutionary workers of the West summon our peoples to a holy war. We say:

Peoples of the East! You have often heard the call to holy war, from your governments, you have marched under the green banner of the Prophet, but all those holy wars were fraudulent, serving only the interests of your self-seeking rulers, and you, the peasants and workers, remained in slavery and want after these wars. You conquered the good things of life for others, but yourselves never enjoyed any of them.

Now we summon you to the first real holy war, under the red banner of the Communist International. We summon you to a holy war for your own well-being, for your own freedom, for your own life!

Britain, the last powerful imperialist predator left in Europe, has spread its dark wings over the Eastern Muslim countries, and is trying to turn the peoples of the East into its slaves, into its booty. Slavery! Frightful slavery, ruin, oppression and exploitation is being brought by Britain to the peoples of the East. Save yourselves, peoples of the East!

Arise and fight against this beast of prey! Go forward as one man into a holy war against the British conquerors! Stand up, Indian exhausted by hunger and unbearable slave labour! Stand up, Anatolian peasant crushed by taxes and usury! Stand up, Persian *rayat* strangled by the *mulkadars*! Stand up, Armenian toiler driven out into the barren hills! Stand up, Arabs and Afghans, lost in sandy deserts and cut off by the British from all the rest of the world! Stand up and fight against the common enemy, imperialist Britain!

Wave high the banner of the holy war.

This is a holy war for the liberation of the Peoples of the East, for the ending of the division of mankind into oppressor peoples and oppressed peoples, for complete equality of all peoples and races, whatever language they may speak, whatever the colour of their skin and whatever the religion they profess.

Wage holy war to end the division of countries into advanced and backward, dependent and independent, metropolitan and colonial!

Wage holy war for the liberation of all mankind from the yoke of capitalist

and imperialist slavery, for the ending of all forms of oppression of one people by another and of all forms of exploitation of man by man!

Wage holy war against the last citadel of capitalism and imperialism in Europe, against the nest of pirates and bandits by sea and land, against the age-old oppressor of all the peoples of the East, against imperialist Britain!

Wage holy war for freedom, independence and happiness for all the peoples of the East, all the East's millions of peasants and workers enslaved by Britain!

Peoples of the East! In this holy war all the revolutionary workers and all the oppressed peasants of the East will be with you. They will help you, they will fight and die along with you.

It is the first congress of representatives of the peoples of the East that tells you this. Long live the unity of all the peasants and workers of the East and of the West, the unity of all the toilers, all the oppressed and exploited. Long live the battle headquarters of this united movement – the Communist International! May the holy war of the peoples of the East and of the toilers of the whole world against imperialist Britain burn with unquenchable fire!

[Signed:]

Honorary Members of the Presidium

Radek (Russia), Béla Kun (Hungary), Rosmer (France), Quelch (Britain), Reed (America), Steinhardt-Gruber (Austria), Jansen (Netherlands), Shablin (Balkan Federation), Yoshiharo (Japan).

Zinoviev, Chairman of the Congress.

Members of the Presidium

Ryskulov, Abdur Rashidov, Kariyev (Turkestan); Mustafa Subhi (Turkey); Wang (China); Karid, Nazir Sidiq (India); Bekchan Rakhmanov, Abdulayev (Khiva); Muhamedov (Bukhara); Korkmasov, Sidajedin Kardash Oglu (Dagestan); Digurov (Terek Region); Aliyev (Northern Caucasia); Kostanyan (Armenia); Yelchiev, Yenikev (Tatar Republic); Narimanov, Musayev (Azerbaijan); Amur-Sanan (Kalmyk Republic); Makharadze (Georgia); Haydar Khan (Persia); Agazadeh, Azim (Afghanistan); Narbutabekov (Tashkent); Mahmudov (Ferghana); Taksim Baari, Haavis Mahomed (Anatolia); Kuleyev (Transcaspia); Niyas Kuli (Turkmenia); Kari Tajiyev (Samarkand).

Ostrovsky, Secretary to the Congress.

COMPOSITION OF THE CONGRESS

The following table, included in the congress minutes, appears to reflect attendance at the start of proceedings. Other counts found in the archival records range up to 2,050 delegates.¹⁴

Turks	235	Persians and Farsis	192
Armenians	157	Russians	104
Georgians	100	Chechens	82
Tajiks	61	Kyrgyzians	47
Jews	41	Turkmens	35
Kamyks	33	Lezgins	25
Ossetians	17	Uzbeks	15
Indians	14	Ingushes	13
Jamshidis	12	Hazaras	11
Sarts	10	Ajars	10
Kabardians	9	Chinese	8
Kurds	8	Avars	7
Poles	5	Hungarians	3
Germans	3	Kalmyks	3
Koreans	3	Arabs	3
Teke	2	Abkhazians	2
Bashkiris	1	Ukrainians	1
Croats	1	Czechs	1
Latvians	1	Total	1,275

1,891	Total number attending the Congress
1,273	Number of Communists
266	No nationality stated
More than 100	Did not complete the questionnaire
55	Total number of women delegates

¹⁴ For full detail, see Riddell, *To See the Dawn*, pp. 242–4.

CHAPTER 5

THIRD CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL:

RESOLUTIONS FROM INDIA, CHINA AND IRAN

Asian Communists Offer Varied Strategic Visions

Ten months after the Baku congress, the Communist International met again in a world gathering, its Third World Congress. One of the gathering's declared goals was to draw a balance sheet on implementation of the sweeping resolutions on revolution in the colonies and semi-colonies adopted the previous year at the Second Congress and in Baku. As Comintern President Grigorii Zinoviev stated in his congress call: 'The Third Congress will have to tackle the Eastern question not only theoretically . . . but also in practical terms.' (See excerpt from congress call in the following chapter.)

Leading Asian Communists, representing revolutionary groups in China, India, and Iran, prepared three draft resolutions, each of which sought to develop strategic concepts for struggle in colonized countries with varying class structures. The draft by M.N. Roy (India) stressed the revolutionary potential of the nascent proletariat in the colonies; drafts by Avetis Sultanzade (Iran) and Zhang Tailei (China) called for a revolutionary anti-colonial alliance, anticipating what later became known as the anti-imperialist united front.

The three texts, reprinted below, represented a qualitative advance: Asian Communists were now distinguishing distinct class structures in different types of colonized countries and proposing a spectrum of strategic visions based on colonized peoples' experiences in struggle in varied contexts.¹

DRAFT RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TO THE THIRD CONGRESS ON THE COLONIAL QUESTION

'Poor peasants and proletarians are the forces of revolution'

Theses on the Eastern Question

M.N. ROY, INDIA

I

1. The fact that, in spite of its general bankruptcy, European capitalism is still holding

¹ To consult these excerpts in the context of the entire Third Congress, see Riddell, *To the Masses*.

its own against the increasingly powerful attack of the proletariat in the Western countries proves that capitalism, as a world-domineering factor, has not yet reached such a state of decay that its immediate downfall is inevitable. Since the time that capitalism entered into its last and most highly developed phase – imperialism – its stronghold was no longer kept confined only in the industrially advanced countries of Western Europe. The innate contradictions of the capitalist system inevitably led to overproduction and its consequence, the recurring commercial and financial crisis; in imperialism was found a way out of this entanglement. Of course, it was a temporary solution bound to prove ineffective for saving the capitalist mode of production from collapse under its own contradictions. But the fact is that till today imperial expansion and exploitation do render strength to capitalism to maintain its position in Europe.

The great imperialist war shook the very foundation of the capitalist order in European countries, and had not these states had other sources to draw strength from, they would not be able to continue defending the right of capital till today as they are actually doing. These sources of strength lie in the imperialist character of present-day capitalism, which holds in its hands the entire economic, political, and military control of the whole world, and thus finds itself in a position to put up a stiff and continued resistance against the proletariat in its home countries. The existence and power of the European bourgeoisie do not depend wholly and exclusively on its ability to wring the greatest amount of surplus value out of the labour power of the workers in the home countries. The imperial right of exploiting the vast non-European markets and peoples has supplied and still supplies it with additional *modus vivendi* and a weapon to defend its position at home in spite of the apparent precariousness and impossibility of maintaining its power there for any length of time.

2. As a result of the war, the world finds itself divided today into two great colonial empires, belonging to two powerful capitalist states. The United States of America endeavours to assume supreme and exclusive right of exploiting and ruling the entire New World, while Great Britain has annexed to its empire practically the entire continents of Asia and Africa. Then, continental Europe, owing to its utter economic bankruptcy and industrial dislocation, is bound to be an economic dependency of either of these two great imperialist states, which are preparing for another giant struggle for world domination. As far as the power of the American bourgeoisie is concerned, the European war has not affected it very much. On the contrary, the control of world finance, which has been for a century the monopoly of the British capitalists, had been to a great extent transferred to the hands of the American capitalists, who cannot be considered to have reached the period of decay and disintegration as yet. In order to consolidate its newly acquired world power, the American capitalist class inclines towards keeping temporarily away from the infectious ruins of Europe. Thus, the British bourgeoisie is the supreme

ruler of the Old World and the backbone of the capitalist order.

Now, where lies the source of strength of the British bourgeoisie? Judging from the industrial conditions obtaining in the British Isles at the present moment, it would appear that if its resources were limited to the productivity of those islands and the power of consumption of continental Europe, the capitalist order in Britain would certainly stand on the very brink of collapse. But despite all its chronic contradictions and the difficulties it is having in reconstructing the industrial fabric of the home country on the pre-war basis, the capitalist class of Britain proves to be quite firm in its power. It still succeeds in deceiving a part and coercing another part of the proletariat. The possession of the vast non-European empire, and the control over the newly created economic dependency to which continental Europe has been reduced, afford British capital a very wide scope of action, thus enabling it to maintain its position at home and incidentally securing its international power.

Economic and industrial development of the rich and thickly populated countries of the East would supply new vigour to Western capital. There are great possibilities in these countries which will provide cheap labour power and new markets not to be exhausted very soon. Therefore, the destruction of its monopolist right of exploitation in the vast Eastern colonial empire is a vital factor in the final and successful overthrow of the capitalist order in Europe.

3. In view of the fact that the power of international capital is rooted all through the globe, anything less than a world-wide revolution would not bring about the end of the capitalist order and the triumph of the proletariat in Europe. The struggle of the European proletariat must be aided by the revolutionary action of the toiling masses of other lands subjugated by the same power, that is, capitalist imperialism. In its struggle to get out of the inevitable vicious circle, capitalism developed itself into imperialism, thus bringing extensive markets and huge armies of colonial workers under its domination. By converting the peasants and artisans of the subject countries into an agricultural and industrial proletariat, imperialism brought into existence another force which is destined to contribute to its destruction.

This being the case, the overthrow of the capitalist order in Europe, which to a great extent rests on its imperial extension, will be achieved not alone by the advanced proletariat of Europe, but with the conscious co-operation of the workers and other revolutionary elements in those colonial and subject countries, which afford the greatest economic and military support to the imperial capital and which are the most developed economically, industrially and politically.

4. Therefore, the Communist International, in its task of mobilizing the forces of world revolution, should not limit its field of activity only to the countries of Europe and the United States of America. While undoubtedly it is the proletariat of the industrial countries of Europe and America which stands at the vanguard of the armies of the world revolution, the historical phenomenon should not be

overlooked that the toiling masses of the most advanced non-European countries are also destined to play a role in the act of freeing the world from the domination of imperialist capital.

This historic role of the masses of the most advanced non-European countries consists of: 1) raising the standard of revolt against foreign imperialism simultaneously with the revolutionary action of the Western proletariat; and 2) fighting the native landowning class and bourgeoisie. Thus attacked from both sides, imperialism will have no possible way out of the vicious circle of its own creation. Deprived of the possibility of creating new markets by economically developing countries like China, India, etc., it will not be able to recover from the effects of overproduction in the home countries.

The great countries of the East have become an integral part of the capitalist world; battles against capitalism have begun and are going to be fought there. This is the result of the historic development of imperialism.

II

5. The point of view that the peoples of the East – given that, in general, they are not on the same economic and political level as those of the West – can be conceived of as something uniform, with identical problems to solve, is erroneous, since it lacks the foundation of fact. It is a mistake to think that a uniform policy can be formulated to guide the activities of the Communist International in all the countries beyond a given geographical limit. The Eastern countries vary greatly in their political, economic, industrial, and social conditions. Consequently, the different Oriental peoples have different problems to solve. Therefore, a certain definite line of policy and tactics cannot be laid down to be followed rigidly in all Eastern countries.

The conditions obtaining in the various countries should be carefully studied in order to ascertain which social class is historically and circumstantially destined to be revolutionary in the present moment as well as in the immediate future, since in such a revolutionary social class is to be found the natural ally of the Western proletariat in its fight for the overthrow of the capitalist order of society. Or, in other words, in order to mobilize the anti-imperialist forces effectually in the Oriental countries, the Communist International has to look for and base its activities on that social class which historically does belong or is destined to belong to its own ranks.

6. Whereas, in the Muslim countries of the Near and Middle East, the religious fanaticism of the ignorant masses and the anti-foreign sentiments of the landowning middle-class counter-revolution can be counted upon as a force for the undermining of imperialism, these elements no longer possess the same significance in a country like India, owing to the radical economic and industrial transformation that has taken place there in the last two decades. Imperial capital

has just touched the surface of the Near and Middle Eastern countries. The economic structure of the society is still predominantly feudal and the influence of the clergy is strong.

But in India, which a considerable time ago was brought fully under the control and exploitation of capital, mainly imperial and partly native (the latter has been growing very fast in the last years), feudalism has been destroyed not by means of a violent revolution but by its long contact with modern political and economic institutions, which are the reflex of the most highly developed capitalist state. There has come into existence in India a native bourgeoisie, which more than thirty years ago began its historical struggle for the conquest of political power from the foreign ruler, and a proletariat, including a huge landless peasantry, which is growing in number and class consciousness in proportion to the rapid industrialization of the country.

Consequently, the revolutionary movement in India today does not rest on the religious fanaticism of the ignorant masses, which is fast losing its potentiality owing to the economic transformation of the society. Nor does it rest on petty-bourgeois sentimental nationalism, which is built on the imaginary unity of interest of the entire people, not taking into consideration the class division which is becoming more and more clearly defined every day. In India and other countries of the same political and economic condition, the liberal bourgeoisie, which stands at the front of the national-democratic movement, is a revolutionary factor insofar as it carries on its historic struggle against the imperial ruler for the right of exploiting native resources and native labour.

But this revolutionary character of the bourgeoisie is temporary, since as soon as foreign political domination is overthrown by a mass revolt, it will turn against the working class and will use all violent measures in order to thwart the further march of the revolution in the name of representative government and national defence. It is also possible that the weak native bourgeoisie will find it more profitable to sell itself out to its imperialist peer in return for such change in the political administration of the country as will provide it with wider scope and opportunity for developing as a class. Thus, the rapidly growing proletariat including the masses of landless peasantry is the principal social class which constitutes the foundation of the revolution in an Oriental country like India.

Therefore, the activities of the Communist International in the economically and industrially advanced countries of the East should consist of the formation of such political parties as are capable of developing and directing the revolutionary movement according to the objective conditions. Such parties will be the apparatus of the Communist International – through them, the peoples of the East will be unified in their respective countries to fight against foreign imperialism, and they will lead the fight further on for economic and social emancipation of the working class against the native bourgeoisie, as soon as it takes the place of the foreign exploiter.

7. The bourgeoisie of the subjected and dominated countries will serve temporarily the purpose of a weapon against imperialism, but it cannot be relied upon. In the East the forces of world revolution – the forces on which the activities of the Communist International should be based – are to be found in the poor peasantry in those countries where feudalism still exists and among the proletariat and agrarian workers in those countries where machine industry has been introduced and the major portion of the population has been brought directly under the domination of modern capitalism, either foreign or native. The first stages of the revolution all over the East are bound to be a great upheaval against foreign imperialism, but it will be headed by the most revolutionary social class according to the economic development of the respective countries. Therefore, in organizing this upheaval, different tactics will have to be adopted in different countries.

For instance, in India, a country directly ruled by foreign imperialism and needing political independence for free social development, it has not been practicable to unify the entire people, or at least a sufficiently large portion of it, in a movement for political liberation on the basis of bourgeois nationalism. Foreign imperialism exploits the masses through the agency of the native bourgeoisie and the impotent relics of feudalism.

Therefore, a movement led by the bourgeoisie and actuated by bourgeois economic and political ideology naturally fails to attract the masses to its standard, since it cannot inspire confidence among them. It does not show them a way out of their present miserable existence. But until and unless the masses of the subject population take an active and conscious part in the revolutionary movement, foreign imperialism cannot and will not be overthrown by the action of the bourgeoisie *alone*, even if it may succeed in rallying a certain section of the people behind it temporarily fired by sentimental enthusiasm. And it is only the historic struggle for economic emancipation which will unify the exploited class to which belongs the great majority of the people in the subject countries, including even the lower strata of the bourgeoisie.

8. Religious-political movements like Pan-Islamism cannot any longer be counted upon as a force against imperialism. Today, under the domination of imperialist capital and thanks to the progressiveness of the rising native bourgeoisie, the so-called Muslim world has become a thing of the past – it has ceased to be a social unit. It exists only in the imagination of fanatics, and the idea serves the ambition of the ruling dynasties and classes of the Muslim countries. Thus, Pan-Islamism, which once had a certain revolutionary character, insofar as it could foment a mass upheaval, finds itself resting today only on the most reactionary and counter-revolutionary elements. The khans, mullahs, and even the progressive Muslim merchants and capitalists of the East find in the bankrupt idea of Pan-Islamism a very convenient means of exploiting the ignorant masses. Such being its character at the present moment, Pan-Islamism stands more on

the side of imperialism than for the cause of liberation. In the economically and industrially backward countries of the Near and Middle East, the poor peasantry and handicraft workers should be organized to fight against imperialism and its henchmen, the native landlords and the merchant class.

'We must ally but not merge with national movements in colonies'

Theses on the Eastern Question

AVETIS SULTANZADE, IRAN

1. The 'League of Nations' launched in Paris set up three categories: sovereign states, vassals, and wards under trusteeship [mandates]. In the 'trusteeship' category are almost all the countries of the East, including Syria, Mesopotamia [Iraq], Arabia, India, Egypt, Korea, and China – proletarian states mercilessly exploited by mandatory states. So we see a classification of states within world imperialism in terms of their relative political weight, corresponding to the class divisions in capitalist society. The dominant states relate to dependencies in a manner quite similar to how an industrialist relates to his workers in bourgeois society. But there is a very significant difference: a portion of the surplus value extracted by the entrepreneurs of the dominant power falls into the hands of the local bourgeoisie. If the entrepreneur realizes this surplus value outside the markets of these 'proletarian' states, he retains it in its entirety.

2. This rather sketchy comparison gives only a rough indication of the place of colonial countries of the East in the world imperialist system. For a more accurate picture, it is necessary to divide these countries into the following categories:

a) Colonies that have experienced considerable industrialization and are strongly linked to the colonizing country through its financial capital.

b) Colonies whose industrialization took place mainly during the war and that are only weakly linked with the colonizing country.

c) Colonies that serve only to supply raw materials to the advanced capitalist countries.

In the East, there are hardly any countries in the first category. It includes countries such as Australia and Canada, where the upper layers of the bourgeoisie have been drawn into the orbit of the imperialist syndicates and trusts. Thus the Canadian stockholders or owners of steel mills have been absorbed into the reigning imperialist steel trust, thus gaining a stake not only in the exploitation of their own country but in the policies of financial capital in the colonizing country, which aim at territorial expansion. This type of colony is normally granted substantial autonomy, given that it does not endanger the interests of trusts in the colonizing country.

3. In the East, this process of incorporation began before the war, although only in India and to some extent in China and only to a very limited extent. However,



Avetis Sultanzade

the war speeded up the industrialization of these countries enormously, giving the local bourgeoisie a firm foundation and a chance to stand on its own feet. This led them to make efforts to gain a stronger position on a national level. A process of industrialization is evident in Turkey. The fact that the Indian and Turkish bourgeoisie has carried out some protectionist propaganda reflects the rise of a whole range of branches of production. The local capitalists are seriously engaged in carrying out protectionist policies to defend emerging industry from the competition of highly developed capitalist countries.

At the same time, the new property relations have given rise to the bourgeoisie as a defined class, separate from the big capitalist trusts, and impelled toward taking political power and using it to its own benefit. But in their struggle for power, the local capitalists come into conflict, first, with the feudal aristocracy that still holds political power in many countries of the East, and, second, with the American and European imperialists, who, with the aid of these feudalists, carry out the economic exploitation of these countries. Here the struggle becomes quite fierce, and world imperialism does everything in its power to prevent the local bourgeoisie from fully taking power.

4. The war not only reinforced and strengthened the national bourgeoisie, which does not wish to share surplus value with capitalism in the colonizing country, but it also brought onto the stage a new revolutionary force, which had previously been in decline and disintegration: handicraft and artisanal industry. Imports of cheap manufactured goods from the industrialized centres of Europe and America subjected this layer to an extended period of profound crisis. Thousands were forced to leave their homelands and emigrate to other countries in order to survive, or to endure miserable conditions of semi-starvation in their own country.

The war aroused in them a new spirit, a new soul – enabling them to expand production to meet enormous market demand.

The enormous crisis of the capitalist economy that broke out two years after the war has further increased the weight of handicraft manufacture in the colonial and semi-colonial countries of the East. The artisans and handicraftsmen, ruined before the war, have come back to life, doing everything in their power to hold off their doom. Their contest with world capitalism is becoming a life-and-death struggle. The young native bourgeoisie, which they do not yet recognize as their

enemy, takes advantage of this situation to draw them into the struggle to break the yoke of European capitalists. This alone explains the broad support that rallied to the boycott of British goods in India and of Japanese goods in China.

5. As for the peasant movement, here it is necessary to distinguish countries such as India and Iran, where a feudal bourgeoisie gained possession of huge landed property, from those such as China and in part Turkey, where small landholdings prevail. In the former two countries, the peasant movement is growing day by day, especially in India, where it gives rise to periodic uprisings and disorders, pitilessly repressed by the British administration. So long as world capitalism maintains its grip in the colonies and semi-colonies, the peasants cannot possibly win freedom from bondage to the landlords, given that the imperialists rely for the most part on the landed aristocracy, all the more in countries where the trusts have not yet succeeded in acquiring a firm base among the native capitalists. As a result, the peasant movement is inevitably directed against the rule of the foreign invaders.

The destruction of imperialist rule will also bring benefits to the working class, which greatly expanded in numbers during and after the war, especially in India. It suffers from a double exploitation by both its own and the foreign bourgeoisie. It is unable to free itself simultaneously from both its exploiters, if only because the organized working class is very small and has not yet acquired the necessary skills of the class struggle. Every unconscious step in this direction will tend to reconcile its enemies, who, until this point, were ready to cut each other's throats.

6. In this fashion, the four strongest classes (bourgeoisie, artisans/petty bourgeoisie, workers and peasants) are inevitably driven by their economic interests into a desperate struggle against exploitation by world capitalism and for full national liberation. Even the most reactionary Pan-Islamic movements, led by the upper layers of the Islamic clergy, have been led by the course of events into a struggle against British capitalism. The fact that Pan-Islamic congresses were convened simultaneously in Ankara (by the Turkish nationalists) and in Mecca (by the British) shows that even in this camp a struggle is unfolding against the rule of world imperialism.

The Communist International must take all these forces into account and direct them against colonial rule by the world bourgeoisie, and above all against British imperialism, whose destruction is a precondition for world revolution. The victory of the national movement in the countries of the East will signal the beginning of the end for the ruling classes of Europe and America.

Even if the native bourgeoisie of some countries, after winning a full or partial victory, concludes an agreement with the great powers, this should not discourage us. Such an event is quite natural and will not halt the revolutionary movement. If the European bourgeoisie is forced in every colonial and semi-colonial country to relinquish even a portion of its political and economic privileges, the power of world capitalism will then be buried by the international proletariat before it is able to strike roots in the East.

7. Because of the predominant influence of petty-bourgeois forces in the East, who are united in hatred of world capitalism's violent outrages, which Communists as well are fighting against, these forces are often portrayed as being communist in character. Thus we have the formation in some countries of various groups with a communist tinge – nationalist or Islamic communists. This fact was taken up at the Second Congress in Thesis 11, point (e) of the Theses on the National and Colonial Questions, which reads:

A resolute struggle is necessary against the attempt to portray as communist the revolutionary liberation movements in the backward countries that are not truly communist. The Communist International has the duty to support the revolutionary movement in the colonies and the backward countries only on condition that the components are gathered in all backward countries for future proletarian parties – communist in fact and not only in name – and that they are educated to be conscious of their particular tasks, that is, the tasks of struggling against the bourgeois-democratic movement in their own nation. The Communist International should arrive at temporary agreements and, yes, even establish an alliance with the revolutionary movement in the colonies and backward countries. But it cannot merge with this movement.

This position is still correct today, and we must act decisively to transform it into reality. This is the only road leading to the destruction of world capitalism's power. We must strengthen in the East the idea of international proletarian solidarity; this will lead to decisive victory.

'We must free the masses from bourgeois leadership'

Theses on the Colonial Question

ZHANG TAILEI, CHINA

1. It is quite wrong to imagine that all the countries of the East present completely uniform tasks to their revolutionary organizations and demand common methods of leadership of their national revolutionary movements. Within the category of oppressed countries of the East we find:

- a) Countries that have already experienced industrial development.
- b) Countries that are encompassed only through international commerce, and then only in initial forms.
- c) Countries that as yet stand completely outside the capitalist relations of the imperialist world – countries that are still primitive.

2. For each type of country, Communists need a special course of action, which takes into account the specific peculiarities of these countries' position in

the world. Flowing from this, they must consider the role of the different classes in each of these countries – whether one of mediation or fundamental antagonism – with regard to its exploitation by imperialism. Each of these three categories of Eastern countries requires a distinct programme of action and revolutionary organization. Each needs its own strategic plan; each calls for a distinct form of leadership by the Communist International.

3. It would be a gross error to deny that the peoples of countries in the three categories above have common revolutionary tasks, above all with regard to the struggle against imperialist oppression. Indeed, it is quite obvious that imperialism in its current form (export of capital, import of raw materials, and the problem – still far from resolved for many capitalist countries – of securing markets for their industrial products) imposes the decisive forms of its economy on backward countries. This results in a radical break in the entire economic system of the given colonial country and of them all taken together.

This break does not promote a strengthening of the basis of the national bourgeoisie's 'domestic' industry and finance in a given country. Rather, in the best of cases, it transforms this bourgeoisie and even the new forms of its economy (factories, mines, banks, maritime transport, etc.) into appendages of the imperialist capitalism ruling that colony or semi-colony. As a result, capitalist development among the more 'advanced' colonial countries proceeds in a direction that undermines the independence of their own national economies. A process of levelling out takes place among the different countries, affecting colonies of different types and expressed in the complete absence of an independent role with regard to their paths for economic and political development.

4. Despite these general features, which shape imperialist capital accumulation in the economy of Eastern countries, it remains important for the international proletariat to direct its efforts to the national 'peculiarities' of working people's struggle in each of the Eastern countries, which are so varied in their form of development. The international tasks of the proletarian movement have always been and will always be resolved only on the basis of a correct application of the international proletarian party's programme and methods to the specific features of each particular country.

This involves examining the relationship not only of forces on a global level but also of those contending within each given country. These may be the feudalists, promoting the cause of counter-revolution and alliance with imperialism; the petty bourgeoisie and oppressed millions of peasants, who may press the bourgeois-democratic revolution through to a victorious conclusion, to its agrarian consummation; or, finally, the young national bourgeoisie, which is fearful, as a rule, of both 'Bolshevik' revolutionary extremism and of oppression by and competition from the enormously more powerful imperialist capitalism.

5. The role of the bourgeoisie of oppressed countries is only a question of tactics.

This is true, first, because it does not determine the course and outcome of the national-revolutionary struggle, and, second, because its participation in this struggle as part of a so-called 'united national front' can only be temporary. The national bourgeoisie takes this path only in circumstances where it cannot establish its role in the form of 'an independent state with economic and financial autonomy' (customs, banking, transport, etc.) or where it does not find the national revolutionary movement standing in contradiction to its efforts to drive out the imperialists so as to be able to take their place in the exploitation of its country's population.

However, the national-revolutionary movement, during its initial phase, gains both tactically and strategically from drawing on the strength of the 'united national front'. Comrade Roy is thus quite wrong to assert that the peasantry and handicraft workers in the economically backward countries of the Near and Middle East should immediately launch a struggle on two fronts – against the imperialists and their own bourgeoisie. This conception of tactical tasks is wrong not only for the economically backward countries of the Near and Middle East but also for China, which Comrade Roy assigns, with some justification, to the grouping of 'advanced' Eastern countries.

6. Communists in the colonial and semi-colonial countries of the East, while maintaining their programmatic and organizational independence, must therefore set themselves the task of winning over the national-revolutionary movement in each of these countries, freeing the masses participating in this movement from the hegemony of the national bourgeoisie. Moreover, where possible, they must press these masses to go beyond this movement. While urging them to struggle under the slogans 'Down with imperialism!' and 'Long live national independence!', Communists must, at the necessary moment, cut them free from the national movement.



Zhang Tailei

CHAPTER 6

THIRD CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL: FROM THE MINUTES

A Discussion Cut Short

The Comintern's Third World Congress, which convened in Moscow in June 1921, achieved significant representation from Asia and Africa: 68 delegates in total, of which 41 were from Asian Soviet republics and three from Africa. Twenty-one Eastern countries were represented, including ten in Soviet Russia, nine others in non-Soviet Asia, and two in Africa.

The main priority of the congress was to deal with an acute internal crisis resulting from conflicting responses in the Communist movement of Europe to the challenge of workers' unity in the mass struggles then shaking Europe.¹

Less attention was devoted to revolutionary struggles in the East. However, several leaders of the Comintern spoke in its general sessions of the importance of struggles in colonized countries. Comments by Lenin, Grigorii Zinoviev (Comintern President), Clara Zetkin (head of the Communist Women's Movement), and M.N. Roy are reprinted below.

Only one session of the congress was scheduled for discussion of the colonial freedom struggle (the 'Eastern Question'). This hurried session was squeezed into the final day of the congress, just before the closing session. The draft resolutions republished in Chapter 5 were neither circulated nor discussed. The congress commission on the Eastern Question gave no report. The speeches consisted mainly of informational reports, with little attention to the strategic and policy issues facing Communists in the East. Halfway through the speakers' list, the Congress accepted proposals by the chair (Kolarov) to cut the speaking time to five minutes and to dispense with translation – measures unique in working sessions of the congress.

During the discussion, Roy spoke out strongly against what he considered the slipshod handling of the Eastern question during the congress. A French delegate, Charles-André Julien, seconded Roy's complaint, adding that 'the main role [in the session] has been played by cinematography'. The chair, Kolarov, while rejecting Roy and Julien's protests, conceded that the Eastern question had been dealt with inadequately.

At the start of the next and final session, the chair, Wilhelm Koenen, said that a draft manifesto on the Eastern question was available and obtained agreement for its referral to the Comintern Executive Committee for publication. The manifesto is not

¹ For the record of how this dispute was resolved, see Riddell, *To the Masses*, pp. 24–46.

otherwise mentioned in the congress; its text was not published and is not found in the archival congress records.

The following year, however, the Comintern's Fourth Congress held a two-day discussion on the Eastern question and adopted a comprehensive resolution (see Chapters 8 and 9).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ANTI-COLONIAL MOVEMENT

The following comments during the Third Comintern Congress spoke to the crucial importance of anti-colonial struggles in the global struggle for socialism.

V.I. LENIN (*from* 'Report on the Policies of the Communist Party of Russia'²): . . . Here I would also like to emphasize the significance of the movement in the colonies. In this respect we see in all the old parties, in all the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois workers' parties affiliated to the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals, survivals of the old sentimental views: they are in full sympathy with oppressed colonial and semi-colonial peoples. The movement in the colonial countries is still regarded as an insignificant national and peaceful movement.

But this is not so. It has undergone a great change since the beginning of the twentieth century: millions and hundreds of millions, in fact the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe, are now coming forward as independent, active and revolutionary factors. It is perfectly clear that in the impending decisive battles in the world revolution, the movement of the majority of the population of the globe, initially directed towards national liberation, will turn against capitalism and imperialism and will, perhaps, play a much more revolutionary part than we expect.

It is important to emphasize the fact that, for the first time in our International, we have taken up the question of preparing for this struggle. Of course, there are many more difficulties in this enormous sphere than in any other, but at all events the movement is advancing. And in spite of the fact that the masses of toilers – the peasants in the colonial countries – are still backward, they will play a very important revolutionary part in the coming phases of the world revolution. (*Loud applause*)³

CLARA ZETKIN (*during the opening session*): I heartily welcome all comrades present here, and especially the delegations from countries of the Near and Far East. (*Renewed applause and cheers*)

Comrades, in the entire history of the workers' movement there has never been a congress embracing so many representatives of the Near and Far East. Recall

² Lenin's remarks formed part of his report on policies of the Communist Party of Russia. For the full text, see Lenin, 'Third Congress of the Communist International', at Marxists Internet Archive.

³ Riddell, *To the Masses*, p. 659.

the congress in Baku, which took place after the Second Congress. Since then the Communist International has gained increased influence in the countries of the Near and Far East, and this authority grows with every day. The presence at our Congress of numerous delegations from the Near and Far East is evidence that our organization is not merely European; it is an international association of workers not merely of Europe but of the entire world. The presence of these delegations is evidence that the now imminent revolution is not merely European but global – a world revolution in the true sense of the word. That is why the delegates of the advanced proletarian parties of Europe and America must devote special attention to these delegates of the Near and Far East, provide them with the fullest support, join with them in fraternal alliance, and show the entire world that we are capable of uniting not just the advanced proletarians of Europe and America but also the numerous peoples of the Near and Far East.⁴

(On the Communist Women's Movement, which met in conference immediately before the Third Comintern Congress:)

And let us not omit a particularly prominent and historically significant feature of this conference: the participation of women from the Eastern peoples.

Comrades, it would perhaps be tempting and seductive for some to view the appearance of delegations from the Near and Far East simply from an aesthetic viewpoint. But the women delegates personified more than the exotic, unusual and fairy-tale character of the Orient. The conference experienced a powerful historical moment, unforgettable and undying in its significance. For what was the significance of the appearance of women's delegations from the East? It told us that the Eastern peoples have begun to awaken and enter into struggle. Even the most downtrodden of the downtrodden, women who have lived for centuries and millennia under the spell of age-old religious and social beliefs, rules, customs and practices, are entering the revolutionary struggle. The appearance at the conference of women from the Near and Far East was an indication of how wide-ranging and profound is the advance of revolution in the East.

And that is exceptionally important for us in the West, for the proletarians in all the capitalist countries. Indeed, the battles to liberate the British and French proletariat will be fought not only on their native land but also in the torrid lands of India and Iran, on the variegated landscape of China, and throughout the Near and Far East. Comrades, the fact that women of the East came to us shows the exceptionally wide-reaching significance of the Third International's revolutionary struggle. It is the first and, until now, the only organization that truly inspires the hopes and the trust of the Eastern peoples; it is the first International to embrace all humankind. 'The International shall be the human race'⁵ – the entirety of humanity.

⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

⁵ A quotation from 'The Internationale', the anthem of the world workers' movement.

That was the significance of the appearance of women of the East at the conference.⁶

GRIGORII ZINOVIEV (*as president of the Comintern, Zinoviev included the following remarks in his call for the Third Congress*): Point 9 concerns an important question. The Communist International can register the first successes of its work among the peoples of the East. The Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku unquestionably has great historic importance. The congress of peoples of the Far East, now in preparation, will also play no small role.⁷ The Third Congress will have to tackle the Eastern question not only theoretically, as was done at the time of the Second Congress, but also in practical terms. Without the revolution in Asia the proletarian world revolution cannot be victorious. This thought must become the intellectual property of Communist proletarians. Only then will Communist workers have adequate ideological arms to resist the European opportunism of Hilferding and other heroes of the Two-and-a-Half International, who can spare only a smile for the subjugated peoples of the East.⁸

(For unity of workers and oppressed peoples:)

At the same time the Communist International resolved to support every genuine revolutionary movement of oppressed peoples and of colonial countries against imperialism. The Communist International is convinced that only the victory of proletarian revolution can genuinely liberate the oppressed peoples. Our slogan is: Proletarians and oppressed peoples of every country, unite in common struggle against imperialism and for communism!

We must, of course, combat every form of nationalism. We are well aware that Communists are murdered just as despicably in Kemal's Turkey as in Social Democratic bourgeois Germany. It goes without saying that the Communist International will fiercely combat such methods of struggle and the suppression of Communists in general. However, where there is a genuine, broad revolutionary movement – perhaps semi-nationalist, but still genuinely revolutionary – the Communist International will support this movement, to the extent that it is directed against imperialism. The world proletariat will lead all such movements and march in their front ranks.⁹

M.N. ROY (*Roy, the most prominent Communist leader from Asia, made these remarks in the Third Congress discussion on the world economic situation*): Comrades, when we debate the world economy and the crisis that the capitalist system of production is going through today, we cannot limit ourselves to Europe and the United States. We must leave the borders of these countries behind us, because capitalism, although doubtless centred in the aforementioned countries, is

⁶ Riddell, *To the Masses*, p. 783.

⁷ The First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East was held in Moscow and Petrograd, 21 January–2 February 1922. See Chapter 7.

⁸ Riddell, *To the Masses*, p. 63.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 849.

spreading to the most disparate parts of the earth and has subjugated the large non-European countries to its influence. This urge for imperial and colonial expansion has dominated all peoples for a long time and will perhaps play a role for a long time yet, since it offers the capitalist order valuable help in its struggles to survive. Without a doubt capitalism finds itself in a very dangerous crisis today; and yet, it would be mistaken to believe the supposition that capitalism will give up its position with little resistance. The capitalists are making the greatest efforts to find a way out of these difficulties and free themselves from this crisis.

Given that the world proletariat can exploit this crisis in order to bring about the world revolution and destroy the capitalist system, they are forced to mobilize everything they have to find a way out, if there is in fact any chance at all for the capitalist system to restore its stability.

The world war spared two capitalist centres, namely: Britain and the United States. The world today is in fact divided between these two states. The United States has annexed the entire New World, while the entire Asian and African continents are under British influence. The remaining European powers have been reduced to economic dependency on one or the other of these enormous imperial states. Therefore, we have to consider the possibility that both of these large states will solidify their capitalist structures, since they occupy a dominant position in capitalism today. The breakdown of Germany and of German industry had a great impact on British industry as well as on that of the United States. Before the war, Germany supplied Britain, the United States and other countries with industrial products in enormous quantities. After the war these markets have been captured by the United States, Britain and Japan, compensating these countries in large measure for the losses incurred through the economic collapse of Germany.

The large capitalist states are gradually recognizing the irrationality of the Versailles Treaty. They have gradually become aware that the conditions of the Versailles Treaty not only destroy Germany, but would probably also entail their own collapse. They are now trying to pull themselves out of this mess that they so short-sightedly got themselves into; they are making efforts to revive Germany's industry and to stabilize it. If Britain were dependent on its own resources alone it would have been unable to carry out its programme to revive Germany. Britain's current economic and industrial structure bars the motherland from either supporting or reviving Germany without the extensive resources of its enormous colonial possessions. Britain finds the pillars of its power today not only in its own economic structure but also in its extensive colonial and foreign possessions. So in order to revive international capitalism the drive for colonial and imperial expansion goes hand in hand with world capitalism. Up until the war it was Britain's policy not to alter the agrarian character of the large colonial countries because it created a receptive market for its industrial products and, on the other hand, was a good source of raw materials. Yet this policy has now been given up because

the industrial development of large countries such as India or China opened up enormous markets for Britain's industrial products. The overproduction that at present characterizes Britain's industrial system cannot be regarded as a ruinous weakness, at least not under present conditions.

The colonial countries are developing industries, with the result that living conditions of an increasing portion of the population are improving. For as low as wages in all industrialized countries may be, living conditions are undoubtedly better than in the other countries. The industrial development of countries that are now entering the world market is progressing, however, and at the same time, an increase in the buying power of the native population is evident. The industrial crisis is in large part the result of surplus from overproduction, which leaves large sums of capital unutilized. If the capitalists do not find a way to invest this capital usefully the consequences are dire, because the capital must then be invested in other industrial countries. The constant flow of capital from the motherland into other countries takes place in order to participate in their development. For that purpose large military forces are retained – horrific military forces, which the government uses to terrorize the labour movement. Large profits are used to pay and bribe labour leaders and also to pacify the strong revolutionary forces that slumber among masses of the unemployed by paying high unemployment benefits, pensions, etc.

Therefore, I suggest that a clause be added to the theses that refers to the important role that the colonial possessions play in the attempt to stabilize international capitalism. This clause must explain that the task of the International is to make clear on this point that the colonial possessions are resources that can be used by the capitalist system to rebuild its strength.¹⁰

SHORTCOMINGS OF THE CONGRESS DISCUSSION

Time constraints prevented the Third Congress from having the planned full discussion of the revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries. This failure prompted the following comments from congress delegates.

ROY: I have been given five minutes for my report. Since the topic could not be exhausted even in an hour, I will use these five minutes to launch an energetic protest.

The way that the Eastern question has been handled at this Congress is purely opportunistic and more appropriate for a congress of the Second International. It is impossible to reach any specific conclusions in the few comments that delegates from the East are permitted to make.

I protest against this way of dealing with the Eastern question. It was included

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 156–7.

in the Congress agenda by decision of a meeting of the Executive. But during the entire course of the Congress no attention was paid to this question. Finally, yesterday, there was a session of the Commission, but it presented a very pathetic spectacle. Not a single representative of the European and American delegations was present. Because of the confusion attending the Congress, the Commission had not been constituted. It decided not to adopt any theoretical resolution on the Eastern question.

This decision is absolutely incorrect and should not be allowed to stand. I therefore call on the Congress to refer the Eastern question to a constituted commission and give it the serious treatment it deserves.¹¹

CHARLES-ANDRÉ JULIEN (FRANCE): Comrades, the French delegation is in principled agreement with the protest by Comrade Roy, who has objected to the way that the Eastern question has been dealt with. The Executive proposed to include this question on the agenda. In all likelihood they considered it essential. Nonetheless, consideration of this question was shoved off to the end of the Congress, when discussion would necessarily be squeezed to the limit. Moreover, the Commission, which met here yesterday for the first time, dealt mainly with setting up the list of speakers. In short, we have had a session this evening in which the main role has been played by cinematography.¹² . . .

We can only regret that the Eastern question was dealt with here so briefly. In our opinion this is among the most important international issues. We must absolutely not neglect it, and the Congress must say clearly and definitely today that it must receive further attention, in a more effective way than was the case today.¹³

LUCIE COLLIARD (FRANCE): With regard to the protest by Comrade Julien, I would like to declare on behalf of a number of members of the French delegation that we do not agree with his statement. He has said that we are in a congress where cinema played the main role. We protest against this statement.

VASIL KOLAROV (CHAIR): On behalf of the Presidium, I support the statement by Comrade Colliard and protest on behalf of the Congress against what was said by Comrade Julien. The Congress gave all representatives of the Eastern countries an opportunity to come here and make contact with the international proletariat.

There is no cause, I believe, to belittle the great work of the Congress. We regret that the Congress does not have time to deal with the Eastern question with the thoroughness it deserves. But this misfortune is not great because the question was already dealt with thoroughly at the Second Congress of the Communist

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 855–6.

¹² The Third Congress session on the Eastern Question was among the portions of the congress filmed by the Soviet Commissariat for Public Education's division for cinema and photography as part of a projected film on the Comintern.

¹³ Riddell, *To the Masses*, pp. 865–9.

International, which adopted theses on the colonial question. This question was also up for discussion at the Congress of the Peoples of the East, which took place in August last year. I am convinced that it will also be dealt with in future congresses and other gatherings.

For us, the most important aspect on this occasion was to demonstrate international solidarity by the Western proletariat, the oppressed peoples in the colonies, and the other Eastern peoples. The main thing is that this demonstration took place.

The debate is closed. The Congress will reconvene at 8:00 P.M. this evening.¹⁴

(When the evening session opened, the first speaker addressed the discussion on the 'Eastern Question'.)

WILHELM KOENEN (CHAIR): The final session of the Congress is open. Comrades, on the agenda we have, first of all, a number of manifestos that have been submitted or that are to be published by the Executive. In addition, we have the reports of the Youth Commission, the Trade Union Commission, the Organization Commission, and, finally, the election of a chair.

To begin with, regarding the previous discussion on the Eastern question, we have the draft of a manifesto. The Presidium proposes that the Congress refer this draft back to the Executive and instruct it to publish the manifesto on behalf of the Congress. I believe there is no objection to that.

Since no objection has been raised, the draft is referred to the Executive.

We also have before us a proposal by the South African delegation to instruct the Executive to take up the Black question, or the proletarian movement among Blacks, as an important part of the Eastern question.¹⁵ The Presidium proposes to refer this matter as well to the Executive for further consideration. Is there any objection to that? No one, . . . so the proposal is adopted.¹⁶

(No manifesto on revolution in the East was published after the congress, and the draft referred to here is not found in the Comintern archives. For the draft resolutions on this question submitted by M.N. Roy, Avetis Sultanzade and Zhang Tailei, see Chapter 5. A resolution on the 'Black question' was adopted by the Fourth Congress; see Chapter 10.)

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 869–70.

¹⁵ The South African proposal, not included in the published proceedings, read: 'That this Congress resolves to further the movement among the working masses of Africa as an integral part of the Oriental question, and desires the Executive to take a direct initiative in promoting the awakening of the African Negroes as a necessary step to the world revolution.' It was implemented at the Fourth Comintern Congress of 1922. See Chapter 10.

¹⁶ Riddell, *To the Masses*, pp. 871–2.

CHAPTER 7

BLUEPRINTS FOR UNITY: CHINA AND DUTCH EAST INDIES

Speeches by G.I. Safarov and Tan Malaka, 1922

The great first tests of Communist policy toward revolutionary national liberation movements in the East took place in China and the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). The key issues in these experiences are laid out in the following speeches given in 1922 by G.I. Safarov and Tan Malaka.

Six months after the close of the Third Congress, the Comintern convened 'The First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East', which met for an opening session in Irkutsk and subsequently in Moscow and Petrograd between 21 January and 2 February 1921. Among the delegations from the Far East and neighbouring countries, 52 came from Korea, 37 from China, 13 from Japan, 14 from Mongolia and two from India.

The Chinese contingent included several delegates from the Guomindang (GMD – usually translated 'Chinese Nationalist Party'), a bourgeois-led insurgent movement that then ruled a large region in southern China. Its leader Sun Yat-sen advocated a form of socialism for China and wrote supportively of the social experiment in Russia. The GMD at that time maintained fraternal relations with the Soviet state and the Comintern.

The main reports at the Far East congress reiterated the Second World Congress strategy of support for national-revolutionary forces while applying it to different national contexts. The crucial test of this policy lay in China, where the large and influential GMD overshadowed a young and small Communist Party. The most authoritative statement of Comintern policy came in a report by Georgii Ivanovich Safarov, a leader of Comintern work with Eastern Peoples, replying to remarks by the GMD delegate identified only as Tao. References to land nationalization should be understood in terms of the Baku Congress call for peasants to 'take the land from the landlords and divide it among the peasants, tenants, and labourers who till it'. (See pp. 138–41 of present volume.)

The following text, taken from the 1922 English-language edition of the congress proceedings, has been edited for clarity.¹

CONDITIONS FOR SUPPORT OF NATIONAL-DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENTS

G.I. SAFAROV

We support every bourgeois-democratic movement in the colonial and semi-

¹ See *The First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East*, London: Hammersmith, 1970, pp. 193–5.

colonial countries, now and in the future, to the extent that it really aims at the national emancipation of the oppressed peoples.

I believe that this statement puts our positions in a nutshell. It was made officially at the Second Congress of the Comintern and was already contained in the Manifesto of its First Congress. It presents our point of view clearly.

We say: In the colonial and semi-colonial countries the first phase of the revolutionary movement must inevitably be a national-democratic movement. We give our support to this movement, as such, to the extent that it is directed against imperialism. We support it now and in the future.

But we cannot recognize this struggle as ours, as a struggle for the proletarian revolution. To make such a statement would be wrong; it would do a poor service to the workers and peasants of China and Korea. The peasant masses, the proletarian and semi-proletarian masses of China and Korea, have a greater task to fulfil than that of national emancipation of their countries. They face the task of their countries' *complete* liberation. Given that these proletarian and semi-proletarian masses of the city and village take upon themselves the task of the social emancipation of the toiling masses of the oppressed countries, it is wrong and fatal to arouse any illusions on this matter.

By raising the slogan of a democratic government, of a uniform income tax, of land nationalization – that is, the slogans of the democratic revolution – we show that we are ready to co-operate with all the honest nationalist democratic organizations, if they have the interests of the toiling majority of their country at heart.

On the other hand the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements must organize independently in their class unions. As for the unions now being formed as guild and craft organizations directly connected with the Guomindang Party, we cannot recognize them as class unions. They do not understand the principle of class; they are not organs of the class struggle of the proletariat for its emancipation.

We deal with you, followers of the Guomindang Party, as our allies, friends, and comrades. We tell you openly and frankly: we support your struggle, now and in the future, to the extent that it is a matter of a nationalistic and democratic uprising for national emancipation. But at the same time we shall independently carry on our Communist work of organizing the proletarian and semi-proletarian masses of China. This is the cause of the proletarian masses themselves, and must be done by the Chinese workers, the Chinese proletariat.



G.I. Safarov

The Chinese labour movement must develop quite independently of the radically minded bourgeois and democratic organizations and parties. This is quite clear to all those present at the Congress. A number of protests against comrade Tao's statements received by the Presidium fully affirmed this. For a definite historical period we can arrange for a division of labour between us, the representatives of the proletarian revolution (that is, the proletarian class and the semi-proletarian elements among the peasantry) on the one hand, and, on the other, the representatives of the nationalist radical and democratic elements of awakening China.

However, both sides must understand that this division of labour must be based upon a voluntary agreement. The proletarian masses need not reject their own views, they need not refrain from organizing their own class party. Only under these conditions is co-operation and a voluntary agreement possible.

Given that we want to organize the masses under our banner and have the majority of the people on our side, we must take up the vital interests of the masses, so they will follow us to the end, ready to die for our and their cause.

For the Chinese peasants of Southern China, the question of land nationalization is not one that can be settled from above by administrative reforms. For them it is a vital necessity. We must therefore carry out this revolutionary measure – even in only a small section of the country – in order to show Chinese peasants living on the territory held by hostile forces that where a democratic regime has been established the peasants live a thousand times better, that their interests are a thousand times more secure. Without a clear understanding of this, without a correct attitude on the land question, the great masses cannot be drawn into the struggle on our side. Working out a good programme is not enough. Advocating this programme within the narrow circle of so-called educated society is not enough. This must be made into the burning demand of the toiling masses.

Only then will this programme become real and living, a programme of revolutionary action. Therefore, I contradict comrade Tao's statement and claim that in order to arouse the Chinese toiling masses it is necessary to do much preparatory organizational and agitational work. For the Chinese toiling masses to organize the state system that best suits the interests of toilers of all countries – the soviet system – much preliminary work must be done. A relentless struggle must be conducted against not only the foreign imperialists, the warlord marauders, but also against the native usurers in the village and the native bourgeoisie in the city.

It is not a question of taking power immediately but of protecting the peasant in his everyday life from those who oppress and exploit him by charging him enormous rents which leave him a mere pittance.

FORGING AN ANTI-COLONIAL UNITED FRONT

Nine months after the Far East Congress, a revolutionary leader from Indonesia (then called the Dutch Indies) reported to the Fourth Comintern Congress on an innovative alliance with Islamic opponents of colonial rule initiated by revolutionary socialists of his country. Ibrahim Datoek Tan Malaka also called on the Comintern to adopt a more flexible policy on 'Pan-Islamism', a shift also recommended by delegates from Tunisia and the Netherlands and incorporated in the Fourth Congress 'Theses on the Eastern Question'.

'I come from the Indies; I have travelled forty days'

IBRAHIM DATOEK TAN MALAKA

12 November 1922

Comrades, given the speeches by Comrades Zinoviev and Radek and other European comrades, and given the importance the united front holds for thousands of millions of oppressed people of the East, I believe I must take the floor in the name of the Communist Party of Java.

I must address some questions to Comrades Zinoviev and Radek. Perhaps Comrade Zinoviev has not considered a united front in Java, and perhaps our united front is something different. But what the decision of the Second Congress of the Communist International means in practice is that we must establish a united front with revolutionary nationalism. We must recognize that the united front is necessary in our country too. And for us it is a united front not with Social Democrats but with revolutionary nationalists. In our country the policies of the nationalists against imperialism take different forms, including the boycott, the Muslim war of liberation and Pan-Islamism. I am looking at two forms in particular, and therefore I ask the following questions. First, should we support the national boycott movement or not? Second, should we support Pan-Islamism – yes or no? And if yes, how far should we go?

I must concede that the boycott is certainly not a Communist method, but given the political and military subjugation of the East it is one of the most effective available methods.² We have also seen that during the last two years this method has been crowned with success in the Egyptian peoples' boycott in 1919 against British imperialism and the great Chinese boycott of late 1919 and early 1920. The most recent boycott movement took place in British India. We can assume that this year or next some kind of boycott will be utilized in the East.

We know, of course, that the boycott is not our method; it is more the method of a petty bourgeois or the nationalist bourgeoisie. We can say more: we can say

² The boycotts in question were directed against purchase of goods made in Britain or other colonizing powers.



A young Tan Malaka

that the boycott is a way to support the indigenous bourgeoisie. But we have also seen that as a result of the boycott movement in British India 18,000 leaders are still languishing in the jails, while the boycott aroused a quite revolutionary sentiment. Yes, the British government was even forced by the boycott movement in British India to ask for military assistance from Japan in the eventuality that the boycott movement evolved into an open armed uprising.

We know that the Muslim leaders in India, Dr Kitchlew, Hasrat Mohani and the Ali brothers, are really nationalists. In fact, no uprising took place when Gandhi was arrested. But in India we know very well, as does every revolutionary, that a local uprising must end in defeat, because

there we do not possess any weapons or other instruments of war.

So the question of a boycott movement, either now or in the future, is very much in the foreground for us Communists. We knew in India and in Java that many Communists are inclined to proclaim a boycott movement in Java, perhaps because the communist sentiment coming from Russia has been so long forgotten, and also perhaps because in British India communist sentiments that were competing with this broad movement were stifled. In any case we face the question: Must we support this tactic – yes or no? And how far can we go in this?

We have a long experience of Pan-Islamism. First let me speak about our experiences in the Indies, where we work together with the Islamists. In Java there is quite a large association called Sarekat Islam (Islamic Federation), which includes many poor peasants. Between 1912 and 1916 this organization had perhaps a million members – it could well have been as many as three or four million. It was a very large popular movement that grew up spontaneously and was very revolutionary.

Until 1921 we worked together with it. Our party, with thirteen thousand members, went into the popular movement and carried out propaganda there. In 1921 we were successful in getting Sarekat Islam to adopt our programme. The Islamic association spoke out in the villages for control of the factories and for the slogan: All power to the poor peasants, all power to the proletarians! So Sarekat Islam was making the same propaganda as our Communist Party, only sometimes under another name.

But in 1921 a split occurred as a result of clumsy criticism of the leaders of Sarekat Islam. The government, through its agents in Sarekat Islam, took advantage of this split and also made use of the decision of the Second Congress of the Communist International: *Struggle against Pan-Islamism!*³ What did they say to the ordinary peasants? They said: You see, the Communists do not merely want to split your religion, they also want to destroy it. For the ordinary Muslim peasant, that was too much. The peasant thought to himself: I have lost everything in this world; must I now lose my heaven as well? That won't do! That is how the ordinary Muslims thought. And the propagandists, the agents of the government, exploited that very successfully. So we had a split.

CHAIR: Your time is up.

TAN MALAKA: I come from the Indies; I have travelled forty days. (*Applause*)

The Sarekat Islamists believe in our propaganda. If I may use a popular expression, their stomachs are with us, but their hearts are with Sarekat Islam, with their heaven. We are unable to grant them that heaven. Therefore, they boycotted our meetings, and we were unable to carry out propaganda any more.

Since the beginning of last year we worked to restore the collaboration with Sarekat Islam. We said at our December congress last year that the Muslims in the Caucasus and other countries who collaborate with the Soviets and fight against international capitalism have a much better understanding of their religion. We also said that if they wish to make propaganda for their religion, they can do so, but they should do it not in meetings but in the mosques.

We have been asked at public meetings, 'Are you a Muslim, yes or no? Do you believe in God, yes or no?'

And how did we answer? 'Yes,' I said, 'when I stand before God, I am a Muslim, but when I stand before man, I am not a Muslim (*Loud applause*), because God has said that there are many Satans among men!' (*Loud applause*) And so, with the Qur'an in our hand, we inflicted a defeat on their leaders. At our congress last year we compelled the leaders of Sarekat Islam, through their own members, to co-operate with us.

Then in March last year a general strike broke out, and the Muslim workers needed us, as we had the railway workers under our leadership.⁴ The leaders of

³ The Second Congress 'Theses on the National and Colonial Questions' state: 'A struggle is necessary against Pan-Islamism, the Pan-Asiatic movement and similar currents which try to tie the liberation struggle against European and American imperialism to the strengthening of the power of Turkish and Japanese imperialism, the nobility, the big landlords, the clergy, etc.' See Chapter 3, pp. 94-9.

⁴ It is not clear to what strike Tan Malaka is referring. In 1920, the sugar workers' union asked the railway workers to help them gain union recognition, but no strike took place. The pawnshop workers' strike of January 1922 was the first major work stoppage in the Dutch East Indies. Tan Malaka presented a statement of support to the strikers on behalf of revolutionary unions, including the railway workers.

Sarekat Islam said: If you want to collaborate with us, you must help us. Of course we went to them and said: 'Yes, your God is mighty, but your God has said that on this earth the railway workers are even mightier!' (*Loud applause*) 'The railway workers are God's executive committee in this world.' (*Laughter*)

But that doesn't settle the question. And if we have another split we can be certain that the government agents will be there again with their Pan-Islamism. That is why the question of Pan-Islamism is urgently posed.

Now first you must understand what the word Pan-Islamism actually means. It once had a historical meaning, signifying that Islam must conquer the entire world, sword in hand. This was to be done in a holy war under the leadership of the caliph, and the caliph must be Arabic in origin. About forty years after the death of Mohammed, the Muslims divided into three great empires, and with that the Holy War lost its significance for the entire Muslim world. The notion of conquering the entire world for the Muslim religion lost its meaning. The caliph of Spain said: I am the true caliph, and I must carry the banner. The caliph of Egypt said the same thing. And the caliph of Baghdad said: I am the true leader, because I come from the Arabic tribe of the Quraysh.

So Pan-Islamism no longer has its original meaning, but instead has now in practice taken on quite a different meaning. Pan-Islamism now means the nationalist freedom struggle. For the Muslims, Islam means everything: not only religion, but also state, economy, food, and everything. Pan-Islamism means the brotherhood of all Muslim peoples, and the freedom struggle of not only the Arab but also the Hindustani, Javanese and all the oppressed Muslim peoples. In practice, this brotherhood means the liberation struggle, not only against Dutch but also against British, French and Italian capitalism, that is to say, against capitalism of the entire world. That is what Pan-Islamism now means in the Indies among the subjugated colonial peoples, and that is how they have spread the idea in secret – that is, as the liberation struggle against the different imperialist powers of the world.

This is a new task for us. Just as we want to support the national struggle, we also want to support the liberation struggle of these very combative, very active 250 million Muslims living under the imperialist powers. Therefore I ask once again: Should we support Pan-Islamism, in this sense? That is all I have to say. (*Loud applause*)

CHAPTER 8

FOURTH CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL: FROM THE MINUTES

The Anti-Imperialist United Front

The Comintern's Fourth World Congress opened in Moscow on 5 November 1922 and lasted for a full month. Among the 61 countries represented were 18 in Asia (of which seven were under Soviet rule), two in Africa, and five in Latin America. Two days of debate were devoted to the revolutionary movement in Asia and Africa (the 'Eastern Question'). A commission on this question developed an extensive statement on implementation of the decisions of the Second Congress and of the Congress of the Peoples of the East (Baku). The Fourth Congress also reconceptualized these decisions by calling for an 'anti-imperialist united front'.

Republished below are the twelve contributions to the Fourth Congress discussion. The opening speech by van Ravestejn was mostly informational in nature; only his comments on policy are included here. For the congress resolution, see Chapter 9.¹

'The world proletariat greets the strivings of Islamic peoples'

WILLEM VAN RAVESTEJN (NETHERLANDS): . . . The world proletariat has only one enemy, imperialism. But this imperialism is . . . neither a unified whole nor does it face in the proletariat its only irreconcilable opponent. The greatest enemy of the proletariat and the Eastern peoples, and especially the Islamic peoples, is the British empire, an imperialism that spans the world, based on its rule over India and its naval control of the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean. The Islamic peoples have it in their power to destroy the bridge that sustains British imperialism. If this bridge falls, then this imperialism will also collapse. Its fall would have such a mighty echo in the entire world of Islam and the East that the French empire too would not survive this blow. The liberation of the Islamic world from every form of European political domination, particularly as regards the countries of the Near East, is in the interests not only of the peoples there, the peasants and workers in the Eastern territories not yet in the grip of capitalism. It represents also a fundamental interest of the West European and world proletariat.

This liberation would lead unavoidably to the fall of Western imperialism, the destruction of the criminal imperialist peace treaties, the triumph of revolution in

¹ To consult these speeches in the context of the entire Fourth Congress, see Riddell, *Toward the United Front*.

Europe, the affiliation of the West European Soviet republics to the central and east European states, the liberation of the Balkan nationalities, and their fusion into a great federation of liberated Balkan republics.

The world proletariat greets the strivings of the Islamic peoples for full economic, financial and political liberation from the influence and domination of the imperialist states. Although these efforts do not aim for the ending of wage slavery and private property in the means of production in the Islamic countries, they nonetheless threaten the roots of European capitalism's domination.

'For an anti-imperialist united front in the colonial countries'

M.N. ROY (INDIA): Comrades, the Eastern question should have been dealt with many times already. It should have been taken up in connection with the capitalist offensive, for when you speak of this offensive, you should not ignore the reserves on which capitalism is based and on which it can call in the future. But this was not the case. And now that this question finally is posed for debate, the time allowed is so limited that it is in practice simply not possible to handle the question in anything like a clear manner. Therefore, I am rather pessimistic regarding the possibility of portraying for you in a fundamental and detailed manner conditions in the Eastern countries, which in my opinion are quite important for the prospects of a decisive victory for the movement in the Western countries. But I will do my best, despite the shortness of the time at my disposal.

The Second Congress of the Communist International settled on the main principles regarding national liberation struggles in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. It expressed the main principles that govern the relationships of the proletarian revolution and the proletarian movement in economically advanced countries with the national struggle of backward peoples. The experiences that we had gained by 1920, at the time of the Second Congress, did not enable us to develop these principles very fully. However, since those days the movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries has experienced a long period of development. And despite everything that the Communist International and the Communist parties of the West have left undone and ought to have done in order to establish closer relations with these movements and develop them, despite everything, we are now in a position to discuss these movements in the colonial and semi-colonial countries with more knowledge, experience and understanding.

The theses adopted by the Communist International's Second Congress confirmed that fundamentally the national movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries is objectively revolutionary, and thus forms part of the world-wide revolutionary struggle. It was therefore decided that the Communist parties of the Western countries, and especially of the imperialist countries, should do all in their power to assist these movements. But at that time we did not know how these instructions and this resolution of the Second Congress could be carried out.

Only a few then understood that the inclusive term 'colonial and semi-colonial countries' embraced quite different regions and peoples. Furthermore, these regions and peoples included every form of social development and of political and industrial backwardness.

Our view was that simply because they were all politically, economically and socially backward, they could all be tossed into a sack and that the problem on a general level would be resolved. But that viewpoint was incorrect. Today we know that the Eastern countries cannot be treated as a politically, economically or socially homogeneous entity. Assuming the Communist International takes it seriously, the Eastern question is therefore more complex than that of the struggle in the West. The social character of the movement in the Western countries is uniform. In the East that is not the case.

The countries of the East can be divided into three categories. Firstly, the countries in which capitalism has reached a rather high level of development. In these countries not only has industry developed due to the inflow of capital from the great centres of capitalism, but also a native capitalism has gained strength. This has promoted the emergence of a bourgeoisie with a developed class consciousness and its counterpart, a proletariat, which also has class consciousness and is engaged in economic struggle that gradually becomes a political one.

Secondly, there are countries where capitalist development has begun but is still at an elementary level, and feudalism still constitutes the backbone of society.

There is also a third level, where primitive conditions still prevail, and the social order is dominated by patriarchal feudalism.

Given that the lands termed 'colonial and semi-colonial countries' can be divided into such dissimilar categories, how is it possible to develop a general programme or broad policy guidelines for them all, in order to promote the development of a revolutionary movement?

Our present task at the Fourth Congress is now to thoroughly elaborate the basic principles that were adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International. Today we face the concrete problem of how to promote the movement's development in these countries. For despite all the differences just mentioned, in all of these countries we are dealing with a revolutionary movement. Yet, since their social structures are dissimilar, so too is the nature of their revolutionary movements. To the degree that their social character differs, so too must these movements' programme vary, and so too must their tactics.

Taking this into account, all the Eastern delegations present at this Congress, working jointly with the Eastern division of the Communist International, have prepared theses that have been submitted to the Congress. These theses present the overall situation in the East and the movement's development since the Second Congress. They also indicate the guidelines for the movement's development in these countries.

At the Second Congress, that is, immediately following the imperialist war, we

noted a generalized uprising among the colonial peoples, resulting from intensive economic exploitation during the war.

This great revolutionary uprising created a sensation around the world. There was a rebellion in Egypt in 1919, and one in Korea that same year. In the countries lying between these far-distant points we noted a more or less intensive and extended upsurge. But at that time these movements were nothing more than great spontaneous risings. Since then the various forces and social factors that comprised these movements have become more distinct, even as their economic foundations have developed.

As a result, forces that two years ago were active participants in these movements are now seen to have gradually withdrawn from them, or even to have quit them entirely. Thus, in the countries with more capitalist development, for example, the highest layer of the bourgeoisie, that is, the layer that already owns what one might call a stake in the country and has invested significant capital and built up industry, now considers it more advantageous for them to shelter under imperialist protection. For when the great social uprising took place at the end of the war and developed into a revolutionary tempest it was not only foreign imperialists but also the native bourgeoisie that took fright at the potential of this movement.

In none of these countries is the bourgeoisie sufficiently developed to be confident in its capacity to replace foreign imperialism and then maintain 'law and order'. In reality they now fear that if foreign rule is overthrown, this revolutionary uprising could lead to a period of anarchy, chaos and the disorders of civil war, which would be damaging for their interests. In other words, the industrial development of the bourgeoisie requires law and order, which in most of these countries was introduced by foreign imperialism. Given the threat posed to this law and order and the possibility of disturbances and revolutionary uprisings, it now seems more appropriate to the native bourgeoisie to conclude a compromise with the imperialist authorities.

This of course weakened the movement in some countries. Nonetheless, this temporary compromise cannot shake the foundations of these movements. In order to maintain its rule in these countries imperialism must seek points of support locally. It must have a social foundation and assure itself of the support of one or another of the classes of native society. Today it has found it necessary to reject the old methods of exploitation, and it has made certain political and economic concessions to a sector of the native bourgeoisie. These concessions have appeased the native bourgeoisie for the moment, while also opening up broader perspectives for this class. They have acquired a taste for economic development and have created capitalist competition. For the moment that industry begins to grow in the colonial countries, it undermines the foundations of imperialist capitalism's monopoly.

That is why the temporary compromise between the native and imperialist

bourgeoisies cannot be of long duration. In this compromise lie the seeds of future conflicts.

This imperialist policy of compromise has also been introduced in the second group of countries, where usury, commercial capital, feudal bureaucracy and feudal militarism are the dominant social forces and the leaders of the national movement. But the results of this policy have been less satisfactory than in the [more developed] countries. The interests of the feudal bureaucracy and the colonial feudal lords cannot be as readily appeased as is possible between the imperialist and native bourgeoisies. We therefore see that in the course of recent years the nationalist struggle in Turkey has taken first place among all the colonial struggles.

But the recent developments in Turkey show us equally the weak side of this situation. For we know that a national struggle and national political awareness cannot develop so long as the social economy of the people in question is still dominated by feudal patriarchy. So long as there is no bourgeoisie that assumes leadership of the society, no national struggle can arise in all its revolutionary potential. Although we know that it is dangerous for the colonial bourgeoisie to continually make compromises with the imperialist bourgeoisie, in principle we must be in favour, for a bourgeois national movement in the colonial countries is objectively revolutionary and must therefore be supported. But we must not overlook the fact that this objective factor must not be accepted unconditionally, and that specific historical factors must also be considered. The bourgeoisie becomes a revolutionary force when it directs the rebellion against the backward and outworn social forms, that is, when the struggle is directed fundamentally against feudalism, and the bourgeoisie leads the people. In such conditions the bourgeoisie is the vanguard of revolution.

But this cannot be said of the new bourgeoisie in the Eastern countries, or at least of its main components. Although the bourgeoisie leads the struggle there, it directs it not against feudalism but against foreign capitalism. It leads the struggle of the weak and undeveloped and oppressed bourgeoisie against a strong and developed bourgeoisie. Instead of a class struggle this is, so to speak, a conflict within a single class, and as such, it presents a basis for compromise.

Therefore, the nationalist struggle in the colonies and the revolutionary struggle for national development there cannot be founded exclusively and simply on a movement inspired by bourgeois ideology and led by the bourgeoisie. We now see that in every country all these leading forces – the liberal bourgeoisie in the advanced countries and the feudal military cliques in the second group of countries – are gradually making attempts to reach compromise agreements with the imperialist rulers and imperialist capitalism.

This reality raises the question whether another social factor can possibly intervene in this struggle and wrest leadership out of the hands that have to this point directed the struggle.

We note that in the countries where capitalism is sufficiently developed such a social factor is already beginning to appear. A proletarian class is coming into being in these countries. And where capitalism has begun to oppress the peasantry, this has created a large mass of poor and landless farm workers. These masses are gradually being drawn into the struggle, which therefore is no longer merely economic but is taking each day a more political character. In the countries where feudalism and the feudal military cliques still hold the leadership in their hands we also see the emergence of a growing agrarian movement. In every conflict and struggle we see the interests of imperialist capitalism coinciding with those of the native landowners and the native feudal class. When the popular masses arise and the national movement becomes revolutionary in scope it will threaten not only imperialist capitalism and the foreign domination. In addition, the native upper classes will join with the foreign exploiters.

We see a dual struggle in the colonial countries, directed simultaneously against foreign imperialism and the native privileged classes, which indirectly or directly reinforces and supports foreign imperialism.

That forms the basis for the question that we have to investigate. How can the native bourgeoisie and the native privileged classes, whose interests run counter to those of imperialism, or whose economic development is blocked by imperialism, be encouraged and supported in taking up the struggle? We must discover how the objective revolutionary significance of these factors can be utilized. At the same time we must bear in mind that these forces can be effective only up to a given point and no further. We must be aware that they will go only so far and no further, and then they will seek to halt the revolution. We have already had such experiences in every country.

An overview of the movement in all the Eastern countries during recent years would have helped us in developing our programmatic points, but this is not possible in the available time. Nonetheless, I believe that most of you are rather well acquainted with the movement's development in these countries. You know that the movements in Egypt and India have been brought to a halt by the fearfulness and vacillation of the bourgeoisie. And a great revolutionary movement that embraced the broad masses of peasants and the working class and seriously threatened imperialism was unable to cause it serious damage for the simple reason that its leadership lay in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

This bourgeoisie is divided into two groups. The upper layer is industrially developed and presides over major industrial and commercial interests, which are linked with imperialist capitalism. This layer saw the danger posed by this movement and therefore went over to the imperialist side. It thus became a positive obstacle for the revolutionary national movement, with its weak social foundations. It did not have the determination and courage to place itself at the head of the great revolutionary movement in order to lead it forward. As a result the movement, betrayed and misled by these forces, landed in its present condition of decline.

On the other hand we have the example of the Turkish struggle, which is taking place at this moment. You are aware that the significant victory of the Turkish people has not been carried through to its logical conclusion thanks to the feudal military clique that at present heads the movement. Whether the Turkish people can achieve a complete victory and the full political and economic liberation of the Turkish nation has been put in question, in order to serve the interests of a small feudal military clique who consider it more advantageous to sell out to a group of imperialists. This clique preferred to link up with one group of imperialists against another. That could lead to the enrichment of this group and to Mustafa Kemal Pasha ascending the throne in place of the Sultan, who was mainly a tool of British imperialism. But that does not in any way resolve the Turkish national question.

And we know that during the two or three months that revolutionary forces around the world were celebrating the victories of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, they received word that in free Turkey, liberated by the revolutionary power of workers and peasants, Kemal is now brutally persecuting all those who strive for the welfare of workers and peasants.

That is proof of the fact that although the bourgeoisie and the feudal military clique may take the leadership of the national revolutionary struggle in this or that country, the time will come when these people will surely betray the movement and become a counter-revolutionary force. We must educate the other social force, which is objectively more revolutionary, in such a way that it can shove aside the others and take the leadership. Until that is done, a decisive victory of the nationalist struggle at the present time remains in question.

Although we did not perceive this problem so clearly two years ago, there was already an objective tendency in this direction, and as a result we have Communist parties, political mass parties, in almost all the Eastern countries. We know that the Communist parties in most of these countries cannot actually be called Communist parties in the Western sense of the word. But their existence shows that social factors in these countries are calling forth political parties – not bourgeois parties but parties that express and reflect the demands, interests and hopes of the popular masses, of the peasants and workers. They are replacing the type of nationalism that fights only to economically develop and politically reinforce the native bourgeoisie.

The existence of Communist parties in these Eastern countries assumes even more significance if we view the matter from another point of view. The bourgeoisie in the colonial and semi-colonial countries unfortunately arrived too late on the scene, 150 years too late, and is in no way ready to play the role of liberator. It neither can nor will go further than a given point. For that reason the nationalist revolutionary movement in these countries, where millions and millions crave national liberation and must free themselves economically and politically from imperialism before they can make further progress, will enjoy no success under the leadership of the bourgeoisie.

Thus we see that Communist parties are necessary, even if for the moment they are no more than cells. These parties are destined to play a great role and to take over the leadership in the national revolutionary struggle, when it is abandoned and betrayed by the bourgeoisie. They will be capable of carrying forward the struggle for freedom from imperialism. They alone will be in a position to assist the oppressed nationalities in winning full political and economic independence.

These parties are historically destined and socially enabled to take up this task because they are based on the objectively most revolutionary factors, namely the workers and peasants. These factors share no common interest with imperialism, and their social status and economic conditions cannot improve so long as these countries remain under capitalist-imperialist rule.

That is why the national revolutionary struggle in these countries can achieve ultimate victory only under the leadership of the workers and peasants, that is, of a political party that represents them.

Comrades, the need to organize Communist parties in these countries brings us to the question of their programme and tactics. I must point out that when the Communist International debates its programme it must take into consideration the fact that developing the International's programme in the countries of the East is very complicated. It is all the more complicated given that – and this must unfortunately be conceded – our comrades of the Communist International have so far devoted very little time to studying this question.

Before we write a programme and develop policies to be adopted by the Communist parties in the East it is important that the International's different sections devote a bit more attention to these questions and study them more carefully. This would not be wasted labour, because the power of the bourgeoisie in its own countries is at present very tightly linked to the situation in the colonial countries. Imperialism is right now making the attempt to save itself through the development of industry in the colonial countries.

During the war, imperialism – and especially British imperialism – considered it necessary to apply more flexibility in its monopoly of control over the industrial and economic life of the backward colonial countries. Thus India, for example, which had for 150 years served as an agricultural preserve and source of raw materials for British industry, was during the war permitted adequate industrial development. The shattering of capitalist equilibrium in Europe forces imperialism to search for new markets, in order to bring world capitalism back into equilibrium. They hope to find this in the colonial countries through the industrial development of countries like India and China. That is the way they are trying to resolve this problem.

By relying on the raw materials of the colonial countries imperialism seeks to guide its offensive against the European proletariat to a devastating victory. We must not lose sight of this tendency. Of course we can raise the objection that this cannot happen, because it is in imperialism's interests to keep the colonial

countries backward in order to absorb all the goods produced in the dominant countries. Well and good, but that is a very mechanical way to view the question. We must not forget that if we lengthen the skirts of the Chinese by a couple of inches, world textile production has to be doubled. Industrial development makes it possible to raise the living standards of four hundred million Chinese and thereby double the world's textile production. The industrial development of China does not necessarily lead to a reduction in production in the main capitalist countries. If these countries develop industrially, they need machines and so on, which they cannot produce themselves. The colonial market will be reduced and limited for some types of products, but where machines are concerned, it must be expanded.

In addition, a portion of the production of Britain and other countries that was previously marketed in Central and Western Europe must now find new buyers, and that can happen only if the capacity of colonial countries to consume increases.

As you see, the unification of imperialist and native capital in the colonial and semi-colonial countries will play a major role in the overall plans for the capitalist offensive. In order to be capable of resisting the capitalist offensive in the European countries we must bring our striking force into alignment with the movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

The experiences we have gained during the last two years in co-ordinating our strength with that of the bourgeois nationalist parties in these countries teach us that making this link is not always practicable. It is necessary for us to have our own parties in these countries, and we must have them. Through the agency of these parties we can utilize the bourgeois revolutionary parties to the greatest possible extent.

That brings us to the question of the anti-imperialist united front. Shoulder to shoulder with the united front of the working class in the Western countries, we must organize an anti-imperialist united front in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Its goal is to organize all available revolutionary forces into a great united front against imperialism. The experience of the last two years has proven that this front cannot be achieved under the leadership of the bourgeois parties. We must develop our parties in these countries in order to take over the leadership and organization of this front.

In the Western countries the proletarian united-front tactic promotes an accumulation of organizational strength, exposes the betrayal and compromising policy of the Social Democratic parties, and leads to struggles. In the same way the campaign for an anti-imperialist united front in the colonial countries will free the movement from the fearful and wavering bourgeoisie and bring the masses more actively into the vanguard, so that the revolutionary social forces can constitute the movement's foundation and thus secure its final victory.

'Japanese workers are awakening'

SEN KATAYAMA (JAPAN): Comrades, I am here to talk about the question of Japan and the Far East. Japan holds a very important position in the coming socialist revolution. Japan is the only country of the Far East that is genuinely independent, both economically and politically. Japan has great importance for the world's revolutionary movement, because Japanese workers may rise up against the capitalist class in the near future. I would therefore like to ask you to listen attentively.

We all know – and there is hardly need to say this here – that we must defend the Russian revolution. Soviet Russia is threatened by Japanese imperialism. For this reason alone the Fourth Congress and Communists around the world should devote more attention to this factor than has been the case in the past. Japan is represented at this Congress in order to help promote world social revolution. I therefore ask you, comrades, to read my report on Japan and the situation there.

I would like to enumerate a few facts in order to inform you regarding the situation in Japan:

Population: 56 million

National wealth: 87 billion yen²

1917 production: 8.372 billion yen

1918 production: 5.608 billion yen

Japan is the most industrially developed country in the Far East. For example, consider the following figures [in thousands]:

Profession	Men	Youth	Women	Total
Civil servants	133	–	43	176
Factories with 10 or more workers	706	–	314	1,520
Miners	353	–	112	465
Forest workers	564	–	147	716
Fishermen	617	20	170	808
Railway workers	2,373	20	1,186	3,860
Farm workers	1,856	55	1,402	3,293
Teachers	173	–	53	226

For a total of 7,364,000 workers.

All these are wage workers who in some cases are immensely exploited. In the spinning factories the working day lasts eleven or twelve hours, plus overtime. Women and young girls work in these factories. In addition there are 4.16 million families of poor peasants and tenant farmers.

² By one estimate, the Japanese yen was worth about US\$ 0.50 in 1922.

A portion of the industrial proletariat among these workers is organized. In 1920 there were 838 trade unions with a membership of 269,000. In 1921 there were 671 unions with a membership of 246,000, and also 229 associations of tenant farmers with 24,000 members. Since then these figures have of course grown. The association of landowners, which with the exception of 225 large landowners is an organization of small peasants, has a membership of 1,422,000. There are also mutual aid societies, 685 of them in 1920, with a membership of two million. These latter associations assisted 3,169,000 people with a sum of 1,551,000 yen.

Comrades, these unvarnished facts are taken from governmental reports. As regards the trade unions the government has obviously tried to scale down their number; in reality there are more. The Japanese workers are oppressed and exploited by the militarist government. Every attempt to found a liberation movement is ruthlessly suppressed. But the Japanese workers are awakening. They have had to learn European technology and methods of industrial management. It took forty to fifty years, and in this time they learned everything. I well recall that when I was thirteen or fourteen years old there were no factories of any account. In the entire country were only twenty-five miles of railroads, and we had never heard of coal and kerosene. All we had for illumination was candles. There were no machines in Japan but the water-wheel and the spinning wheel.

Today we have six thousand miles of railroads, a merchant navy with a total displacement of four million tons, and, I am ashamed to say, a war fleet with 700,000 tons displacement. In forty to fifty years the Japanese have learned to build steamships, locomotives and complicated machinery, while the workers are more and more oppressed. The Japanese have also been forced to learn the art of war. Japan waged war against China in 1894 and against Russia in 1904. The Japanese workers sacrificed themselves as cannon fodder, but they recognized that they were fighting only for Japan's capitalists.

This was a true revelation for the Japanese workers. They have not only learned complex modern industrial technology, but have also organized a workers' movement. Our trade unions are still quite weak, but I must tell you that there is no Henderson or Gompers in Japan. The workers do not concern themselves with bank balances or union properties, but fight for the Japanese revolution. In addition to wage increases they demand reduction of the working time and control of industry, and they are determined to carry through their struggle for a new social system. Our trade union leaders understand the conditions of capitalism and show the workers that the capitalist system cannot abolish unemployment from the world, and that this will occur only when capitalism is abolished.

Comrades, our workers are still backward with respect to the workers' movement, but I must tell you that we have no traditions holding us back and no reactionary worker aristocracy. For this reason the movement has developed more quickly in Japan than in other countries. Most of the unions were founded quite

recently, that is, in the last couple of years, but one trade union has already existed for eleven years. I would like to show you how the Japanese workers' movement has progressed. The Yuai Kai (the Japanese workers' federation) was founded 11 years ago in order to educate the workers. Its founder was Suzuki, a student who boasted of being a close friend of the Tokyo chief of police. Yet, although this movement was founded for educational purposes, it caused a great sensation. Thanks to Suzuki's friendship with the chief of detectives, of which he was so proud, he received permission to found a workers' movement. The police even helped him distribute the publications of the American Federation of Labor. But the workers were not satisfied with a purely educational association.

Nonetheless, it grew astonishingly quickly. Tens of thousands of workers united in the Japanese Federation of Labour, which then formed industrial unions. Despite its bourgeois founder the movement gradually grew strong and radical. At first they were socialist. But last October, at their annual assembly, the tone was outspokenly Bolshevik.

The federation includes 63 unions with a total membership of 120,000 workers in all. At the yearly assembly in October, which I mentioned, it was decided among other things to prepare for a 24-hour general strike on 1 May. The delegates voted for immediate recognition of Soviet Russia and for closing down the League of Nations' labour office. They also voted to press for more radical textbooks in the schools. In Japan, as also in the United States, children in the schools are supplied with textbooks that poison their minds in favour of the imperialist and capitalist classes. We have to carry out anti-militarist and anti-chauvinist propaganda.

We see then that this trade union, founded ten years ago under police protection, has since grown strong and revolutionary. Its left wing sent a delegation with the goal of affiliating to the Red International of Trade Unions. That shows that the Japanese labour movement is making headway. Comrades, I have unshakable faith in the Japanese workers' movement. In one and a half generations the Japanese workers have mastered industrial technology and modern industry – a task that took a century for European workers. Given that the workers have built up Japanese industry in so short a time, I maintain that they will also learn to conduct a revolutionary struggle, not only in Japan but across the entire Far East.

As you know, Japanese and Korean workers, and in particular the independent revolutionaries in Korea, have joined together to pursue revolutionary work in the Far East. I know that in many countries of the world the Japanese worker is decried as cheap labour, and that this is an issue that must be dealt with in North America, Canada and Australia.³ But comrades, the Japanese revolutionary workers, indeed

³ Revolutionary socialists had long opposed discriminatory measures against immigrants from Japan and other Asian countries. A resolution to this effect was adopted by the 1907 Stuttgart congress of the Socialist International. See Riddell, *Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International*, pp. 15–20.

the entire trade union membership do not lament the anti-Japanese movement in these countries. They have more important things to do than concerning themselves with the anti-Japanese movement, and they have found that they can carry out these tasks. The Japanese workers struggle and protest against the exclusion of Chinese workers. The Japanese trade unions combat the capitalists that so brutally exploit the Korean working class. The Korean workers' association in Japan is affiliated to the Japanese Federation of Labour. They are awaiting the day of full liberation of the working class, with the Russian revolution as their example.

For this reason I would like to assure my comrades of all countries where there is an anti-Japanese movement that the Japanese workers, the advanced revolutionary workers and radical trade unions, are not preoccupied by this movement. They are expecting you to establish a united front against imperialism and capitalism around the world. I am happy to be able to say that the Japanese workers have already begun working for the united front in the Far East. With the support of Soviet Russia and the Communist International, in February and March this year, we held a conference of the Far East, which established a united front. The Japanese, Chinese and Korean Communists are advancing in the establishment of a united front against Japanese imperialism. Comrades from the West, I would like to say that although you possibly have low esteem for the Japanese workers in your countries, you will certainly agree with me that an attempt must be made to smash Japanese imperialism. Is that not correct? We have organized under the banner of combating Japanese imperialism in the Far East.

I would now like to say a few words about the women's movement. The Fourth Congress has somewhat neglected this point. Japanese working women are highly exploited. They are kept prisoner in the dormitories of the employers and work twelve hours daily in day and night shifts. In earlier times Japanese women were forbidden from taking part in political meetings and forming political associations. However, these prohibitions have now been lifted.

The Japanese women attend the country's best educational institutions and use their education to improve their status. They do not only participate in the country's political life, but many have already joined the trade unions. The Japanese Federation of Labour has many thousand female members. Women take part actively in every strike and help the strikers in many ways. They hold their own public meetings and deliver speeches that are so effective and gripping that they are sometimes mentioned even in the capitalist newspapers. Thus even the Japanese working women have finally awakened. In the primary schools, the girls now receive the same education as the boys.

Now, comrades, as for the Far East, there is a nationalist movement in Korea. This independence movement has grown ever stronger, and – this has not previously been widely known – the national revolutionaries are now organizing to achieve their final tasks. They have discovered that a successful struggle for Korean independence requires the collaboration of Japanese workers.

Japanese imperialism has become quite unpopular among the Japanese workers. Nonetheless, it remains very strong. Let me give you a relevant example. In earlier times a mother who wanted to frighten her child would say that she would stick the child in prison. Now she says she will hand him over to the soldiers.

The imperialists are preparing for the next war. For this reason we propose, together with the Chinese delegation, that the Fourth Congress of the Communist International adopt a resolution against Japan's occupation of the northern part of Sakhalin Island.⁴ This will spur on Japanese revolutionary workers in their struggle against imperialism and for the coming socialist revolution in Japan.

CHAIR: Before I give the floor to the next speaker, I will read the resolution that has been introduced by the Japanese and Chinese delegations.

Call for Japan's Withdrawal from Russian Sakhalin

The Japanese and Chinese delegations to the Fourth Congress of the Communist International propose the following resolution on the occupation of Russian Sakhalin by the Japanese imperialists:

The Fourth World Congress of the Communist International sends its greetings to the working people of the Russian half of Sakhalin and of the Far East and to the working class of Japan. We condemn Japanese imperialism, which tormented the workers and peasants of Siberia for four years.

The imperialists' withdrawal from the coastal and Amur territory and, finally, from Vladivostok, resulted from the heroic resistance of the working people of the Russian Far East, and above all the proletariat of the coastal region. It also resulted from the increasing resentment of the broad working masses of Japan against the intervention and the government of the Mikado.

Nonetheless, the Japanese imperialists, who have been compelled to evacuate Siberia and the coastal territory, still occupy Russian Sakhalin, still subjugate Russian working people, and from this base threaten the new Soviet order in the Far Eastern territories just freed from intervention.

The international proletariat is convinced that the time is not distant when the militaristic clique that presently rules over Japanese workers and peasants will appear in the court of the victorious Japanese proletariat and will answer there for its many crimes. Among them are the crimes committed in the Russian Far East.

'Pseudo-Communists compete for French bourgeoisie's high regard'

TAHAR BOUDENGHA (TUNISIA): Comrades, I believe it is superfluous for me to read my report, a copy of which has been distributed to each of the language groups. I

⁴ Japanese forces had occupied the northern half of Sakhalin Island during the Russian civil war, and retained this territory until 1925.

will limit myself to examining a few of the points in this report.

French imperialism holds colonies that are close to the mother country, which enables it to draw as many troops and as much food from these colonies as it wants. It does this in part in expectation of future wars and in part to suppress the proletarian revolution in France.

Meanwhile, in North Africa there is a stirring of discontent. The Communist cells formed in Tunisia after the Tours congress [1920] have not failed to make good use of this fact. Given the grave conditions that would follow from a proletarian revolution, they undertook to combat the danger linked to French capitalism's subjugation of the native population of North Africa. To carry out these tasks we turned to the working class and peasantry, both through our daily papers in Arabic and our public meetings. Our success was so significant that the government took alarm and carried out persecution and arrests. It declared that our party was banned, which forced us underground.

I must admit that the banning of both our party and our newspapers caused us great harm because our activity was not limited to Tunisia but embraced all North Africa. However, I must tell you that Comrade Louzon of the French party took repeated steps to obtain a subsidy for our press. Thanks to the influence of some comrades he was ultimately able to obtain a loan of ten thousand francs from *l'Humanité*. In addition, Comrade Vaillant-Couturier came to Algeria and Tunisia and was able to become acquainted with the prevailing mood among the indigenous population. He conceded that forces were available both in the city and in the countryside that were eminently suitable for a pure proletarian Communist movement.

What did the Central Committee do after the trip by Vaillant-Couturier? It was not just a matter of carrying out propaganda. An ongoing campaign was required, not just in Tunisia but in all colonies where discontent is prevalent.

The party must therefore have a clear, definite action programme for the colonies. The colonial policy of French capitalism consists of inciting the peoples under its rule against one another. Thus, in response to the conduct of Tunisian riflemen in the events of 5 April this year, French militarism stationed two brigades of Black troops there.⁵

The Communist Party of France has still not grasped how useful it is for it to have a genuine and effective colonial policy. Rather it allowed itself to be influenced by the pseudo-Communists of Algeria. At its Paris congress it postponed discussion of the colonial question out of concern for electoral considerations.

⁵ From 1919, Tunisia was shaken by nationalist ferment led by the Destour party, which demanded constitutional rule, equal rights for native Tunisians, defence of native rights to the land and other reforms. On 3 April 1922, the Bey or governor of Tunis, the territory's traditional ruler, threatened to resign if such reforms were not implemented. On 5 April, the French authorities reasserted control and forced the Bey to withdraw his threat.

I must read you the letter sent on the eve of the congress by the Central Committee to the Colonial Studies Group. The letter reads as follows:

The Central Committee maintains its decision to postpone examination of the colonial question until the next national congress, which will follow the Fourth World Congress. The Central Committee considers that the departmental elections in Algiers have an importance for the comrades of the overseas sections far beyond anything the colonial study group seems to grasp; that these elections will take place not only on 8 October but also on 15 October; that the most respected comrades of these sections will have to take part in these elections; and that in such circumstances, it is absolutely out of the question to determine the party's colonial policy in their absence.

Comrades, there is every indication that the party's colonial policy depends on the Algerian citizens alone. The same citizens who carry such weight for the party in its colonial policy have written theses that are utterly opposed to Moscow's eighth condition.⁶ I must read you some portions of the questionable theses composed in Sidi-Bel-Abbès:

For this reason, the Communist section of Sidi-Bel-Abbès is of the opinion that the native proletariat of North Africa can only be liberated as a result of the revolution in the motherland. Relinquishing this control – as specified in point 8 of the Twenty-One Conditions for affiliation to the Communist International – is not the best way to promote any kind of liberation movement in our colony. On the contrary, the task of the Communist Party remains

⁶ Point 8 of the 21 conditions for admission to the Comintern obligated all Communist parties to 'support every liberation movement in the colonies not only in words but in deeds' and 'to demand that the imperialists of its country be driven out of these colonies'. (See Chapter 3, pp. 100–1.)

The section of the French CP in Sidi-Bel-Abbès, a city in northwest Algeria, was influential among both local European residents and CP members across Algeria. Responding to a French CP inquiry regarding its work among Algerian natives, the Sidi-Bel-Abbès section replied, in part, 'The emancipation of the indigenous population of Algeria can result only from revolution in France. Direct Communist propaganda among indigenous people is currently useless and dangerous. It is useless because indigenous people have not yet reached an intellectual and moral level that enables them to attain a Communist understanding.'

Following the Comintern's 20 May 1922 call for liberation of Algeria and Tunis, the Sidi-Bel-Abbès section restated their position in the resolution quoted by Boudengha. On 24 September, this resolution was adopted unanimously by a conference of Communists in North Africa.

Most Sidi-Bel-Abbès CP members rejected the Fourth Congress decisions and left the party at the end of 1922.

increasing propaganda, building the trade union movement and communism. . . . It is not possible sincerely to follow Moscow's call.

This makes the International seem insincere. Look at the thinking of these so-called Communists, whom the Communist Party of France still tolerates in their ranks. The theses from Algeria continue:

The first two series of articles correspond well to propaganda needs in Algeria. They were unanimously approved, and we want nothing more than the continued publication of many articles of this type.

As for the third series, we have nothing against the essence of these articles, which are dictated by purely Communist motivations and deal with the ways that the eighth condition should be applied. But we would have preferred that they had appeared in the *Bulletin communiste* rather than in *l'Humanité*, because the first is addressed only to a limited number of party activists who are well informed and capable of correctly understanding ideology and immediate possibilities.

Since the visit of Vaillant-Couturier, *l'Humanité* is circulated much more widely. It is read both by Europeans and by natives who have not yet assimilated Communist ideas, but display some sympathy toward us and whom we hope to win over. The imperialist-bourgeois press has adroitly utilized these articles against us. They were very shocked by what they judged to be our propaganda plans in Algeria and turned their back on us. Given the inadequacy of our local press and organization, we were not able to carry the polemic with them.

So for them it is dangerous when outspokenly Communist articles appear in the press, even though they claim to want to carry out propaganda among the native masses. That is the mentality of these so-called Communists.

They say, further:

The native population of Algeria can only be liberated as the result of the revolution in France.

The native masses have been subjugated for centuries in a status of half-slavery. They are fanatical and fatalistic, patient and resigned, oppressed and imbued with religious prejudices. At this time they still cannot imagine their liberation. They are content to seek a better life, which they believe can be achieved through reforms and the achievement of certain political rights. . . .

Achieving these results does not require us to carry out open Communist propaganda in Algeria at this time. It is entirely unnecessary to publish calls to rebellion in our press or distribute Arabic-language leaflets, as many have recommended.

The publication of the call of the Communist International for the liberation of Algeria and Tunisia was a mistake. We see evidence of this in the fact that the bourgeois colonial press itself published this call in order to turn public opinion against us. And to some degree they achieved this goal.

These comrades are thus competing for the high regard of the bourgeoisie.

HENRI LAURIDAN (FRANCE): Who wrote this?

BOUDENGHA: This is the thesis of a Communist section of Algeria.

I will not dwell further on this point, but I do believe that the Communist Party of France should not tolerate gentlemen of this sort, and I believe that these gentlemen must be expelled.

I hope that immediately following the World Congress, the French comrades, regardless of their tendency, will set about launching a Communist campaign in the colonies by creating an official publication and involving comrades from the colonies in the work of the central committee.

The French comrades must take note, once and for all, that the proletarian revolution in France is doomed to sure failure so long as the French bourgeoisie holds the colonial population under its rule. And the liberation of the colonial peoples will only be possible if there is a party in France that is committed to revolutionary action, not to opportunism.

The Communist International must take the matter in hand by appointing a permanent representative of the French colonies.

In my opinion the British party has also not done everything that it should have done. What has the British party done to support the revolutionary movement in India and Egypt? The Egyptian commission was looking here yesterday for any party that could take the Egyptian party under its wing, and was considering the Italian party for this task, even though it is solely the responsibility of the Communist Party of Britain.

Communists should not limit their activity exclusively to the national territory without concerning themselves with the thousands of peoples who groan under bourgeois oppression and suffer the yoke of their own imperialism. I believe it is cowardly to abandon peoples whose liberation and future depends on the Communist Party alone – as is the case with the British party.

In addition, Comrade Malaka was recently in an awkward situation over the question of whether he could support Pan-Islamism. There is no cause for awkwardness here. Pan-Islamism means nothing other than the unification of all Muslims against their oppressors. It must therefore be supported.

Questions of a religious nature have posed barriers to the development of communism. We have experienced the same difficulties in Tunisia that you have in Java. Whenever people argue with us that communism is incompatible with Islam, we point out to these smart-alecks in public meetings that the Islamic religion does

not recognize wage labour, which is a most noble foundation of this religion. In addition we point out that our opponents, if they truly wish to be religious, must begin the application of their religious principles by giving each year a tenth of their property, capital and profits included, to those who are unable to work. I can tell you that each time they try to argue with us by pointing to religious principles, they burn their fingers.

I believe that the concerns of Comrade Malaka are groundless. Our ideas have made greater gains among the Muslims than we foresaw. From every corner of the Muslim world we received numerous good wishes because of the manner in which we wished to apply communism in the Muslim countries. This was especially true when we still had our Arabic publications.

In light of the presence of the revolutionary movement in North Africa and other colonies it is necessary for the Communist Party of France, in agreement with the International and the responsible comrades from the colonies, to carry out an effective, ongoing campaign in these countries and to lead the movement there in our direction.

I hope that the Congress will adopt the conclusions of my report, which will contribute to the victory of Communist ideas among the oppressed peoples.

In North and West Africa it is superfluous to make provision for a period of transition. I am certain that we will go over from the feudal system directly to communism without first having to go through a period of indigenous capitalism.

In Tunisia and Algeria there are already fields that are cultivated collectively. Granted, this is a patriarchal communism. But we can nonetheless develop it, reform it, and replace it by fully developed communism.

I close by presenting my greetings to this Congress of the International.
(*Applause*)

Protest Against Reduction of Speaking Time

LUDWIG KATTERFELD (CHAIR): The following protest has been submitted.

The delegations of the following countries hereby protest the fact that the Presidium and the Congress, by reducing speaking time at the last moment, has not devoted appropriate attention to the question of the East and the colonies.

This protest is signed by [delegations from] Japan, Britain, Turkey, Ankara, Poland, Belgium, Australia, India, Java, Egypt, Persia [Iran], Tunisia, Morocco, and Switzerland. . . .

‘We must link up with revolutionaries in the colonies’

HARRY WEBB (BRITAIN): Comrades, at the risk of coming under fire from Comrade Radek for discussing the Twenty-One Points under this important question, that of the East, I wish to refer again to the Twenty-One Points adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International, or rather to the eighth of these points.

In his speech to this Congress Comrade Lenin warned the parties affiliated to the Communist International against coming to the Congress, or sending delegates, and voting for various principles set down in the theses and statutes of the International, without fully understanding the consequences of the principles they are approving. When the Twenty-One Points were adopted by the Second Congress, so too were the theses on the nationalities question and the colonies. Since that time there has been an enormous evolution in the international workers’ movement. And we can state confidently, without fear of objection from Comrade Radek or any other comrade of the Communist International, that the Communist parties around the world have not understood the consequences of the theses on the nationalities question adopted by the Second Congress of the International.

Point 8 of the Twenty-One Points reads as follows:

In countries whose bourgeoisies possess colonies and oppress other nations, it is necessary that the parties have an especially clear and well-defined position on the question of colonies and oppressed nations. Every party wishing to belong to the Communist International is obligated to expose the tricks of ‘its own’ imperialists in the colonies, to support every liberation movement in the colonies not only in words but in deeds, to demand that the imperialists of its country be driven out of these colonies, to instil in the hearts of the workers of its country a truly fraternal attitude toward the labouring people in the colonies and toward the oppressed nations, and to conduct systematic agitation among its country’s troops against all oppression of colonial peoples.

That was the decision of the Second Congress of the Communist International. Since that time we have seen the rise in the national revolutionary movement in Egypt, Persia, Mesopotamia [Iraq] and Turkey. And still we can be confident in saying that not even the most mature Communist parties – I am not referring to little parties or revolutionary groups that are on the path to development toward becoming a Communist Party, but the developed Communist parties that belong to the Communist International – not even these parties have been aware of the responsibilities toward the national movement that I have just read out.

In the draft theses on the national and colonial question Comrade Lenin pointed out to the Second Congress of the Communist International the importance, on the one hand, of a group of advanced revolutionary movements in the advanced

capitalist countries, and, on the other hand, of the array of revolutionary nationalist forces around Russia. In this preliminary draft Comrade Lenin establishes that we cannot be content with simply recognizing in the programme that we must link up with these revolutionary nationalist movements and the colonies. We cannot restrict ourselves to a simple declaration. We must work out a policy defined by the level of development of the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries.

It is true that the party that I am speaking for has been criticized for its stand on the question of the colonies and the national movements. In the territories of Britain's world empire we have freedom movements in Ireland, Egypt and elsewhere in Africa, and India, as well as in the other colonies that make up this empire. But our sins of omission can mostly be put down to the fact that our party is still very small and also very new. Countless internal difficulties must be overcome before it can devote appropriate attention to the problems of national movements.

In a book written before the Russian revolution Comrade Trotsky criticized the strongest section of the Second International, the Social Democratic Party of Germany, showing that it had developed to a social-imperialist party.⁷

I would like to particularly stress today that we must do all we can to exclude from the Communist International all forces that seek to turn it into an International of communist imperialism, similar to the socialist imperialism characteristic of social democracy.

There is quite an important article in one of the recent issues of *Fortnightly Review*, a magazine that is very well known in the capitalist and English-speaking world. This article is a clear indication that the capitalist class, the bourgeoisie, grasps the importance of these revolutionary national movements and is striving to turn these movements against Soviet Russia – in order to counter the attempts of the Communist International to utilize these forces as allies.

In an article on the national revolutionary movement in Turkey, entitled 'Kemal, the Man and the Movement', this magazine states:

It is beyond any doubt that, while the Kemalists pursue purely nationalist goals, the Bolsheviks utilize Turkish national aspirations in order to attack Western civilization at its weakest point. These new disruptions can result in a renewed outbreak by the revolutionary movement in an exhausted Europe.

After taking up the relations between the Soviet government and the government in Ankara, the magazine continues, 'There is also a British link that is far from insignificant.' It then quotes a passage from a declaration of the executive of the Communist Party of Great Britain that demands the unconditional return of

⁷ See Trotsky's *The War and the International*, available at Marxists Internet Archive under the title *The Bolsheviks and World Peace*.

Constantinople to the Turkish people. The magazine then comments:

The American bankers' association is quite right in saying that when Britain refused to withdraw from Chanak – confronting one thousand Kemalist cavalry with thirty Lanarkshire infantrymen until reinforcements could arrive – it served for two weeks as the defence of European civilization.⁸

The article closes with the thought that perhaps Britain and the allies should hand over Constantinople to the Turkish nationalist Kemal Pasha, but that they should first show the world that he is no longer a pawn of Soviet Russia.

Such a declaration from an authoritative capitalist magazine like the *Fortnightly Review* shows that the bourgeoisie is very well aware of the danger that the revolutionary national movement will be reorganized into a revolutionary proletarian movement directed against it. That is why we should give close attention to the points in the theses of which Comrade Roy has spoken. He stressed the need to unite the proletarian forces in these countries and organize them separately from the bourgeois liberation movements. This is important not only for the revolutionary proletarian forces in the colonial countries but also for the Communist parties in countries where measures are undertaken to suppress these movements.

I am surprised to see the small number of delegates that have come here to witness the continuation of discussion on a question as important as this one. Contrary to what the Presidium chairman said this morning, I believe that it would be better for the Congress to continue for a few days in December rather than to rush through in this way a question as important as that of the East.

Finally, I would like to say that the strongest blow yet struck against the Versailles Peace Treaty – and when we discuss that treaty we will see all important members of the Communist International speaking from this platform – the one decisive blow struck so far against the treaty is the victory of the revolutionary Turkish movement that shattered the Sèvres peace treaty.⁹ And that is the reason why this question is particularly important. That is what I would like to tell the Fourth Congress.

'For a united front with the Guomindang'

LIU RENJING (CHINA): Comrades, since my speaking time is limited, I can give you only a general overview of the present situation in China – although I could have told you much more.

⁸ Chanak (Çanakkale) was a British outpost on the south side of the Dardanelles.

⁹ The Sèvres treaty of 1920 provided for the dismemberment of Turkey. It was abandoned in 1923, after the victory of forces led by Kemal (Atatürk).

I must speak first of the present political situation in China. From May until June this year, two governments fell in China. This overturn had enormous importance for the country's revolutionary movement.

First came the overthrow of the Southern government, the revolutionary government of Sun Yat-sen. It was ousted by a subordinate military member of the nationalist party.¹⁰ This resulted from a difference of opinion between Sun Yat-sen, as leader, and this subordinate figure, as regards plans for the military expedition against the North.

What does this signify? It means that the military plans for the revolution have absolutely miscarried. The Kuomintang [Guomindang] party, the national revolutionary party in China, has for years cherished plans for a military revolution. It hoped to introduce democracy in China by a military conquest of its provinces. It did not carry out any propaganda in the country on a mass scale. It did not organize the masses. Its efforts were limited to utilizing military forces to achieve its goals. Even before it conquered Guangdong in 1920, it established a government. It wanted to exhaust all the resources available in Guangdong to equip an expedition against the Northern government, that of the feudal militarists and the agents of world imperialism.

At first this plan seemed practicable, for all party members appeared to agree with it. But once Guangdong province had been conquered, the military governor, a member of the party, abandoned all plans against the North. He became more and more conservative and more and more inclined to content himself with one province, paying no heed to any events outside the province.

Many members of this party are like this. Before they take power, they are revolutionary; afterwards they become conservative. This general who overthrew the Southern government is only one example of many within this party. The majority of the party is made up of people who are essentially reactionary. The moment they take power in other provinces, they will oppose the plan for military conquest, just as this governor did. That shows that the plan for military conquest is a failure, and that the revolutionary movement must pursue a new course. That means that a revolution that seeks success must organize the masses and conduct propaganda among them. It must not rely on military means alone. That method is finished in China.

In the North, during the months of April and May, there was a civil war between two factions of feudal militarists. One faction was for the Japanese, and the other for the Americans. This struggle ended with the victory of the pro-American group, the military faction under Wu Peifu. This outcome is also enormously important for the revolutionary movement in China.

¹⁰ In June 1921, Sun Yat-sen established a revolutionary Guomindang government in Guangdong. Expelled from the province in June 1922, Sun's government was re-established early in 1923.

The government of northern China had been under Japanese influence for about five years. Japanese imperialism secured this influence through loans granted to the Northern government to pursue the civil war. The Japanese government bribed officials of this regime to obtain a share in Chinese mines, the right to build railways in Shandong, and so on. All these rights were obtained through bribery. For this reason the Chinese population had a hostile attitude to Japanese imperialism and the Japanese agents of the Northern government.

Given the bitter hatred of Japanese imperialism in China, the population was increasingly inclined to support American imperialism. In view of the very reactionary character of the Northern government under Zhang Zuolin, the population is more sympathetic to the military group led by Wu Peifu, who is more progressive and favours a reduction in the size of the army and abolition of the *tuchun* [warlord] system (the feudal apportionment of provinces) and enjoys support from the Americans.

The recent conquest of power by Wu Peifu and American imperialism in China will show that Wu Peifu cannot resolve China's political dilemma and, in addition, that he differs little from Zhang Zuolin. Although he favours a democratic programme he will not be able to carry out his plan to reduce the size of the army and abolish the *tuchun* system. This will disappoint the masses and turn them against American imperialism, which will lead to their radicalization. The population will become aware of the fact that it is the only force that can carry through democracy and that it cannot rely on any of the militarist groups. The masses will see that Wu Peifu will not carry out the enticing promises he made when he did not yet have command of power. The pacifist petty bourgeoisie tends to sympathize with Wu Peifu because he promises to improve their economic condition. This will dwindle more and more, and ultimately dissolve because of such political shifts.

Let's take the case of Wu Peifu. He claimed he would not borrow any money from the great powers, thus winning popular sympathy. But once he had achieved power he organized his cabinet with the aid of a group of pro-American intellectuals, who immediately set about organizing an American loan. This and much else will disappoint the masses. Thus the situation will grow more and more favourable for the revolutionary movement in China.

Second, I must touch on the workers' movement. It made great progress this year. Early in the year we experienced the strike of mariners in Hong Kong, which lasted 50 days. At first it was limited to economic demands, but then it took on a nationalist character against British imperialism. Limited at first to the mariners the strike grew into a general strike against British imperialism, first in Hong Kong and then spreading to the north.

We also had the strike on the Beijing-Hankou railway, which spread to mid-China. Other strikes took place in the iron and steel works in Hong Kong, in the textile and tobacco industries in Shanghai and in the mines. These strikes

took place in rapid succession. The expansion of this revolt against the capitalist class came close to awakening the working masses. This shows that the mass movement in China exists not merely in the socialists' dreams but is an obvious reality. In addition it shows that the Communist Party can gain success through propaganda among the masses. All this indicates that the Communist Party will progress rapidly, in contrast to earlier years when it was no more than a sect and an educational circle. During the past year we can track the increasing influence of our Communist Party among the masses.

Now I come to the recent political activity of the Communist Party of China. Starting from the principle that an anti-imperialist united front should be established to drive imperialism out of China, our party decided to achieve a united front with the national revolutionary Kuomintang party. This united front took the form that we joined this party, in our name and as individuals. We have two goals in view. First, we want to carry out propaganda among the many organized workers in the national revolutionary party and win them to our ranks. Second, we can only combat imperialism if we unify our forces – those of the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

We aim to enter into competition with this party in winning the masses through propaganda and organizing them. If we do not join this party we will remain isolated, preaching a communism that certainly represents a great and noble goal but that the masses will not follow. The masses would then rather follow the petty-bourgeois party, which would use them for its purposes. If we join the party we are in a position to show the masses that we too are for revolutionary democracy, but that for us it is a means to an end. We will also then be in a position to show that, while committing ourselves to this distant goal, we do not overlook the masses' immediate demands. We can gather the masses around us and split the Kuomintang party.

'The red flag will wave over the pyramids'

HUSNI EL-ARABI (EGYPT) (*speaks in Arabic, translated into English by Comrade Paul*): I have been asked to say that we in Egypt believe the day is no longer distant when the red flag will wave over the pyramids, greeting the red flag over the Kremlin.

That is the greeting that I bring you from the workers and fellahin of Egypt. Now I would like to add some personal comments.

The Egyptian workers suffer from the burden of capitulations,¹¹ the yoke

¹¹ Capitulations by the Ottoman empire, permitting foreign states to exercise extraterritorial jurisdiction over their nationals travelling within Ottoman territory, represented a humiliating surrender of sovereignty, extracted by military pressure. European powers extended the practice to other Asian states. The Russian Soviet republic renounced such

of British imperialism, foreign capitalists, and its own bourgeoisie. The fertility of Egypt's soil; its geographical position as a bridge for British imperialism's expansion toward the Far East; the construction of the Palestine railway linking Africa through Egypt with Asia Minor; the prospect of a railway from Cairo to South Africa – all this inspires hope among the imperialist exploiters and increases the suffering of Egyptian workers.

Egypt is ripe for socialist ideas. This is shown by the growth of the Egyptian Socialist Party. Its legal foundation took place in August, and during its brief existence it has already recruited one thousand members. Since Egypt is ripe for socialist ideas we do everything to prevent barriers from being placed in the path of the steady penetration of Communist propaganda and an evolution toward communism. We consider that if Egypt is not accorded a place in the Communist International family, and if we let the zeal of Egypt dissipate without effect, its backwardness will be harmful to the revolution in the East and will delay it in the West.

The admirable uprisings in 1919 and 1920 shook the power of British imperialism and provided Egyptian capitalists with a basic lesson. Startled by these events the British government in alliance with the Egyptian capitalists has made the grand gesture of granting Egypt its independence.¹² But the people did not let themselves be fooled by these empty promises. What actual content did they have, after all? They included, first, conceding [British] protection of transport connections, since Britain insisted on defending its route to India. Second, joint sovereignty over Sudan, in order for Britain to secure a new source of raw materials to feed its Manchester cotton mills. Third, the protection of national minorities. Fourth, ending the capitulations. These last two demands were included in order to give Great Britain a right to interfere in Egyptian affairs.

The Egyptian capitalists have now formed a Liberal Party to defend the new constitution and to ratify the agreement between Britain and Egypt.¹³ They have adopted a programme and chosen candidates to represent this current in parliament. The elections are set for next January.

The Egyptian Socialist Party was pleased that the enemy was now showing its face openly. There is an Arabic proverb, 'Beauty is seen to more advantage when counterposed to ugliness.'

The struggle between us and the Liberal Party promises to become intense. But we do not fear this clash, because we feel the strength and influence of the

rights in 1921.

¹² Egypt's revolution of 1919 included mass demonstrations, strikes and civil disobedience in favour of national independence. Although this uprising was suppressed, mass pressure continued, leading Britain to grant formal independence to Egypt in February 1922, subject to conditions that perpetuated British domination.

¹³ 'Liberal Party' refers to the Wafd, a pro-independence movement that led Egypt's 1919 revolution.

Egyptian Socialist Party growing from day to day. We can maintain our position in the economic and political arena. We have not let one shameless deed of the government pass without exposing it in the press. We go to the workers and expound socialist ideas and the class struggle, both orally and through the publication of leaflets and pamphlets. We have also not failed to utilize the opportunity for propaganda during the international May Day celebration. Despite the fact that the government forbade all public propaganda, and our party was then still illegal and the country was under a state of siege, we gathered the proletarian forces around our banner and held imposing demonstrations in three cities.

We intend to make use of the upcoming elections to the first Egyptian parliament. During the weeks preceding the elections, we will do all possible to enable the workers to be represented in the new assembly by some comrades. If we succeed in winning a seat or two we will enhance the prestige of communism in the East and reinforce the foundations of our party in Egypt.

As for the question of industry, Egypt is chiefly an agricultural country and faces an acute agrarian problem. The party is now discussing this question and hopes to be able to draw up an agrarian programme in the near future.

Industrial workers are rather well organized, in one hundred trade unions. Since the party achieved legality it has organized two trade unions and brought three already existing unions into the Red International of Labour Unions. However, the total count of the workers organized in these unions is only 2,750. We hope at the next congress to be able to add just as many zeros to this total as Comrade Lenin tells us will be crossed off the new rouble.¹⁴ We have well-organized Communist cells in these five unions, and we also have party members in other unions. Much work awaits us before we can establish cells in these other unions as well.

Now I would like to mention something else. The Communist International has established a sub-committee to study the Egyptian question. At the last meeting of this committee not all its members were present. The participants adopted a resolution reproaching the Egyptian party for various errors. This seems to me to be testimony to good behaviour, because those that are inactive never have the occasion to commit errors. Even if the Egyptian party has committed errors in the past, I am convinced that it will make every effort to make this good in the future. In the session where this resolution was adopted only three members of the committee were present, and one of these three opposed the resolution. I am convinced that during the next year the Communist International will gain a better understanding of the Egyptian Socialist Party and will revise its resolution at the Fifth Congress.

Long live the Communist International!

¹⁴ A reference to Lenin's comments at the Fourth Congress on inflation of the Russian rouble; see Lenin, 'Five Years of the Russian Revolution', at Marxists Internet Archive.

'For a pan-Pacific congress of workers'

WILLIAM EARSMAN (AUSTRALIA): Comrades, I would like to speak about two points in the theses presented to the Congress.

The first concerns the formation and development of the revolutionary movement in the colonial countries, especially those oppressed by imperialism in the Near and Far East.

The second, which is of special interest to us, concerns the challenges created by the developing clash in the Pacific Ocean.

If we examine the situation in detail we find that there are still many difficulties and misunderstandings between the workers of different countries, especially the countries in the south and the north of the Pacific Ocean as regards white and Coloured workers. The main difficulty we must overcome is the prejudices aroused among white workers by the fear of cheap Coloured labour. Most of the countries involved – Australia, the United States and Canada – have laws banning the immigration of Coloured workers, because the workers believe that such immigrants will be utilized to reduce the standard and conditions of living achieved in these countries.

It is not enough to say that workers in these countries are reactionary, that they do not understand the economic factors underlying the situation and their own special tasks. As the vanguard of the working class, we must tell these workers clearly and distinctly how to handle this situation. So far this has been done only to a limited extent, and never from an international point of view.

At present thousands of Coloured workers from India and China are being brought to the countries of the southern Pacific to work in the sugar fields, under the worst conditions of contractual labour. These workers were transported especially to the Fiji islands and other island groups close to Australia. So far the capitalists have not succeeded in introducing this system in Australia and New Zealand. But they are making great efforts in that direction, and their attempt to introduce this system in Australia makes the work of Communist parties in these countries very difficult. Under the pressure of these attempts workers are uniting in defence of the laws aimed at preventing Coloured immigration.

The Communist Party has considered this question. At this year's trade union congress in Melbourne it succeeded in explaining to the trade union leaders the full meaning of these laws and why their effects are harmful to the interests of the working class. These laws defend the interests of Australian workers at the expense of those of Japan, China and other countries in the southern Pacific. That is the problem that we must solve, and in my opinion can solve, if we enjoy the support of the Communist International and do not lose sight in the coming years of the full importance of this question.

All those who have paid even fleeting attention to the Pacific question will

understand that the danger of a new world war is rising there. And this awareness will lead you to the conclusion that the slogans the capitalists would utilize in the eventuality of war are more effective than those that the working class could disseminate against such a bloody conflict. If the capitalist class would reinforce existing fears of the 'Yellow peril' in Australia by the fear of a 'Yellow invasion', it could rally the support of numbers never seen in the past. It is therefore our special task in the coming months to counter these slogans and make workers aware of their true meaning and significance.

A proposal is made in the theses that in our opinion could be very advantageous for our work against the capitalists in these countries. The trade union congress in Melbourne this year adopted a resolution calling for a pan-Pacific congress as the best means of achieving agreement among the workers in the countries of the North and South Pacific. Such a congress would unite workers of Japan, China, the Malay islands, India, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It would enable them to discuss their problems and come to agreement on the best means and methods of explaining to workers the reactionary character of their earlier stand against the Coloured working class.

They would understand that they need have no fear of a Japanese invasion or of the arrival of Japanese, Indian and other Coloured workers in the United States or Australia with the intention of driving down the standard of living of the native-born workers. They would recognize that the workers of the North Pacific are organized. Once they grasp the danger posed by capitalism the first step will have been taken toward unifying the ranks of the working class in the countries of the entire Pacific region.

In making this proposal regarding the theses we hope that the workers in these countries will be granted every form of support, and that this Congress will succeed in producing a resolution and theses that affirm that such a congress can actually be held.¹⁵ We consider it our duty, however, to say that the congress must take place, must draft a clearly defined programme, and must then translate it into practical form.

We also understand that the trade unions in Australia must devote attention to this problem. For this to succeed, the unions must first learn to recognize the problem. The trade union movement is very strong in Australia, with 80 per cent of all workers organised, and we can therefore force every Coloured worker who comes to the country to join our unions.

Next January the last relic of racial prejudice remaining in the statutes of the revolutionary trade unions will disappear. Then the way will be clear for the unions that dominate the key industries. They will take into their ranks every Coloured worker who is in Australia already or who comes to Australia. It is true that these unions refused in the past to recruit Coloured workers. If we fully understand the

¹⁵ See 'Theses on the Eastern Question' in Chapter 9, point 7, p. 243-4.

historical meaning of this situation we cannot reproach them for this stand. But today there is no justification for such a barrier in the unions, and the attempt of the Communist Party to eliminate this barrier has been successful.

However, to consolidate this situation and apply the theses to practical politics and bring workers to be aware of it in their daily struggles, we must convene the proposed conference as quickly as possible, with the support of the Communist International. We need now to have the support of the Executive. The Executive must devote more attention to colonial questions than we have done in previous years. It must grasp that the colonial problem is just as important as any problem in Europe. If this is truly the case, we in Australia are convinced that we will successfully carry through to completion of the task that we are proposing for adoption in these theses.

‘Unify all the efforts of colonial revolution’

G.I. SAFAROV (RUSSIA): Despite the decisions of the Second Congress of the Communist International, the Communist parties in the imperialist countries have done very little to tackle the national and colonial questions.

Only quite recently did the British Communist Party turn its attention to the revolutionary colonial movements in India and Egypt.

Despite the significant revolutionary movement in the French colonies, the French party does not have a properly organized centre to lead this very important branch of its activity, but rather only a colonial study group.

What is more: hidden under the banner of communism we find conceptions of sovereignty that are alien and hostile to proletarian internationalism.

The Sidi-Bel-Abbès section provides striking evidence of this. These comrades – if we can even call them comrades, for they are not comrades but petty bourgeois – these citizens say in a protest against an appeal of the Communist International regarding the French colonies:

The colonial question is characterized by a complete lack of the necessary unity. There are peoples in trusteeship that are now capable of self-rule, and others who are not capable. And if the duty of Communists is to grant the first category their freedom, this duty demands even more insistently that the second category not be left to their wretched fate. Sovereignty for Egypt is essential, but sovereignty for cannibals is not desirable.¹⁶

¹⁶ The reference to cannibalism in the Sidi-Bel-Abbès resolution continues a racist current of thought within the pre-war Second International, expressed by Dutch delegate Hendrick Van Kol's remarks at its 1907 Stuttgart congress. He dismissed thoughts of fraternal assistance to colonial peoples: 'Perhaps [the natives] will kill us or even eat us. . . . Therefore we must go there with weapons in hand, even if Kautsky calls that imperialism.' Congress delegates

That is the point of view of these so-called Communists. These people are imbued with the conviction that the Communist International and its Executive want to serve up these good little people of Sidi-Bel-Abbès to the cannibals.

We are not so harsh, and we do not have a terrorist mentality, and the good little people of Sidi-Bel-Abbès can rest reassured. The topic here is not cannibalism, it is just the national and colonial question.

It must be said once and for all that the pre-war attitudes of the Second International are unacceptable in the Communist International. We must be aware that certain theses on this question, like this one from Algeria, and some statements of our comrades in different countries, represent points of view in the style of Hildenbrand and Noske. And we therefore protest the passivity manifested by a considerable sector of the Fourth World Congress. (*Applause*)

The fate of the proletarian revolution against world imperialism in the advanced imperialist countries is bound together with that of the colonial revolution in backward countries. World capitalism strives to renew its forces through more intensive exploitation of the colonies. Because capitalism is experiencing greater difficulties at this time, it heightens exploitation of China, India and other countries.

Observe all the conflicts now developing in international politics. The programme of Bonar Law's Conservative cabinet in Britain aims at re-establishing British imperialism's strength with the aid of the colonies. The interests of the United States, Britain and Japan clash in China and the Pacific.

In Asia Minor, northern Iran and southern Iran, British, American and French interests conflict with each other. In France, Black troops play an overriding role in the plans of Millerand, Poincaré and company. Millerand and Poincaré understand the colonial question better than some Communists, because they know very well that all these backward countries, so long as they have not been touched by a revolutionary spirit – all these 'cannibals' can be used to the benefit of imperialism.¹⁷ All this is very simple and easily understood.

So far, with a few rare exceptions, what we find in our papers are ringing declarations about the colonial question that say, 'We must free the oppressed peoples and support them,' and so on. But no one says *what must be done now*.

Since the Second Congress the colonial movement in the backward countries,

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defeated Van Kol's position, but only narrowly. See Lenin's *Struggle for a Revolutionary International*, pp. 14, 38–9.

¹⁷ More than 100,000 African troops fought in Europe during the First World War. After the war, 20,000–30,000 troops recruited in the colonies were stationed in France and also utilized against the Red Army in Russia (1919) and German workers in the Ruhr region (1923–24). The Third Comintern Congress pointed to the need for Communists to fraternize with these troops and rally them in the struggle against colonialism. French generals complained of the insubordination of colonial troops, and there were recorded cases of defiance of orders. For a fuller discussion, see Riddell, *Founding the Communist International*, pp. 342–4.

in India, China, and elsewhere, has developed rather quickly. During the war years, thanks to a slackening in imperialist oversight of the colonies, native capitalism made giant steps forward. In some countries, such as India, industrial production actually doubled. The development of native capitalism in these countries provides a foundation for the national revolutionary movement.

Foreign imperialism in the colonies is today playing the same role as feudalism played with regard to the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The colonial and national revolution in the backward countries is a bourgeois-democratic revolution, and we know that the international situation at this time is revolutionary. We know that we are living in a time of a great upsurge in the class struggle. We know that the day is near when the proletarian revolution will achieve complete victory. A bourgeois-democratic government in the backward countries provides support and great reassurance for our proletarian movement. We must therefore not underestimate this movement. That is why the Communist parties must do all in their power to support this movement and to organize the best forces in the backward countries.

The different countries of the East – China, India – are rather backward. Agrarian feudalism and military bureaucratism provide the main supports for foreign imperialism. The nomad chiefs in Iran, for example, have aided and abetted Britain's plans for conquest. In China it is the military governors, the tuchuns, who obstruct the unity of China.

Our first task is to unify all the efforts of the colonial revolutionary movement into an anti-imperialist united front.

In these backward countries, the forces of petty-bourgeois development have not separated out from the feudal forces, which are supporters of foreign imperialism. A struggle must be waged against the feudal agrarian order. In Iran this struggle is under way, and it is also directed against foreign imperialism.

At the time of the Second Congress we did not yet have Communist parties in these countries. The first evidence of the workers' movement in China came in 1920, with the boycott of foreign goods. In India this movement began to develop in 1919.

We can cite many similar examples. The development of native capitalism during the war and the post-war crisis led to an upswing of the workers' movement. The Communist parties of these countries remain very weak. Their members number in the hundreds, sometimes only in the dozens. Nonetheless, we know well the history of the workers' movement. In 1883, the Bolshevik party was a small group of five members; forty years later it took state power. And in our times history is striding forward even more quickly. A similar upswing awaits the small Communist parties.

The working class that has just developed, during the war, is still bound to handicrafts, to the petty bourgeoisie. In India there are two million workers organized in various trade unions. The movement is led by bourgeois lawyers. Only in 1920 did the first revolutionary group appear in India. A socialist newspaper

appears in Bombay [Mumbai], edited by Comrade Dange, who now intends to found a workers' party in India. We are convinced that the moment is very close when this independent party will be founded in India.

The workers' movement develops in different ways in each country, and yet its overall features can be generalized. We can say with justification that the working class in the colonial countries is becoming an independent political force, and that is a great advance toward the final victory of proletarian revolution.

I have here a report by the head of the Beijing police force. The Chinese police are afraid of Lenin. Their chief writes:

The experience with Lenin is living proof that the realization of perverse ideas is a thousand times more dangerous than the dangers menacing us from floods and wild animals. (*Laughter*)

Even the Chinese police are concerned by the progress of Bolshevik ideas.

We cannot immediately pose the task of Soviet revolution in these countries. Our first duty here is the struggle to free the working class and for its organization in the economic and political arenas. The working class must also take part in the common struggle against foreign imperialism. But it must not be a small-scale reproduction of the national movement.

The Second Congress of the Communist International declared that we must support all forms of the independent workers' movement in the backward countries. We have followed this guideline. The Communist parties have already become a political force, and they are capable of organizing the national revolutionary movement and driving it forward. The first stages of the nationalist movement are still bound by obsolete prejudices. The masses, oppressed for long centuries, believe that passive resistance will bring them to victory. We must criticize these methods, for they are not suitable for achieving our goal.

On the other hand, we must turn our attention in all countries to the colonial question. So far what we have in the International is merely colonial study groups. That is not enough. We must organize the working class of these backward countries, because this working class, and these colonial and semi-colonial peoples, are of crucial importance for the victory of world proletarian revolution. (*Applause*)

'Communists in the motherlands have neglected their duties'

ORHAN (SADRETTIN CELAL ANTEL, TURKEY): Comrades, the Communist International has taken the position that the independence movement of colonial peoples is of great importance for the world revolution. We therefore find it completely inexplicable that the Communist parties of the West do not ascribe to the Eastern and colonial question the importance that it deserves.

We can point to a striking example of this in the fact that to our great regret

the Communist Party of Italy has still not included a special section in its action programme on the tasks of Communist parties in the colonies.

Unfortunately we see that with regard to discussion of the Eastern question, the Fourth Congress is following the example of the Third Congress. We fully join in the protests of our comrades.

In our view, the anti-imperialist united front is a sort of coalition of the most advanced classes in struggle against imperialism on the basis of satisfying the minimum demands of the working masses.

The proletarian united front against the offensive of capitalism, which has set the goal of exposing the traitorous policies of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals, has come into existence on the basis of the workers' minimum demands (eight-hour day, wages, freedom of assembly and so on). In exactly the same way the anti-imperialist united front has the goal of disorganizing the imperialist forces, winning the masses, and exposing the foreign policy of the ruling classes that seek a reconciliation with the imperialists.

In order to teach the masses to understand the anti-imperialist united front, this policy must be concretized in a way that grounds its positive content in the masses' demands for agrarian, administrative, tax and electoral reforms.

Given that the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals now also feel compelled to make at least a verbal stand against imperialism in West and East, we must propose to the opportunist parties of Europe an anti-imperialist united front on the basis of independence for the Eastern and colonial peoples.

In the future we must propose that the Labour Party [of Britain] pressure the government along the following lines:

1. Demand at the Lausanne conference the conclusion of a peace treaty [with Turkey] in conformity with the terms of the National Pact.¹⁸
2. Unconditionally evacuate Constantinople and all of Thrace.
3. Resolve the question of the Straits in conformity with the Russian–Turkish treaty,¹⁹ with participation of the countries bordering on the Black Sea.

¹⁸ The National Pact presented the Turkish people's claims for national unity and independence. The Lausanne Conference was convened 20 November 1922 to resolve the diplomatic crisis resulting from the victory of Turkey's independence movement. After protracted negotiations, a treaty was signed in July 1923 recognizing Turkish sovereignty over the territories of the present Turkish republic.

¹⁹ The treaty between the Russian Soviet government and the Turkish Grand National Assembly, signed on 16 March 1921, provided that the 'international status of the Black Sea and its straits' would be considered by a future committee of delegates from countries bordering the Black Sea (Turkey, four Soviet republics, Bulgaria and Romania), subject to the condition that such a committee would not infringe on Turkish sovereignty or the security of Turkey and its capital, Constantinople. The reference to 'security' implied Turkey's right to build military fortifications along the Straits, a major point in dispute between Turkey and the Allied powers.

4. Authorize publication of articles on this question in the workers' newspapers.

5. Evacuate Syria, Mesopotamia and Palestine. Recognition of the national independence of all colonies and semi-colonies.

In the interests of the national and workers' movements in the East and the liberation of all working people from the yoke of the intruding capitalist governments, and further in the interests of organizing a unified alliance for struggle, we propose a conference of all delegations from Eastern countries plus the French and British delegations. This gathering should immediately call a congress, to which all revolutionary organizations engaged in an anti-imperialist struggle will be invited.

The recent victories achieved by the Turkish people over world imperialism have been greeted enthusiastically in the most remote countries of Asia and Africa. This is true even in Cochin China [southern Vietnam], a non-Muslim country; the demonstrations of joy there received special attention in the bourgeois press.

Based on these facts, we believe that a congress of all oppressed peoples called by the Communist Party of Turkey would have first-rank importance for the world revolution.

All parties of the countries that have colonies or semi-colonies – and especially the French and British parties – must support every revolutionary independence movement and use every means to stand by the Communist parties of their colonies, just as they would toward branches of their own party. We insist particularly on this point because so far the Communist parties in the motherlands have neglected their duties toward the national liberation movements and Communist parties in a manner that is incomprehensible. We demand that the Fourth Congress require that all national sections carry out point 8 of the Twenty-One Conditions and urge them to regularly send the Communist parties of the East materials and literature that can help expose imperialist policies. We also urge them to send pamphlets, newspapers, leaflets, statements and the like, written with the goal of disorganizing and revolutionizing the occupation troops.

The Communist parties of these countries will assume responsibilities for distributing these publications.

In the Eastern countries the level of development of productive forces does not permit the young Communist parties to immediately realize their final goal in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat – although the build-up of industry in Turkey is much more extensive and working-class consciousness has developed considerably in recent years. In these countries the parties' greatest challenge is to consolidate their ranks and free themselves from all opportunist and individualist forces, to educate and organize the proletariat in both the economic and political arenas, and centralize the workers' movement through incessant and methodical work in the trade unions.

The precondition for these new Communist parties' inevitable victory is that they win influence among the semi-proletarian and peasant masses.

During this transitional period the Communist parties of these countries must provide slogans that are suitable for uniting the broad masses of working people and weakening the power of the ruling class with respect to the people as a whole.

The main tasks of the new Communist parties of the Eastern countries are, in brief, the following:

1. The national liberation movements must be supported in every way possible. All forces should be united in an anti-imperialist united front. We must be vigilant that the ruling class does not sabotage this national liberation movement.

2. Efforts are needed to promote democratic institutions favourable to the broad working masses. This policy will win for the party the sympathy of the working classes and make the Communist Party a great party of the people.

However, if its entire activity consisted only of supporting the independence movement and promoting reforms, it would cease being a Communist party. One of its chief tasks is to educate and organize the working class, forming firm structures and testing them out, so that the moment will come when the party is capable, despite leaders who are nationalists and social-traitors, of leading the proletariat and the semi-proletarian masses to final victory. (*Applause*)

‘The Second Congress resolution exists only on paper’

KARIM NIKBIN (IRAN): Comrades, before I proceed to present the situation in Iran, I believe it is necessary to say that until now very little attention has been devoted to the colonial countries and the East. The resolution of the Second Congress of the Communist International stated clearly that the liberation of the colonial countries requires the support of the Communist parties in the great-power countries that possess colonies, and that Communist parties can be created in these countries. But this resolution exists only on paper. Not only have we received no moral support from the Communist parties of the imperialist countries in the West, they have shown altogether very little interest in the Eastern question. Today’s session of the Fourth Congress is evidence of that.

There is no doubt that the Eastern question plays an essential role in the abolition of the capitalist order. To do away with it, we must block all the arteries through which flow the nourishing fluids and nutrients that sustain capitalism. The power of capitalism must be undermined in the colonies.

As regards Iran, this country is at present going through a transition from patriarchal tribalism to capitalism. In Iran there is not just one source of authority but two, three and so on to infinity. The Communist Party must struggle there not only against the local feudal lords, but also against the imperialists. Chief among these are the British, who have united with the feudal lords, their most important allies, and who hold Iran back from a transition to a capitalist order. The world industrial crisis has become evident in Iran through the fact that the Iranian market has remained to some extent unutilized by the capitalists. As a result local industry

has begun to develop, and along with it, a working class. This and a number of other factors have led to the organization of a Communist Party in Iran, which at present has one thousand members in the country as a whole. In addition there are now trade unions, which have 15,000 members in Iran as a whole, of which 12,000 are in the capital, Tehran.

From a strictly party point of view, it would be incorrect to organize a mass Communist Party in Iran. The organization consists only of a nucleus – granted, a quite healthy nucleus, composed mainly of workers. In addition there are trade union organizations that are fully under the influence of the Communist Party. The party leads politically and influences the course of work in the unions.

A huge number of unions have arisen, so that the party cannot completely encompass them all. The degree to which the Communist Party in Iran has gained strength is evident in the fact that during the year many strikes took place under its leadership, of which the majority, about ten, concluded in victory.

We must also not omit mention of the influence of our newspaper, our press. In Tehran we have two publications, which are the most popular newspapers in Iran as a whole. They exceed all the others not only in popularity but even in their press run. The party is trying to create a general anti-imperialist alliance against the imperialists. To this end it has made an extensive proposal for a democratic bloc that is to include representatives of all the national and democratic groups. This bloc is led by the Communist Party of Iran.

It is significant that the Communist Party of Iran has proved to be even stronger than the bourgeois parties, which are themselves seeking a bloc with us – especially the so-called Social Democrats, who have a democratic programme. It can be said that the preconditions are in place for the Communist Party of Iran to achieve great success in the near future, for there are industrial districts in Iran with a numerous proletariat. Let me refer, for example, to the workers in the ports of northern and southern Iran, and also to the southern districts of Iran, where the British petroleum wells are located. Forty thousand Iranian workers are employed there. We must also note that May Day was celebrated in Iran this year for the first time in its history. Not only did rallies take place, but a May Day strike was also called. Not all categories of workers went on strike; rather, only the typesetters struck on May Day. All these facts show that the Communist Party of Iran has matured fully and has entered into the struggle for communism.

Summary: ‘We face a vast organizational, political and intellectual labour’

KARL RADEK (EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL): Comrades, we must examine the path we have trodden since the Second Congress with regard to our relationship to the movements in the East. You recall that at the Second Congress we advanced the thesis that the movement in the East had the greatest

revolutionary importance, and that the Communist International had to support this movement. This position aroused a hullabaloo, not only in the capitalist world that had very good reason to fear our decision, but also in the parties of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals. You need only recall how Crispian and Hilferding told the Halle congress that we ascribed greater importance to the mullahs in Khiva than to any industrial proletariat or to a party like the independent German Social Democracy.²⁰

Comrades, history has shown how right we were and how wrong were these gentlemen who talked with their West European arrogance about mullahs from Khiva. You recall how, after the Congress of Peoples of the East in Baku, people abused us for allying with the ‘Turks’. And what has been shown by experience, by history? The Treaty of Versailles exists despite all of Hilferding’s protests, and Hilferding and his colleagues are now ready to join the government in order to act as lackeys of the Entente. Powerless pawns of history, the Hilferdings can only bemoan their misfortunes to the world.

But the revolutionary movement in Turkey, the struggle of the Turkish masses, to which we pledged our support, has torn up the Treaty of Sèvres. And while the entire Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals constitute a nullity compared to capitalism, this struggle in Turkey shook the entire West European balance of power. And thereby was the question answered whether these movements in the East are revolutionary in character, whether they are important in undermining capitalist power, or whether they are just a plaything of Soviet Russia’s foreign policy, which the Communist International is going along with.

After the importance of the Eastern question had been made plain to all, even for the blind, these gentlemen come with a new song. This time it is one of the chairpersons at our Second Congress, Paul Levi, now deceased as a Communist, who gives the cue for this melody. Now it is no longer that the Eastern peoples and the revolution in the East are of no importance. Rather the story now is: Look! The victory of Kemal Pasha is a victory for Poincaré. And by supporting Kemal Pasha, Soviet Russia was also supporting Poincaré. And Paul Levi says: See how far they have gone!

This move by Levi shows better than all his articles over German internal politics how he has personally landed on a slippery slope, and also how completely rotten is international Social Democracy. It does not grasp that different forces are at work in a great world-historical development. It does not grasp that the revolutionary struggle of Eastern peoples may be exploited and utilized by the quarrelling cliques of international imperialism, but that does not alter the revolutionary character

²⁰ See Samilov’s greetings in Chapter 3, pp. 99–100. Social Democratic opponents of the Comintern made much of its alliance with Islamic revolutionists, some of whom were clerics, in Khiva and elsewhere in Asia. The Comintern developed its views on this alliance at the Baku congress; see Chapter 4.

of its struggle or relieve the world proletariat of its obligation to support the revolutionary currents in the East.

These petty hagglers of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals do not understand that the fact that capitalist powers try to convert the Eastern peoples into tools of capitalism is simply one more reason why the international working class is obligated to do all in its power to help the Eastern peoples to unite with the European and world workers' movement in the struggle against world capitalism.

When Levi and company now say that the victory of Turkey is a victory for France, their prophecy comes two weeks too soon. The Lausanne conference will portray how the awakening East is opposed by a united front of world capitalism. France wants to play the role in the East that Germany played before the war. France wants to confront Britain with a fairly large Turkish territory, but in order not to make this territory independent but rather to subject it to French expansion. That is why the French government, having helped Turkey defeat Greece, will now leave Turkey in the lurch.

France will take the same position as British imperialism regarding the capitulations and financial control over Turkey. Then we will see who was right: the revolutionary forces – the Communist International and Soviet Russia – who resolved to support the movement in the East through all the confusion, because in its core it is a revolutionary movement; or by contrast those whose fear and anxiety leads them at every point to lose perspective on what is coming next.

This brings me to my second point, which played a role in the reports of our Turkish comrades. Our thesis was that the exploited East must and will defend itself against international capital. That is why we support the exploited East. However, the Eastern peoples are now led by those who are not only not Communists but for the most part not even bourgeois revolutionaries. They are still headed by representatives of moribund feudal cliques, out of which the officer corps and bureaucracy in these countries has been constituted.

Our support for the Eastern peoples therefore raises the question of our relationship to these governing forces. The question is posed in practice by the persecution of Communists in Turkey and by the struggles waged in recent weeks by Wu Peifu in China against strikers. As Communists, we are able to express our position on these matters fully and with complete frankness. When we promised our support to the awakening East, we did not for a moment forget the class struggles that will take place there.

In the *Communist Manifesto* of 1847, Marx was writing not only for the German workers when he said: Support the bourgeoisie to the degree that its actions are revolutionary. He even called on the revolutionary forces in Poland to grant support to the wing of the big Polish landowners, the aristocracy, who took a revolutionary position in the peasant question. What does this tell us? He knew very well that a bourgeoisie remains a bourgeoisie, that the Polish aristocrats

remain aristocrats. He knew that the young workers' movement will have to wage a class struggle against these alien and hostile classes. But he understood that the interests of this class struggle and of its future development at that historical moment demanded support of these classes, despite the class antagonisms.

Comrades, the persecution of Communists in Turkey is part of a class struggle that has just begun to develop in that country, not only between the working class and the young bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy, but also in the camp of these ruling layers.

It is no secret that the main responsibility for the persecution of Communists lies with ministers of the interior, Rauf Orbay and Refet Pasha, who are both for a compromise with the Entente and were opponents of the Sultan. It is no secret that the deposition of the Sultan in Turkey unleashed a struggle.²¹ The question now is whether the revolutionary forces in the ruling class will capitulate to the reactionaries or not. If they capitulate, then the role of Kemal Pasha is finished, haggling over the fate of Turkey will resume, and the Turkish people will be sold for *baksheesh*. If they do not capitulate, they will have to counterpose the resistance of the masses to the impact of the clergy, the reactionary pashas and all the corrupt forces.

It is not clear which side will win, but we do not regret for a moment that we told the Turkish Communists that their first task after organizing themselves as a separate party is to support the national liberation movement in Turkey. At stake here is the future of the Turkish people as a whole – whether the way for them will be cleared or whether they will become the slaves of world capitalism. If the pashas sell the Turkish people, if the entire burden of the capitulations, financial control and all the rest falls on the Turkish peasants, then they will understand that it is the Communists and the young working class who have fought for their interests, and they will unite around the Communist Party.

And even in this moment of persecution, we tell the Turkish Communists: Do not in the present situation forget the immediate future. The task of defending Turkish sovereignty, which has great international revolutionary importance, is not over. You should defend yourself against your persecutors, you should return blow for blow, but you should understand that historically the moment for the liberation struggle has not arrived; you will still have to travel a considerable way with the revolutionary forces that are even now only beginning to crystallize out in Turkey.

Or take the situation in China. Remember the course of events, comrades. When Wu Peifu went into battle with Zhang Zuolin, he had behind him the line of the Yangtze River and its arsenals, but he did not control the northern railways, which were held by people in the pay of Japan. What did he do? He turned to the young Communist Party of China for support. They gave him commissars, who

²¹ On 1 November 1922 the Turkish Grand National Assembly declared the office of sultan abolished, and on 17 November, the deposed sultan Mehmed left Constantinople aboard a British warship and went into exile in Italy.

kept a firm hold on the railways for his troops, who were waging a revolutionary struggle there.

Anyone who fights in China against Japanese imperialism is fighting for China's revolutionary development. Because the Communists understood that, they created in the working class a sense of their independence and importance. Later, the workers made their demands on Wu Peifu and in part achieved them. Through this support and by carrying their historical obligations to the revolutionary bourgeois forces, our comrades succeeded in establishing themselves among the working masses of North China.

The Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals constantly tell us: You fools, don't you understand that the Enver Pashas and Wu Peifus will always betray you, again and again. To this we reply: Worthy gentlemen of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals, so long as there is a petty bourgeoisie – and you are part of it – it will waver between capitalism and the working class. And you, who call yourselves socialists, have already betrayed the working class a thousand times. Still we come to you, after each betrayal, and try to win you to the united front, which you resist. And the joke of the story is that you are driven into it. Whether you want to or not, and despite your betrayals, you will be obliged to march with us once again and serve our cause.

Remember the events in Germany! Did not the German Social Democracy, who had brought the Lüttwitz people to power, then fight during the Kapp putsch side by side with the Communist workers?²² True, at a later stage they betrayed once again. But nonetheless this struggle, which they were compelled to fight together with us, was a service to the working class, for obviously a Kapp government would have been much worse than what we have now. All the more are betrayals and turnabouts possible in the East, where the government is in the hands not even of the petty bourgeoisie but of a moribund feudal class. They will try a thousand times to sell themselves to this or that faction of world capitalism; they will try a thousand times to betray the revolutionary interests of their country, but the joke of history is that *der Bien muss* – they've got no choice.²³ They must fight, because in the long run a compromise with imperialism is impossible.

The pashas can of course conclude a compromise, in order to assure themselves

²² After the November 1918 revolution, the SPD-USPD government appointed the German general Walther von Lüttwitz to command army forces in Berlin. In this capacity he organized the brutal suppression of a workers' uprising in January 1919, during which soldiers under his command murdered Liebknecht and Luxemburg. In March 1920, Lüttwitz joined with Wolfgang Kapp in a right-wing military coup that briefly overthrew the republican government that included the SPD. The coup was defeated by united workers' resistance encompassing both SPD and KPD.

²³ The joke is German dialect humour, first recorded in 1597, about a foreigner talking of bees supposedly as large as sheep. How then can the bee fly into its hive? '*Der Bien muss*' – the bee just has to do it.

of a good life, but when they try tomorrow to dupe the Anatolian peasants, in order to pay for the compromise, they will discover that it was not in vain that history subjected the Turkish peasants to twelve years of war. The peasant is now a different person from what he was before the war.

A Social Revolutionary publication, which certainly does not write flatteringly of Soviet Russia, prints a letter from Constantinople. Describing the impact produced by the victories of Kemal Pasha, it says: There were two cries on the streets, where tens and hundreds of thousands of people were gathered, 'Long live Kemal Pasha', and 'Long live Soviet Russia.' The masses knew that the French had helped as well, but no cries rang out for France. For they felt instinctively that France acted because of diplomatic considerations, sometimes for Turkey and sometimes against. But Soviet Russia, despite centuries of struggle between tsarism and Turkey, had rejected tsarism's imperialist policies and wanted to establish fraternal relations with the Turkish people. And this fact has sunk roots in the consciousness of the Turkish people. It leads down the road of victory.

And that is why we say, from the point of view not of Soviet Russia but of the Communist International, don't try to scare us! We are placing our bets not on the transitory policies of this or that clique, but on the great historical stream that brings together the West European working masses and the awakening masses of the East.

Comrades, I'd now like to say a few words about the reports and what was said here regarding the state of our parties in the East and their work.

As always, comrades, I'd like to begin by saying you should not have too rosy a view of the situation. Do not exaggerate your strength. The Chinese comrade says here: We have sunk roots across all China. I must reply: Dear comrades, it is good to feel enough strength at the beginning to get the work under way. But you must look the facts in the face. Our Chinese party has developed quite separately in each of the country's two parts.

The comrades working in Canton [Guangzhou] and in Shanghai have made very little headway in linking themselves to the working masses. We struggled with them for a whole year because many believed: How can a good Communist get involved in such everyday matters as strikes. Many of our comrades there locked themselves in their room to study Marx and Lenin, as they had once studied Confucius.

That was the situation a couple of months ago. How is it possible that the cause of revolution, which has already taken a blow with the fall of Sun Yat-sen, is suddenly such a strong force? In the North, where the party is quite weak and enjoys support only among the railway workers, how can it represent great power? Comrade Thalheimer gave us a quotation from Lenin, in which he said: Don't boast of your victory before the fact. That is an excellent saying, one to learn and understand, just like the proverbs of the Chinese sages of old.

The first task of the Chinese comrades is to focus on what the Chinese movement is capable of. Comrades, you must understand that in China neither the victory of socialism nor the establishment of a Soviet republic is on the agenda. Unfortunately, even the question of national unity has not yet been historically placed on the agenda in China. What we are experiencing in China is reminiscent of the eighteenth century in Europe, in Germany, where the development of capitalism was still so weak that it had not yet given rise to a single unifying national centre.

When you speak of the tuchuns, the military governors; when you proclaim: Here we have Sun Yat-sen and there Wu Peifu – what does that tell us? It means that capitalism is beginning to develop in a whole number of different centres. With a population of more than three hundred million people, without railways – how can it be any different? We have wide perspectives, which you should advocate with all the fire of your youthful Communist convictions. Despite that, our task consists of unifying the real forces taking shape in the working class with two goals: first, organizing the young working class, and second, establishing a proper relationship between them and the objectively revolutionary bourgeois forces, in order to organize the struggle against European and Asiatic imperialism.

We are only beginning to understand these tasks, and that is why, comrades, we must be aware that to become stronger we have to establish a concrete programme of action. The Communist International tells the Communist parties of the West: Go to the masses! So too, what we say to you is: Get out of the Confucian scholars' reading rooms and go to the masses! Not only the masses of workers, not only the coolies, but also the massive peasant population that has been stirred up by these events.

I will move on to Japan and India. In both countries the relationship of forces is quite similar. In both Japan and India there is quite a strong working class. Both countries are experiencing a severe social crisis, in which different layers of the bourgeoisie and the landed aristocracy are contending for power, and in neither country do we yet have a mass Communist movement. That is a fact. Look at the appeals that Comrade Katayama assembled in the most recent issue of *Kommunistische Internationale* regarding the situation in Japan, which are extremely interesting. In these appeals, published legally by different groups of workers, you find an entire spectrum of viewpoints from Tolstoyism over to syndicalism and communism and including even the most elementary social reform. And I must say that in this choir of voices, that of communism is the weakest.

Why is this? Previously, we were still uninformed about the mood of the workers, who are going through a period similar to the British Chartists.²⁴ We did not succeed in building bridges to the specific tasks that are now before them.

²⁴ The Chartists were a mass working-class movement in Britain from 1838 into the 1850s that demanded universal manhood suffrage and other democratic reforms.

These consist of organizing the working class as a power that can intervene in the class struggle in Japan, above all to establish democracy.

I do not believe that developments in Japan will simply repeat those in Britain. One hundred years have passed, and obviously the pace of developments in Japan will be more rapid. The entire history will be compressed, and as a result even in this bourgeois revolution now being prepared in Japan, soviets will arise, not as organs of power but as organs unifying the working class. But now we have to form trade unions and advance a sensible programme that presents the working class with immediate tasks. And the immediate task is to lead the working class into struggle as an organized force.

In India we have an intellectual centre. It must be acknowledged here that what Comrade Roy has succeeded in creating in recent years – a Marxist orientation to Indian reality, presented in his outstanding book and in his newspaper – represents a very great labour. No Communist Party of the East has carried out intellectual work on its own; this work deserves the strongest support of the Communist International. But in practice, during the present flare-up of strikes, we have made no progress with India's large trade union movement.²⁵ We have not found a way under the British occupation to utilize the rights that it is compelled to provide. The reception received by Comrade Roy shows that legal possibilities exist there. We have not succeeded in taking even the first practical steps as a workers' party. And all this tells us that 'It's a long way to Tipperary.' And when comrades complain here that there is not yet great interest in their work, I must reply that interest in parties is tied to their deeds.

It has been explained for the twentieth time at a congress that there are many workers in Iran. These are things that we learn not from a congress but from a geography textbook.

Comrades, let me express the hope that we will succeed at this Congress in steering the work that you and our Eastern division have achieved onto a practical track, so that we are able at the next congress to report on practical organizational achievements. If that happens, then the International will be aware not only of the great importance of the Eastern question but also that you are carrying out work that is in step with its great importance.

Comrades, the world situation has changed since the time of the Second Congress. At that congress our political line in the East was oriented toward immediate and broad revolutionary uprisings. This was not made explicit, but all the delegates from the East felt it.²⁶ As for the present world situation, we find

²⁵ See M.N. Roy, 'The Indian Trade Union Congress', *Inprecorr*, vol. 2, no. 1 (3 January 1922), p. 4; and 'The Railroad Strike in India', *Inprecorr*, vol. 2, no. 3 (10 January 1922), pp. 295–6, available in Marxists Internet Archive.

²⁶ The orientation to immediate revolutionary uprisings in the East was made explicit at the 1920 Baku congress, which called on Asian peoples to 'go forward as one man in a holy war'

ourselves around the world in a period where the revolution is gathering its forces. This has an impact on the situation in the Eastern countries as well. If we are to play a revolutionary role in these countries in the coming period, we must set the goal of accomplishing a vast organizational, political and intellectual labour.

Of course the revolutions of the East will not wait until our comrades in every country have learned that revolution does not signify reading and digesting the theses of the Communist International but carrying out practical revolutionary work among the masses. But when great events develop in the East similar to those in Turkey today, where we are weak and unorganized, then they will take place without us and we will not be able to influence them in a revolutionary direction. Therefore the slogan of this Congress on the Eastern question must be to go to the tormented masses of the East, to work for their education, and to create solid bastions of the Communist International in the East that are capable of carrying out practical work for the struggle before us and of influencing the broad masses. And then, after we have gathered the workers around us, we must go to the peasants and craftsmen and become the leaders of a future people's party. (*Loud applause*)

for the 'liberation of the peoples of the East'. See Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 9

FOURTH CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL:

RESOLUTION

‘Workers’ parties in the colonies have a double task’

The following resolution, drafted by the Commission on the Eastern Question, was unanimously adopted by the last session of the congress.

THESES ON THE EASTERN QUESTION

5 December 1922

1. The Rise of the Revolutionary Movement in the East

Based on the experience of Soviet construction in the East and the growth of national revolutionary movements in the colonies, the Second Congress of the Communist International drew up a general statement of principles on the national and colonial question in the period of extended struggle between imperialism and proletarian dictatorship.¹

Since then the struggle against imperialist oppression in the colonial and semi-colonial countries has intensified significantly, resulting from the deepened political and economic crisis of post-war imperialism. Evidence of this can be seen in:

1. The collapse of the Sèvres Treaty for the partition of Turkey and the possibility of the full restoration of its national and political independence.

2. The impetuous rise of the national revolutionary movement in India, Mesopotamia [Iraq], Egypt, Morocco, China and Korea.

3. The hopeless internal crisis of Japanese imperialism, which is causing a rapid development of forces for a bourgeois-democratic revolution and the present transition of the Japanese proletariat to independent class struggle.

4. The growth of the workers’ movement in all countries of the East and the formation of Communist parties in almost all these countries.

The facts enumerated here signify a shift in the social basis of the revolutionary movement in the colonies. This shift tends to intensify the anti-imperialist struggle. And its leadership is thus no longer automatically held by feudal forces and the national bourgeoisie, who stand ready to compromise with imperialism.

The imperialist war of 1914–18 and the subsequent protracted crisis of

¹ See ‘Theses on the National and Colonial Questions’, Chapter 3, pp. 94–9.

imperialism – above all European imperialism – have weakened the economic tutelage of the great powers over the colonies.

In addition, the same forces that have narrowed the economic basis and political sphere of influence of European capitalism have aggravated the imperialist competitive struggle for colonies, thus disrupting the equilibrium of the entire world imperialist system. This is reflected in the struggle for oil wells, the British–French conflict in Asia Minor, Japanese–American rivalry in the Pacific, and so on.

It is this weakening of imperialist pressure on the colonies, together with the steadily growing rivalry between the different imperialist groupings, that has facilitated the development of indigenous capitalism in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, which has expanded and continues to expand beyond the narrow and restrictive limits of imperialist rule by the great powers. Previously, great-power capitalism sought to isolate the backward countries from world economic trade, in order in this way to secure its monopoly status and achieve super-profits from the commercial, industrial and fiscal exploitation of these countries. The rise of indigenous productive forces in the colonies stands in irreconcilable contradiction to the interests of world imperialism, whose very essence is to take advantage of the variation in the level of development of productive forces in different arenas of the world economy to achieve monopoly super-profits.

2. The Conditions of Struggle

The backwardness of the colonies finds expression in the diversity of the national revolutionary movements against imperialism, reflecting the different stages of transition from feudal and feudal-patriarchal conditions to capitalism. This diversity puts its stamp on the ideology of this movement. To the degree that capitalism arises in the colonial countries on a feudal basis, in stunted and incomplete transitional forms that serve above all to assure the domination of commercial capital, the differentiation of bourgeois democracy from feudal-bureaucratic and feudal-agrarian forces often takes place in a lengthy and roundabout manner. This is the main obstacle to a successful mass struggle against imperialist oppression. For in all backward countries, foreign imperialism utilizes the feudal (and in part also semi-feudal, semi-bourgeois) elite of indigenous society as an instrument to achieve its domination (native military governors – tuchuns – in China; native aristocrats and land-tax farmers – zamindars and talukdars – in India; the feudal bureaucrats and aristocrats in Iran; the capitalist landowners and plantation owners in Egypt; and so on).

In this way, the ruling classes of the colonial and semi-colonial countries are shown to be unable and unwilling to lead the struggle against imperialism, to the degree that this struggle takes the form of a revolutionary mass movement. Only where the feudal-patriarchal relationships have not yet disintegrated to the point where the native aristocracy has fully separated out from the popular masses, as

for example among nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples, can the representatives of these elites come forward as active leaders in struggle against imperialist violence (Mesopotamia, Mongolia).

In Muslim countries, the national movement is initially guided by the religious and political slogans of Pan-Islamism. This provides an opportunity for great-power officials and diplomats to utilize the prejudices and ignorance of the broad masses in struggle against this movement (thus British imperialism dabbles in Pan-Islamism and Pan-Arabism; the British plans to move the Caliphate to India; French imperialism's pretence at 'Muslim sympathies'). Nonetheless, to the degree that the national liberation movements extend in scope, the religious-political slogans of Pan-Islamism will be more and more replaced by specific political demands. This is shown by the recent struggle in Turkey to separate secular power from the Caliphate.

The main task that is common to all national revolutionary movements is to achieve national unity and political independence. How this task is carried out depends on the degree to which a given national movement is capable of breaking all its ties with the reactionary feudal forces, and to thus win over the broad working masses and give expression in its programme to their social demands.

Well aware that the desire of the nation for political independence can be expressed, under different historical conditions, by the most diverse social forces, the Communist International supports every national revolutionary movement against imperialism. However, it does not ignore the fact that the oppressed masses can be led to victory only by a consistent revolutionary line aimed at drawing the broadest masses into active struggle and an unconditional break with all those who seek conciliation with imperialism in order to maintain their own class rule. The native bourgeoisie's ties to reactionary feudal forces permit imperialism to exploit extensively feudal anarchy; the rivalry between individual leaders, lineages and tribes; the antagonism of town and country; and struggles between occupational layers and national religious sects, in order to disorganize the people's movement (see China, Iran, Kurdistan and Mesopotamia).

3. The Agrarian Question

In most countries of the East (India, Iran, Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia), the agrarian question is of paramount importance in the struggle for liberation from the yoke of great-power despotism. By exploiting and ruining the peasant majority of the backward nations, imperialism robs them of their basic means of survival. Meanwhile, the resulting rural surplus population cannot be absorbed either by local industry, which is developed only in a few centres, or by emigration, for which possibilities are completely lacking. The impoverished peasants remaining on the land are reduced to the status of serfs.

In the advanced countries, before the war, industrial crises acted as the regulators of social production. In the colonies, this role is played by famine. Given that imperialism has an intense interest in achieving huge profits with a minimum investment of capital in the backward countries, it sustains as long as possible the feudal and usurious forms of exploiting labour power. In some countries, such as India, it takes over the existing feudal state's monopoly ownership of the land and transforms the land tax into a tribute to great-power capital and its local servants, the zamindars and talukdars. In other countries it secures the land rent by acting through existing organizations of large landowners, as in Iran, Morocco, Egypt and so on. The struggle to free the land from feudal dues and limitations thus takes on the character of a battle for national liberation against imperialism and feudal land tenure. Examples can be found in the uprising of the Moplah against the landowners and the British in India in the autumn of 1921 and the Sikh uprising of 1922.²

Only the agrarian revolution, which adopts the aim of expropriating large landholdings, can set the mighty peasant masses in motion. It is destined to have a decisive influence in the struggle against imperialism. Bourgeois nationalists (in India, Iran and Egypt) fear agrarian slogans and seek every possibility to water them down. This reveals the close links of the native bourgeoisie with the feudal and feudal-bourgeois big landowners, on whom they are ideologically and politically dependent. All revolutionary forces must utilize this vacillation to reveal the irresolution of bourgeois leaders of the nationalist movements. It is this irresolution that obstructs organizing and unifying the working masses, as has been shown by the failure of the policy of passive resistance ('non-co-operation') in India.³

The revolutionary movement in backward countries of the East cannot be victorious unless it bases itself on the activity of the broad peasant masses. The revolutionary parties of all Eastern countries must therefore formulate a clear agrarian programme, which demands the complete elimination of feudalism and its surviving institutions: large-scale land ownership and the leasing out of the land tax. In order to draw the peasant masses into the struggle for national liberation, this programme must demand a radical change in the basis of land ownership rights. It is equally necessary to compel the bourgeois national parties, as far as possible, to adopt this revolutionary agrarian programme as their own.

² The Moplah or Mapilla are Muslim inhabitants of Kerala and neighbouring states. Their August 1921 uprising against British rule was repressed, and 3,000–10,000 Moplah were killed. The Akalis, a militant community of Sikhs in Punjab, carried out actions to regain control of Sikh holy places, notably at Guru-ka-Bagh in September 1922.

³ Mohandas Gandhi, main leader of the Indian National Congress, suspended the massive non-co-operation movement in India in February 1922, in response to an incident that month in which protesters had violently retaliated against police killings. The following month, Gandhi was jailed by British authorities.

4. The Workers' Movement in the East

The new workers' movement in the East is the result of recent development of indigenous capitalism. Previously the working class there – even considering only its more advanced elements – was still in a state of transition, on the road from the small craft workshop to the large capitalist factory. To the degree that the bourgeois nationalist intelligentsia draws the revolutionary working-class movement into the anti-imperialist struggle, its representatives will also initially lead the burgeoning trade union organizations and their activity. Initially, in this activity, the proletariat does not go beyond the framework of 'common national' interests of bourgeois democracy (thus the strike against the imperialist bureaucracy and administration in China and India). It often happens – as the Communist International's Second Congress noted – that representatives of bourgeois nationalism, drawing on the moral and political authority of Soviet Russia, seek to adapt their bourgeois-democratic aspirations to the class instincts of workers by presenting them in a 'socialist' or 'communist' guise. In this way they seek, sometimes without being conscious of the fact, to divert the initial proletarian associations from the immediate tasks of class organization. (Thus the Yeşil Ordu party in Turkey, which has given a communist colouration to its Pan-Turkism,⁴ and also the 'state socialism' advocated by some representatives of the Kuomintang party in China.)

Nonetheless, both the trade union and also the political movement of the working class have made great progress in recent years in the backward countries. It is very significant that independent proletarian class parties have been formed in almost all the countries of the East, even if the vast majority of these parties still have a great deal of internal work to do in order to rid themselves of diletantism, sectarianism and other shortcomings. From its outset, the Communist International has duly acknowledged the tremendous potential of the workers' movement in the East, which provides eloquent proof of the genuine international unification of proletarians of the entire world under the banner of communism. By contrast, the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals have so far failed to find supporters in a single one of the backward countries, precisely because they are playing merely the role of 'servants' of European-American imperialism.

5. The General Tasks of Communist Parties in the East

Bourgeois nationalists view the workers' movement in terms of whether it will contribute to the victory of the bourgeoisie. By contrast, the international proletariat views the new workers' movement of the East in terms of its revolutionary future.

⁴ Yeşil Ordu (Green Army) was a left nationalist political association, formed in Ankara in the spring of 1920 with the support of Mustafa Kemal's government. Its policies combined radical socialist, nationalist and Islamic themes.

Under capitalist rule, the backward countries will not be able to share in the achievements of modern technology and culture, without paying an enormous tribute to great-power capitalism in the form of savage exploitation and oppression.

The workers of the East need to ally with the proletariat of the advanced countries not only for the sake of their joint struggle against imperialism but also so that they may obtain from the victorious proletariat of these countries unselfish aid in the development of their backward productive forces. The alliance with the Western proletariat opens the road to an international federation of Soviet republics. For backward peoples, the Soviet order represents the least painful transition from primitive conditions of existence to the advanced culture of communism, which is destined to replace capitalist production and distribution in the entire world economy.

This is shown by the experience of Soviet construction in the liberated colonies of the Russian empire. Only the soviet form of government is capable of securing the consistent implementation of a peasant-based agrarian reform. The particular conditions of agriculture in certain parts of the East (irrigation) were previously maintained by a special form of collective labour organized on a feudal and patriarchal basis. Later, this was undermined by systematic capitalist over-cropping. They need a type of state organization that can meet social needs in a systematic and organized manner. As a result of particular climatic and historical circumstances, co-operatives of small-scale producers will play an important role in the transitional period across the East as a whole.

The objective tasks of the colonial revolution are extending beyond the framework of bourgeois democracy, simply because a decisive victory of this revolution is incompatible with the rule of world imperialism. Initially, the native bourgeois intelligentsia forms the vanguard of the colonial revolutionary movements. But as the proletarian and semi-proletarian peasant masses are drawn into these movements, and to the degree that the social interests of these lower layers come to the fore, the big-bourgeois and agrarian bourgeois forces begin to turn away from the movement. The young proletariat in the colonies faces a lengthy struggle during an entire historical epoch – a struggle against imperialist exploitation and against its own ruling classes, who hold exclusive possession of all the advantages of industrial and cultural development and seek to keep the broad working masses in their earlier ‘pre-historic’ condition.

This struggle for influence over the peasant masses must prepare the indigenous proletariat for the role of political leadership. Only when the proletariat has accomplished this task in its own ranks and with respect to the social layers closest to it will it be capable of challenging bourgeois democracy, which in the backward conditions of the East is even more hypocritical than in the West.

Any refusal of Communists in the colonies to take part in the struggle against imperialist tyranny, on the excuse of supposed ‘defence’ of independent class

interests, is opportunism of the worst sort that can only discredit the proletarian revolution in the East. No less damaging is the attempt to remain aloof from the struggle for the immediate interests of the working class in order to pursue 'national unity' or 'civil peace' with the bourgeois democrats.

The Communist workers' parties of the colonial and semi-colonial countries have a double task: both to fight for the most radical possible resolution of the tasks of a bourgeois-democratic revolution, aimed at winning political independence, and also to organize the worker and peasant masses in struggle for their particular class interests, profiting from all the contradictions in the nationalist bourgeois-democratic camp.

By putting forward social demands, Communists provide an outlet for revolutionary energy that cannot be expressed in bourgeois-liberal demands, and spur on its development. The working class in the colonial and semi-colonial countries must be aware that only the broadening and deepening of the struggle against the yoke of the imperialist great powers can serve to secure for them a revolutionary leadership role. On the other hand, it is only the economic and political organization and political education of the working class and the semi-proletarian layers that can expand the revolutionary impetus of the struggle against imperialism.

The Communist parties of the colonial and semi-colonial countries of the East, which are still at an embryonic stage, must take part in every movement that provides them with access to the masses. Nonetheless, they must wage an energetic struggle against patriarchal and craft prejudices and against bourgeois ideology, which is predominant in the workers' associations, in order to protect these undeveloped forms of trade unions from reformist tendencies and to transform them into organs of mass struggle. They must make every effort to organize the numerous agricultural day workers and apprentices, both men and women, on the basis of defence of their immediate interests.

6. The Anti-Imperialist United Front

The slogan of the proletarian united front was advanced in the West during a transitional period of gathering forces together organizationally. So too in the colonial East at present, the slogan of the anti-imperialist united front must be emphasized. The *suitability* of this slogan flows from the perspective of an extended, lengthy struggle against world imperialism, demanding the mobilization of all revolutionary forces. This mobilization is all the more necessary, since the native ruling classes tend to make compromises with foreign capitalism that are directed against the interests of the popular masses. And just as the slogan of proletarian united front in the West contributes to exposing Social Democratic betrayal of proletarian interests, so too the slogan of anti-imperialist united front serves to

expose the vacillation of different bourgeois nationalist currents. This slogan will also promote the development of a revolutionary will and of class consciousness among the working masses, placing them in the front ranks of fighters not only against imperialism but also against survivals of feudalism.

The workers' movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries must strive above all to achieve the role of an independent revolutionary force in the overall anti-imperialist front. Only when its autonomous weight is acknowledged and its political independence is thus safeguarded is it permissible and necessary to conclude temporary agreements with bourgeois democracy. The proletariat supports immediate demands, and advances them itself – such as, for example, the demand for an independent democratic republic, for assuring that women obtain rights, and so on – to the degree that the current relationship of forces does not permit it to implement its soviet programme as an immediate task. At the same time, the proletariat seeks to advance demands that promote a political alliance of the peasant and semi-proletarian masses with the workers' movement. One of the most important tasks of the anti-imperialist united front tactic is to explain to the broad working masses why they need an alliance with the international proletariat and the Soviet republic. The colonial revolution can only win – and defend its victory – together with the proletarian revolution in the highly developed countries.

As a result of inter-imperialist rivalry, the danger of a deal between bourgeois nationalism and one or several of the contending imperialist powers is much greater in the semi-colonial countries (China, Iran) or in countries struggling for their political independence (Turkey), than it is in the colonies. Any such agreement involves a quite unequal balance of power between the native ruling classes and imperialism. Under cover of formal independence, it leaves the country in its previous status of a semi-colonial buffer state in the service of world imperialism.

The working class recognizes that temporary and partial compromises are permissible and necessary in order to achieve a breathing spell in the revolutionary struggle for liberation against imperialism. But it must conduct an irreconcilable struggle against every attempt to establish an open or concealed power-sharing agreement between imperialism and the native ruling classes aimed at preserving the latter's class privileges. The demand for a close alliance with the proletarian Soviet republic is a characteristic feature of the anti-imperialist united front. While advancing this demand, a determined struggle must be carried out for comprehensive democratization of the political order, in order to rob politically and socially reactionary forces of their points of support in the country and provide working people with organizational freedom in the struggle for their class interests (for a democratic republic, agrarian reform, tax reform, administrative reorganization on the basis of extensive self-government, protective labour legislation, restriction of child labour, protection of mothers and children, and so on). Even in independent Turkey, the working class enjoys no freedom of

association, a telling indication of the bourgeois nationalists' attitude to the proletariat.

7. The Tasks of the Proletariat in Countries of the Pacific

The steady, uninterrupted growth of imperialist rivalry is a further reason for organizing an anti-imperialist united front. This rivalry has now become so acute that unless international revolution intervenes, a new world war focused in the Pacific is inevitable.

The Washington conference, an attempt to ward off this threat, served in reality only to deepen and intensify the imperialist rivalries.⁵ The recent struggle in China between Wu Peifu and Zhang Zuolin was a direct result of the failure of attempts by Japanese and Anglo-American capitalism to reconcile their respective interests in Washington.⁶ The new war threatening the world will involve not only Japan, the United States and Britain, but also other capitalist powers (France, the Netherlands, etc.). It could well cause even more destruction than the war of 1914–18.

The task of Communist parties of the colonial and semi-colonial countries on the Pacific is to carry out energetic propaganda to explain this danger to the masses. They should summon them to militant struggle for national liberation, and orient to Soviet Russia as the bastion of all the oppressed and exploited masses.

In view of the threatening danger, the Communist parties of the imperialist countries – the United States, Japan, Britain, Australia and Canada – are obliged not to limit themselves to propaganda against the war but also to make every effort to eliminate the factors that disorganize the workers' movement in these countries and make it easier for the capitalists to utilize national and race antagonisms. These factors are the questions of immigration and of cheap Coloured labour.

The chief method of recruiting Coloured workers today on the sugar plantations in the southern Pacific today is the contract system, which brings in workers from China and India. This fact has led workers of the imperialist countries to demand the passing of laws against immigration and against Coloured labour, both in the United States and in Australia. These laws deepen the antagonism between Coloured and white workers, fragmenting and weakening unity of the workers' movement.

The Communist parties of the United States, Canada and Australia must wage a vigorous campaign against laws that restrict immigration, and explain to the

⁵ Representatives of nine governments met at the Washington Conference (12 November 1921–6 February 1922) to discuss naval disarmament and conflicting interests in the Pacific. The Soviet republic protested its exclusion and declared it would not be bound by conference decisions. The conference adopted a five-power agreement for naval arms limitations, which lasted until 1936.

⁶ For a discussion of the conflict between Wu Peifu and Zhang Zuolin, see remarks by Liu Renjing in Chapter 8, pp. 211–4.

proletarian masses of these countries that they too will suffer harm because of the race hatred stirred up by these laws.

The capitalists oppose such anti-immigration laws because they favour free importation of cheap Coloured labour as a means of driving down the wages of white workers. There is only one way to successfully counter the capitalists' intention to go over to the offensive: the immigrant workers must be admitted into the existing trade unions of white workers. At the same time, the demand must be raised that the wages of Coloured workers be brought up to same level as white workers' pay. Such a step by the Communist parties will expose the capitalists' intentions and also demonstrate clearly to the Coloured workers that the international proletariat does not harbour any racial prejudice.

To carry out these steps, the representatives of the revolutionary proletariat in the countries of the Pacific must convene a Pacific conference to work out correct policies and determine the appropriate organizational steps for an effective unification of the proletariat of all races in the Pacific.

8. The Tasks of the Metropolitan Parties toward the Colonies

Given the exceptional importance of the colonial revolutionary movements for international proletarian revolution, work in the colonies must be heightened, above all by Communist parties in the imperialist powers.

French imperialism is basing all its calculations for the suppression of proletarian revolutionary struggle in France and Europe on the utilization of its colonial workers as a reserve army of counter-revolution. British and American imperialism still continue to divide the workers' movement by winning the workers' aristocracy to its side with the promise of a certain share in the super-profits drawn from colonial exploitation.

Every Communist party in countries that possess colonies must take on the task of organizing systematic ideological and material assistance for the proletarian and revolutionary movement in the colonies. They must strenuously and stubbornly oppose the quasi-socialist colonialist tendencies of some categories of well-paid European workers in the colonies. The European Communist workers in the colonies must seek to organize the indigenous proletarians and win their trust through specific economic demands (raising the level of native workers' pay to that of European workers, laws to protect labour, insurance and so on). The creation of separate European Communist organizations in the colonies (Egypt, Algeria) is a hidden form of colonialism and furthers only the interests of imperialism. Any attempt to build Communist organizations on the basis of national characteristics contradicts the principles of proletarian internationalism.

All parties of the Communist International are obligated to explain to the broad working masses the vital importance of the struggle against imperialist

rule in the backward countries. The Communist parties active in great-power countries must form standing commissions on the colonial question from among the members of their Central Committees in order to pursue these goals. The support of the Communist International for Communist parties of the East must be expressed above all through assistance in organizing their press and in bringing out publications and newspapers in the local languages. Special attention must be paid to work among the European workers' organizations and the occupation troops in the colonies. The Communist parties of the great-power countries must not miss a single opportunity to expose the predatory colonial policies of their imperialist governments and of the bourgeois and reformist parties.

CHAPTER 10

FOR GLOBAL BLACK LIBERATION

Excerpt from Proceedings of the Fourth Comintern Congress

In November 1922, the Comintern's Fourth World Congress adopted the first statement on global Black liberation ever made by a Marxist organization. The impulse for this statement came from two Black Comintern supporters, Otto Huiswoud and Claude McKay, who had travelled to Moscow from New York. Their speeches to the congress follow, along with the final text of the resolution, which was unanimously adopted.

[SESSION 22:] REPORTS ON THE BLACK QUESTION

25 November 1922¹

'Awaken the consciousness of the Black masses'

BILLINGS (OTTO HUISWOUD, UNITED STATES): Comrades, the Second Congress of the Communist International recognized the importance of the colonial question for the world revolution. From the ranks of comrades in the East as well as from some comrades in the colonies we hear the reproach that little attention has been paid to this matter and that it has not received the attention it deserves as a component of the world revolution. The Black question is another part of the racial and colonial question, and it has until now not received any special attention. I mean by that to say that the Second International did not devote any special attention to the Black question. That is why we find in the Second Congress theses the remark that the Second International is an International of white workers and the Communist International is an International of the workers of the world.

Comrades Zinoviev and Bukharin referred in their speeches to the fact that the colonial question is today among the most important issues that we must deal with. And since this important problem is now under discussion, I expect of this Congress that it will recognize the experiences we have gone through and the policies recommended for the colonial question. The Congress – or rather the Communist International – has gathered certain experiences during its activity among the peoples of the Near and Far East and should have gained some knowledge regarding this particular problem. We will find that in handling this question certain unavoidable errors have been committed, from which we must learn. When we address the Black question we must begin by heading in the right direction.

¹ See footnote 2 on p. 32.

When we examine the Black question we should include in our analysis the psychological aspects of the question. We must recognize that various peoples that have reached a definite level of development at a given time necessarily react to the world in a specific psychological fashion. If we try to work with these masses and carry out our propaganda and agitation among them, we must necessarily take into consideration the elements we find in this special question that is posed for analysis.

Although the Black question is chiefly economic in nature, we nonetheless find that the problem is worsened and deepened by frictions between the white and Black races. As is generally known, the question of race, based as it is on prejudice arising from the class prejudices of specific groups in society, still plays an important role. It is true that in the United States, for example, the competition between Black and white workers is the main source of racial hatred. But we must not forget that the Blacks still bear the mark of bondage stemming from the time of slavery. For this reason we find that the particular antagonism of white workers against Black workers takes a special form.

There are in all about 150 million Blacks in the world, of which approximately 25 million live in the New World and the rest in Africa. The Blacks in the United States and the West Indies are a source of cheap labour for the American capitalists. We observe that the capitalist class has always utilized them, as it still does today, in order to put down the white working class in its daily struggle. 'White Guard' forces are recruited from the ranks of these Blacks, to be used anywhere that there is a revolutionary uprising.

The exploitation of Blacks in Africa makes possible the continued accumulation of capital. The capitalist class as such recognizes the useful assistance provided by the Black masses. For this reason it many years ago set itself the task of infecting the Black population with bourgeois ideology. This it did, of course, in its own interests, and not in order to help the Blacks. The capitalists have carefully planned the formation of organizations among the Blacks that carry out propaganda for the bourgeoisie and against the white workers. They have called into being the renowned Rockefeller Foundation and the Urban League.² The first organization is a well-known strike-breaking institution, which was at its post while most revolutionaries were asleep, while the second gives financial support to schools for Blacks. Despite these factors it was unavoidable that the Black population would find a way of defending itself against the oppression that it suffers everywhere in the world. Initially this took the form of religious institutions, which were in some periods the only permitted framework for their private recreation. Later we see, however, the continual development of Black organizations that, although

² The Rockefeller Foundation advised employers on countering labour militancy. The Urban League, founded in 1910, sought improved opportunities for Blacks in northern cities and pressed trade unions to end anti-Black discrimination.

composed entirely of Blacks, either directly or indirectly stand to some degree in opposition to capitalism.

The three most important Black organizations are, first, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP], an organization composed mainly of proletarian forces and led by bourgeois intellectuals, whose activity is based on the principle of petitioning the capitalist class to improve the conditions of Blacks, which in practical terms is simply a form of begging.

We then come to a second and more interesting organization, the [Marcus] Garvey organization, which is ultra-nationalist and has a radical membership. Although this organization veils its programme with an inexpensive share-certificate system, it has nonetheless moved the Blacks into action against imperialism. This organization was founded after the world war. Of course it did not take any definitive radical form; this was prevented even at that time by its leader. Nonetheless, it has awakened racial consciousness and utilized it on a broad scale, even into the interior of Africa, where one would hardly expect that an organization formed in the United States would find a base of support.

The third organization is the African Blood Brotherhood, a radical Black organization whose programme is based on the destruction of capitalism.³ This organization was the only one to wage a struggle during the racial battles in Tulsa, Oklahoma – a brilliant and brave struggle – and it is the organization to which the capitalist class of the United States is now going to devote its attention.⁴

There are also various small nationalist organizations in Africa, such as the Ethiopian movement, which all find their inspiration in the United States, the centre of political tendencies among the Blacks. These organizations have expanded and developed as far as into the Sudan. They could be utilized by Communists, if the propaganda material was written carefully and with reflection and was then used intensively to bring these movements together. So we see that there is already a sort of organization that will oppose world imperialism.

There are about 450 Black newspapers and magazines in the United States, most addressing only the question of race, but nonetheless exerting a great influence on the Black masses. Thus we have, for example, the *Chicago Defender*, with a weekly press run of 250,000, which is sent everywhere in the world where significant numbers of Blacks are to be found. Then there is also *Crisis*, a monthly magazine with a run of more than sixty thousand. These publications, especially the *Chicago*

³ The African Blood Brotherhood, founded in 1919, aimed to achieve ‘a liberated race; absolute race equality – political, economic, social; the fostering of race pride; organized and uncompromising opposition to Ku Kluxism; rapprochement and fellowship within the darker masses and with the class-conscious revolutionary workers; industrial development; higher wages for Negro labour; lower rents; a united Negro front’ in ‘the United States, Africa, and elsewhere’. The ABB had its own delegates to the Fourth Congress.

⁴ During 31 May–1 June 1921, a white mob waged war on the Black community of Tulsa, Oklahoma, leaving three hundred or more Blacks dead and 10,000 homeless.



Otto Huiswoud

Defender and others with a smaller circulation, have always made use of the radical propaganda material that we have made available to them.

The Blacks sense the approach of a crisis that will break out between whites and Blacks in the South. The seeds have been sown in the South and they must sprout up there in some form. It is likely that the crisis will take the form of race baiting on a vast scale.

For us, comrades, the Black question is of great interest and supreme importance. We see, for example, that among the approximately 12 million Blacks, two million work in the industrial districts of the North and another nine or ten million in the South. (I assume that you all have some conception of this South. When you go there, you will believe yourselves to be in Dante's inferno. Sometimes you will feel that all hope is futile.)

The South is almost a separate country. Among the Blacks, 80 per cent live in the countryside. The [racial] division is kept very sharp, and Blacks are robbed of their right to vote. And here, where the class struggle is waged in its most brutal form, we find that the relationship between Blacks and whites consists of continual conflicts and life-and-death struggles. This is where you find lynching and racial uprisings. You see that in the South, the lynching of a Black is the occasion for enjoyment, as it is elsewhere to go to the cinema. When you grasp that the white population of the South is so imbued by this notion of white domination of the Blacks, you will also understand that we must take up this question.

At present, when major strikes are carried out in the North of the United States, we see that the capitalist class send their paid agents as rapidly as possible to the South to bring the Blacks there to the northern districts as strike-breakers. These agents promise higher wages and better conditions in order to induce Blacks to enter the strike districts. This poses a constant danger to white strikers.

But the Blacks must not be held solely responsible for this situation. The American trade unions, and I am speaking here of genuine trade unions, have insisted during recent years that a Black, even if a skilled worker, is barred from membership in the unions because of the colour of his skin. Just a short time ago, the American Federation of Labor made a feeble attempt to enable Blacks to join the regular trade unions. But even today, if I am not mistaken, even such an organization as the machinists' union has a regulation in its programme establishing as a condition of membership that each white brother will recruit other white workers, or something of this sort. That means that Blacks will always remain outside the union, simply because they are Black. The capitalist class and the reactionary Black press exploit this fact as much as they can in order to turn Black workers against the unions.

When you discuss with a Black about his joining a union or about the need to be a radical, you always get hurled in your face the response, 'Don't preach to me. Preach to the whites. The unions are useful to them, not to me. I am always ready to fight side by side with them, if they are prepared to let me join. But as long as they refuse, I will carry out work that has been struck. And by God I have a right to do this. I need to protect my life.' That is one of their arguments, and we cannot ignore it. We can advance all the fine theoretical formulations that we have at hand, but yet in the daily struggle there are some harsh and stubborn facts.

The Commission on Blacks has drafted theses on the Black question, which I will now read. During our discussion of the Black question we made certain definite proposals, which in our opinion should be carried out by the different sections of the Communist International whose countries or whose colonies contain Blacks. We have of course not made these proposals so they could remain on paper, but rather so they could be transformed into reality by the various sections. And we ask the Communist International to see to it that these proposals are applied to the letter and in the spirit in which they have been written.

We have drawn up an outline for our work, a proposal to begin work immediately among Black people of the entire world. We have also proposed the founding of a bureau for Blacks as a component of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. The reason for this was that we wished to coordinate and centralize the work. We thought that Moscow is the best place for this bureau, or section, or whatever you choose to call it. The Black question is of great importance for us, and for this reason we have made an effort to study the real situation in Africa and especially in the United States. We have not fallen into reverie over a programme. But we have nevertheless made specific proposals for a plan for a Black organization. This plan took into account the specific spiritual characteristics of Blacks in the present period. . . .

Comrades, to conclude I would like to express the hope that comrades of each section of the Communist International where there are Black workers will seize hold of the Black question in its current form, viewing this not merely as a New Year's resolution but as work to be carried out in reality and in action, in order to awaken the consciousness of the Black masses and put us in a position to integrate them into the proletarian revolution.

'The situation of Blacks is horrendous and fraught with danger'

CLAUDE MCKAY (UNITED STATES): Comrades, I have the feeling that I would prefer to face lynch justice in the civilized United States rather than to try to make a speech before such an intellectually developed and critically minded world audience. I belong to a race of speakers, yet my public speaking is always so poor that those of my own race say that I should not try to give speeches any more but should stick to

writing. But when I heard that the Black question was to be placed on the agenda of this Congress, I felt nevertheless that I would stand in eternal disgrace if I did not say something about the brothers and sisters of my race. I would particularly disgrace the Blacks of the United States, since I published a poem in 1919 that has become known, which is always shoved into the limelight because of my poetical temperament as a leading spokesperson for Black radicalism in the United States.⁵

I have the feeling that my race has been honoured by the invitation to one of its members to speak at the present Fourth Congress. It is an honour not because my race is different from the white or Yellow races, but because it is a race of workers, of hewers of wood and drawers of water, a race that belongs to the most oppressed, exploited and subjugated part of the working class of the world. The Communist International is for the emancipation of all workers of the world without distinction of race or colour. And this stand of the Communist International is not just written on paper, as is the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America;⁶ it is something real.

The Black race at present has a special position in the economic life of the world. In every country where whites and Blacks must live together, the capitalists set the one against the other. It is as if the international bourgeoisie wished to use the Black race as a trump in the battle against world revolution. Great Britain has Black regiments in the colonies, and by using them in the last war it showed what can be achieved by Black soldiers. And the revolution in Britain is still far distant as a result of the well-organized exploitation of the subject peoples of the British Empire.

In Europe, we see that France has a Black army of more than 300,000 men, and that it aims to use this army to carry out its policy of the imperialist subjugation of Europe. In the United States we face the same situation. The North American bourgeoisie knows how well the Black soldiers fought for their liberation in the Civil War, even though they were illiterate and unpractised. It also knows how well the Black soldiers fought in the Spanish–American war under Theodore Roosevelt. It knows that in the recent war it mobilized more than 400,000 Blacks, who acquitted themselves very well. In addition to fighting for the capitalists, they have bravely weathered a hard struggle for their own interests, as they were forced after

⁵ McKay is referring to his poem, 'If We Must Die' (1918), which contains the words:

If we must die, O let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain . . .
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

⁶ The Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1870, barred the exclusion of U.S. citizens from voting because of 'race, colour, or previous condition of servitude'. By 1900, most Blacks had been deprived of this right by a combination of legal regulations and extra-legal terror.

their return to the United States to struggle against the white mobs in Chicago, St Louis and Washington.

But even more important is the fact that the American capitalists use Black soldiers in their struggles against the interests of the working class, and that they are preparing to mobilize the entire Black race in the United States in combat against the organized working class. The present situation in the United States is horrendous and fraught with danger. It is more dreadful and horrendous than that of the peasants and Jews under the rule of the tsars in Russia. It is so dreadful and horrendous that very few people in the United States can accept it.

The reformist bourgeoisie has carried out a struggle against racial division and race prejudice in the United States. The Socialists and Communists conducted this struggle with great caution, because there are still strong prejudices of this kind among the American Socialists and Communists. They do not want to take up the Black question. In my dealings with American comrades, I have seen that on many occasions, when white and Black comrades came together, that prejudice was noticeable. And the greatest hindrance that Communists in the United States must overcome is that they must first of all free themselves from their attitudes toward Blacks before they can succeed in reaching Blacks through any form of radical propaganda.

But when I consider the Blacks themselves, I have a sense that just as other oppressed races have come to Moscow to learn how to struggle against the exploiter, the Blacks too will come to Moscow. In 1919, when the Communist International published its manifesto, which contained a passage regarding the exploited colonies,⁷ there were many groups of radical Blacks in the United States that distributed this propaganda among Blacks. In 1920 the American government set about combating and suppressing radical propaganda among Blacks. Several small groups of radical Blacks responded to these efforts of the government by a public declaration that Socialists were striving for the emancipation of Blacks, while the reformist United States could do nothing for them.

It was on this occasion, I believe, that American Blacks grasped for the first time in American history that Karl Marx was concerned with their emancipation and fought for it energetically. I will read a relevant quotation from a writing by Karl Marx during the Civil War:

When an oligarchy of three hundred thousand slaveholders dared to inscribe, for the first time in the annals of the world, 'slavery' on the banner of Armed Revolt, when on the very spots where hardly a century ago the idea of one great Democratic Republic had first sprung up, whence the first Declaration of the Rights of Man was issued, and the first impulse given to the European revolution of the eighteenth century; when on those very spots counter-

⁷ See Chapter 2, pp. 32-3.

revolution . . . cynically proclaimed property in man ‘the cornerstone of the new edifice’ – then the working classes of Europe understood at once . . . that the slaveholders’ rebellion was to sound the tocsin for a general holy crusade of property against labour, and that for the men of labour, with their hopes for the future, even their past conquests were at stake in that tremendous conflict on the other side of the Atlantic.⁸

Karl Marx, who wrote these lines, is generally known as the father of scientific socialism and the author of the epoch-making work, *Capital*, popularly known as ‘the socialist Bible’.

Together with Richard Cobden, the atheist Charles Bradlaugh, and John Bright, he travelled throughout Britain to give addresses, and aroused the working class against the Confederacy to such a degree that Lord Palmerston, the prime minister, who wished to recognize the South, was forced to resign. Just as Marx fought against chattel slavery in 1861, his intellectual followers, today’s socialists, are fighting against wage slavery – the exploitation of people by other people.

If the American Workers Party were a genuine workers’ party, which embraced the Blacks as well, it would be illegal in the South.⁹ And I would like to inform the American comrades that there is a local branch of the American Workers Party in the South, in Richmond, in the state of Virginia, which is illegal – illegal because it has Coloured members.

Here we have a small group of white and Black comrades who work together, and the fact that there are laws in Virginia and in most other southern states that ban meetings that include both whites and Blacks means that the Workers’ Party can only be illegal in the South. In order to get around the Virginia laws, the Black and white comrades have to have separate meetings, and come together only once a month behind closed doors.

That is indicative of the work that must be accomplished in the South. The work among the Blacks in the South must be carried out through legal propaganda organized in the North. For the southern states of the United States, home to nine million of the Black population, which numbers ten million in all, is such that even the liberal bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie among the Blacks are prevented by legal restrictions from having their own publications to develop reformist propaganda.

The fact is that only in the southern states is there suppression of freedom of opinion. In the North, on the other hand, there is no such repression. In the North, special laws are passed for specific situations, such as for example the laws against Communists and Socialists during the war. In the South, by contrast, there

⁸ See <www.marxists.org/archive/marx/iwma/documents/1864/lincoln-letter.htm>.

⁹ The Workers Party of America was a legal structure established and directed by the U.S. Communists, at a time when the CP itself was functioning underground.



Claude McKay at the Fourth Congress

are laws that have been on the books for fifty-five years now, banning Blacks from meeting together to discuss their grievances. The whites who are concerned with the condition of Blacks are not allowed to go to them and speak to them. When we send white comrades to the South, they are usually expelled by the white oligarchy, and if they do not leave the area the white mob sets upon them and whips, tars and feathers them. But when we send Black comrades, they do not come back again, because they are lynched and burned.

I hope that the international bourgeoisie will not succeed in utilizing Blacks in the final struggle against world revolution. I hope that in response to the challenge of the international bourgeoisie, which has now fully grasped the importance of the Black question, we will soon see some Black soldiers in the ranks of the best, most courageous and most magnificent armed force in the world, Russia's Red Army and Navy, who will fight not only for their own emancipation but for the liberation of the entire working class of the world.

THESES ON THE BLACK QUESTION

1. During and after the war, a movement of revolt developed among the colonial and semi-colonial peoples against the power of world capitalism, and this movement is successfully making progress. Meanwhile, the further development of capitalism depends on resolving its last great challenge, the penetration and intensive colonization of the territories inhabited by Black races. French capitalism has clearly recognized that post-war French imperialism can only be maintained

by creating a French empire in Africa, tied to the mother country by a Trans-Sahara railroad.

The financial magnates of the United States, who already exploit 12 million Blacks in that country, have begun the peaceful penetration of Africa. Britain's fear that its position in Africa may be threatened is clearly shown by the extreme measures it took to suppress the strikes in South Africa in the Rand.

Just as the competition between imperialist powers in the Pacific region has produced an acute danger of a new world war, so there are ominous indications that Africa has become the object of their competitive efforts. In addition, the war, the Russian revolution and the powerful rebellious movements of Asian and Muslim peoples against imperialism have awakened racial consciousness among millions of Blacks, who have been oppressed and humiliated for centuries not only in Africa but also, and perhaps even more, in the United States.

2. The history of Blacks in the United States has prepared them to play an important role in the liberation struggle of the entire African race. Three hundred years ago the American Blacks were torn from their native soil, transported on slave ships under the most indescribably cruel conditions, and sold into slavery. For 250 years they worked as slaves under the whip of the American overseer. Their labour cleared the forests, built the roads, planted the cotton, laid the railway tracks, and sustained the Southern aristocracy. The reward for their labour was poverty, ignorance, degradation and misery.

The Blacks were not docile slaves. Their history tells of rebellions, revolts and underground techniques of winning freedom. But all their struggles were savagely suppressed. They were tortured into submission, while the bourgeois press and bourgeois religion declared their enslavement to be rightful.

Slavery grew into a barrier on the road to America's development on a capitalist basis. In the contest between chattel slavery and wage slavery, chattel slavery was destined to defeat. The Civil War was a war not to free the slaves but to maintain the industrial supremacy of capitalism in the Northern states. It presented Blacks with the choice between slavery in the South and wage slavery in the North.

The longing, the blood, and the tears of the 'emancipated' Blacks formed part of the material from which American capitalism was constructed. When the United States, which had now emerged as a world power, was inevitably pulled into the whirlpool of the world war, Blacks were declared to be of equal worth to whites. They were permitted to kill for 'democracy' and let themselves be killed; 400,000 Coloured workers were recruited into the American army and formed into Black regiments. Immediately after the dreadful sacrifices of the world war, the Black soldier, returning home, faced racial persecution, lynching, murder, deprivation of the right to vote, and inequality between him and the whites.

Blacks fought back, for which they had to pay dearly. The persecution of Blacks became more intensive and pervasive than before the war, until they had

learned to forget their 'presumption'. The spirit of rebellion aroused by the post-war persecution and brutality, although suppressed, flares up again, as we saw in the protests against atrocities such as those that took place in Tulsa. Combined with the impact of the Blacks' integration into industry in the North, this assigns to American Blacks, especially in the North, a place in the vanguard of the struggle against oppression in Africa.

3. The Communist International views with satisfaction the resistance of exploited Blacks to the attacks of their exploiters, since the enemy of their race and of the white worker is identical: capitalism and imperialism. The international struggle of the Black race is a struggle against capitalism and imperialism. The international Black movement must be organized on this basis – in the United States, the centre of Black culture and the focus of Black protests; in Africa, the reservoir of human labour for capitalism's further development; in Central America (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Colombia, Nicaragua and other 'independent' republics), which is dominated by American imperialism; in Puerto Rico, Haiti, Santo Domingo [Dominican Republic] and other islands in the Caribbean, where the brutal treatment of our Black fellow men by American occupation troops has aroused a protest by conscious Blacks and revolutionary white workers around the world; in South Africa and the Congo, where the increasing industrialization of the Black population has led to uprisings of different types; in East Africa, where the current penetration of international capitalism is driving the native population to active resistance against imperialism.

4. It is the task of the Communist International to show Blacks that they are not the only people that suffer the oppression of imperialism and capitalism. The workers and peasants of Europe, Asia and America are also victims of the imperialist exploiters. In India and China, in Iran and Turkey, in Egypt and Morocco, the oppressed Coloured peoples are mounting a heroic defence against the imperialist exploiters. These peoples are rising up against the same outrages that drive Blacks to fury: racial oppression, social and economic inequality, and intensive exploitation in industry. These peoples are fighting for the same goals as Blacks – for political, economic and social liberation and equality.

The Communist International represents the world-wide struggle of revolutionary workers and peasants against the power of imperialism. It is not only the organization of the subjugated white workers in Europe and America but is also the organization of the oppressed Coloured peoples of the world. It feels duty-bound to support and promote the international organization of Blacks in their struggle against the common enemy.

5. The Black question has become an essential part of the world revolution. The Communist International has already recognized what worthwhile help the Coloured peoples of Asia can provide in the semi-colonial countries. It views the assistance of our oppressed Black fellow human beings as absolutely necessary for

proletarian revolution and the destruction of capitalist power. For these reasons, the Fourth Congress assigns to Communists the special responsibility to apply the 'Theses on the Colonial Question' to the situation of Blacks.

6. a) The Fourth Congress considers it essential to support every form of the Black movement that either undermines or weakens capitalism or places barriers in the path of its further expansion.

b) The Communist International will struggle for the equality of the white and Black races, and for equal wages and equal political and social rights.

c) The Communist International will utilize all the means available to it to compel the trade unions to take Black workers into their rights, or, where this right already exists in form, to make special efforts to recruit Blacks into the trade unions. If this proves to be impossible, the Communist International will organize Blacks in their own trade unions and make special use of the united-front tactic in order to force the general unions to admit them.

d) The Communist International will take immediate steps to convene a general conference or congress of Blacks in Moscow.

CHAIR: The resolution has been distributed to you in translation and has been read out. We come to the vote on the resolution on the Black question.

(The resolution was adopted unanimously on 30 November 1922.)

CHAPTER 11

FIFTH CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL: HO CHI

MINH ON THE NATIONAL AND COLONIAL QUESTIONS

‘The native peasants are ripe for insurrection’

The policy of an anti-colonial united front adopted by the Comintern’s 1922 world congress found expression in China, where the newly formed Communist Party worked to build the popular insurgency for national liberation that was then led by Sun Yat-sen and the Guomindang (‘Nationalist’) party. In Europe, the Comintern initiated a League against Colonialism that sponsored a ‘Hands Off China’ conference in Germany in 1923.

Nonetheless, the Communist parties of Europe were slow to rally for colonial freedom. This default aroused a concern often expressed at Comintern gatherings, and not only by delegates from colonized countries.¹ The celebrated Vietnamese Communist leader Ho Chi Minh, then known as Nguyen Ai Quoc, drew the Comintern’s attention to this failing in a dramatic speech given on 8 July 1924 to the Comintern’s Fifth Congress in Moscow.

In a second speech to the congress given that same day, Ho drew on his intensive discussions in Paris in previous years with anti-colonial activists from many French possessions in Asia and Africa to present a damning portrait of the French empire’s criminal land seizures, plunder, and oppression of its colonial subjects.

‘Famine is on the increase and so is the people’s hatred,’ Ho concluded. ‘The native peasants are ripe for insurrection.’

‘What our European parties have done for the colonies is almost worthless’

Comrades, I wish only to put forward some suggestions about Comrade Manuilsky’s criticisms of our policy on the colonial question. But before entering upon the matter, it is desirable to give some statistics in order to help us to see its importance more clearly. [See Table on p. 259.]

Therefore, nine countries with a population of 320,657,000 and an area of 11,470,300 square kilometres are exploiting colonies embracing dozens of nationalities, with a population of 560,193,000 and covering an area of 55,637,000 square kilometres. The whole area of the colonies is five times greater than that of

¹ See, for example, comments by Roy and Julien at the Third Congress (Chapter 5) and, at the Fourth Congress, by Roy, Nikbin, Webb, and Safarov as well as by a joint protest of 14 delegations (Chapter 8).

Countries	Mother Countries		Colonies	
	Area (sq. km)	Population	Area (sq. km)	Population
Great Britain	151,000	45,500,000	34,910,000	403,600,000
France	536,000	39,000,000	10,250,000	55,600,000
The US	9,420,000	100,000,000	1,850,000	12,000,000
Spain	504,500	20,700,000	371,600	853,000
Italy	286,600	38,500,000	1,460,000	1,623,000
Japan	418,000	57,070,000	288,000	21,249,000
Belgium	29,500	7,642,000	2,400,000	8,500,000
Portugal	92,000	5,545,000	2,062,000	8,738,000
Netherlands	32,500	6,700,000	2,046,000	48,030,000

the mother countries, and the whole population of the mother countries amounts to less than three-fifths of that of the colonies.

These figures are still more striking if the biggest imperialist countries are taken separately. The British colonies taken as a whole are eight and a half times more populous and about 232 times bigger than Great Britain. France occupies an area 19 times bigger than her own. The population of the French colonies exceeds that of France by 16.6 million.

Thus it is not an exaggeration to say that so long as the French and British Communist parties have not advanced a genuinely progressive policy with regard to the colonies, have not come into contact with the colonial peoples, their programme as a whole is and will be ineffective because it goes counter to Leninism. I will explain myself more clearly. In his speech on Lenin and the national question, Comrade Stalin said that the reformists and leaders of the Second International refused to deal with the white peoples and Coloured peoples on an equal basis. Leninism, however, did away with this unequal treatment and removed the barrier that placed the 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' slaves of imperialism in different compartments.

According to Lenin, the victory of the revolution in the West depends on a close alliance with the liberation movement against imperialism in enslaved colonies and oppressed countries. The national question is merely a component of the overall question of proletarian revolution and proletarian dictatorship.

Later, Comrade Stalin branded as counter-revolutionary the viewpoint that the European proletarians can achieve victory without a direct alliance with the liberation movement in the colonies. But if we evaluate points of view on the basis of deeds, we are entitled to say that our big parties, excepting the Soviet Communist Party, still hold the above-mentioned viewpoint.

What have the bourgeois class in the colonialist countries done to achieve the oppression of the great mass of people enslaved by them? They have done

everything. In addition to employing force and violence they have carried out intensive propaganda. They have crammed the heads of the people of the mother countries with speeches, films, newspapers, exhibitions and every other means, so that they have a colonialist outlook; they have displayed before their eyes pictures of the easy, honourable and rich life which seems to await them in the colonies.

As for our Communist parties in Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium and other countries – what have they done to cope with the colonial invasions perpetrated by the bourgeois class of their countries? What have they done from the day they accepted Lenin's political programme to educate the working class of their countries in the spirit of true internationalism, and that of close contact with the working masses in the colonies?

What our parties have done in this domain is almost worthless. As for me, I was born in a French colony and am a member of the French Communist Party, and I am very sorry to say that our Communist Party has done hardly anything for the colonies.

It is the task of the Communist newspapers to introduce the colonial question to our militants to awaken the working masses in the colonies, win them over to the cause of communism. But what have our newspapers done? Nothing at all.

Just compare the number of columns devoted to the colonial question in the bourgeois newspapers such as *The Times*, *Figaro*, *l'Oeuvre* or those of various [workers'] currents such as *Le Populaire*, or *Libertaire*, with those devoted to the same question in *l'Humanité*, the central organ of our party. We can only say that this comparison will not be favourable to us.

When the Ministry of Colonies worked out a plan for transforming many African regions into large private plantations, turning the people of these regions into veritable slaves attached to the new employers' land, our newspapers still remained silent.

In the French West African colonies, measures for military enlistment employing brutal compulsion were carried out, and yet our newspapers maintained a close silence. The colonialist authorities in Indochina turned themselves into slave traders, and sold the inhabitants of North Vietnam to planters in the Pacific islands; they lengthened the natives' military service from two to four years; they sold the greater part of the colonial land to financier sharks; they increased taxes by a further 30 per cent in spite of the natives' inability to pay the old ones. And all this was done while the natives were being driven to bankruptcy and dying of hunger through flood. However, our newspapers still maintained silence. Thus, it is no wonder that the natives are inclined to side with democratic or liberal organizations such as the 'Society for the Rights of Man and the Citizen' together with other similar organizations which take care of them or pretend to take care of them.

If we go even further, we shall see shocking things, leading all to think that our

party has a disregard for all that concerns the colonies. For instance, *l'Humanité* did not find space to publish the Peasants International's appeal to the people of the colonies, distributed by the Communist International.

Prior to the party's Lyon conference [1924], the written discussion found place for all the theses except those on the colonial question. *L'Humanité* carried many articles on the Senegal boxer Siki's success, but did not raise its voice when the dockers at Dakar port, Siki's brothers, were arrested in the middle of their work, tied hand and foot, hauled on to lorries and taken to jail. Later, they were sent to the garrisons to be turned into 'defenders of civilization', that is to say, into soldiers.

The central organ of our party daily informed our readers of the feats of the pilot [Georges Pelletier] d'Oisy, who flew from Paris to Indochina. But when the colonial administration pillaged the people of Annam, robbed them of their fields to give them to the French profiteers, sent out bombers with orders to the pilots to teach reason to the pitiful and despoiled local people, the organ of our party did not find it necessary to bring this news to the knowledge of its readers.

Comrades, the press of the French bourgeoisie has realized that the national question cannot be separated from the colonial question. In my opinion, our party has not thoroughly understood this. We must learn from the lessons of the Ruhr, when native troops were used against starving German workers and to encircle suspect French regiments; the example of the eastern troops, in which the native forces were given machine-guns 'to mobilize the spirit' of the French troops worn out by the hard and protracted war; the events which occurred in 1917 at places where Russian troops were stationed in France; events during the strike of agricultural workers in the Pyrenees where native troops were forced to play the shameful part of strike-breakers; and finally, the presence of 207,000 colonial troops in France itself – all these have still not made our party think, and lay down a clear and firm policy on colonial questions.

The party has missed many good opportunities for propaganda. The new party leadership has conceded that the party has been inactive on this question. That is a good sign. Once the leaders of the party have realized and recognized this weak point in the party's policy, there is hope that the party will do its utmost to rectify its errors. I firmly believe that this congress will be the turning point and will urge the party to correct its past shortcomings. Although Comrade Manuilsky is quite right in his remarks on the elections in Algeria, to be objective, I must say that although our party has committed errors, it has corrected them by nominating a colonial representative as candidate in the Seine [Paris] departmental elections.

Though this is still too little, it is fairly satisfactory as a beginning. I am very happy to see that at present our party is again filled with enthusiasm and the best intentions, which need only to be accompanied by deeds in order to arrive at a correct policy on the colonial question.

What are these practical deeds? It is not enough to work out long political

programmes and pass high-sounding resolutions that, after the congress, are sent to the museum as has always been done in the past. We must adopt concrete measures. I propose the following points:

1. To publish in *l'Humanité* a new feature of at least two columns weekly devoted to regular coverage of colonial questions.

2. To increase propaganda and recruitment among the natives of the colonial countries where branches of the Communist International already exist.

3. To send comrades from the colonial countries to study at the Communist University of the Eastern Peoples in Moscow.

4. To come to an agreement with the United General Confederation of Labour [CGTU] on the organization of working people from colonial countries working in France.

5. To set party members the task of paying more attention to colonial questions.

In my opinion, these proposals are useful, and if the Communist International and delegates of our party approve them, I believe that at the Sixth [Comintern] Congress, the French Communist Party will be able to say that the united front of the masses of the metropolitan country and colonies has become a reality.

Comrades, as Lenin's disciples, we must concentrate all our forces and energies on colonial questions as on all other questions in order to implement Lenin's teachings.

Victims of Colonialism are 'Ripe for Insurrection'

The French colonies occupy an area of 10.2 million square kilometres with 55.6 million inhabitants scattered over all four continents. In spite of the differences in races, climates, customs, traditions and economic and social development, there are two common points that make them alike and can later bring about unity in the common struggle.

1. The economic situation: In all the French colonies, industry and commerce are little developed and the majority of the population are engaged in agriculture; 95 per cent of the population are peasants.

2. In all the colonies, the native peoples are unremittingly exploited by French imperialist capital.

I have not enough time to make a thorough analysis of the situation of the peasants in each colony. Therefore I shall take only a few typical examples to give an idea of the peasants' life in the colonies.

I shall begin with my country, Indochina, which naturally I know better than the other colonies. When France occupied this colony, the war drove the peasants away from their villages. Later, on their return, they found their lands occupied by the colonists who had followed in the wake of the victorious army. They had shared among themselves the land the native peasants had cultivated for generations. In

consequence the Annamese peasants were turned into serfs and forced to cultivate their own lands for foreign masters.

Numerous unfortunates who could not suffer the extremely hard conditions imposed by the occupiers left their lands and wandered about the country. They were called 'pirates' by the French, who sought every means to prosecute them.

The lands stolen in this way were allotted to the planters. They needed merely to say a word in order to get tracts of land sometimes covering more than 20,000 or 25,000 hectares.

These planters not only occupied lands without any payment but also obtained all that was necessary to exploit those lands, including labour. The administration allowed them to make use of a number of prisoners without any payment, or ordered the communes to supply them with manpower.

Besides the pillage by the administration, thievery by the Catholic Mission must be mentioned. The Catholic Mission alone occupies one quarter of the areas under cultivation in Cochin China. To secure for itself all those lands it used every imaginable and unimaginable method, including bribery, fraud, and coercion. Here are a few examples. Availing itself of crop failures it gave the peasants loans, with their rice-fields pledged on mortgage. The interest rates being too high, the peasants were unable to get out of debt and had to cede their mortgaged fields outright to the Mission. Using all kinds of underhand methods the Mission did its utmost to find out secret information that could be harmful to the colonial authorities. It used this information as a threat to force the authorities to comply with its will.

The Mission founded companies for the exploitation of the plantations which were occupied without any payment; the lands having been stolen from the peasants. The henchmen of the Mission held high positions in the government. The Mission exploited believers no less ruthlessly than the planters.

Another of its tricks was to assemble poor people and force them to reclaim waste land with promises that once the land was cultivated it would be divided among the peasants. But as soon as the land was reclaimed and the crops about to be harvested, the Mission declared that it owned the land and drove out those who had toiled to make it productive.

Robbed by their 'protectors' (both secular and spiritual), the Annamese peasants were not even left in peace to work on their remaining tiny plots of land. The land registry service carried out a fraudulent cadastral survey to make the peasants pay more taxes. These increased every year.

Recently, after occupying thousands of hectares of land belonging to the Annamese highlanders to give them to the profiteers, the authorities sent airplanes to the place so that the victims dared not think of rebelling.

The despoiled peasants, ruined and driven away, again found ways and means to reclaim virgin land. But once it was under cultivation the administration would

seize it and oblige them to buy it at prices fixed by the administration. Those unable to pay would be driven out pitilessly.

Last year, the country was devastated by catastrophic floods; however, land taxes increased 30 per cent.

In addition to the iniquitous taxes that ruin them, the peasants still have to do forced labour, pay a poll tax, a salt tax, buy government bonds, subscribe to various funds and many other things, and sign unequal contracts, etc.

French capitalists in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco have carried out the same policy of robbery and exploitation. All the good irrigated land was kept for the French. The natives were driven away to areas at the foot of the mountains or to arid spots. The financial companies, profiteers and high functionaries divided the land in the colonies among themselves.

The Bank of Algeria and Tunisia made a profit of 12.3 million francs from a capital of 25 million francs.

The Bank of Morocco, with a capital of 15.4 million francs, made a profit of 1.7 million in 1921.

The French Algerian Company has occupied 324,000 hectares of the best land; the Algerian General Company another 100,000 hectares.

A private company has occupied 50,000 hectares of forest without any payment, while Capsa Phosphate and Railway Company took 50,000 hectares of land rich in ores, and also secured priority rights over 20,000 hectares of neighbouring land.

A former French parliamentary deputy has occupied a plantation covering 1,125 hectares of land, with mines to the value of ten million francs, producing a yearly income of four million francs. The natives, the real owners of these mines, receive annually only one-tenth of a franc per hectare.

French colonial policy has abolished the right of collective ownership and replaced it by private ownership. It has also abolished small-scale ownership to the advantage of estate ownership of the plantations. For the native peasants this policy has entailed the loss of five million hectares of their best land.

In 15 years, the peasants in Kabylia were robbed of 192,090 hectares.

Since 1913 the Moroccan peasants have been robbed of 12,000 hectares of cultivated land. Since France's victory in the war 'for justice' that figure has risen to 14,540 hectares. At present, there are in Morocco only 1,070 French people, but they occupy 500,000 hectares of land.

Like their Annamese peasant brothers and sisters, the peasants in Africa lead an unbearably hard life, subjected to continual forced labour and paying heavy taxes. Their misery and sufferings are indescribable. Due to shortage of food they have to eat wild vegetables and grasses or rotten rice and consequently are affected with typhus and tuberculosis. Even in good harvest years, peasants search rubbish heaps, contending with the dogs for remnants of food. In lean years, the corpses of peasants dead of starvation litter the fields and the highways.

The peasants' life in West Africa and French Equatorial Africa is still more frightful. These colonies are in the hands of about 40 companies, which occupy everything: land and fields, natural resources and even the natives' lives; the latter lack even the right to work for themselves. They are compelled to work for the companies, all the time, and only for the companies. To force them to work for nothing, incredible means of coercion are used by the companies. All lands and fields are confiscated. Only those who agree to do the farming required by the companies are allowed to have some tiny plots of land. People are affected with all kinds of diseases through malnutrition, and the death rate especially among the children is very high.

Another method is to make old people, women and children work as servants. They are lodged in small huts, ill-treated, beaten, ill-fed and sometimes murdered. In some localities the number of permanent servants is kept about equal to the number of workers in order to discourage the latter from running away. In order to maintain work levels in the plantations, the natives are forbidden to work their own land and harvest crops in good time. Therefore famine and epidemics occur very often, wreaking havoc in the colonies.

The few tribes who have fled to the forests and succeeded in escaping the planters' exploitation live like animals, feeding on roots and leaves, and die from malaria and the unwholesome climate. Meanwhile, the white masters are devastating their fields and villages. The following is an excerpt from an officer's diary describing briefly but clearly the repression of the colonial peasants:

'Raid on Colover village' . . .

'Raid on the Fan tribe at Cuno. Villages and gardens destroyed' . . .

'Raid on Becani village. Village burnt down; 3,000 banana-trees cut down' . . .

'Raid on Kwa village. Village destroyed. Gardens and farms razed to the ground' . . .

'Raid on Abimaphan village. All houses burnt down, all gardens and farms destroyed' . . .

'Raid on Examfami village. Village destroyed. The whole commune along Bom river burnt down' . . .

The same system of pillage, extermination and destruction prevails in the African regions under Italian, Spanish, British, or Portuguese rule.

In the Belgian Congo, the population in 1891 was 25 million, but by 1911 it had fallen to 8.5 million. The Hereros and Nama tribes in the former German colonies in Africa were completely exterminated: 80,000 were killed under German rule and 15,000 were killed during the 'pacification' period in 1904. In one region of the French Congo the population was 20,000 in 1894 and only 9,700 in 1911. In another province there were 10,000 inhabitants in 1910; eight years later there

remained only 1,080. In another province with 40,000 Black inhabitants, in only two years, 20,000 people were killed, and in the following six months 6,000 more were killed or disabled.

The densely populated regions bordering the rivers were turned into deserts within a matter of 15 years. Bleached bones were scattered throughout the ravaged oases and villages.

The life of the survivors was atrocious in the extreme. The peasants were robbed of the tiny plots of land allowed them by the companies, the artisans lost their crafts, and the breeders their cattle. The Matabeles were cattle-breeders: before the arrival of the British, they had 200,000 cattle. Two years later only 40,900 were left. The Hereros had 90,000 cattle; within 12 years the German colonists had robbed them of half. Similar cases are numerous in all the Black countries which came into contact with the whites' civilization.

In conclusion, I quote the African writer Rene Maran, author of *Batouala*, who said:

Equatorial Africa was a densely populated area, rich in rubber. There were here all kinds of gardens and farms with plenty of poultry and goats. After only seven years everything was destroyed. Villages were in ruins, gardens and farms laid waste, poultry and goats killed. The inhabitants grew weak because they had to work beyond their strength and without any payment. They were thus not sufficiently strong and lacked the time to work their fields. Diseases broke out, famine appeared, the population fell steadily. We should know that they are the descendants of strong and healthy tribes imbued with an enduring and tempered fighting spirit. Here, there is nothing left that can be called civilization . . .

To complete this tragic picture, I want to add one point: French capitalism has never hesitated to drive each region in turn to famine if it might be of advantage to them. In many colonial countries, e.g. the Reunion Islands, Algeria, Madagascar, etc., the inhabitants are no longer allowed to grow cereals but have to grow other crops required by French industry. These crops are more profitable to the planters. And this has caused the cost of living in the colonies to rise and often brings about famine.

In all the French colonies famine is on the increase and so is the people's hatred. The native peasants are ripe for insurrection. In many colonies they have risen many times but their uprisings have all been drowned in blood. If at present the peasants still have a passive attitude, the reason is that they still lack organization and leaders. The Communist International must help them organize and provide them with leaders who can show them the road to revolution and liberation.

JOHN RIDDELL

THE LONG MARCH TO COLONIAL FREEDOM

Hearty congratulations to LeftWord Books for making available in South Asia – and online – these foundational debates of the global movement for colonial freedom. The appearance of *Liberate the Colonies!* is a significant advance in socialist historical publishing.

It has been an honour to work with LeftWord's editorial team in compiling this text.

Since 1983, I have been engaged in an effort to publish the core record of the Communist International (Comintern), the world revolutionary movement in the time of Lenin. Founded in 1919, the Communist International won wide support in colonized countries, and its ideas helped shape the movement for anti-colonial liberation around the world.

So far, my collaborators and I have produced eight volumes of the Comintern Publishing Project, all in print and totalling 7,500 pages – with more on the way. This independent team effort has benefited from the support of scores of socialists on every continent, as well as that of three publishing houses: Pathfinder (New York), Brill (Netherlands), and Haymarket Books (Chicago). See below for a list of published volumes.

Distortions of the capitalist book industry have obstructed distribution of these books in the Asia, Africa and Latin America. Despite my team's best efforts, none of these books are fully available online.

By publishing the present work in both book and online formats, LeftWord is thus promoting greater global accessibility to sources on socialist history.

This historical record is vitally important to all those who seek a socialist future. The collective memory of the oppressed provides us with the concepts and vocabulary we use in projecting a social alternative and charting a course of action. Memory is the map of our imagination, providing us with the factual foundation for developing and testing policy.

The memory of the oppressed is shaped by social struggles. Where this memory is distorted or lost, it can be rectified and recovered, through a process of collective struggle, for a new generation to weigh and assess. The Comintern Publishing Project has sought to aid this recovery for a significant segment of our socialist heritage.

The present book focuses on the emergence of a global revolutionary movement for colonial liberation that figured centrally in the victories and setbacks registered by peoples of the Global South in the decades that followed.

MY ENCOUNTER WITH THE GLOBAL SOUTH

My own understanding of colonial liberation goes back to the late 1950s. As a teenager in the then very 'British' city of Toronto, I formed friendships with many of the African and Caribbean students who were then blazing the way for a Black presence in Canada's universities. They were inspired by the high tide of independence struggles in their countries – and so was I.

I celebrated the triumph in 1959 of the Cuban revolution and, a few years later, of the long and costly independence struggle in Algeria. I helped circulate speeches of the great Black leader Malcolm X and joined in the protracted and ultimately successful worldwide effort to force an end to the U.S. war against Vietnam.

I wondered how these struggles had originated. How had their ideas germinated and developed? During many years of activity as a socialist organizer and writer, I did not find a satisfactory explanation. Then in 1983, after finishing my shift at a unionized machine shop near Toronto, I received an unexpected visit from two representatives of Pathfinder Press, a socialist publisher in New York. Their proposal: that I head up a decade-long project to translate and publish documents of the Communist International, many of which dealt with the struggle for colonial freedom.

I was taken aback; this did flow logically from my metalworking experience. But the Pathfinder reps, Mary-Alice Waters and Barry Sheppard, insisted that given my wide reading in workers' history, my experience in the global socialist movement, and my knowledge of the main translating languages (German, Russian and French), I was the obvious choice. So I agreed to give it a try.

I recruited a team of collaborators, and we headed for the great research libraries of North America and Europe to find source material. As socialist activists without academic credentials, we devised many stratagems to gain admission. We were not always successful; I was myself once thrown out of the Harvard University library in Boston for lack of a doctorate.

1919: HO CHI MINH IN VERSAILLES

My reading included a biography of the great Vietnamese patriot Ho Chi Minh. In 1919, I learned, Ho – then an unknown immigrant worker in Paris – recruited a group of Vietnamese friends into an improvised national delegation. The group boldly entered the congress of victorious imperialist powers, held in the former royal palace in Versailles, France. Ho confronted U.S. President Woodrow Wilson and demanded freedom for his homeland.¹

The Vietnamese delegation got the brush-off, but their efforts helped expose the colonialists' real agenda. Two years earlier, the Soviet government of workers and

¹ Jean Lacouture, *Ho Chi Minh: A Political Biography*, New York: Vintage Books, 1968, p. 24.

peasants in Russia, during its first week in office, had granted self-determination to all the colonized peoples within Russia's borders.² So great was the impact of this pledge in the colonial world that President Wilson himself had felt obliged to tip his hat to self-determination in his celebrated Fourteen Points. At Versailles, however, Wilson and the other imperialist rulers firmly rejected colonial freedom.

This insulting betrayal was deeply felt in colonial countries. In China it sparked a wave of protests. The early Chinese Communist Liu Shaozhou explained how these actions launched a mass movement,³ and within half a decade it evolved into a great revolutionary upsurge.

In the same year as Ho's gesture in Versailles, and while the imperialist leaders were still deliberating, the manifesto of the Communist International's founding congress lent further authority to the Soviet pledge of support for colonial independence.⁴

Hopes were high at that time that socialist revolution would sweep west from Russia and overthrow imperialism in France, Britain, the Netherlands, and other European colonial powers. Such victories could have enabled workers in these countries to assure the victory of freedom movements in the long-oppressed colonies.

World Communism was reaching out to colonized peoples with the goal of consolidating a global movement for colonial freedom.

FIRST-HAND TESTIMONY

During the Comintern Publishing Project's research, our team talked to veteran socialists in many countries, including three surviving participants in Comintern gatherings held in Lenin's lifetime, 70 years earlier. In two cases, the discussions turned on the task of linking up with colonized peoples.

Our first such interview was with Charles Phillips, who – as a U.S. expatriate – had represented the embryonic Communists of Mexico at the Second Comintern congress. Communists then knew little of the great indigenous, peasant, and anti-imperialist uprising in Mexico led by Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa. That topic did not come up in our discussion with Phillips. Still, he told us that Lenin had been anxious to learn more about Mexico and invited him to a personal discussion. Our book on the Second Congress reported on this interview.

'What publications do you have to reach the peasantry,' Lenin asked Phillips. None, Phillips answered, 'because they are mostly indigenous and illiterate.'

'Oh, well, I can understand that,' said Lenin. 'Of course. But you must find

² See Chapter 1, pp. 24–5.

³ See Liu Shaozhou's speech in Chapter 3, p. 61.

⁴ See Chapter 2, p. 32, and Chapter 10, p. 252.

some ways to reach them. If they make up a great proportion of the peasantry, you've got to find a way to reach them. You've got to send out special people who can speak their languages.' Struck by this unexpected advice, Phillips fired off a letter to his comrades in Mexico.⁵

Our second eyewitness report came from one of the project's Iranian collaborators. He had recently held a discussion with a veteran Iranian socialist, Babayev, who, as a young man and a devout Muslim, had attended the 1920 Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East. Babayev served as a guard.

When the call to prayer came, Babayev said, he set aside his gun in order to carry out devotions. After that, he would 'go back to defend with our blood the conference and the resolutions.' Inspired by the 'declaration of holy war against the enemies of revolution,' Babayev explained, 'thousands of people, convinced there was no contradiction between being a Bolshevik [Communist] and a Muslim, joined the Bolshevik ranks.'⁶

Both these recollections, vivid long after the event, reflect socialists' efforts to link up with indigenous expressions of revolt among colonized peoples, even when they found expression in religious guise or in ancient traditions of peasant insurgency. The 1920 Baku Congress as a whole represented an attempt to make this connection.

The Communist movement's record in those years sparkles with fruitful encounters between revolutionaries of Russia and of the colonial world. Thus the 1922 speech of Afro-American delegate Claude McKay was given in part because of assistance provided by the head of the Soviet Red Army, Leon Trotsky.⁷ At the Fourth Congress in 1922, Tan Malaka portrayed a successful initiative by Communists to ally with Muslim anti-imperialists in Indonesia; Tahar Boudengha rallied the International to oppose a pro-colonial current within the Communist forces in North Africa.⁸ Both these delegates called for a more flexible approach to Pan-Islamic currents, and an adjustment on this point was incorporated into the congress resolution.

⁵ Riddell, *Workers of the World*, vol. 1, pp. 12–13.

⁶ Riddell, *To See the Dawn*, pp. 29–30.

⁷ For McKay's speech, see Chapter 10, pp. 250–4. Trotsky's comments to McKay are included in Leon Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, New York: Pathfinder, 1972, vol. 2, and are online at Marxists Internet Archive.

⁸ See Chapter 7, pp. 186–9 and Chapter 8, pp. 203–8.

THE ROLE OF M.N. ROY

During the crisis of the Russian Civil War, in 1920, Lenin took time from his governmental duties to engage in detailed discussion with a previously unknown comrade from India, Manabendra Nath Roy, during which both Lenin and Roy significantly modified their positions. M.N. Roy had been forced into exile in 1915 for protesting British rule. Like Charles Phillips, he came to the 1920 world congress as a delegate of Mexican Communists.

Roy brought with him draft theses on colonial liberation. After reading the theses, Lenin asked for a discussion with Roy. The key point at issue between the two leaders concerned Communists' attitude toward 'bourgeois-democratic' movements in colonies and semi-colonies. Through discussion, the veteran revolutionary and the Indian newcomer came to a common view, which Lenin explained to the congress: the colonial liberation movements that deserved Communist support could be better termed not 'bourgeois-democratic' but 'national-revolutionary.'⁹

The concept of a 'bourgeois-democratic' overturn was rooted in Marxists' understanding of the French Revolution of 1789. Under the leadership of a nascent 'bourgeois' class, the French uprising broke the bonds of feudal absolutism and landlordism, proclaimed the civil rights of all citizens, and strove to create a democratic republic. Marxists saw such changes as opening the road to capitalist development – as did in fact happen in some countries of nineteenth-century Europe. When nationalist uprisings swept Iran, Turkey and China in the first years of the twentieth century, Marxists initially viewed them as an extension of this 'bourgeois-democratic' process.

Lenin and other Communists often termed colonial countries 'backward', a term that can best be understood as a reference to economic and social 'backwardness' imposed by colonialism. Roy presented this view eloquently in point 6 of his supplementary theses.¹⁰ Lenin himself had challenged the misleading nature of the 'backward' label in a 1913 article, which pointed to the leading role of colonial freedom struggles, entitled 'Backward Europe and Advanced Asia'.

Such colonialist 'backwardness' was found in Asia and Africa not only in *colonies* (like India and Indonesia, which were under direct colonial rule), but also in *semi-colonies* (like China or Iran) which although sovereign in name were in fact dominated by colonial powers.

⁹ See Chapter 3, pp. 43–5 (Roy's theses) and pp. 38–43 (Lenin's report). For a comparison of Roy's original text and the version he presented to the congress, showing the changes resulting from his discussions with Lenin, see Riddell, *Workers of the World*, vol. 2, pp. 846–55.

¹⁰ Thanks to Vijay Prashad for suggesting this point.

DEFINING A STRATEGY

When Marxists described such liberation movements as ‘bourgeois-democratic’, they did not mean that a colonial bourgeoisie would necessarily take a leadership role. Instead, they used the term to indicate that anti-colonial movements, at least initially, sought democratic and national rights that had been at the core of the national and anti-feudal revolutions in France and elsewhere in Europe.

Yet the term ‘bourgeois’, applied to the colonies, was ambiguous. It was applied not only to large-scale native capitalists but also to small-scale independent producers (‘petty bourgeois’). In his report, Lenin states that this term embraces the mass of impoverished peasants, cultivating their tiny parcels of land as miniature ‘bourgeois’ private enterprises.

Clearly, in an anti-colonial uprising, the response of rich native capitalists would be quite different from that of penniless peasants. Drawing on India’s experience, Roy perceived two different impulses among those resisting British rule: one among moderate forces, the true ‘bourgeois’, who sought only political independence; and the other consisting of the ‘struggle of dispossessed peasants for their liberation from every kind of exploitation.’¹¹

Both Lenin and Roy pointed out that the native capitalist elite in the colonies were rarely a revolutionary force. They were likely to seek a deal with imperialism (Lenin noted ‘a certain rapprochement’) and to settle for superficial reforms. The peasantry, the driving force of national revolution, sought by contrast to break the chains of landlordism and usury – and that meant a revolutionary struggle challenging many native capitalists.

Lenin and Roy used the term ‘national-revolutionary’ to describe such a mass movement to overthrow colonial rule and oppression of the peasantry. The term held open the possibility that such a process might take a society beyond bourgeois rule, in the direction of socialism.

The uprising in Russia in 1917 served as an example of such a process in a mostly peasant country. The great mass of peasants joined with the working class in establishing a revolutionary democracy – the Soviet republic – against the opposition of the rich bourgeois, that is, the capitalist class.

Summarizing the conclusion he had reached with Roy, Lenin stated:

[We] as Communists . . . will support the bourgeois freedom movements in the colonial countries only if these movements are genuinely revolutionary and if their exponents are not opposed to us training and organizing the peasantry and the masses of the exploited in a revolutionary spirit.¹²

¹¹ See Chapter 3, ‘Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Questions’, point 7, pp. 44–5.

¹² See Chapter 3, report by Lenin, p. 38.

Two years later, the Fourth Congress resolution on the 'Eastern Question' went further. Projecting 'an extended, lengthy struggle against world imperialism', it called for an 'anti-imperialist united front' in the colonies, a 'political alliance of the peasant and semi-proletarian masses with the workers' movement'. Communist workers' parties should seek 'both to fight for the most radical possible resolution of the tasks of a bourgeois-democratic revolution' and also 'to organize the worker and peasant masses in struggle for their particular class interests'.¹³

Foremost among the class interests of the peasants was the urgent need for agrarian reform, and the Comintern sought to give the peasant movement 'the most revolutionary character possible'. Peasants were encouraged to form soviets – that is, rank-and-file councils of the exploited. The working-class movement, even if embryonic, was urged to maintain its independence. The goal of national freedom was linked to the prospect that working people would achieve global unity for liberation, while giving 'particular care and attention to survivals of national feelings' among long-oppressed peoples.¹⁴

Roy's contributions to Communist debate repeatedly stressed that the social contexts in different colonies were widely divergent. Some were colonies; some semi-colonies. Some of these countries displayed considerable capitalist development; in others this was lacking. In some colonial countries there was an industrial proletariat of significant size; in others industrial workers were few in number.

Despite Roy's urgings, the Comintern resolutions refrained from classifying countries in terms of such characterizations, leaving scope for its national affiliates to make judgments based on local conditions and context.

A DELEGATE FROM KHIVA

Sixteen days into the Second Comintern Congress, in August 1920, a delegate arrived from the distant and ancient principality of Khiva in Turkestan, having completed an arduous journey of 4,000 kilometres through territories still shaken by civil conflict. The delegate, Baba Akhunde Samilov, represented soviets (councils) of peasants and workers that, under protection of the Soviet Red Army, had thrust aside Khiva's former rulers and established Soviet power.

Our only record of Samilov, aside from his brief remarks to the congress, is a photograph showing his proud bearing as he stands in indigenous dress at the Congress podium. 'The peoples of the East will not put down their weapons,' he declared, 'until the toilers of the whole world have united into a single family'.¹⁵

The Soviets' victory in Khiva was the outcome of a contest between bourgeois

¹³ See Chapter 9, points 5 and 6, pp. 241–2.

¹⁴ See Chapter 3, p. 99.

¹⁵ See Chapter 3, pp. 99–100.



Delegate from Central Asia, probably Baba Akhunde Samilov

and worker-peasant forces for leadership of national revolts in Russia's Asian territories, which the Comintern believed would now spread across colonial and semi-colonial countries of Asia and Africa.

Working people of Khiva (now renamed the Soviet Republic of Khorezm) were entering not only a liberation from colonial rule but also a direct transition from a traditional pre-capitalist society to a process of socialist construction, helped in this by assistance from Soviet Russia and, it was hoped, workers of Western and Central Europe.

It was Soviet power in Russia that made such a perspective realistic, not only in Khorezm but in China, which now bordered on Soviet Russia and on a Mongolian peoples' republic allied with the Soviets – and even southward, across the great mountains, in British-ruled India.

This possibility had been affirmed by Lenin, a few days before Samilov's arrival, in his report to the Second Congress. Referring to countries victimized by colonialism, he stated:

[W]ith the help of the proletariat of the advanced countries the backward countries can arrive at soviet organization and, through a series of stages, and even avoiding the capitalist system, arrive at communism.¹⁶

Communists should create independent contingents of fighters and party organizations in the colonies, including workers' and peasants' soviets, Lenin explained. These 'soviets' – that is, rank-and-file action committees – could help

¹⁶ See Chapter 3, p. 42.

drive through the fullest possible achievement of democratic revolution and, moreover, also lead in achieving workers' and peasants' rule and taking initial steps toward socialism.¹⁷

UPSURGE IN CHINA

In the first years after the 1917 Russian revolution, Communists were imbued with confidence that socialist revolution would soon spread across the world, sweeping both advanced capitalist countries as well as colonies and semi-colonies into its embrace, uniting both industrial proletarians and peasants in the colonies. The Baku Congress called for 'holy war against British imperialism'; Ho Chi Minh declared in 1924 that 'the native peasants are ripe for insurrection'.

In most colonial countries, imperialism managed to reassert its control during the 1920s. But there was an exception, and it was decisive. The vast country of China remained locked in warlordism and civil conflict, shaken by rebellion and deprived of effective central government. Still nominally independent, China had been shackled to world colonialism by defeat in Britain's notorious Opium Wars of the mid-1800s. Yet, although subject to intrusions by all the imperialist powers, China escaped their effective control. In the south, the region around Guangzhou (Canton) was governed by the Guomindang (GMD), a nationalist movement that was in conflict with imperialism and whose programme was in many respects progressive.

Was the GMD a 'revolutionary-national movement'? There were indications both pro and con; its attitude to the peasantry promised to be a decisive test. The Chinese Communists, still numbering only a few dozen, were quick to form links with the GMD, with Comintern encouragement. GMD delegates attended the Comintern's Far East congress in 1922, where Georgii Safarov explained to them the Communists' approach to their movement:

We tell you openly and frankly: we support your struggle, now and in the future, to the extent that it is a matter of a nationalistic and democratic uprising for national emancipation. But at the same time, we shall independently carry on our Communist work of organizing the proletarian and semi-proletarian masses of China.¹⁸

¹⁷ For other discussions of the interrelationship of democratic and socialist struggle in the colonial world, see the Baku Congress resolution on the agrarian question, point 4, pp. 140–1; Zhang Tailei's theses for the Third Comintern Congress, Chapter 5, pp. 172–4; and comments by both Safarov and Radek to the Fourth Congress, Chapter 8, pp. 219–22 and 226–34.

¹⁸ Chapter 7, p. 184. See also remarks by Liu Renjing in the Fourth Congress, Chapter 8, pp. 211–4.

Communist coexistence with the GMD endured more than two decades, during which they were sometimes allied and more often opposed to each other in war. During these years, Comintern policy diverged from its original path and went through a series of abrupt reversals. Communists in China experienced both success and failure; both defeat and ultimate victory. But that is a story for another book.

TOWARD THE FALL OF COLONIALISM

The grip of colonialism in the Global South was ultimately loosened by the Second World War, which unfolded in considerable measure as a struggle for colonial liberation. This war began in 1937 with the escalation of Japan's incursion into China and ended eight years later with imperial rule decisively weakened from Manchuria to 'British' India and beyond.

In China, Vietnam and northern Korea, post-war revolutionary struggles went beyond capitalism and did indeed take initial steps toward socialism. In the 1960s, revolutionary Cuba set out on a socialist course and applied the Communist International's policies for colonial freedom on a global scale.

The process of liberation spread around the world. When South African apartheid was brought down in the 1990s, with decisive aid from Cuba, direct colonial rule had been abolished almost everywhere.

Despite these and other gains, in recent decades imperialism has consolidated its strength. The oppression of the Global South, compounded by imperialist wars, endures and deepens. Indeed, climate change and environmental collapse threaten the poor countries with utter ruin. In many regions, imperialist oppression, in new guise, had deepened its grip. Meanwhile, capitalist development has created a stronger material and social basis in these countries for a transition to a society free of oppression and exploitation.

Under these changed circumstances, socialists worldwide still draw inspiration from the principles outlined by anti-imperialist fighters a century ago under the banner 'Liberate the Colonies'.

GLOSSARY

- ABDUR RABB BARQ, MOHAMMED (1875–1960s) – born in Peshawar; Pan-Islamist; left India to defend Turkey 1914; went to Moscow 1919; chairman of Indian Revolutionary Association in Kabul 1920; later lived in Turkey.
- ANTEL, SADRETTIN CELAL (Orhan) (1890–1954) – educator; joined Istanbul Communist Group 1919; sentenced to seven years of imprisonment 1925; left CP after his release eighteen months later; continued to write for progressive publications.
- BABEUF, FRANÇOIS-NOËL (1760–1797) – French revolutionary and communist.
- BOMBACCI, NICOLA (1879–1945) – member Italian SP, then CP; expelled for Fascist sympathies 1927; became close advisor of Mussolini; executed by partisans.
- BOUDENGHA, TAHAR – Tunisian postal worker; organized and led union branch from 1920; joined French CP in Tunisia 1921; Fourth World Congress delegate; member of commission on Blacks.
- BUND (General Union of Jewish Workers) – formed 1897; affiliated to Russian Social Democracy; its left wing in Russia and Poland joined Communist movement 1920–21.
- BUNIATZADEH, DADASH (1888–1938) – active in Iran Constitutional Revolution 1908–9; founding member Azerbaijan CP 1920; a leader of Azerbaijani Soviet government in 1920s; executed.
- CLEMENCEAU, GEORGES (1841–1929) – French prime minister 1906–9, 1917–20.
- COLLIARD, LUCIE (1877–1961) – joined French SP 1912 and CP 1920; member of CP directing committee 1921; collaborator of Trotskyist *Contre le courant* 1927–9; rejoined SP 1936.
- CONNOLLY, RODERIC (1901–1980) – fought in Irish Easter Uprising 1916; president Irish CP 1921; chair of Irish Labour Party in 1970s.
- CUNOW, HEINRICH (1862–1936) – Leader of German SPD.
- DAN, FYODOR ILYICH (1871–1947) – leader of Russian Mensheviks; opposed October 1917 revolution; in exile from 1922.
- DZHUGASHVILI – see Stalin, Joseph.
- EARSMAN, WILLIAM (1884–1965) – born in Scotland; lathe operator; moved to Australia 1910; barred from Australia 1923; left CP about 1927 and joined British Labour Party 1934.
- EFENDIEV – either Sultan Mejid Efendiev (b. 1887), a leader of Azerbaijan Soviet government, or Najmuddin Efendiev-Samursky, leader of Dagestan CP. Both executed in late 1930s.
- ENTENTE – Britain, France, and their allies in the First World War.
- ENVER PASHA (1881–1922) – leader of Young Turk revolution 1908; head of Turkish government 1913–18; declared support for Soviet regime August 1920; joined counter-revolution 1921; killed in action.
- FRAINA, LOUIS (Lewis Corey) (1892–1953) – member U.S. Socialist Labor Party 1919–14; co-founder U.S. CP 1919; left Comintern 1922; broke with Marxism 1940.

- FRUMKINA, MARIYA (1880–1938) – member Jewish Bund 1901; joined Russian CP 1919; head of Comintern Jewish section; executed.
- GARVEY, MARCUS (1887–1940) – born in Jamaica; founded Universal Negro Improvement Association 1914; moved to U.S. 1916; jailed and deported 1927.
- GOLOVIN, N.N. (1875–1944) – tsarist general; emigrated after 1917 and worked with enemies of Soviet republic.
- GORTER, HERMAN (1864–1927) – Dutch left socialist; co-founder of Dutch CP 1918; criticized Comintern policies from ultraleft viewpoint; left Comintern 1921.
- GRAZIADEI, ANTONIO (1873–1953) – joined Italian SP 1893; joined CP 1921; expelled 1928 but rejoined in late 1940s.
- GUILBEAUX, HENRI (1884–1938) – anarcho-syndicalist; delegate of French Communist Federation of Soviets to Second Comintern Congress; left Comintern in 1930s.
- HADJI – a Muslim who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca.
- HAYDAR KHAN ‘AMU ‘UGHLI (1880–1921) – born in Umia, Iran; co-founder Iranian Social Democracy 1904; joined Iranian Communists 1920; killed in Gilan civil war.
- HILFERDING, RUDOLF (1877–1941) – Austrian and German socialist; opponent of Comintern; tortured and killed by Hitler’s Gestapo.
- HO CHI MINH (1890–1969) – became activist for Vietnamese independence and socialism while in France; founding member French CP 1920; based in Moscow from 1923; carried out many missions for Comintern; founded Vietnamese CP 1930; proclaimed Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Hanoi 1945; its president 1945–69; headed independence struggle until death.
- HOHENZOLLERN – ruling dynasty of Germany until November 1918.
- HUISWOUD, OTTO (Billings) (1893–1961) – born in Suriname; Black liberation fighter; co-founder of U.S. CP; leader of American Negro Labor Congress; settled in Amsterdam 1949; member U.S. CP until death.
- HUSNI EL-ARABI, MAHMUD – lawyer; co-founder Cairo branch of Egyptian SP 1920, which became CP 1922; member CC of CP from 1922; expelled from CP 1927; active in Union of the Peoples of the Nile Valley in 1940s.
- ISMAEL HAKKI OF KAYSERI (1901–1945?) – co-founder Turkish CP 1920; remained in Soviet Russia; worked with Communist University for Toilers of the East.
- IWW – Industrial Workers of the World, founded in U.S. as a revolutionary union movement 1905.
- JULIEN, CHARLES-ANDRÉ (1891–1991) – joined French SP 1911 in Algeria; became member of French CP 1920; left CP 1926 and later rejoined SP; supporter of Algerian independence struggle.
- KATAYAMA, SEN (1859–1933) – co-founder of Japanese SDP 1901; moved to U.S. 1914; active in left wing of U.S. SP during war; founded Japanese Communist group in New York 1919; represented Comintern in Mexico 1921; moved to Moscow 1922; member Fourth World Congress Presidium; member ECCI from 1922; active in Comintern until death.
- KATTERFELD, LUDWIG (1881–1974) – born in Alsace; member U.S. SP 1905 and CP 1919; expelled from CP 1929; published magazine on evolution in 1930s.
- KEMAL PASHA, MUSTAFA (Atatürk) (1881–1938) – led Turkish independence struggle

- 1919–23; head of Turkish republic 1920 until death.
- KITCHLEW, SAIFUDDIN (1888–1963) – member of Indian National Congress and a leader of movement for independence.
- KOENEN, WILHELM (1886–1963) – member German SPD 1904, Independent SPD 1917, and CP 1921; in exile 1933–45; official in East German CP (SD) after 1945.
- KOHN, MICHAEL (b. 1884) – born in Galicia; member Poale Zion; joined Austrian CP 1921.
- KOLAROV, VASIL (1877–1950) – joined Bulgarian SDP 1897; secretary of Bulgarian CP 1919–23; lived in USSR 1923–45; returned to Bulgaria 1944; prime minister 1949–50.
- LAURIDAN, HENRI (1885–1963) – briefly member of French revolutionary movement 1919–23.
- LEAGUE OF NATIONS – International association formed in 1920 by the victorious powers in First World War; dissolved 1946.
- LENIN, VLADIMIR ILYICH (1870–1924) – central leader of Bolsheviks from 1903; called for new International 1914; leader of 1917 October Revolution; chair of Soviet government 1917–24; founder and leader of Comintern.
- LEVI, PAUL (1883–1930) – leader of SPD left and of German Communist Party; left Comintern 1921 and returned to SPD.
- LIEBER, M.I. (1880–1937) – leader of Jewish Bund and Russian Mensheviks; opponent of October revolution; remained in Soviet republic; arrested 1937 and shot.
- LIEBKNECHT, KARL (1871–1919) – leader of revolutionary anti-war socialists; co-founder of German CP; executed by SPD-instigated militia.
- LIU RENJING (1899–1987) – co-founder of Chinese CP 1921; general secretary of Socialist Youth League; joined Left Opposition led by Trotsky in late 1920s; arrested 1934; university teacher in Chinese People's Republic after 1949; jailed during 'Cultural Revolution'; subsequently a published writer.
- LIU SHAOZHOU (b. 1892) – born in China; lived in Russia from 1897; Bolshevik 1917; chair of Chinese workers' union in Russia; returned to China after 1949 and served in diplomatic corps.
- LLOYD GEORGE, DAVID (1863–1945) – British prime minister 1916–22.
- LOZOVSKY, S.A. (1878–1952) – joined Russian Social Democracy 1901 and Bolsheviks 1917; head of Comintern's trade-union wing; deputy minister foreign affairs 1939–45; arrested 1949 and executed.
- LUXEBURG, ROSA (1871–1919) – a founding leader of Polish Socialist movement; later leader of left wing of German SPD; cofounder of German CP; murdered by SPD-instigated militia.
- MACALPINE, EAMONN – born in Ireland; helped found Communist movement in U.S.; returned to Ireland 1919.
- MANUILSKY, DMITRY Z. (1883–1959) – joined Russian Social Democrats 1903; joined Bolsheviks 1917; member Presidium of Comintern Executive Committee 1924–43; its secretary 1928–43.
- MARING – see Sneevliet, Henk.
- MATUSHEV, AKHMED – chair of Bukhara delegation to Baku; member of Congress Presidium.

- MCKAY, CLAUDE (1889–1948) – Jamaican poet and writer; an inspirer of Harlem Renaissance generation of Black writers; co-founder of African Blood Brotherhood, which merged into CP; left CP in 1930s, remained socialist and advocate of Black liberation.
- MCLAINE, WILLIAM (1891–1960) – a leader of British metalworkers' union; SP member during First World War; CP member 1920–29; later anti-communist.
- MEREZHIN, A.N. (b. 1890) – Menshevik, then member of Jewish Bund; joined Russian CP 1919; member of CP Central Bureau of Jewish Sections.
- MURPHY, JOHN (1888–1966) – a leader of British Shop Stewards movement; co-founder British CP 1920; jailed for subversion 1925; left Comintern 1932 and joined Labour Party.
- NARIMANOV, NARIMAN (1871–1925) – co-founder of Hümmeet (Azerbaijani Social Democrats) 1905; head of Azerbaijani Soviet government from 1920.
- NIKBIN, KARIM (c. 1892–1940) – born in northern Iran; journalist; joined Bolsheviks 1917; fought in revolution in Gilan 1920; secretary of Iranian CP 1921–27; ousted from leadership posts for 'factionalism' 1931; arrested 1938 and executed.
- ORHAN – See Antel, Sadrettin Celal.
- PAK CHIN-SUN – born in Korea; settled in Russia before 1914; Communist 1917; worked among immigrant Korean Communists.
- PESTAÑA, ANGEL (1888–1937) – anarchist; a leader of Spanish syndicalist unions (CNT); attended Second Comintern Congress but subsequently opposed affiliation to Comintern.
- POALE ZION – coalition of Jewish groups in Eastern Europe from 1897 that sought to combine ideas of socialism and Zionism; left wing in Russia supported Comintern.
- QUELCH, THOMAS (1886–1954) – British left socialist; elected to Comintern Executive Committee at its Second Congress; co-founder and a long-time leader of British CP.
- RADEK, KARL (1885–1939) – born in Austrian Poland; collaborator of Lenin during World War; joined Bolsheviks 1917; a central leader of Comintern; with Trotsky, a leader of Left Opposition in Russian CP and Comintern 1923–29; expelled and exiled 1927; arrested 1939; killed by police agent in prison.
- RANDOLPH, A. PHILIP (1889–1979) – co-founder of Black socialist magazine *The Messenger* 1917; defender of Black human rights; long-time head of Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.
- RAVESTEYN, WILLEM VAN (1876–1970) – member Dutch Social Democracy from 1900; internationalist during World War; founding member CP; expelled 1926 and withdrew from political activity.
- REED, JOHN (1887–1920) – U.S. reporter; won to Communism while in Russia 1917; died of typhus in Soviet Russia.
- ROY, MANABENDRA NATH (1887–1954) – active in Indian independence movement from 1910; went abroad 1915; won to Marxism in U.S. 1917; worked in Comintern Far Eastern Bureau and founded CP of India in exile in Tashkent 1920; member Comintern Executive Committee 1922–7; expelled for 'opportunism' 1929; worked with anti-Stalinist opposition led by Brandler; returned to India 1930; led current critical of Comintern sectarianism on national question; jailed 1931–6; joined Congress Party

- 1936; founded Radical Democratic Party 1940.
- RYSKULOV, TURAR** (1894–1938) – joined in Kazakh uprising against tsar 1916; led current in Turkestan CP that sought to expand autonomy for Soviet Asian peoples; leader of Turkestan government 1920–23; protested mistreatment of Kazakhs in 1930s; executed.
- SAFAROV, GEORGII I.** (1891–1942) – Bolshevik from 1908; leader of Soviet and Comintern work among peoples of the East; supporter of Leningrad opposition led by Zinoviev 1925 and United Opposition led by Zinoviev and Trotsky 1926; expelled from CP 1927; executed.
- SERRATI, GIACINTO** (1874–1926) – central leader of Italian SP; led SP into Comintern 1919; refused to join Italian CP 1921 but led SP left wing into fusion with it 1924.
- SHABANOVA-KARAYEVA, KHAVER** (1901–1958) – joined CP 1919; served in Red Army; organized revolutionary women in Azerbaijan; jailed 1937; later freed and readmitted to CP.
- SHAKIR, BAHAEDDIN** (1874–1922) – leader of Young Turks and of Committee of Union and Progress; organizer of Armenian deportations 1915; detained by British after war; assassinated by Armenian nationalists.
- SIKI** (Louis Mbarick Fall) (1897–1925) – born in Senegal; professional boxer, fighting as ‘Battling Siki’; first world boxing champion from Africa.
- SKULSKI, LEOPOLD** (1878–1940) – minister in Polish government 1919–21.
- SNEEVLIET, HENK** (Maring) (1883–1942) – Dutch socialist; emigrated to Dutch East Indies 1913; railway union leader; deported 1918; joined Dutch CP 1919; represented Comintern in China 1921–23; left Comintern with Left Opposition 1927; resisted Nazi occupation and was executed.
- SOCIAL PATRIOTS** – Forces in the Socialist movement that supported the war effort of their national capitalist rulers in the First World War.
- SP** – Socialist Party.
- SPD** – Social Democratic Party of Germany.
- STALIN, JOSEPH** (1878–1953) – born in Georgia; joined Russian Social Democrats 1898; Bolshevik 1903; people’s commissar or nationalities after October 1917 revolution; general secretary of Russian CP from 1922.
- SULTANZADE, AVETIS** (Avetis Mikailian) (1889–1938) – born in Maraghah, Iran; moved to tsarist Russia 1907 and joined Russian Social Democrats; joined Bolsheviks by 1912; organized founding of Iranian CP 1920; CC member 1920–3, 1927–32; worked for Soviet government 1923–7 and after 1932; expelled from Iranian CP 1932, accused of ‘leftist deviation’; arrested and shot.
- SUN YAT-SEN** (1866–1925) – Chinese revolutionary democrat; founder of Guomindang 1912; accepted aid of Soviet Russia from 1923.
- TALI, IBRAHIM** (1875–1952) – Turkish army officer; helped launch national resistance movement 1919; political counsel to this movement’s delegation to Moscow 1920; later parliamentary deputy.
- TAN MALAKA, IBRAHIM DATOEK** (1897–1949) – born in Sumatra; chair of Dutch East Indies CP 1921; exiled 1922; left Comintern early 1930s; a leader of independence struggle from 1942; killed during its final phase.
- TRIBUNISTS** – adherents of *De Tribune*, left socialist publication founded 1907 and later

- published by Dutch CP.
- TROTSKY, LEON (1879–1940) – joined Bolsheviks 1917; organized and led Red Army 1918–25; led Left Opposition within Soviet CP from 1923; exiled 1928; assassinated by agent of Soviet security police.
- TUCHUN – military governor (‘warlord’) in China.
- VAILLANT-COUTURIER, PAUL (1892–1937) – joined French revolutionary movement as soldier 1916; co-founder of French CP 1920; member of its Central Committee 1920–37.
- WALCHER, JAKOB (1887–1970) – joined SPD 1906 and CP 1918; member of its central committee 1919–24; a frequent critic of official Communism, lived in East Germany after 1945.
- WASHINGTON, BOOKER T. (1856–1915) – born a slave in U.S.; educator; advocated accommodation rather than struggle for Black rights.
- WEBB, HARRY (b. 1889) – metalworker; co-founder of British CP; jailed for two months 1921; member of Central Committee 1929–32.
- WIJNKOOP, DAVID (1876–1941) – Dutch socialist; leader of Dutch CP from 1918; expelled 1926; reinstated 1930.
- WILSON, WOODROW (1856–1924) – U.S. president 1913–21.
- YOUNG TURKS – a movement based on younger Turkish army officers, whose successful revolt in 1908 replaced the Sultan’s despotism with a constitutional regime.
- ZETKIN, CLARA (1857–1933) – co-founder of Second International 1889; a leader of its Marxist wing; head of Socialist Women’s Movement in Second International; joined Comintern 1919; head of its Communist Women’s Movement; opposed Stalin’s policies from 1928; remained prominent figure in German CP and Comintern until her death in Moscow.
- ZHANG TAILEI (1898–1927) – won to communism as Chinese student activist 1920; went to Irkutsk 1921 to establish Chinese CP contact with Far Eastern Secretariat; elected secretary-general of Chinese Communist youth February 1925; elected to party CC 1927; helped lead December 1927 Canton insurrection; executed after it was crushed.
- ZINOVIEV, GRIGORII (1883–1936) – joined RSDLP 1901; Bolshevik; chair of Petrograd soviet 1917–26; chairman of Comintern 1919–26; broke with Stalin 1925; with Trotsky, led United Opposition to bureaucratism 1926–7; expelled 1927; recanted and was readmitted 1928; rearrested and shot.
- ZUBATOV, S.V. (1864–1917) – tsarist police official; organized police-sponsored trade unions to maintain control over workers.

ABOUT THIS TEXT

This book has been written on the initiative and under the direction of Vijay Prasad, Chief Editor, LeftWord Books and Executive Director, Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research. The text has been compiled by an editorial team of Nazeef Mollah of LeftWord Books and John Riddell, general editor of the Comintern Publishing Project (1983–2017). Riddell also provided the translations.

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For more information on the Comintern Publishing Project, go to <<http://johnriddell.wordpress.com>>.

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