

Eurocentrism and the Communist Movement

Internal study papers (uncirculated)

- Vietnam Communism and the Third International
- The Lenin-Roy Debate
- The International Communist Movement and Palestine

The following paper is only an attempt to open up some of the issues for debate. I have relied on secondary sources, including an important unpublished thesis by Cedric Sampson. Hopefully this paper will indicate some directions which we can pursue in our future work.

In this paper I have confined myself to the influence of Comintern on the formative period of Vietnamese Communism. Case studies like this are necessary in order to get a concrete understanding of the role of Comintern in real situations.

Background and brief history.

The Comintern and Vietnam.

Abbreviations:

ACSD Annam Cong San Dang (Communist Party of Annam)

DDCSD Dong Duong Cong San Dang (Indochinese Communist Party)

VNCSA Viet Nam Cong San Dang (Communist Party of Viet Nam)

VNQDD Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (Vietnamese Nationalist Party)

Thanh Nien Hoi (Association of Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth)

VIETNAM: Background History

From its early history Vietnam has been faced with threats from abroad. It is however with the direct attack of French imperialism in mid 19th century that it lost its independence.

But what was supposed to be an easy victory for the French met with more resistance than anticipated and the peace treaty signed in June 1862 was seen by the court as a temporary measure. Although they had lost some provinces to the French the area of Tonkin in the North bordering with China and the long coastal area of Annam remained theirs.

After successfully countering French attacks in 1873, the Vietnamese negotiated a treaty in 1874 where France 'recognised the complete sovereignty and independence of the Vietnamese kingdom'. It also promised aid in the event of an external threat. This apparently did not include France who for all intents and purposes had every intention of using their position inside Vietnam to advance further.

In return as well as recognising the occupation of Cochinchina, Vietnam agreed to open two French ports for trade in Tonkin. By 1885 French occupation had succeeded in both Annam and Tonkin. Pockets of resistance were systematically suppressed and by 1893 French occupation had succeeded in the delta.

Some have argued that resistance to occupation was not the only cause of the rise of nationalism and this may very well be so. However it certainly did help and it is interesting to note that this was as much taking place in the ranks of officials who refused to collaborate with the French as among ordinary people.

There was a new generation of anti-colonial activists coming on the scene who wanted to break away from old tradition which saw the older rulers as the main force in taking side against French. The idea was emerging that a successful liberation needed to involve the people.

Initially some had thought that it would be possible to present the French with requests for reforms.

In June 1919 Quoc presented the Versailles Peace Conference with a list of 'The Demands of the Vietnamese People' where he requested amnesty for political prisoners, a judicial code for Vietnamese that would be the same as the French, freedom of meetings etc..

If he still had some illusions that such reforms could be granted. The fact that they were turned down had the fortunate consequence that he abandoned such tactics and turned to communism. He went to the Tours Congress the following year and after the debate of which International to follow he decided to turn to the Third International.

By 1925 it was clear for activist such as Nguyen An Ninh that if reforms were not forthcoming violence was the only way out.

Comintern and Vietnamese Communist Party

The history of the Indochinese Communist Party is inextricably linked with the name of Nguyen Ai Quoc, later known as Ho. There are of course other important figures who deserve a study in their own right. This is an area which could be usefully investigated at a later date to give us a more complete picture.

It is undoubtedly the reading of Lenin's 'Thesis on the National and Colonial Question' that swayed Quoc's towards the Third International as his initial allegiance was with anti-colonialism rather than communism. This came at a later date as he himself admits: 'Initially it was patriotism not communism which had prompted me to believe in Lenin and the Third International.' But he adds 'Gradually advancing step by step as the struggle developed, coupling a theoretical study of M L with practical work, I had come to realize that only Socialism and Communism are capable of bringing freedom to the oppressed and to working people all over the world.'

In 1921 Quoc and other expatriates from the French colonies founded the Union Intercoloniale.

Shortly before ,the Second Congress of the Internationale had taken place and the Lenin Roy debate on the East was still a live issue. Quoc was the first Vietnamese to be recruited by the Comintern and this was clearly a first step to further communist influence in the national movement.

In 1923 Quoc went to Russia and in 1924 was part of the Soviet mission to China led by Borodin. Though there is some argument to use the Comintern resources and advice to further the influence of parties there are also questions about the underlying attitude this implies.

May be at this stage I should indicate that because Quoc was the direct link between the Comintern and the building of the party whether inside China at the beginning or inside Vietnam later, documentation certainly seem to be more abundant about him than about other figures. At the same time when relations between China and Russia were strained Quoc's role was less prominent. Certainly after the Comintern was proved to have misjudged the Chinese situation and backed Chiang Kai-shek right until he fomented a coup in 1927, Quoc was moved back-stage for a while. As we know the failure of the Comintern had the positive result of showing Mao's real understanding of the situation.

Going back a little in time I would like to mention some of the activities that took place among the Vietnamese in South China. What had been known as Tam Tam Xa (the Perseverance Society) had its name changed to Thanh Nien (Revolutionary Youth) in 1925. It was the only organisation that had revolutionary aspirations. It organised at village level and dedicated itself to train cadres. It benefited from help from the CCP for military training and sent people back to organise within Vietnam and Thailand.

Tahn Nien had a newspaper which carried on publication after Quoc left in 1927. Indeed its members felt they had more claim to the founding of Thanh nien as they had been part of the original Tam Tam Xa. There was a struggle for power within the organisation and Ho Tung Mau & Hong Son got rid of some members who had been closely associated with the Comintern. The new leaders cultivated good relations with the CCP but seem to have hardly been in contact with the Comintern.

The efforts of organising within Vietnam paid off and by May 1929 there were provincial committees in all three regions Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina. Some differences between the making of the groups in China and Vietnam were becoming apparent but more than that their aspirations and practices began to follow different lines. The situation inside Vietnam was constant repression from the French authorities, whereas that in China was relatively more comfortable. It had however

to contend with more intervention from the official Soviet line.

Because of the likelihood of being victimised by the colonial powers inside Vietnam only the most dedicated people were likely to join the movement. Moreover there was a certain need to prove the more revolutionary nature of the party as the Nationalist Party was also trying to carve a place for itself. In order to prove its revolutionary credentials the Tonkin Thanh Nien provoked a split in May 1929.

This occurred during the First national congress but had been a question of dissention in the months leading up to it. In february the Tonkin delegates had tried to get an agreement to transform Thanh Nien into a Communist party. This was rejected by the Cnaton section on the grounds that members were not of the right calibre needed for a true communist organisation. It would only leave a few people who would fall within this category and work had to be done to recruit new members. After this February meeting the Tonkin delegates returned and started organising genuine communist cells. By May 1929 4 delegates to the National Congress in Hong Kong had been chosen from the cell in Hanoi. It was hoped that their idea of having a sovereign body to decide on the affairs of the revolution would be approved by other delegates at the Congress but the proposal was turned down and the 4 left the Congress in disgust. On return to the Tonkin they tried to get recognition from the Comintern on the ground they they had split as a gesture against the hierarchy that prevailed in the China branch and not for reasons directed against the Comintern itself.

This refusal of Comintern to recognise the split-away group of Thanh Nien only galvanised its members in working harder towards a more indigenous party that would not take orders from abroad. They organised into a party, dissolved the Thanh Nien and formed the Dong Duong Cong San Dang (Indochinese Com. party). It had an propaganda publication Bua Liem and a publication for workers. Its success in a short time meant that they started organising in the other provinces as well though they had less impact in Cochinchina. This was a crucial area to try and win over as it would give the newly formed party as the only legitimate one in Indochina.

At the same time Thanh Nien was still uncertain that it was faced by a real threat from the DDCSD. True they took some resolutions to try and get a party less uniquely based on membership from intellectuals but at the same time they assessed that 'the conditions for the creation of a truly bolshevik party are still unfavourable.'

They obviously had some faith in what they stood for as they tried to get recognition from Comintern as the 'most revolutionary force in Vietnam.'

Still they were losing members all the time and the Comintern must have preferred to edge its bet at that time and wait a while.

In Annam another party came to light: Annam Cong San Dan who some argue had been formed after instruction from leaders in China but there is no proof of this. Whatever, Thanh Nien was in trouble and decided to make moves to unite with the 2 parties. DDCSD did not want to rush things and certainly would only consider a principled plan of unification. Only those who could prove they were true partisans would qualify to join and it affirmed that this position would hold for the leaders as well in fact they specifically included Nguyen Ai Quoc as a person who would be treated as any other.

DDCSD felt that there was also a problem with the composition of the Annam party who it felt had recruited a heterogeneous membership. It needed to study it more closely before deciding on unity. There was a feeling that if directives were to come from the Comintern they would need to confront it with those problems.

However the Comintern was busy, trying to settle the question of Thanh Nien at that time. A delegation was supposed to visit various groups in Asia and on the strength of their findings decide whether they would admit them as official representatives. There was a sudden rise in self-criticism took place in Thanh Nien. Yes they admitted they were not so strongly based among the workers. True there were some undesirable elements in the association and an association it was not really a party. The moment of truth came on December 16 1929 when the meeting with the Comintern took place. It was relatively short, 4 hours which in terms of Comintern time was little.

If the DDCSD had better claims to be a true revolutionary party it nevertheless did not qualify for recognition either. The mission in East Asia obviously saw the Chinese revolution as its primary aim. It was time for the Comintern to reaffirm its authority and it decided to put the Vietnamese affairs in the hands of the CCP. The Oriental Section organised the Federation of Oppressed Peoples of the Far East to oversee the work of parties in various countries in the region.

Quoc returned from Thailand where he had taken on organisational work in the countryside but from where he had kept in touch with the Comintern. He organised a meeting in Honk Kong in early 1930 where 2 delegates of each DDCSD and ACSD were present. Unification was agreed upon and the party was named Viet Nam Cong San Dang. (VNCSD).

Though on the surface it looked like control was being exercised over the new party the events of the following years proved otherwise.

The nationalist party was planning action in early 1930 and the newly formed VNCSB tried to dissuade it to carry it through. The revolt did not succeed but no excuse was needed for the French to exercise savage repression. They believed that the insurrection was the work of the communists and acted accordingly. As if that was not enough for the party to cope with it also came under pressure from its members who had seen the initiatives of the nationalist party as a model to imitate and various rebellions took place.

At that time the central committee was trying to demonstrate that premature action would be destructive but it had lost some degree of control over its members. The base of the Party was being consolidated among the proletariat and as the situation was moving towards increase number of strikes and work stoppages members managed to play quite a significant role but often under the orders of the local leaders with whom the centre was getting increasingly impatient.

The years 1930 & 1931 saw an unprecedented number of revolts and demonstrations and each were put down with escalating force. This even included aircraft attack on demonstrators in Vinh. Both sides were counting casualties and the colonial government began to employ the Foreign Legion along other troupes to put down revolts. Opposition to the colonial regime grew accordingly and establishment of the first Soviet took place in early September in Nghe-Tinh, support in the countryside was gaining ground.

In April 1931 informers turned a number of members over to the French authorities. French and British police co-operated and arrested more people in June. The French surete maintained that the Annam revolt was the work of the Communist International. It is unlikely that outside influence played such an important role among a population faced by so many real problems of famine, heavy taxes etc..

On the surface repression had worked and a relative calm seem to have appeared in the villages. Most of the important figures of the revolution were imprisoned and the French were satisfied with their way of handling the situation. What they had not planned was that the prisons became breeding ground for communist ideas and as many spent a number of years inside they came out with a solid knowledge. No time was wasted to put it into practice on release.

THE LENIN-ROY DEBATE

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

"As a result of the extensive colonial policy the European proletariat partly finds himself in a position when it is not his labour, but the labour of the practically enslaved nations in the colonies that maintains the whole of society. The British bourgeoisie, for example, derives more profit from the many millions of the population of India and other colonies than from the British workers." (Lenin, Stuttgart Conference, 1919)

"One of the main sources from which European capitalism draws its chief strength is to be found in the colonial possessions and dependencies (without which) the capitalist powers of Europe cannot maintain their existence for even a short time." (M.N.Roy, Thesis 2, Supplementary Theses to the National and Colonial Question, 1919)

"The British, French or German proletariat...will not be victorious without the aid of all the oppressed and colonial nations." (Lenin, Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of Peoples of the East, 1919) (our emphasis)

"England apart from her empire in India ceases for ever to exist as a great power." (Winston Churchill).

INTRODUCTION

(1) Marx and Engels on the Colonial Question: The Three Insights

The essence of Marx and Engels' theory of revolution is the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Since the most advanced section of the international proletariat was then to be found in Europe, and later North America, it followed that their initial focus was Europe, the 'centre,' and the victory of the proletarian revolution there, to the virtual exclusion of everything else - especially the peoples of the colonial 'periphery' whose role as conscious, independent makers of history was largely discounted (2). However, Marx and Engels had three theoretical insights on which Lenin had based his theory of colonial revolution. In turn Lenin's theory was further refined in the course of applying it to the practice of revolutions in the periphery, notably by Mao Zedong.

The first of these insights was the realisation that the proletariat cannot win victory alone, that it therefore needed allies, and that the chief of these allies was the peasantry. These ideas, containing in embryo the concept of the worker-peasant alliance, were expressed by Marx, as early as 1852, in the first edition of the 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.

"In losing hope in the Napoleonic restoration, the French peasant loses faith in his small holding, overthrows the whole State apparatus built on that small holding, and thus the proletarian revolution obtains the chorus without which, in all peasant countries, its solo becomes a swan song." (3)

The second insight is contained in the later writings of Marx and Engels on Russia (4). In these writings, which developed on the concept of the worker-peasant alliance, there was advanced the idea that in countries with large peasant populations, the possibility existed of bypassing the capitalist stage of development. This will be taken up later.

Marx's third insight: (a) The question of 'Who Liberates Whom?'

This question lies at the heart of Marx's third insight, contained in his letter of December 10, 1869, to Engels. Most of the debates in the international Communist movement have since been conducted without direct reference to this crucial insight - and, as will soon be apparent, for good reason. Those who raised the issue either had their knuckles rapped (as Roy's was) or were physically exterminated (as Galiev was), depending on how far they pursued the logic of the third insight. Therefore, attitude to Marx's third insight remains the touchstone for detecting Eurocentrism in all its manifold manifestations.

The third insight centred on the structural relationship between the imperialist centre and the colonial periphery, involving the question of where to put the emphasis. It starkly highlights the question of the frontiers of an imperialist State (uncomfortable for Eurocentrists) and embodies the rationale for the right of nations to self-determination. It unambiguously asserts the primacy of the periphery as a determinant of events in the centre - and not the other way round. The two lines on this question of 'who liberates whom?' may be posed thus: Whether revolution in the centre would lead to the liberation of the periphery, or whether the precondition for revolution in the centre is the revolutionary overthrow of the hegemony of the centre by the peoples of the periphery which, at one and the same time, would also destroy the basis of the hold the bourgeoisie exercises over the proletariat and thus lay the condition for the proletariat in the centre to overthrow their own bourgeoisies? Marx's views on this are well known, even if ignored.

"And this is my most complete conviction, and for reasons which in part I cannot tell the English workers themselves. For a long time I believed that it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working class ascendancy...Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will never accomplish anything before it has got rid of Ireland. The lever must be applied in Ireland. That is why the Irish question is so important for the social movement in general." (emphasis by Marx). (5)

(b) The third insight and the Lenin-Roy debate

Marx's insight, as it applies under imperialism, is that the proletariat in the centre "will never accomplish anything" while its bourgeoisie continues to hold down numerous 'Irelands' in the periphery. This was the precise point Roy had made in his original Draft Supplementary Theses.

"The European working class will not succeed in overthrowing the capitalist order until this source (i.e., superprofit from the colonies) has been definitively cut off." (6) (our emphasis)

This was found unacceptable to the Commission on National and Colonial Questions. They revised and watered it down to read

"and so long as the latter (i.e., modern capitalism) is not deprived of this source of extra profit it will not be easy for the European working class to overthrow the capitalist order." (7) (our emphasis)

The Commission's formulation also revises and waters down Marx's conclusions, quoted above. At the Second Congress of the Comintern Lenin dealt with Roy's point in these terms

"Comrade Roy goes too far when he asserts that the fate of the West depends exclusively on the degree of development and the strength of the revolutionary movement in the Eastern countries. In spite of the fact that the proletariat in India numbers 5 million and there are 37 million landless peasants, the Indian Communists have not yet succeeded in creating a Communist Party in their country. This fact alone shows that Comrade Roy's views are to a large extent unfounded" (8)

It shows nothing of the sort, even assuming that the first sentence gives an accurate statement of Roy's views. The validity of Roy's point does not depend on any of the reasons cited by Lenin. It can only be refuted by showing that the European proletariat, despite 'gaily sharing' in the feast from the colonies, yet retains sufficient revolutionary will to overthrow its bourgeoisie. Marx had categorically discounted this possibility - and this at a time when the dependence of the centre on the periphery was not yet complete!

It must be borne in mind that these debates took place when the focus was Europe and in the midst of revolutionary upsurges convulsing Europe, caused primarily by the economic and social dislocation wrought by the war. This tended to give that upsurge every appearance of having an independent character, not directly connected with the question of colonial exploitation. It was no such thing. Rather, these upsurges tend to support Roy's point. The effect of the post war economic dislocation was to disrupt the normal functioning of the domestic conduits that transmit the soporific effects of colonial spoils to the proletariat. As a result of this disruption, the European proletariat had once more become restive.

(C) The third insight: subsequent developments

Marx's third insight developed along two paths. The first path was within the international Communist movement. In the period of the Second International it was virtually suppressed (see below). During the period of the Comintern, and under the influence of what has been called 'tactical Eurocentrism' (on which see ECM pp 52-55), the third insight was, as shown above, watered down. In the 1930s it was further watered down. It was basically this doubly watered down version that prevailed in the international Communist movement till the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, and beyond that within the CPSU and those Communist Parties that followed the Soviet line. To a lesser extent it was to be found in the Marxist-Leninist movement.

The second path was, until very recently, entirely due to the efforts of thinkers from the periphery who developed Marx's third insight. The most important of these early pioneers were Roy and his contemporary Sultan Galiev of the Tatar Communist Party. Whereas Roy had confined himself to repeating Marx and making explicit what Marx felt he could not "tell the English workers themselves," Galiev went further and advanced the following thesis

"The formula which offers the replacement of the world-wide dictatorship of one class of European society (the bourgeoisie) by its antipode (the proletariat)...will not bring about a major change in the social life of the oppressed segment of humanity...In contradiction to this we advance another thesis: the idea that the material premises for a social transformation of humanity can be created only through the establishment of a dictatorship of the colonies and semi-colonies over the metropolises." (quoted in Ronaldo Munck, The Difficult Dialogue, London, (Zed Books), 1982 at p 82).

For the first time a unified view of world revolution, from the perspective of the periphery, was offered. It contains three elements: the periphery can liberate itself only by overthrowing the yoke of the centre (this is implied); the periphery must then proceed to exercise its dictatorship over the centre; this would in turn create the conditions for the social transformation of humanity. It is the second point, together with his troublesome concept of 'proletarian nations' and his call for a Comintern of the periphery, that had put Galiev beyond the pale.

Given his position, Galiev must have been thoroughly familiar with the debates in the Second International, in particular the plans to implement a 'Socialist' colonial policy. He therefore would have had no illusions about the proletariat of the centre trying to force its blessings on the periphery. Hence, if the proletariat cannot emancipate itself without bringing the whole superincumbent structure based on its oppression crashing down, for Galiev it equally followed that the periphery could not emancipate itself without likewise bringing down the whole superincumbent structure based on its own oppression - in this case, principally the centre, together with its proletariat! The dictatorship of the periphery over the centre would then become necessary for precisely the same reasons as the dictatorship of the proletariat is necessary, namely, to keep down the oppressors. More, such a dictatorship would then enable the proletarian nations to carry out their own historic mission (and the concept of the proletariat ipso facto implies such a mission) to create "the material premises for a social transformation of humanity."

The logic is attractive. It is also difficult to refute. To attempt to do so would be to open the Pandora's box of Marx's third insight and subject it to public scrutiny and debate, a debate in which Galiev could deploy the big guns of Marx and Lenin, whose own analysis of imperialism would constitute the linchpin in Galiev's defence. He could then proceed to drive the Eurocentrists, both tactical and the more usual variety, on to the ropes. It will then be for these Eurocentrists to show why Marx's insight, the fruit of his "deeper study" and representing his "most complete conviction," was wrong! If they failed to hold the pass at this point, they would have to concede Galiev's first point, namely, the primacy of revolution in the periphery. The way would then be clear to debate Galiev's second point, the need for the dictatorship of the periphery over the centre. In theory, the need for such a dictatorship over the imperialist bourgeoisie seems self evident (only the question of method is problematical). As for a similar need for protection from the metropolitan proletariat, Galiev could present the entire record of the Second International on the colonial question and ask for guarantees (which would in any case be impossible to give) that the metropolitan proletariat would not in the future intervene to put down revolutions in the periphery. At a minimum, this should serve to establish the rationale for a separate Comintern of the Periphery.

Logic or no the whole thing was preposterous. More, it was heretical. Open debate could not be permitted. That might lead to the very thing Galiev had proposed: a Comintern of the periphery. A far simpler method lay to hand. Galiev was expelled, arrested, forced to recant, fell an early victim of Stalin's purges and his very name was anathematised. To this day the relevant Soviet literature studiously avoids any mention of him. Thus, Galievism slumbered in limbo until the early 1960s when it was dramatically resuscitated in the wake of the Sino-Soviet open polemics.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The next section offers a view based on the Chinese perception of the international realities of the time. For our view see ECM at pp 55-57 and 69-74, especially p74, paragraphs 2 and 3).

(d) The third insight and the question of revolution in the imperialist heartland

How relevant is Marx's insight in appraising the prospect of revolution in these parts today? On any but the most voluntarist criteria, the answer is unambiguous. In Marx's time there was great social deprivation of a type that no longer exist

Now the bourgeoisie is far better coordinated internationally, while domestically it has greatly refined its control techniques, particularly at the cultural level, where it is mass consumer culture operating through the control of people's life styles and thinking that is the chief technique of pacification. Under these conditions the question of revolution in these parts is, more than ever, connected with revolution in the periphery. To explain away the proletariat's inability to make a revolution in these parts the Left have come up with the theory of 'treachery,' i.e., that it is all the fault of the labour aristocracy for having 'betrayed', 'sold out' their birthright, etc. and so forth.

The reassertion of the periphery's role came in the letter of June 14, 1963, from the GPC to the CPSU entitled, "A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement", point 8 of which states

"It is impossible for the working class in the European and American capitalist countries to liberate itself unless it unites with the oppressed nations and unless those nations are liberated." (our emphasis).

This is a direct restatement of Marx's third insight, and similar to Roy's original Third Thesis, quoted above. But the Chinese did not stop there. This shot across the bows was followed up with a broadside two years later with the publication on September 3, 1965, of an editorial in the Peoples Daily entitled, "Long Live the Victory of People's War!", containing the following analysis.

"Taking the entire globe, if North America and Western Europe can be called "the cities of the world," then Asia, Africa and Latin America constitute "the rural areas of the world"...In a sense, the contemporary world revolution also presents a picture of the encirclement of the cities by the rural areas. In the final analysis, the whole cause of world revolution hinges on the revolutionary struggles of the Asian, African and Latin American peoples..." (our emphasis).

The line is familiar. It is pure Galiev. All the elements of his Theses are present, either explicitly or by implication. What is fairly explicit is his heresy of the dictatorship of the periphery over the centre. It is also a refinement of his Theses. In a very general way Galiev had outlined the organisational forms that would be necessary by calling for a separate Communist International of the periphery which would constitute the headquarters and general staff of the periphery in the same way that the Comintern fulfilled a similar function for the international proletariat. The Chinese however had primarily based their position on Lenin's view of the Soviet Union. They were beginning to see themselves as the "base" of world revolution (which, unlike a State, does not have fixed boundaries). This view is derived directly from the 5th thesis of Lenin's Theses on the National and Colonial Question, with the concomitant duties attaching to such a role contained in thesis 10.

"the task of transforming the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national one...into an international one...demands, firstly, that the interests of the proletarian struggle in one country be subordinated to the interests of that struggle on a world scale, and secondly, that a nation which is achieving victory over the bourgeoisie be able and willing to make the greatest national sacrifices for the sake of overthrowing international capital." (our emphasis).

The Chinese had already successfully solved the question of revolution in the periphery through concepts and forms developed in the practice of the Chinese revolution by Mao, at the core of which lay his concept of the 'Three Magic Weapons' of Party, Army and United Front, with the Party both commanding the Army and leading the united front. Now the Chinese were proposing to apply this in an international context. Thus, the agency for the encirclement of the centre would be the international united front, the purpose of which, as Mao explained, is "to isolate the handful of enemies to the maximum and attack them." Clearly,

some kind of armed conflict is envisaged between the 'base' of world revolution and the 'base' of world reaction - something implicit in Galiev's thesis as well. The US was keenly aware of its implications. Its representative at the United Nations is reported to have waved the article aloft and harangued the assembled Delegates on how it 'proved' that China was "bellicose."

In the following year the point was made with unparalleled force for a country not directly involved in armed hostilities in the People's Daily editorial of July 5 1966 entitled, "US Agression has no Bounds and our Counter to Agression has no Bounds."

"We want to warn the US agressors in very clear terms: Since you have destroyed the bounds of the war by your acts of aggressive war...the entire Vietnamese people...(and)...all the countries and people that genuinely support the Vietnamese people's war...have also ceased to be subject to any restrictions. It is not up to you to decide how the war should be fought next. (our emphasis).

This marked a watershed. After 1968 this perspective of war between the 'bases' receded with a perceived change in the international correlation of forces when China began placing greater emphasis on building the broadest united front at the inter-Governmental level. The 'Three World Theory,' first put forward in April 1974 at the UN General Assembly's 6th Special Session on raw materials and development, in the background of the euphoria generated by the demands of elite groups in the periphery for a New International Economic Order, reflects this perspective and change in emphasis.

However, the 'encirclement' thesis of Long Live the Victory of People's War remains an unvarying constant so long as imperialism's aim of subjugating the periphery remains an unvarying constant. There are several possible scenarios of world revolution contained in the 'encirclement' thesis depending on which aspect of the principal contradiction (i.e., people of the whole world against US-led imperialism) is given emphasis at any particular time. The most important of these possible scenarios are

- (a) Successful revolutions in the periphery would put increasing pressure on the centre to the point where the proletariat of the centre could, at long last, be in a position to stage a successful insurrection. This is the most likely scenario and it reflects the struggles of the people as forming the principal aspect of the principal contradiction at the present stage, summed up Mao's May 20th Statement in the formulation, "Revolution is the main trend in the world today."
- (b) On the other hand, successful revolutions in the periphery would put such an intolerable pressure on the centre (see note 22) that the 'base' of imperialism might launch an attack on the 'base' of world revolution, in the wake of which the proletariat in the centre might have a prospect of winning victory. The counterpart to this is that, given a favourable correlation of forces, the 'base' of world revolution might launch an attack on the 'base' of imperialism thereby destroying its main force. Though this is highly unlikely under present conditions, it cannot be entirely discounted as a theoretical possibility in the future.
- (c) The third scenario is one where increasing pressure on the centre would cause the superpowers, like 'scorpions in a jar,' to go for one another. Herein lies the danger of war. But this is only the secondary aspect of the principal contradiction and it would be undialectical to highlight only this aspect and to underplay the principal aspect, people. It is precisely the latter that gives rise to the former.

Summing up

Marx, from the standpoint of the proletariat of the centre, had in 1869 uncovered the great 'secret' of why revolution in the centre has been held up. Galiev, from the standpoint of the periphery, had built on this insight and had

outlined a practical programme for securing the periphery's freedom from the yoke of the centre. The Chinese in turn had built on this and had carried it through to its logical conclusion in the 'encirclement' thesis.

The above is an attempt to trace the development of one of Marx's most important insights, which has an immediate and burning relevance. His insight provides an infallible touchstone for detecting Eurocentrism in all its manifestations. More work needs to be done to develop this. Clarity on these questions relating to the stage of world revolution is a pre-requisite to clarity on all other questions, especially the key question on how to build the Party in the imperialist heartlands.

(2) The Second International and the Colonial Question

Founded in 1889 the Second International ingloriously foundered in August, 1914, amidst the mud, blood and morass of the European civil war, a war which its leading members had made that much more possible by voting for war credits in 'their' national Parliaments. Long before this it had undermined its credibility by sweeping the colonial question under the imperialist carpet. Marx's third insight and his belief that "a nation that oppresses another forges the chains of its own oppression" was turned on its head. Thus, in 1896, Bernstein, whose declared intention was to revise Marx, came out with the first 'Socialist' defence of colonialism by invoking the twin rationales of "manifest destiny" and the "safeguarding of national interests." This new social-imperialist line was tried out by the Dutch Delegate Van Kol at the Amsterdam Congress in 1904, with some refinements of his own, namely, that "possession of colonies...even under the future socialist system of government" would be necessary. At the Stuttgart Congress of 1907 this line became more entrenched, with Germany's Edward David crying, "Europe needs colonies. It does not have enough of them" - thereby, in effect, arguing for the enslavement of the European proletariat! Lenin and others had forcefully opposed this trend and succeeded in defeating the motion for a socialist colonial policy. But the trend remained pervasive.

India at the Stuttgart Congress

The notable feature of the Congress was the appearance of the Indian revolutionaries, Madame Cama and S.S. Rana, to the discomfiture of the British delegation. This was aggravated when one of their number, Hyndman, presented his report, "The Ruin of India by British Rule." Despite stiff opposition, Juarez and Hyndman were successful in their attempt to let Madame Cama appear before the Congress and move the following Resolution

"That the continuance of British rule in India is positively disastrous and extremely injurious to the best interests of India, and lovers of freedom all over the world ought to cooperate in freeing from slavery the fifth of the human race inhabiting that oppressed country, since the perfect social State demands that no people should be subject to any despotic or tyrannical form of government."

The Resolution was not allowed to be put to the vote on technical grounds. However, the Congress President allowed her to make a speech, whereupon the British Delegation, led by Ramsay Macdonald, the future British Prime Minister, walked out. After her speech Madame Cama requested the Delegates to rise and salute the flag of new India, which they did amidst applause.

1907 had also marked the Golden Jubilee celebrations in Britain of the so-called 'Mutiny' of 1857. There was a counter-campaign by Indian revolutionaries based in London at India House in Cromwell Avenue, Highgate. They were in close touch with Madame Cama's group based in France. Lenin had reportedly visited India House on more than one occasion. Among the British people who had supported the Indian revolutionaries, one of them, Guy Aldred, was the first to have been imprisoned for upholding the cause of Indian independence.

(3) Lenin and Colonial Revolution: The Key Concepts

One of Lenin's greatest and ^{most} original contributions was to apply Marxism to the periphery and thus to see the struggles of the peoples there as a component part of the world proletarian revolution. It was a particularly challenging task for Lenin because there was little in the way of theory to draw on. Colonial revolution was not on the agenda in Marx and Engels's time, and the Second International had wilfully neglected it.

In formulating his theory of colonial revolution Lenin built on the three insights of Marx and Engels, noted above - in particular, Marx's crucial third insight which provided the rationale for the whole enterprise. Lenin's fear, expressed at the Stuttgart Congress, was that possession of colonies was turning the European proletariat into a class of "non-working, have nots ...incapable of overthrowing the exploiters." It therefore followed that if the European proletariat were to be deprived of their 'feast' from the colonies, then that would serve to concentrate their minds wonderfully and to direct their energies to fulfilling their historic mission.

This concern led Lenin to place greater emphasis on summing up the struggles in the periphery and to formulate a theoretical and tactical line for revolution there. At the heart of his theory lay three concepts: the worker-peasant alliance, the anti-imperialist united front and the right of nations to self determination. The latter concept contains the clear recognition that colonies are oppressed and exploited as nations. Taken together with Lenin's recognition that the national bourgeoisie in the colonies had an anti-imperialist role, they enabled him to formulate a tactical line for revolution in the colonies that dialectically fused both the national and class questions. This will be taken up under points 2 and 3 of the next section.

(4) Oppressed Nations: The Soft Under-Belly of Imperialism

The colonial powers have always been keenly aware of the strategic role of the colonial hinterlands, their soft under-belly. At the same time they were also painfully aware of the fatal weaknesses inherent in all salt-water empires (10) - an awareness that the ideological smokescreen of Eurocentrism had served to conceal from their own peoples, including most of the Left (e.g, Rosa Luxemburg who had overestimated the strength of imperialism in the colonies and underestimated the struggles of the peoples there). Nevertheless, particularly with the advent of imperialism in the final quarter of the last century, the potent lure of colonies was a 'fix' they could not do without, for two reasons: firstly, colonies provided the material basis for their own well-being, chiefly by the provision of largesse for the pacification of their own proletariat. On this Galiev had this to say,

"So long as international imperialism in the shape of the Entente retains the East as a colony where it is absolute master of the entire natural wealth, it is assured of a favourable outcome of all isolated economic clashes with the metropolitan working masses, for it is perfectly able in this situation to 'shut their mouths' by agreeing to meet their economic demands." (This was the embarrassing fact that Marx had felt unable to "tell the English workers themselves.")

Secondly, colonies served to maintain the balance, and hence the relative peace in Europe. They enabled European contradictions to be exported and adjusted 'out there.' For chiefly these reasons, the possession of colonies (or lack of them) drove the Powers to prance about on the world stage in the way they did, tussling and scuffling with one another. The classic case was the British ruling class with their near-paranoid concern for the security of India (11) - an understandable concern, given that no colonial Power had been so dependent on just one colony for its material well being and its international status as Britain was on India (12).

Therefore, when the Comintern was created in 1919 to meet the need for a centralised headquarters and general staff of the international proletariat, (13) it was no accident that the national and colonial question was a major part of its strategic concerns.

THE ISSUES IN THE LENIN-ROY DEBATE

It was at the Second Congress of the Comintern that the national and Colonial Question was thoroughly debated. Lenin was nominated the speaker and he presented his theses at the Congress.⁽¹⁴⁾ Roy agreed with some of Lenin's formulations. As a result Lenin had asked Roy to draft a set of Supplementary Theses. The issues which led to the formulation of the Supplementary Theses (and to minor textual revisions in Lenin's own Theses) may conveniently be referred to as the Lenin-Roy debate. The debate centred around three issues.

(1) The Question of the Level of Economic Development in the Colonies

For Lenin the starting point was the correct identification of the stage of the revolution, both internationally and within a country. Only after this is done can the appropriate political line be formulated. This is because different levels of economic development call for different models of political action. Internationally the stage is imperialism, the essence of which is the division of the world into oppressor and oppressed countries, or centre and periphery. In the oppressor countries the mode of production was capitalist and therefore the stage was that of socialist revolution. Within the oppressed countries the mode of production was characterised primarily by pre-capitalist production relations in which the peasantry was the overwhelmingly dominant form of social labour. Therefore the stage of the revolution was democratic usually, but not necessarily, led by the national bourgeoisie.

At the same time Lenin recognised that in certain colonies and semi-colonies like India and China a proletariat was slowly emerging. It was to take into account colonies of this type, by allowing representatives from these countries who were present and able to articulate their positions, that Lenin had asked Roy to draft the Supplementary Theses.

Contrary to what some bourgeois scholars have suggested (15), Lenin's theory of colonial revolution is not the product of an opportunist shift in emphasis on realising that the hoped for European revolution was receding. Rather, Lenin had been preoccupied with the question from at least the Stuttgart Conference of 1907 for quite different reasons. As we have seen, its antecedents lay in the second insight of Marx and Engels which had envisaged the possibility of Russia bypassing the capitalist stage of development if the proletariat could tap the revolutionary potential of the peasantry. It was this insight that had provided Lenin with the theoretical clue that lay at the core of his emphasis on the peasant question in the colonies. In addressing Communists of the East in 1919, Lenin gave the following advice:

"you are confronted with a task which has not previously confronted Communists of the world...you must adapt yourselves to specific conditions...to conditions in which the bulk of the population are peasants, and in which the task is to wage a struggle against medieval survivals and not against capitalism." (16) (our emphasis)

This theory was new. Lenin did not then know what forms would be necessary to bring about the worker-peasant alliance and the anti-imperialist united front in the colonies.⁽¹⁷⁾ That was left to Mao and others to solve in the practice of their own revolutions. By the end of the 1930s Mao had 'discovered' the necessary forms to vindicate Lenin's theory. These forms are embodied in three key concepts: Mao's concept of party and army building; his concept of the revolutionary base area; and his concept of peoples' war. These concepts and the forms they embody have an immediate and universal relevance.

Roy disagreed with Lenin's analysis of the stage of colonial revolution. His starting point was his belief that the British had broken with their past colonial policy in India and were in the process of industrialising the country with a view to taking advantage of the cheap labour there and leading eventually to decolonisation of the territory. This had resulted in the creation of a growing army of the proletariat, some 5 million strong. By 1926 Roy had made a clear case for industrialisation on the basis of interpreting export figures of British capital to India. Palme Dutt, and later the bulk of the CPGB, also supported this analysis. However, both Dutt and Roy had de-emphasised the question of the peasantry since, for them, India was characterised basically by the capitalist mode of production.

Given this analysis, Roy had placed great stress on the growing strike movement and believed that the Indian proletariat was developing into a revolutionary force capable of overthrowing British imperialism. Years later, in his Memoirs, Roy acknowledged that he had overestimated the development of capitalism in India and had relied on unconfirmed statistical data. However, Roy's critics were equally one-sided. At the 6th Congress Roy's industrialisation and decolonisation theses came under heavy fire from Varga and Kuusinen. Varga's chief objection was that the term 'industrialisation' could not be applied to a colony. Kuusinen's objection to 'decolonisation' was primarily that it would have a devitalising effect on the national movement and not on its validity as such. What no one seemed to understand clearly at the time was that the process unfolding in the periphery was a different, dependent form of capitalism (18). Although incorrect at the time, Roy's ideas were prophetic. Decolonisation (he appears to have coined the expression) is now virtually complete, while many countries in the periphery such as India, China and Brazil have large industrial bases, while others such as South Korea and Singapore have been turned into little more than processing plants for imperialism precisely, as Roy had pointed out, for their cheap labour.

(2) Appraising the Role of the National Bourgeoisie in Relation to Imperialism

Lenin recognised that the bourgeoisie "naturally exercises hegemony (leadership) in the beginning of every national movement." Therefore, the national bourgeoisie did have a positive anti-imperialist role. At the same time he was aware that the national and class aims of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat were not, and could not, be the same.⁽¹⁹⁾ This awareness of the dual nature of the bourgeoisie coupled with his insight on the revolutionary potential of the peasantry led Lenin to foresee two possible paths to the bourgeois democratic revolution in the colonies. The first is the path of reformism in which the bourgeoisie compromise with imperialism, are therefore given power, and then go on to develop a type of retarded, dependent capitalism. This, the path of neo-colonialism, has been the general trend in the periphery in the post-war period. The second is the path of 'revolutionary democracy,' where the worker-peasant alliance, with the peasants as the main force, avoid the capitalist path. Lenin perceived this as the new stage in the national liberation movement which came about after the October Revolution, a stage in which the worker-peasant alliance provided the mainstay of revolution in the colonies. Lenin's writings on China and the role of Sun Yat Sen develop this point. ⁽²⁰⁾

Against this, Roy's position on the bourgeoisie flowed from his analysis of the stage - i.e., that capitalist relations of production prevailed since India was being industrialised which in turn led to the creation of an increasingly numerous and revolutionary proletariat. The bourgeoisie were not happy with this development and therefore a polarisation of interests on the basis of class simultaneously developed. Roy therefore counterposed the class question to the national question, putting the emphasis on the former and thereby, in effect, wiping out the latter.

(3) Assessment of the Revolutionary Potential in the Colonies and the Tactical Line of Action for the Communist Parties in Relation to the Bourgeoisie

Given his analysis of the stage and his attitude to the bourgeoisie (21), it followed that Roy saw the proletariat as the real revolutionary force in India. He therefore called for deletion from paragraph 11 of Lenin's Theses the call for Communist parties to assist in the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the colonies. Instead, the logic of Roy's position demanded that the "Communist International must help exclusively in the building up and development of a Communist movement in India and the Communist Party of India must devote all care exclusively to the organisation of wide masses for struggle for the class interests of the latter." (our emphasis). This formulation provides an object lesson on how an incorrect appraisal of the stage and motive forces of a revolution is bound to result in an unworkable political line. Roy could never understand the flexibility of Lenin's united front tactics. He was unable to dialectically link the class and national questions. For him, the united front largely meant an alliance of workers and peasants. It is instructive to compare Roy's one-sided analysis of the bourgeoisie with the great precision of Mao in his 'Analysis of Classes in Chinese Society,' written in 1926 - and Roy had been sent by the Comintern in the following year to 'teach' the Chinese Communists!

However, in appraising Roy's contributions a distinction should be made between his insights and his practical prescriptions. While the latter have proved to be unworkable, many of his insights have had been correct and still retain their relevance. His insight on industrialisation and decolonisation have been noted. Similarly, his insight regarding the structural role of the periphery in underpinning every aspect of life in the centre was and is substantially correct. His most important and relevant insight, derived from Marx, was that the course of revolution in Europe was ultimately dependent on revolution in the periphery. Roy's weakness lay in his inability to concretely analyse a given conjuncture, due largely to his imperfect grasp of revolutionary dialectics. We have seen Lenin's capacity for concrete analysis. It is instructive to see how Lenin applies that analysis to the formulation of tactics.

Lenin appraised the stage as one where the peasants would provide the main force; he was aware of the dual nature of the bourgeoisie and; on this basis formulated the appropriate tactics - a dialectical package fusing the national and class question. The active agent of this fusion was the united front.

The key elements of Lenin's tactics are formulated under six points in paragraph 11 of his Theses. In summary these are: all Communist parties must assist in the bourgeois-democratic movement; the need for struggle against the clergy and other reactionary elements; the need to combat Pan-Slavism and similar trends which strive to combine the liberation movements against European and American imperialism with an attempt to strengthen the position of the khans, landlords, mullahs, etc., (very topical!); the need to give special support to the peasant movement; support for the bourgeois-democratic movement given only on condition that proletarian parties are educated to fight the bourgeois-democratic movement

within their own nations; the Comintern must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonies but must not merge with it and must uphold the independence of the proletarian movement; finally, the need to explain and expose the systematic deception practised by imperialism in creating nominally independent States which are actually dependent on imperialism economically, financially and militarily (again very topical in the context of contemporary centre-periphery relations).

RELEVANCE OF THE LENIN-ROY DEBATE

The issues raised at the various Congresses of the Comintern, many of them for the first time and in a systematic manner, have great contemporary relevance, for at least the following reasons.

- (1) The stage of world revolution remains the same. It is still the era of imperialism, the essence of which is the division of the world into oppressor and oppressed nations. National democratic revolutions are still unfolding in the oppressed nations or periphery. The structural role of the periphery in underpinning imperialism remains the same. In fact, the dependence on the periphery has actually increased (22)
- (2) It was India rather than China (whose Communist Party, after 1927, had become increasingly less pliant to external direction) that became the Comintern's chief testing ground for the application of its line on the colonial question. A key problem for the Comintern then (as for National Liberation Movements now) is how to appraise the vacillating role of the bourgeoisie. The Comintern could ^{never} understand the complexity of Indian society and therefore failed at crucial junctures to correctly appraise the role of the Indian National Congress and Gandhi. (23) On the other hand Roy's line had been consistently sectarian. The Comintern is no more and therefore NLMs are no longer subject to the same type of 'direction,' but Roys are still to be found within the NLMs. Therefore, this experience repays close study.

Furthermore, India had been represented by M.N. Roy (24), chosen by the Comintern to lead the revolution in India. He was an important spokesman on the national and colonial questions and his, sometimes forceful, intervention (as in the Third Congress) ensured that the colonial question received a proper airing. The real importance of Roy was to have raised issues and put them on the agenda of the international Communist movement. Some of these issues still remain on the agenda. The chief of these was his insight, derived from Marx, on the primacy of revolution in the periphery.

- (3) The question of building the united front against imperialism was one of the key tactical questions in the anti-imperialist stage of the national liberation movement. Roy could never understand this. The Comintern too, after Lenin's death in 1924, had erred at crucial junctures. There were two major shifts in policy - the sectarian line of the 6th Congress and the anti-fascist united front line of the 7th Congress. In 1930 it had characterised Gandhi as "a prime agent of British imperialism" at a time when he was stirring the country to unparalleled acts of heroism and self sacrifice (). The 7th Congress line was largely a rationalisation of Soviet foreign policy and this became disastrous for the CPI after June 1941 when the Nazis attacked the Soviet Union. The result was that the CPI found itself standing on the side of the Government at a time when that Government was using troops, machine guns and aircraft against the people to quell the Quit India Movement. Thereafter, the CPI found it difficult to give a satisfactory rejoinder to the jibe, 'where were you during the war'.

In sum, the Lenin-Roy debate highlights, and will help to clarify, some of the most pressing theoretical problems facing revolutionaries everywhere today, involving such questions of 'orientation' as: What is the stage of the revolution and its motive forces, both internationally and within a country? In the light of the stage, what are the main contradictions in the contemporary world, and of these, what is the principal contradiction and the principal aspect of that contradiction? What are the purposes and targets of the united front and where is the emphasis to be placed at any given time? With the wisdom of hindsight it can be seen that nobody at the time had a monopoly on the truth, although Lenin's thinking had provided the most consistently reliable guide to action precisely because Lenin had been most consistent in applying materialist dialectics to pose and solve political questions.

Conclusion

The issues raised here for the first time in the international Communist movement were later to develop in the post-war period into the debates on the centre-periphery relationship and unequal development (25). In these debates it is thinkers from the periphery, such as Samir Amin, (26), who are the pace-setters in the creation of new theoretical models for understanding the contemporary world. It is these thinkers who have inherited the materialist dialectical method of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao. They are no longer isolated and marginalised as Roy had been. On the contrary, it is Eurocentric 'marxists' who have been marginalised, even within their own societies, and who have turned themselves into ivory towers of irrelevancy.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- (1) See generally S. Bairathi, Communism and Nationalism in India, India, (Anamika Prakashan), 1987; S.N. Talwar, Under the Banyan Tree, India, (Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd.), 1985. For a more specialised treatment see S.D. Gupta, Comintern, India and the Colonial Question, India, (K.P. Bagchi & Company), 1980. A useful collection of documents which include extracts from the various Comintern Congresses is contained in Helene Carriere d'Encausse and Stuart R. Schram, (eds.), Marxism and Asia, London, (Allen Lane), 1969. Soviet works include R.A. Ulyanovsky, (ed), The Comintern and the East: The Struggle for the Leninist Strategy and Tactics in National Liberation Movements, 1978, and The Comintern and the East: Critique of the Critique, 1981, (both by Progress Publishers, Moscow); A.B. Reznikov, The Comintern and the East: Strategy and Tactics, Moscow, (Progress Publishers), 1984.
- (2) For a survey and analysis of Eurocentrism in the works of Marx and Engels see, Eurocentrism and the Communist Movement, London, (Political Economy Study Group), 1986, pp 20-46. (Hereafter ECM).
- (3) Text in Marxism and Asia, (supra n1) at p 123.
- (4) e.g., Engels, On Social Relations in Russia, in Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Volume 2, London, (Lawrence & Wishart), 1950, pp 46-56; Marx and Engels, Preface to the Russian edition of 1882, Manifesto of the Communist Party, Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Volume 1, pp 22-24.
- (5) Marx, Letter to Engels, 10 December, 1869, in Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence, London, (Lawrence & Wishart), 1936, pp 281-282. Marx was bound to arrive at this position sooner or later. Already in 1853 he had perceived that "the next uprising of the people of Europe...may depend more probably on what is now passing in the Celestial Empire...than on any other political cause that now exists." (Revolution in China and in Europe, in Marx and Engels, On Colonialism, Moscow, 1960, at p 15).
- (6) Reproduced in G. Adhikari, (ed), Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India, Volume 1, (1917-1922), India, 1971, pp 178-188.
- (7) Reproduced in Marxism and Asia, at p 160.
- (8) Marxism and Asia at p 152
- (9) ECM, pp 55-57 and 70-74
- (10) e.g., see Admiral A.T.Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, (1890); Halford Mackinder, The Geographical Pivot of History, Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, London, 1904. Mackinder had taken part at the Paris Peace Conferences of 1919 which drew up the strategic treaties that created the new States of Eastern Europe which were intended to form a buffer zone between Western Europe and the new Bolshevik State. His 'Heartland' theory sheds light on the rationale behind Britain's 'great game' with Russia which was based on her vulnerability and fear of being edged out of Asia, particularly India.
- (11) A flavour of the panic engendered by the 'Bolshevik menace' for British imperialism in India can be savoured from a perusal of the primary source materials which include Foreign and Political Department Proceedings, 1917-1945; Home (Political) Department Proceedings, 1917-1945; Meerut

Conspiracy Case Papers, as well as Government of India publications by three Directors of the Intelligence Services, viz, Sir Cecil Kaye, Communism in India, 1920-24, (1925); Sir Donald Petrie, Communism in India, 1924-27, (1927); H. Williamson, Communism and India, (1937).

A curious feature of the period was the dissemination of large quantities of crude anti-Communist atrocity propaganda such as that Bolsheviki eat human flesh and that they particularly relish the flesh of Mensheviki! As for the role of Indian revolutionaries abroad and the extent to which they affected British diplomacy, even before the establishment of the Comintern, a role hitherto underplayed in both British and Indian scholarship, see Don Dignan, The Indian Revolutionary Problem in British Diplomacy, 1914-1919, India, (Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd.), 1983.

- (12) Lord Curzon, one of the most imperialist-minded of the Viceroy (1899-1905) summed up the heart of the Anglo-Indian 'special relationship' in these terms: "The Indian Empire is in the strategic centre of the third most important portion of the globe...But her central and commanding position is nowhere better seen than in the political influence which she exercises over the destinies of her neighbours near and far, and the extent to which their fortunes revolve upon an Indian axis." The key to this was the role of the Indian Army. Of this role Sir E. Ellis in the budget discussions of 1904-5 had stated: "It is, I think, undoubted that the Indian Army in the future must be the main factor in the maintenance of the balance of power in Asia." To maintain that balance (not only in Asia) the Indian Army was sent to China in 1839, 1856 and 1859; to Persia in 1856; to Ethiopia and Singapore in 1867; to HongKong in 1868; to Afghanistan in 1878; to Egypt in 1882; to Burma in 1885; to Nyasa in 1893 and to the Sudan and Uganda in 1896, as well as deployed to provide the main force in Britain's Middle East and East African campaigns in the 1914-18 conflict which, as a contradiction primarily with Germany, turned partially on the control of the Middle East, one of the gateways to India. It is against this 'Indian background' that British expansionism around this period should be seen. Thus, the shoring up of Turkey against Russia in 1878, the intervention in Egypt in 1882, the positional jockeying with the Germans in East Africa and with the French, culminating in the Fashoda incident, all had the ultimate aim of safeguarding the Indian Empire, "the only part of the empire really essential to Britain's well-being and becoming more so." - Bernard Porter, The Lion's Share, 1984. See also R.P. Dutt, India Today, Gollancz, 1940, at pp 476-484. On the role of India in providing the impetus for the Industrial Revolution in Britain see Dutt, *ibid*, pp 116-124.
- (13) The Comintern was also necessary in order to enable the Soviet Union to maintain its diplomatic position vis a vis the imperialist Powers and to enable it to enter into a variety of relations with them - e.g., see F.S. Northedge and Audrey Wells, Britain and Soviet Communism: the impact of a Revolution, London, (Macmillan), 1982, at pp 35-36
- (14) Text in Lenin, Selected Works, Volume 10, London, 1938, pp 231-238
- (15) e.g., Hugh Seton-Watson, The Pattern of Communist Revolution. A Historical Analysis, London, 1960, at p 127.
- (16) Lenin, The National Liberation Movement in the East, Moscow, (Progress Publishers), 1969, at p 256. From this useful collection of articles the evolution of Lenin's thoughts on the colonial question can be traced. They convincingly refute bourgeois scholars such as Seton-Watson (*supra*).
- (17) Lenin had suggested the idea of peasant Soviets at the Second Congress and this idea was also put forward by the Soviet representative Pavlovitch at the Baku Conference of the Peoples of the East, held shortly after the Second Congress

- (18) see ECM p 55
- (19) Lenin, The Right of Nations to Self-Determination, Collected Works, Volume 20, pp 409-412.
- (20) e.g., Democracy and Narodism in China, (1912); Two Utopias, (1912), both in Collected Works, Volume 18.
- (21) see paragraphs 7, 10 and 11 of his original Draft Supplementary Theses, in Adhikari, *supra* n.6
- (22) As for the periphery's role as 'milch cow' of the centre, the Annual Reports of the IMF and World Bank published in 1988 show that there was a net transfer of US\$39.1 billion from the periphery to the centre during the year, an increase of US\$7.9 billion over the preceding year!
- On the periphery's role in maintaining order within and among countries of the centre, this is what the Rapporteur of a think tank session convened in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had to say: "Unless we can assure continued access to strategic minerals, both abroad and here at home, our civilisation in its present form may not be able to survive. Entire industries may well be forced into heavy shutdowns with many millions of workers losing their jobs, and in the long run our basic freedoms accordingly may evaporate. In short, unless we take those steps necessary to assure continued access to strategic minerals, our economic health and our national security - and the security of our allies in Western Europe and Japan - will be endangered." James Arnold Miller et al (eds), The Resource War in 3D - Dependency, Diplomacy, Defence, 18th. World Affairs Forum, World Affairs Council of Pittsburgh, 1980, at p 7. (our emphasis).
- (23) see e.g., Jairus Banaji, The Comintern and Indian Nationalism, in K.N. Pannikar, (ed), National and Left Movements in India, India, (Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.), 1980.
- (24) Roy's work as a Communist dates from September 1919 when he met the Comintern agent, Michael Borodin, at the Socialist Conference in Mexico where Roy had fled from the United States to escape arrest. In 1922 he attended the Second Congress of the Comintern as a Delegate of the Mexican Communist Party which he had helped found. Roy's rise was rapid and by 1926 he was a full member of all the four policy-making bodies of the Comintern. In 1927 he was sent to China to implement the 7th Plenum Theses on the Chinese revolution which he had helped draft. Following the Chinese debacle of that year Roy fell into disfavour and was denied the opportunity to present his views on the Chinese question at the 8th Plenum. In September 1929, by a Resolution of the 10th Plenum, Roy was expelled from the Comintern and designated a renegade. Officially, five charges were levelled against Roy, none of which bear close scrutiny. The real reason for his expulsion appears to be connected with the internal power struggles within the Bolshevik Party in which Roy was identified with the Bukharin faction. See M.N. Roy, Memoirs, 1964; The Communist International, 1943; Talwar, *op cit*, Ch III and *passim*; J.P. Haithcox, Communism and Nationalism in India: M.N. Roy and Comintern Policy, 1920-39, Bombay, (OUP), 1971.
- (25) A succinct overview of these issues is contained in Magnus Blomstrom and Bjorn Hettne, Development Theory in Transition: The Dependency Debate and Beyond, London, (Zed Books)
- (26) S.Amin, Accumulation on a World Scale, (New York), 1975

The International Communist Movement and Palestine

The record of the international communist movement on the issue of Palestine has been an uneven one. The reasons have included opportunism, Eurocentrism and straight forward ignorance. Yet the Palestinian struggle has been a protracted one, with ramifications way beyond the borders of the land of Palestine.

Between the October Revolution and the 1950s, the Soviet Union and most communist parties outside the area seem to have had little understanding of the Middle East, and only showed occasional interest in what was happening there. The Soviet Union and most communist parties were most concerned with the West-Europe, and later, Europe and the USA. Neither the Soviet Union nor the Communist International had a strong body of experts working on the Middle East. In Lenin's last years, when the Soviet Union gave more weight to the struggles of the peoples of the colonial world than it did in the Thirties or Forties, its attention was concentrated on east and South Asia rather than other areas.

A Palestinian Section for the Comintern

In October 1919, the Socialist Workers Party was formed in Palestine as a breakaway from the Ahdut ha-Avodah (Unity of Labour) left Zionist group. It saw this split as similar to that which had taken place in a number of social-democratic parties in Europe, but it was only able to do this by judging the split in terms of class struggle as it occurred in Europe, hardly taking account of the fundamental national issue which actually determined the way in which the class contradictions in Palestine would shape up: the contradiction between Zionism and the Palestinian Arab people. The MPS (the Socialist Workers' Party's Hebrew initials), in fact, had not broken with Zionism, but declared that it stood for "proletarian Zionism". However, it did pledge to build an Arab-Jewish organisation and to work for its objectives on the basis of Arab-Jewish working class understanding. Historically, it would not be the only party which would simultaneously declare its loyalty to Zionist objectives and its desire to work for them with the consent of the Arab working class-consent which was never forthcoming, in default of which the Zionist goals were pursued anyway.

Relations with the rest of the Zionist left deteriorated rapidly, because of the social revolutionary politics of MPS, but there was no simultaneous party penetration into the Arab population. The party's Zionism didn't endear it to any section of the Palestinian Arab population, but the indigenous population was also suspicious of Bolshevism. One of the arguments the Arab elites used against the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine was that it would promote Bolshevism in the area, the new Jewish immigrants being mainly East Europeans with "socialist" politics.

The MPS was short-lived. In 1921, an MPS May Day procession clashed with a left-Zionist one in Jaffa, and Arabs became involved, turning on the Jewish colonists in general. As a result, the British authorities banned the MPS, and it disintegrated.

After a period of struggles between the fragments of the former party, a single party was re-established in July, 1923. It became the Palestinian section of the Communist International in March, 1924. The Executive Committee of the Communist International stressed the importance of the party transforming itself "from an organisation of Jewish workers into a truly territorial party", i.e., one that reflected, in its composition, the predominantly Arab character of the population of Palestine. This objective of becoming a "truly territorial party" was to remain, in theory and to a fair extent in practice, an aim of the party over the next two decades, almost. This line was strengthened following the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, when the "Arabisation" of the party was

stressed.

The Comintern was undoubtedly right to place this demand on the Palestine Communist Party, just as it sought to make the Communist Party of South Africa transform itself from the all-white organisation as which it started out. Comintern interventions were sometimes clumsy and did not take sufficient account of specific conditions within the countries in which member parties operated, but in these cases, the general principle was right. This really was an instance of the Comintern acting in the interests of the working class as an international class to override the inclinations of sectional interests within it which, left to their own devices, would have continued to direct their work towards a privileged and oppressive element within the working class of a specific state. However, the limits of the Comintern's understanding of the situation in Palestine were shown by its call for the PCP to support Arab participation in the Zionist labour federation, the Histadrut. It seems to have seen the Histadrut as analogous to the mass trade union organisations of Europe, whereas it was, before anything else, a Zionist body whose central function was the organisation of Jewish labour in Palestine for the furtherance of the aim of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. To call for Palestinian Arab participation in such a body suggested a failure both to appreciate the Zionist colonialist essence of the Histadrut and the extent of Palestinian Arab opposition to the entire Zionist enterprise. As it was, few Palestinians joined the Histadrut (or, to be more precise, its separate Arab organisation) until after the state of Israel was established and they needed to be members of its health scheme.

The Sixth Congress of the Communist International

It is customary on the left to regard the Sixth Congress of the Comintern an entirely negative venture into ultra-leftism. Its decisions are seen as being responsible for the world's communist parties adopting sectarian leftist policies which resulted in them losing influence and members and isolating themselves. There's a lot of truth in this, but that wasn't the whole picture, even in the European countries. The Comintern's decisions had their positive side, which is evident in their impact on the Palestinian party.

In line with its general stand against "national reformism", the Comintern called for a struggle against the leadership of the Arab national movement, refusing to acknowledge that it had a dual character in consequence of its status in relation to imperialism and the Arab masses. This dual character should have demanded an approach of unity and struggle from the communists, with the objective of building a broad anti-imperialist front within which the communists would strive to wrest the leadership from nationalist leaderships drawn from the domestic oppressing classes. The sectarian approach which was instead adopted tended to isolate the communists rather than place them in a good position to influence the mass of the workers and working people. This approach limited the potential gains that the PCP might have made through applying the Comintern's line on the Arabisation of the party, which was given much more weight following the Sixth Congress than it had been allowed hitherto.

The Comintern criticised the leadership of the PCP for its pre-occupation with work in the Jewish community in Palestine. It called for workers and peasants' governments to be the objective of the communists of the Arab world as that of the existing stage of their struggles, and it included Palestine as part of the Arab world. Wolf Auerbach, the PCP's representative, delivered a report critical of Bukharin, who had argued that the importance of the colonies to

the imperialist countries was declining, and he also criticised the Comintern's inadequate attention to the Arab world, but was himself silent on the subject of the Arabisation of the PCP.

The Comintern's decisions caused disagreements within the PCP over its attitude towards the national movement. The left of the leadership, which was in the dominant position in 1929, upheld the goal of Arabisation, and also saw it as necessary to fight the reformist leadership of the Arab national movement. The right had a point in arguing that this was the leadership that the national movement had, and that they had to co-operate with it in some way if they were to work with that movement, but this position was coupled with a continued concentration on activity in the Jewish community. They underestimated the revolutionary potential of the peasants, who made up the bulk of the Palestinian Arab population. A small section within the PCP came to a position of total opposition to the Zionist project, following it through in practice by opposing Jewish immigration to Palestine and themselves leaving the country.

The positions taken by the PCP in response to the Comintern led to a breaking of its ties with the established leadership of the national movement—ties which it had first made early in its existence—but they also resulted in the recruitment of a number of Arab members, laying down a small but significant foundation for expansion within the Arab sector.

Adjustment was painful. In 1929, a clash at the "Wailing Wall" in Jerusalem ignited a series of attacks on Jews by Arabs, including a massacre in Hebron, where many of the long-established Jewish community were killed. The Comintern hailed the events as a "national revolt", but the PCP initially analysed them as a pogrom. Subsequently, the party reformulated its position, in line with that of the Comintern, characterising the events as a national revolt, but with reactionary elements within it. That was actually a fairly accurate assessment of what occurred, whatever the processes that led to it were.

The 1930 party congress marked a decisive step in the Arabisation effort. It called for Jewish workers to support Palestinian peasants fighting against being dispossessed of their land, and demanded an end to Zionist immigration. Before 1930, the PCP had followed the European model of political organisation, concentrating on the (overwhelmingly Jewish) working class, but in 1930, the national character of the struggle in Palestine was recognised, and the party correspondingly adjusted its policies.

The Party Splits

In 1935, the Seventh Congress of the Communist International came out with a new line for the international communist movement. This was the period of the united front against fascism. In seeking to establish a broad united front against fascism, most communist parties wrongly dropped principled differences with social democratic and other parties to a large extent in order to secure—or attempt to secure—their co-operation. This move by the Comintern came as a welcome relief for the right opportunist trend within the communist movement, which saw an opportunity to legitimise its own readiness to conciliate with social democratic and other anti-communist tendencies, and sought to take the communist parties as a whole with it. It did so across much of the world, with the blessing of the Communist International and the Soviet Union.

In Palestine, the new Comintern policy meant that the PCP could consider united front work with sections of the Zionist movement. Most of the Jewish membership was keen to undertake this, while Arab communists wanted nothing to do with Zionist organisations. The upshot of this disagreement was that the party effectively developed into two organisations, reflecting the national divisions

within it. This division was to be formalised before long. Ideally, there should have been a struggle within the organisation to arrive at a clear strategy for the party as a whole, but the shared communist opinions of the membership were not sufficient to bridge the national divide.

New tests were put to the Palestinian communists following the Seventh Comintern Congress just as they had been soon after the Sixth. The great Palestinian Arab revolt broke out in 1936 and lasted until 1939. While it continued, the Arab communists took part, while Jewish communists criticised British actions against the rebels, but also soft-pedalled on Zionism and denounced alleged fascist influences on the revolt. As the revolt petered out, the division of the party was temporarily overcome, but the unity did not go deep, and the split between the two sections was formalised in 1943, the same year as the Comintern was dissolved. The PCP became a Jewish party. It was quite fragmented, with one section taking up the Zionist calls to allow unrestricted Jewish immigration and supporting the establishment of the "Jewish national home" in Palestine. The Arab section became the National Liberation League.

The Country's Split

The PCP went further down the road of conciliation with Zionism following the Second World War, with little to discourage it at the level of the international communist movement. It criticised its support for the 1936-39 Palestinian Arab revolt. It opposed the establishment of a separate Jewish state in Palestine, but declared itself in favour of an independent Palestinian state with "equality of rights for the Jewish settlers". Its Jewish support began to increase.

In the last couple of years of the war, neither the Soviet Communist Party nor the international communist movement in general gave a clear indication of where they stood on the future of Palestine. Then in 1945, at the International Workers' Congress in London, the Soviet delegate supported a resolution in favour of a Jewish "national home" in Palestine, although the Soviet Union did not yet come out in favour of partition.

In 1946, the differences between the Arab and Jewish parties were very clear. The NLL called for an independent Arab state of Palestine, and did not accept that the Jews should have "equal national rights" there. The PCP supported the Zionist leadership in Palestine against Britain and called for "recognition of the existing Jewish community and its right to free national development." It called for the issue of Palestine to be put to the United Nations in order to take it out of the hands of "Anglo-US imperialism." However, it did not yet call for the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, but instead, for a single state with proportional representation for the two communities.

Until 1947, the international communist movement was opposed to any partition of Palestine—a "solution" which had been proposed for the first time ten years earlier by the British Peel Commission—and both national groupings of communists took the same position, in spite of their other divergences. This changed after the issue of Palestine's future was referred to the United Nations. Once the UN started to discuss the question in April, 1947, the Soviet Union had to clarify its own position. Its representative at first indicated that the Soviet Union favoured a solution based upon a single state in Palestine, but expressed the view that partition was a possible, if second best solution.

Then, in November 1947, the Soviet Union abruptly changed its position. Two reports were delivered to the UN by the United Nations

Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), The majority one advocated the partition of Palestine into two states—one Arab and one Jewish—within an economic union. Its proposals allocated 55% of Palestine to the Jewish state, although Jews made up only a third of Palestine's population and owned under 10% of its land. The Palestinian Arabs naturally objected to this. Not only did they see the actual partition proposals as unjust; they also rejected partition in principle, believing that, as the indigenous and majority population of Palestine, their wishes for the future of the country must come first, according to the principle of the right of nations to self-determination.

The minority report called for a single federal Palestinian state to be established upon the withdrawal of the British.

When the reports were presented, the Soviet Union came down in favour of the majority one. Soviet representative Andrei Gromyko argued that, while the Soviet Union supported the minority report in principle, it saw partition as the only practical solution in the situation of national conflict which existed.

This move was very significant historically. The Cold War was well under way, and as a result, the UN was the scene of regular clashes between the Soviet and US representatives. On this occasion, however, they found themselves on the same side of the fence. Both supported partition, and both leaned on their allies and friends to back a pro-partition resolution, which required the support of a two-thirds majority to be passed. In the event, it was carried with 33 votes for, 13 against and ten abstentions.

Of the 33 who voted for partition, 16 belonged to the "third world", but of those, 13 were Latin American and Caribbean states which were very much under the thumb of the USA. Of the remaining three, Liberia and the Philippines were both highly susceptible to US pressure (resulting in the Filipino representative making a strong statement against partition and then later being instructed by his government to support it), and South Africa was run by a white minority settler elite who could readily identify with the minority settler community in Palestine.

The 13 who voted against partition were the six Arab member states of the UN, Afghanistan, Cuba, Greece, India, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. China and Ethiopia had intended to vote against; but yielded to US pressure and abstained; the Philippines, Haiti and Liberia only backed partition in response to intense US pressure. The record of the voting and what went on before it took place can be seen in retrospect as the first major contest at UN level between the "developed" countries as a whole and the non-aligned/Third World. On this occasion, the Soviet Union clearly failed to appreciate the standpoint of oppressed, colonial peoples. It expressed sympathy for the Jews who had gone through the horrors of attempted genocide at the expense of the Palestinian Arabs; it underestimated the importance of the contradiction between the Arab national movement and Zionism, seeing it as less significant than short-term antagonism between the Zionists in Palestine and Britain.

Catastrophe

Within days of the Soviet Union's change of line, the world's communist parties followed its lead, without undertaking their own analysis or publicly indicating disquiet about this sudden shift. Ever since, this decision has been an albatross hanging around the necks of the Arab communist parties. Tendencies which were in competition with the communists for mass support over the years—Nasserists, Baathists and Muslim fundamentalists—frequently pointed to the Soviet Union's support for partition and the communist parties' endorsement of this as evidence of their opposition to the Arab national/Islamic cause, of the communists' treasonous character, of their unreliability, etc.

The PCP embraced the new Soviet position with fervour. Its Jewish membership was totally behind the establishment of a Jewish state, and could feel that, for the first time in their history, they had a policy which accorded with the wishes of the overwhelming majority of their community. The party supported the war effort of the Zionist forces in 1948, and its leader, Meir Vilner, was a signatory of Israel's declaration of independence. The PCP became the Communist Party of Israel.

The effect on the National Liberation League was disastrous. Its fragile base of support was shattered and the organisation split into fragments. At the end of the 1948, some Palestinian Arab communists remained within the frontiers of the new Israeli state, and joined the Communist Party of Israel. Those in the West Bank, annexed by Jordan in 1950, worked with the Jordanian Communist Party, while a small group in the Gaza Strip maintained an independent existence over the following decades, until, in 1981, it came together with the JCP members in the West Bank to form a new Palestinian Communist Party.

The CPGB and Palestine

The Communist Party of Great Britain's views on Palestine in the Twenties and Thirties were pretty much in line with those of the rest of the international communist movement, although they did cause it some problems. In the Thirties, the most determined anti-fascists were the communists. They were prepared to take on the British Union of Fascists and counter their anti-semitic activities, and also took a strong stand against Nazi Germany. Naturally, this drew to it the support of thousands of Jewish people, including hundreds who became party members. The members accepted party discipline and argued for its politics, but many felt a certain attachment to the Jewish community in Palestine, and one which grew stronger as the news about what the Nazis were doing to the Jews of occupied Europe emerged. The CPGB tended to accommodate itself to such feelings by stressing what it saw as British (later US) imperialism's divide and rule tactics, pitting Arabs against Jews in order to dominate both. Without saying this in so many words, such an approach tended to put the Zionist colonial community on the same basis as the indigenous Palestinian Arab people, thus playing down Zionism's necessarily oppressive role. This sort of viewpoint is still sometimes expressed by old party members, or ex-members.

When the Soviet Union voted for partition and then backed the new state of Israel when it was declared, the CPGB embraced the new line wholeheartedly. It condemned Labour Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, for obstructing Jewish immigration to Palestine and praised the establishment of Israel. William Gallacher, one of the CPGB's MPs, wrote about Palestine in his book, "Rise Like Lions" (1951), presenting a rather distorted version of the CPGB's record on the issue. It includes a poem, penned by Gallacher, entitled "A Flag is Born" (After the title of a Ben Hecht play which he had just seen) whose final verse is indicative of the sentiments of the entire piece:

"Now far away on Jordan's banks,
In challenge to the mighty great,
They march in ever-swelling ranks,
The Guardians of the Jewish State.
"A Flag is Born", oh ancient Jew!
There-Eretz Israel lives for you."

Three years after two-thirds of the Palestinian Arabs were turned into refugees, Gallacher did not see fit to mention them. Such an attitude was, unfortunately, typical at the time.

The Rebirth of the Palestinian National Movement

1948 was a year of disaster for the Palestinian Arab people, who still refer to the events of that year as "The Catastrophe". For nearly two decades, they were to be a people fragmented, with no independent voice of their own, living in the hope that the great powers, the UN or the Arab states would at least act to ensure the return of the refugees to their country. Some Palestinians joined pan-Arabist political organisations to further Arab unity, which they hoped would create a power great enough to defeat Israel, but they were to be disappointed. Ultimately, the Palestinians in the Nasserist Arab Nationalist Movement were to concentrate their attention on Palestinian matters, and reconstituted themselves as the core of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (from which the present-day Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine split in 1969).

Other Palestinians set out to build an independent Palestinian organisation from the mid-1950s onward, and their efforts resulted in the foundation of the Palestine National Liberation Movement, Al Fatah, which in 1965 launched an armed struggle for the liberation of Palestine. In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organisation was established, but at first it was largely a tool for controlling and channelling the reviving Palestinian national movement into directions acceptable to the Arab states, of which Egypt was the most influential at the time. It was only in 1969 that genuinely independent Palestinian forces, of which Fatah was the strongest, gained control of the PLO, which, in the course of the 1970's, came to be seen by the Palestinian people as a whole as their sole legitimate representative.

The policies and practices of the Palestinian communists set them at odds with the predominant trends in the revived national movement. The fragments of the former National Liberation League never revised their stance on partition, arguing that the Palestinian leadership was wrong to reject it in 1947. They maintained that a Palestinian Arab state could have been created as a result of partition, alongside Israel, and that the creation of a refugee problem could have been avoided, if only the Palestinian Arab leadership had formed an accurate assessment of the extent to which the international and regional balance of forces was tipped against the Palestinians. This has remained the view of communists such as Tawfiq Zayyad, Israeli Communist Party leader, up to the present day.

These arguments don't stand up to serious examination. The Zionist leadership in Palestine always intended that the establishment of a Jewish state in part of Palestine should only be a step towards the seizure of the entire land. For Ben Gurion and his colleagues, acceptance of partition was simply a tactical move. Moreover, as Avi Shlaim's recent book, "Collusion Across the Jordan" shows, not only the Zionist leadership but also King Abdullah of Transjordan intended that no independent Palestinian state should be allowed to emerge, and made arrangements accordingly. There is no reason to believe that large numbers of Palestinians would not have been expelled from the areas allocated to the Jewish state whatever the Palestinian leadership had done: a Jewish state could hardly have been built in areas where over 50% of the population were Arabs and the great majority of the land was owned by Arabs. The Zionist movement as a whole has had few moral qualms about what it did to the Palestinians, contrary to what most of its historians in the West have maintained.

The Palestinian communists accepted the legitimacy of the State of Israel within the borders it attained in 1948. They opposed the national movement that re-emerged in the 1960s in its aim of

liberating the whole land, even after Fatah (in 1969) and then the PLO had declared their aim to be the establishment of a democratic, non-sectarian state of Palestine. They also opposed the armed struggle, counterposing it, after 1967 and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, to mass struggle.

Today, with the Intifada in progress and with the PLO having clearly spelt out its willingness to accept a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Israeli Communist Party's Palestinian members and the Palestinian Communist Party have an "I told you so" attitude towards the other major PLO organisations. It seems rather smug, and not altogether justified. For one thing, it is quite unhistorical.

It was the armed struggle launched by Fatah, as well as operations by the PFLP, DFLP and others which made Palestine a factor in the politics of the Middle East again after the disaster of 1948. It was the struggle of these organisations which reformed a Palestinian collective identity and often provided hope and encouragement to the Palestinian people at the most difficult times. The communists' trade union work and activity on "bread and butter"/democratic rights issues would not, of themselves, have achieved such things, and were originally not even intended to do so. Within the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the late 60s-early 70s, the problem was not that the PLO organisations were pursuing a strategy of armed struggle, but that they underestimated the strength of their enemy and the importance of laying the foundations for a protracted, multi-level liberation struggle, and therefore neglected political and organisational work on legal, semi-legal and illegal lines to mobilise the mass of the people to the greatest possible extent. With the practical defeat of the early attempts at armed struggle inside the 1967 occupied territories by 1971, there was a gradual recognition of this weakness on the part of the leading PLO groups, and Fatah, PFLP and DFLP all began to lay greater stress upon political and organisational work. This laid the basis for the Intifada, which erupted in December, 1987.

The Intifada began as a spontaneous uprising, a reaction to the latest acts of Israeli repression. Nobody chose the moment when it would begin, but twenty years of occupation and years of Palestinian politicisation and organisation lay behind it. A leadership based inside Palestine was formed, which gave overall direction to the Uprising. It grouped Fatah, PFLP, DFLP and the PCP. From the start, there was a decision to limit the level of Palestinian violence-to use stones and molotov cocktails, but not guns-as well as engaging in protests and nation-building activities which were entirely non-violent. But, at the time of writing, while some sections of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation believe that the way forward lies through a continuation of the tactics employed in the Intifada to date (tactics which the PCP regards as the result of "progress" away from armed struggle towards the version of "mass struggle" which it has argued for), others think that Israel will not budge until the occupation becomes more costly, and some believe that will necessitate the use of internally based armed struggle. The issue of what direction the Uprising will take in the future is by no means decided.

As to the PLO's current "two states" position, orthodox communists might choose to portray the PLO's evolution towards this in terms of reason prevailing, of arguments played out (as Alain Gresh does in "The PLO: The Struggle Within"), but in fact, external factors played a major role in the emergence of this stand.

Thanks in large measure to the backing of Egypt's President Nasser, PLO Executive Committee Chairman Yasser Arafat was invited on his first official visit to the Soviet Union in February, 1970. After two more visits, the Soviet Union began to supply arms to the PLO in 1972. Ties became closer over the years that followed. At the same time, the PLO was moving away from affirming the objective of a democratic, non-sectarian state of Palestine towards a position more or less in line with that of the Soviet Union, which was never prepared to back any solution which would have involved dismantling the Israeli state. In 1974, the Palestine National Council the "parliament" of the PLO, adopted a ten point programme in response to diplomatic moves in the wake of the 1973 war, which looked as though they could lead to a peace agreement between Israel and its neighbours and Israeli withdrawal from some of the lands occupied in 1967. Point 2 of the programme declared:

"The PLO will struggle by every means-the foremost of which is armed struggle-to liberate Palestinian land and to establish the people's national, independent and fighting authority on every part of Palestinian land that is liberated..."

In talking of liberating "Palestinian land" rather than Palestine, and supporting the establishment of an independent authority on the liberated land, the PLO took its first step towards accepting a "two state" solution. In 1981, Soviet leader Brezhnev put forward proposals for a settlement which involved Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 occupied territories, the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the recognition by all concerned of all states in the area within "secure and recognised" boundaries. The PLO accepted these proposals. Then in 1988, under the impact of the Intifada rather than in response to Soviet urgings, the PNC put forward the most explicit statements yet accepting the possibility of making a peace agreement which would result in two states existing side by side within historic Palestine. By and large, people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip wanted some such position to be adopted in order to relieve them of the Israeli occupation, which was becoming more onerous by the day. Ironically enough, by this time the Soviet Union had entered a new phase in its foreign policy under Gorbachev, and was gradually improving its ties with Israel; it attached a low priority to trying to resolve the Palestine issue, and certainly was not inclined to let the USA's stance towards the Palestinians and Israel be an impediment to more relaxed relations with the USA. As the guest reached the dinner table, the host showed signs of leaving the room.

The attitude of China under Mao Zedong's leadership had been markedly different to that of the Soviet Union. In the early 1950s, contacts had taken place between Israel and China with a view to establishing diplomatic relations (which Israel already had with eastern Europe), but Israel was hesitant about such a move when it was well aware of the continued US efforts to isolate and undermine the People's Republic of China. While Israel hesitated, China became more appreciative of the views of the Arab countries and their friends, and the contacts came to an end. When the PLO was established, China supported it diplomatically and with weapons and training, becoming a strong critic of Israel. Premier Zhou Enlai once told the PLO representative in Beijing that even if all the Arab states recognised Israel, China never would. Following the deaths of Mao and Zhou in 1976, there was a gradual shift in the Chinese position. While it has not yet established diplomatic relations with Israel and still backs the PLO, China has effectively accepted that Israel should go on existing within its pre-1967 borders. It has purchased Israeli military equipment and developed a growing trade with Israel within the last few years.

The traditional communist movement followed the Soviet example for the most part. For example, the Communist Party of Great Britain

was absent from work in solidarity with the Palestinians in the 1960s, and only warmed to their struggle as the 1970s wore on. Of the various political tendencies in the left outside the Third World, only a few Marxist-Leninists have consistently supported the Palestinians right from when their liberation struggle was re-launched in the 1960s.

Conclusion

This outline is far from complete, and some questions have hardly been touched upon at all—for example, the relationship between the Israeli state, the Communist Party of Israel and the Soviet Union—but it does suggest certain things.

The international communist movement has never had a real appreciation of the place of the Palestinian struggle within the global struggle to defeat imperialism. While some of the Comintern's interventions in the affairs of the Palestine Communist Party had a positive impact as far as Palestinian Arabs were concerned, they did not take place within the context of a firm conception of the character of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine and the nature of the Palestinian national movement, and so their impact was lessened and was partially negated in the 1930s and 40s by the new directions taken by the Comintern and the Soviet Union. In more recent times, Soviet material and diplomatic support has to be set against the quiet pressure brought to bear on the PLO to move away from the practical and humane objective of a democratic non-sectarian state in the whole of Palestine towards that of establishing a state in 20% of the country—a solution which has the diplomatic advantage of appearing "moderate", even if in reality, it has neither justice nor practicality to commend it. If the Palestinians as a whole have been forced to lower their sights in this way, however, the fault lies not with them, but with the "natural allies" who have let them down. They face powerful enemies and great problems, but have proved determined and resilient. The road to Palestine's liberation cannot yet be mapped out, but the historical experience so far accumulated indicates that a continuing effort is needed to work out an independent revolutionary line, unhampered by any outside interference and unrestrained by any tendency to dogmatically toe international lines worked out to suit any "elder brother". Those people from other lands whose politics are revolutionary or progressive should try harder to appreciate the role of the Palestinian revolution, and work to step up solidarity with it.

Quite a number of books were consulted during the preparation of this talk, but a special mention should be made of Musa Budeiri's "The Palestine Communist Party: 1919-1948", which was valuable for the first parts of the above.