

CHARLES B. MCLANE

Soviet Strategies in Southeast Asia

*An Exploration of Eastern Policy under
Lenin and Stalin*



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STRATEGIES
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

*An Exploration of Eastern Policy
under Lenin and Stalin*

BY CHARLES B. McLANE

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To Carol

Preface

A DISTINCTIVE feature of Khrushchev's foreign policy was the fresh attention his regime directed to the emerging nations of Asia and Africa. This interest is usually dated from 1955, soon after Khrushchev gained the Soviet leadership. In that year the Russians acclaimed the first Afro-Asian conference at Bandung, reversing their earlier stand on neutralism and acknowledging the validity of non-alignment; they welcomed in Moscow former "running dogs" of American and British imperialism such as Nehru and U Nu; Khrushchev and Bulganin made what was described in the Russian press as a "triumphal tour" of the Asian sub-continent; more ominously, Moscow's determination to play a more vigorous role in the Near East and North Africa was revealed in a critical arms agreement between Czechoslovakia and Egypt. Since 1955 the Kremlin has made it clear that no part of the colonial, former colonial, or semi-colonial world lies outside the scope of its interest. This interest has been manifested in greatly expanded trade with Asia, Africa, and South America, in widening diplomatic contacts with the new nations, in an elaborate system of cultural and aid programs, not excluding military assistance to selected countries, and in many other ways.

No one need doubt that Khrushchev's attention to the developing nations affected world affairs. It promoted the identity of these nations and gave new stature to their spokesmen. It quickened the desire of subject peoples for independence and in some cases hastened the process of independence. It caused affluent Western powers, the United States in particular, to devote more energy and funds than they might otherwise have allocated to the modernization of the once underdeveloped world. A new spotlight was cast on the emerging nations. Vast competition among the Great Powers was launched for their allegiance, or at least for their good will. The bipolar world of the post-war era was replaced by a world of infinitely varied and complex relationships between states. A shift in Soviet foreign policy once again influenced the course of international relations, much as

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Andrei Zhdanov's articulation of the "two camp" thesis in 1947 fixed the character of international relations during the Cold War.

It is important to understand the origins of the Russian shift. Some Western observers, struck by the speed with which Moscow in the mid-1950's abandoned its hostility toward unaligned nations such as India, Egypt, and Indonesia, have tended to think of Russian interest in the developing nations as of comparatively recent origin, dating from Khrushchev's ascendancy. Others, consumed by resentment of what they felt to be Russia's presumptuous and meddlesome intervention in an already troubled arena of international politics, have viewed Soviet motives as designed principally to embarrass the Western Powers and have discounted any genuine interest Moscow might have in Asia and Africa. In point of fact, concern with the colonial—or, as it was called, the Eastern—question can be traced back to the first years after the Russian Revolution. The East, it is true, did not engage Moscow's attentions as persistently as the West, either in a revolutionary sense or in the Russians' periodic search for normal diplomatic intercourse (which was in any case out of the question where the nations concerned were dependent). Nor were Soviet policies in the East normally based on as much detailed knowledge of local conditions as were policies with respect to more developed countries; the social and political systems of Burma and Indochina, for instance, were never as familiar to Russians as those of England and France—even with the distortions often arising from their Marxist-Leninist outlook. The Russians did, however, devise theories of social and political development in the colonial and semi-colonial East which they fitted into their general philosophy of world affairs and which they sought to apply as opportunities arose. Indeed, in the sense of suggesting to the subject peoples of the East an alternative to a dependency they increasingly wished to rid themselves of, the Soviet Union may be said to have taken a *constructive* interest in the colonial world some years before a similar concern developed in the West. The present study, then, is a search for origins. What was the nature of Moscow's interest in the East under Lenin and Stalin, before Khrushchev's more decisive concern with Eastern affairs

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in the mid-1950's? How did Soviet colonial policies—that is, policies toward colonial and semi-colonial countries—unfold in one sector of the Eastern world? Do these policies suggest a pattern of Soviet behavior in the East at large?

The selection of Southeast Asia as a proving-ground of Soviet strategies in the East has not been made at random. It followed, in the first instance, from the author's having had some prior acquaintance with the area—an acquaintance that grew during the years while research was in progress and, in particular, during two extended visits in 1961 and 1962 that took the author to each of the countries treated in this study, in several cases more than once. The selection of Southeast Asia in any case needs no apology. Many considerations make this area well suited to the purposes of the present study. Its proximity, for instance, to China and India, two persistent targets of Moscow's strategies in the East, give special pertinence to parallel strategies in Southeast Asia; the Chinese revolution in particular, vividly mirrored in the course of events in Southeast Asia, at times stimulated and at times frustrated Soviet policies. It was in Southeast Asia that the first Communist thrust in the East after World War II, an outgrowth of Zhdanovism, took place. The startling contrasts in Southeast Asia, meanwhile, posed a demanding test of Russian ingenuity. The widely divergent conditions which influenced the development of local nationalist and Communist movements made it impossible for the Russians to rely on fixed formulas and so bring to light different facets of their colonial strategies. The fact too that the Russians competed in Southeast Asia with several varieties of foreign imperialism meant that their policies reflected the complex interplay of Stalin's dual concern with revolution abroad and normal relations with the Great Powers. These circumstances, among others, make Southeast Asia an excellent prism through which to study Soviet policies in the East.

It is easier by far to indicate what the present study sets out to accomplish than to foretell with confidence how it is to be done. The search for materials that might shed light on Soviet strategies has been extensive and for certain periods, if it does not sound immodest to say so, exhaustive. Yet the evidence is uneven

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and sometimes fragmentary. It is useful to review briefly at this juncture the types of sources that have been consulted. Most relate, of course, to Southeast Asia, but Soviet activity elsewhere in the colonial and semi-colonial world (notably in China and India) has not been overlooked. Chapter One, for instance, is given over entirely to the evolution of Moscow's Eastern policies during the decade following the Russian Revolution, with little specific reference to Southeast Asia; succeeding chapters open with a discussion of Moscow's general objectives in the East at a given stage, seen in the context of Stalin's world-wide strategies.

The principal evidence on which this study relies is extracted from Russian publications, especially contemporaneous Soviet and Comintern (later Cominform) periodicals, which are unencumbered by afterthought and hindsight. To the uninitiated the Russian press is often incomprehensible, a mixture of half-truths and what appear to be willful self-deceptions. It is, however, the permanent record of Soviet strategies and accordingly the constant companion of any student of Russian affairs. Even with the yawning gaps where Southeast Asia is concerned, Russian periodicals provide the fullest testimony of Moscow's policies there.

Evidence of Moscow's strategies in the East is not, of course, confined to what is recorded in Soviet and Soviet-controlled publications. Since Russian policy may reasonably be said to embrace any activity that Moscow approves (or in some cases merely refrains from disapproving), however initiated, efforts to discover it in Southeast Asia inevitably lead to consideration of the course of local nationalist as well as Communist movements and the encouragement given these movements by metropolitan and other Asian parties. A few primary records of local Communist movements in Southeast Asia shed light on these matters, although the authenticity of such records is often difficult to establish. The files of former colonial administrations, where they are open to scholars, are also of value despite their tendency to exaggerate both the extent of local Communist activity and Soviet responsibility for it. Materials relating to metropolitan Communist parties such as the French and British, and to Asian parties such as the Chinese and Indian, further illuminate Communist strate-

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gies in Southeast Asia. The author has made what use he could of this scattered documentation but is much indebted to students of Southeast Asian affairs who have already sifted through it and published their findings. It would have been impossible for this writer, working alone, to trace Russian policies in Southeast Asia without ready access to the work, for instance, of George M. Kahin and Ruth T. McVey on Indonesia; of Renze L. Hoeksema on the Philippines; of I. Milton Sacks on Indochina; and of Gene Z. Hanrahan and Lucien Pye on Malaya. (These studies and others are listed in the Bibliography.) The gaps that remained have been filled as well as possible by evidence the author himself was able to gather in interviews during 1961 and 1962 with several dozen Southeast Asians, ranging from prominent opponents of Communism (such as Phoumi Nosavan of Laos and the late Ngo Diem Nhu of South Vietnam) to former Communist leaders serving jail sentences for insurrection (such as Luis Taruc and José Lava of the Philippines); their testimony, of course, supplements data based on documentary sources yet it has often provided insights into Southeast Asian affairs not otherwise available. (A list of these informants as well as a brief itemization of the topics that the author discussed with them is also included in the Bibliography.)

Raw data relating to Russian policies in Southeast Asia, thus, are not lacking. Great care, however, must be exercised in the use of these data. No service is done future students of Southeast Asian affairs by a painstaking reconstruction of Soviet strategies based on data that cannot be verified. The trick, in short, lies not in discovering new "evidence," engaging as this enterprise may be, but in making the evidence sustain a plausible argument. To this end the author has sought to underplay the evidence at hand and to avoid the temptation of rendering a fuller account of Russian policy in Southeast Asia than the facts will support. Whether or not he has succeeded the reader must judge for himself.

The list of individuals to whom the author owes a debt of gratitude in connection with the present study is both long and impossible to give here in full. Some informants are listed in the

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Bibliography as interviewees, and the author's gratitude to them, to the humble as well as to the illustrious, is very real. Others, however, often the most helpful and the most generous with their time and expertise, are government officials in Southeast Asia and should not be named. It must suffice to acknowledge the latter *incognito* but no less warmly. Acknowledgment is made of the permission given the writer by the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of Malaya to inspect certain early records of Malayan Communism, records which greatly enriched his understanding of the evolution of this movement; this permission was arranged through the good offices of Professor Anthony Short of the University of Malaya, who is currently engaged in research on the Malayan Emergency. The assistance of a former student, John B. Starr, who as a Senior Fellow of Dartmouth College accompanied the author on his 1961 visit to Southeast Asia, should also be acknowledged here. Travel grants for the 1961 and 1962 visits were awarded, respectively, by the Russian Research Center of Harvard University and by the Cultural Affairs Program of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. Grants from Dartmouth College covered the costs of a brief trip to Leningrad in 1961 in search of materials and, subsequently, of preparing the manuscript. Mrs. Joan Erdman was indispensable in organizing the Index. None of these individuals or institutions, of course, bear responsibility for any shortcomings of the present study.

The author's very lively sense of gratitude, finally, should be expressed to his wife, Carol Evarts McLane, who has read the manuscript from beginning to end for style and coherence, suffered with forbearance the domestic inconvenience of authorship, and offered solace beyond any call of duty. On plea of modesty she avoided the intended dedication to her of an earlier volume which she helped to shape no less than this; the writer and husband has determined that her modesty should not prevail a second time.

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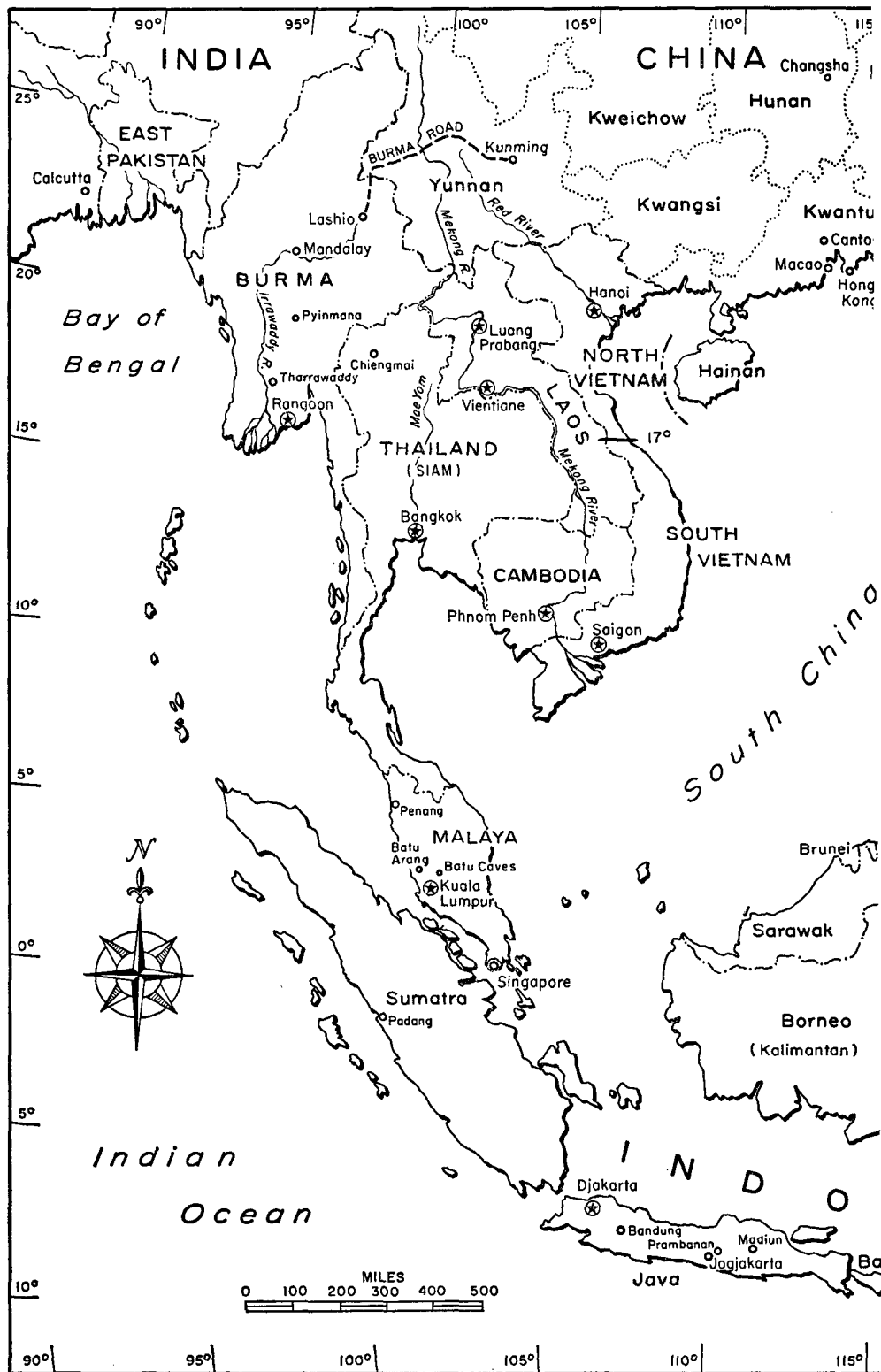
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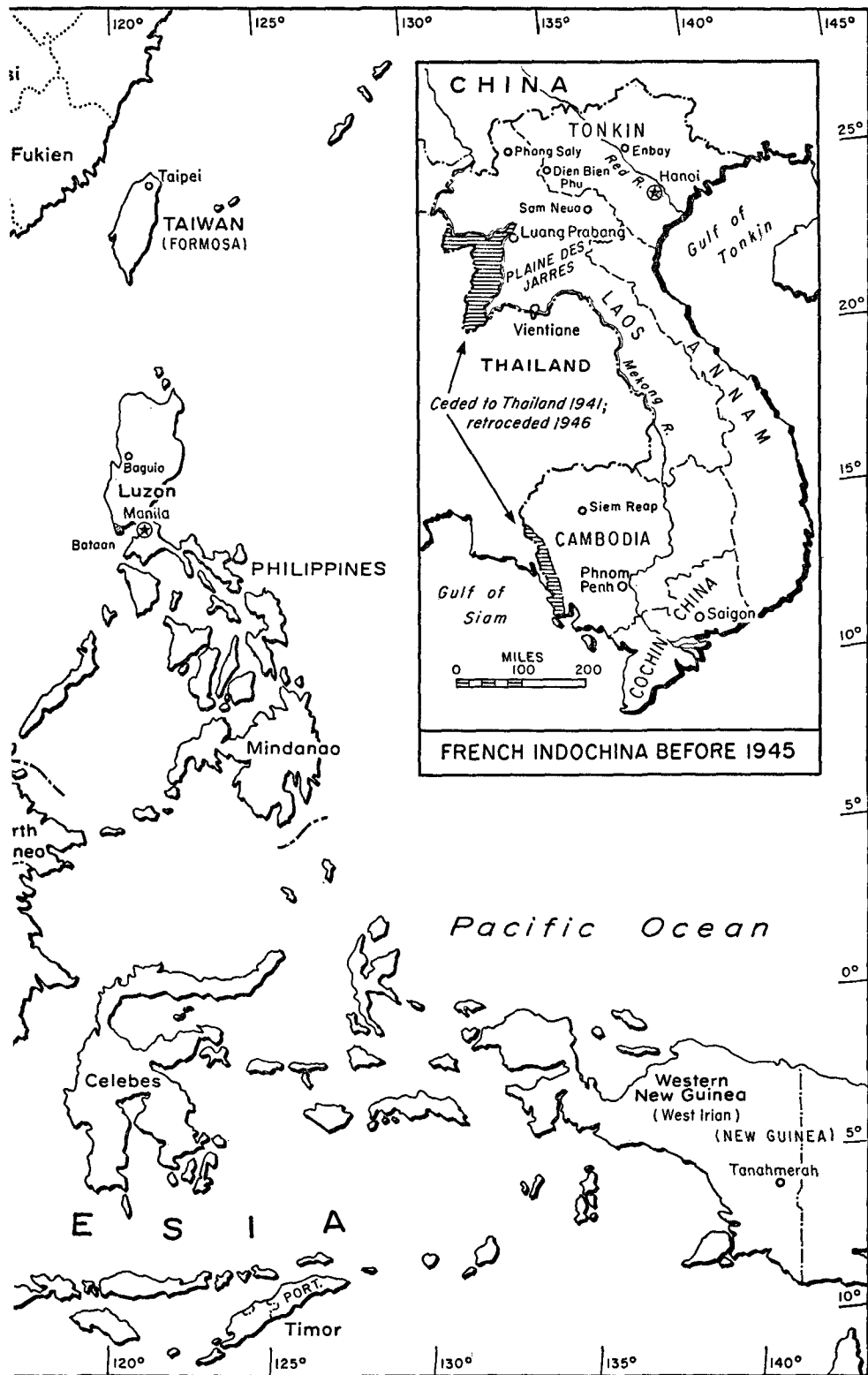
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Soviet Strategies in Southeast Asia

CHAPTER ONE

The Evolution of Soviet Eastern Policy: 1917-1928

WHATEVER one may think of the relationship between theory and practice in Soviet foreign policy, the deference Moscow pays to theory compels us to know what it is, or what it is said to be. It is possible to discover this without succumbing to the Marxian notion that theory, or ideology, is derived from certain immutable laws. In reality, as the following discussion will show, much of Soviet theory, and indeed much of Soviet practice itself, is contrived, answerable to no fixed logic and as fluid as theory and practice are in less pretentious systems.

In particular, we need to understand something of early Soviet theories regarding the "East," which embraces the area of our focus. Moscow did not initially devote much attention to South-east Asia, but when it did the strategies devised were in the context of a set of theories already formulated for the "East" in general. The theories were not without contradictions, but they were nonetheless consulted more or less systematically. They are, in consequence, relevant to our study, and it is the purpose of the present chapter to review them, together with some of the general strategies founded on them.

The word "East" did not always have an exact meaning for Moscow. In the months immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution, for instance, the East (*Vostok*) appears to have signified no more than the Asian parts of the former Russian Empire, especially Tataria and Turkestan. By mid-1918 the term was being used to describe the Muslim world both inside and outside the Soviet Union. By the end of 1918 the word was freely used, as in Stalin's much-quoted article "Don't Forget the East,"¹ to describe all of Asia, including China. Thereafter the concept grew gradually to embrace, as a leading Soviet Orientalist wrote in 1921, "the entire colonial world, the world of the oppressed peo-

¹ The article first appeared in *Zhizn' natsional'nostei*, No. 3, November 24, 1918; a partial English translation is in Eudin and North, *Soviet Russia and the East*, pp. 156-7.

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ples not only of Asia but of Africa and South America—in a word, that entire world the exploitation of which nourished the might of capitalist society in Europe and the United States.”² On occasion it was even suggested that countries such as Germany, Austria, and Hungary, by virtue of their defeat in World War I and their subsequent “exploitation” by the victorious capitalist powers, qualified as Eastern countries.³ Normal usage, however, limited the East to colonies and semi-colonies (principally in Asia, since that was the focus of Soviet Eastern policy in the 1920’s) and we will follow that usage in the present chapter.

PRE-REVOLUTIONARY MARXIAN VIEWS OF THE EAST

Marx had nothing to say on the focal area of this study, and in all likelihood could not have distinguished one Southeast Asian country from another. He did, however, comment—at wide intervals—on China and on Ireland, and from these comments it is possible to gain an idea of how the colonial (or national) question fitted into his scheme of world revolution.

As early as 1853 Marx saw in the Taiping rebellion in China the possibility of a sufficient contraction of British trade to trigger revolution in England and eventually throughout Europe. The Taiping rebellion, he wrote, “will throw the spark into the overloaded mine of the present industrial system and cause the explosion of the long-prepared general crisis [in England], which, spreading abroad, will be closely followed by political revolution on the Continent.” He continued: “It would be a curious spectacle, that of China sending disorder into the Western World while the Western Powers, by English, French and American warsteamers, are conveying ‘order’ to Shanghai, Nanking and the mouths of the Grand Canal.”⁴

Doubtless Marx was more intrigued by the hypothetical “spectacle” than seriously persuaded his prediction would come true, but there is here the genesis of an idea that was to re-emerge in

² M. N. Veltman (Pavlovich) in *Novyi Vostok*, No. 1, 1922, p. 1.

³ See the article by M. Rafail in *Lenin i Vostok*, p. 13.

⁴ Karl Marx, “Revolution in China and in Europe,” *New York Daily Tribune*, June 14, 1853; cited in *Marx on China: 1853-1860* (London, 1951), p. 7.

Pre-Revolutionary Marxian Views of the East

Soviet thinking after 1917: the idea that revolutions in colonial and semi-colonial countries, by denying markets and resources to imperialist powers, could cause revolutions in Europe. Marx from time to time returned to the thesis, especially in his comments on Ireland. Summarizing his views on Ireland in 1870, he wrote: "After occupying myself with the Irish question for many years, I have come to the conclusion that the decisive blow against the English ruling classes (and it will be decisive for the workers' movement all over the world) *cannot* be delivered *in England* but *only in Ireland*. . . . Ireland is the bulwark of the *English landed aristocracy*. The exploitation of that country is not only one of the main sources of this aristocracy's material wealth; it is their greatest *moral* strength. It, in fact, represents the *domination of England over Ireland*. Ireland is therefore the great means by which the English aristocracy maintains *its domination in England itself*. . . . The overthrow of the English aristocracy in Ireland involves as a necessary consequence its overthrow in England. And this would fulfil the preliminary condition for the proletarian revolution in England."⁵

Lenin was attentive to certain of Marx's views on Ireland (notably that Ireland must first secede from England before a free alliance between the two nations could be brought about),⁶ but he gave little attention to Marx's argument concerning colonial revolution as the means of revolution in the metropolitan. His *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (written in 1916), where one would surely expect to find discussion of such a thesis, contains none. The implication there is that revolution would occur first in Europe and only subsequently in the colonies. The East in fact drew little attention from Lenin prior to

⁵ *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Correspondence* (Moscow, 1956), p. 285; letter to S. Meyer and A. Vogt, April 9, 1870 (emphasis in original).

⁶ Lenin used this argument to show that his support of secession within the Czarist Empire, prior to the Russian Revolution, was not in pursuit of any idea of small states but, on the contrary, to prepare the conditions for large states united "on a truly democratic, truly international basis"; see, for instance, his article in November 1915, entitled "The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," in *Sochineniia*, xxi, p. 377 (unless otherwise indicated, all references to Lenin's *Sochineniia* are to the Fourth Edition, 1947-50).

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1917. An article in 1913 entitled "Backward Europe and Advanced Asia," in which Lenin claims the existence of a "mighty democratic movement" everywhere in Asia, should not mislead us; it seems clearly to have been written in hostility toward the projected Great Power loan to Yuan Shih-kai, at the expense of the new Chinese Republic, and his claim is not repeated in other writings of this period.⁷ In 1916 Lenin included colonies and semi-colonies in his general formula on the right of self-determination, arguing that their struggle for liberation "in its political expression signifies nothing more nor less than the recognition of this right"; but he did not suggest that national liberation in the East was as vital in the revolutionary process as self-determination in the subject countries of Europe, such as Poland and Ireland.⁸ The most that Lenin ever argued before the Russian Revolution, concerning the relationship between revolutions in the colonies and in Europe, was that the social revolution could occur only in "an epoch of civil war against the bourgeoisie in the advanced countries *combined with* a whole series of democratic and revolutionary movements . . . in the underdeveloped, backward and oppressed nations."⁹ And even assertions such as this occur too rarely in Lenin's pre-revolutionary writings to warrant the assumption that he placed much reliance on colonial upheavals.

The discussion of the national question before 1917, which is of course the only clue to any Bolshevik "colonial policy," involved mainly the legalistic question of a "right" to independence. The question had two parts, as Lenin stated it in 1913: "the right of nations to self-determination and the attitude the socialist proletariat should adopt towards this right."¹⁰ The voluminous writ-

⁷ The article was first published in *Pravda*, May 18, 1913; see *Sochineniia*, xix, pp. 77-8. Lenin also wrote several articles on the Chinese revolution itself, generally critical of Sun Yat-sen and seeing no great future in his leadership; e.g., "Democracy and Narodism in China" (July 1912) and "Regenerated China" (November 1912), *ibid.*, xviii, pp. 143-9, 371-2.

⁸ Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (March 1916), *ibid.*, xxii, pp. 139-40.

⁹ Lenin, "Concerning a Caricature of Marxian and 'Imperialist Economics'" (October 1916), *ibid.*, xxiii, p. 48 (emphasis added).

¹⁰ Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," *ibid.*, xx, p. 396.

Pre-Revolutionary Marxian Views of the East

ing on the national question among Marxists, which is heavier in polemics than in consistency, underscores at least one important consideration—the need to distinguish between the right itself and the political advisability of exercising it. On the latter point Lenin acknowledged that there might be different attitudes by Marxists in different countries. “The right to unite,” he wrote in April 1917, applying the prevailing Bolshevik formula on self-determination to Poland, “implies the right to secede. We Russians must emphasize the right [of Poland] to secede, while the Poles must emphasize the right to unite.”¹¹ This was probably as succinct a statement as could be made, and it remained, in theory at least, the Bolshevik formulation on self-determination as long as the national question was in the forefront. The only significant modification of the formula after the Bolshevik Revolution was the not surprising stipulation that, at least in the portions of the former Czarist Empire to which the Bolsheviks laid claim, the right of self-determination was properly exercised only by elements sympathetic to the revolution—which meant, of course, that it was not to be exercised at all.

If a Bolshevik “Eastern policy” may be inferred from these pre-revolutionary writings, it amounted simply to an alleged “right” of colonies and semi-colonies to seek independence from their oppressors. The Bolsheviks were committed to support this effort (except perhaps in the “Eastern” portions of Russia itself), and they trusted that the colonial risings would occur close enough to risings in Europe so that the world-wide social revolution could unfold simultaneously. The question of whether to support bourgeois democratic or proletarian elements in the colonies had not yet arisen in Bolshevik calculations, inasmuch as colonial proletariats did not exist and even bourgeois democratic movements, according to Lenin in 1916, “have either hardly begun, or are far from being completed.”¹² The “policy” had the virtue of simplicity and showed none of the deviousness of paral-

¹¹ Lenin, *ibid.*, xxiv, p. 265; from Lenin's speech on the national question at the All-Russian Conference of the RSDLP, May 12, 1917.

¹² Lenin, “The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination,” *ibid.*, xxii, p. 140.

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lel policies for revolution in Europe; it proved, however, either too virtuous or too naïve for political realities in the East.

BOLSHEVIK BEACONS IN THE EAST

After coming to power, the Bolsheviks inevitably directed a portion of their attention eastward, first to the Asiatic peoples of Russia itself, later to all the peoples of Asia and the Near East. As early as May 1918, Stalin, People's Commissar for the Nationalities, spoke of the new Tatar-Bashkir Soviet Republic as "a living beacon to the Muslim peoples of the East, lighting the path to their emancipation from oppression."¹³ In November 1918, addressing the First Congress of Muslim Communists in Moscow, Stalin was more explicit about the role Russia's Islamic peoples could play beyond the borders of the Soviet republics. "No one," he said, "can erect a bridge between the West and the East as easily and quickly as you can. This is because a door is opened for you to Persia, India, Afghanistan and China. The liberation of the peoples of these countries from the yoke of the imperialists would . . . undermine imperialism at its very foundation."¹⁴

Stalin returns here—and he appears to have been the first Bolshevik to do so—to Marx's long-neglected thesis that colonial revolution, especially in Asia, could hasten revolution in Europe. There was no agreement among Soviet leaders, however, that revolution in the East was *essential* to revolution in the West or would necessarily precede it. This, indeed, remained a question on which there would be differences of opinion for many years. Trotsky, for instance, speaking at the founding congress of the Communist International in March 1919, stated: "The workers and peasants not only of Annam, Algeria, Bengal but also of Persia and Armenia will obtain the possibility of independent existence only on the day when the workers of England and France will have overthrown Lloyd George and Clemenceau and

¹³ Stalin, *Sochineniia*, IV, p. 92.

¹⁴ *Zhizn' natsional'nostei*, November 24, 1918, p. 2, cited in Eudin and North, *Soviet Russia and the East*, p. 77; for reasons not clear, the text of the address is not included in Stalin's *Sochineniia*.

Bolshevik Beacons in the East

taken the state power into their hands.”¹⁵ A few weeks later Zinoviev, in a mood of extreme optimism generated by recent events in Hungary and Bavaria, wrote that within a year Europe would be Communist “and the struggle will have spread to America, perhaps to Asia too.”¹⁶ Clearly Trotsky and Zinoviev believed national liberation in the East was contingent on Communist successes in Europe.

Other Bolshevik spokesmen argued in an opposite sense. In 1918 an early Soviet volume on revolution in the East considered that “the Persian revolt can become the key to a general revolution.”¹⁷ In May 1919 an article appearing in *Zhizn’ natsional’nostei* (organ of Stalin’s Commissariat for the Nationalities) described Marx as having foreseen that “the Communist revolution must be preceded by a number of national revolutions of the oppressed peoples, and first of all India and the peoples of the East.”¹⁸ It is unlikely that Marx ever made so firm a prediction, but it is instructive that an authoritative Soviet writer makes the claim. After Russian Turkestan (Central Asia) had been recovered by the Bolsheviks in September 1919, an editorial in *Zhizn’ natsional’nostei* observed that this success offset the recent loss of the Ukraine because the Soviet Union now bordered on Afghanistan and “from Afghanistan the road leads to Hindustan [India], the possible key to world revolution.”¹⁹ Another writer in *Zhizn’ natsional’nostei*, an Asian protégé of Stalin, charged that it was a strategic blunder to give priority to the revolution in the West when the weakest link in the capitalist chain was the East.²⁰

¹⁵ *Der I Kongress der Kommunistischen Internationale: Protokoll* (Hamburg, 1921), p. 5; cited in Boersner, *The Bolsheviks and the National and Colonial Question*, p. 66.

¹⁶ *Kommunisticheskii internatsional*, May 1, 1919; cited in Degras, *Communist International*, 1, p. 51.

¹⁷ Troianovsky, *Vostok i revoliutsiia*, p. 47, cited in Eudin and North, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

¹⁸ Palinkaitis, “Turkestan i revoliutsii Vostoka,” *Zhizn’ natsional’nostei*, May 26, 1919, p. 2, and in Eudin and North, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

¹⁹ *Zhizn’ natsional’nostei*, September 21, 1919, p. 1, cited in *ibid.*, p. 161.

²⁰ *Zhizn’ natsional’nostei*, October 5 and 12, November 2, 1919; cited in Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* (Harvard, 1954), p. 169. The writer was Mirza Sultan-Galiev, a Tatar.

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Lenin and Stalin themselves, addressing the Second Congress of Muslim Communists in November 1919, spoke with only slightly less enthusiasm of the revolutionary role of the Eastern colonies. Lenin, for instance, stated that "without the help of the toiling masses of all suppressed colonial peoples, especially the peoples of the East, the English, French, and German workers will not succeed."²¹

It is not easy then to fix a consistent Bolshevik attitude toward the East during the first years after the Revolution. This should surprise no one. There was still relatively wide freedom of expression at this time, within certain limits established by the Revolution, and honest differences of opinion among Bolshevik leaders were not unusual. Moreover, as the fortunes of the Civil War shifted back and forth on the Eastern and the Western fronts, it was natural for Soviet spokesmen to respond by shifting their emphasis between East and West. It was equally natural when Russians addressed assemblies of Asians, such as the two congresses of Muslim Communists, for them to accent the role of the Muslims in establishing "beacons" and "bridges" to the rest of Asia. Muslims themselves, such as Mirza Sultan-Galiev, emphasized the revolutionary potential of the East as a matter of course. The focus of the Bolsheviks, however, measured by any reasonable analysis of their propaganda and of the energy they expended during these years, remained in Europe. It was there that the first concrete steps were taken to extend the revolution; it was from Europe, not Asia, that delegates came in 1919 to found the Third International. As Bukharin stated the argument for an Eastern orientation shortly after the founding of the International: "If we propound the solution of the right of self-determination for the colonies . . . we lose nothing by it. On the contrary, we gain. The most outright nationalist movement . . . is only water for our mill, since it contributes to the destruction of English imperialism."²² Whatever, at any event,

²¹ Lenin, *Sochineniia*, xxx, p. 140; Stalin's address is in his *Sochineniia*, iv, pp. 279-80.

²² Cited in Degras, *The Communist International*, 1, p. 138; from Bukharin's speech before the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party.

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was *said* of revolution in the East—as support, prerequisite, or consequence of revolution in the West—little was accomplished there beyond the perimeter of Bolshevik control.

In the last analysis, the attitudes expressed by Lenin and Stalin must be taken as the most authoritative—Stalin's, because of his closeness to the Eastern question in his role as Commissar for the Nationalities; Lenin's, because he was Lenin. Stalin, the first Bolshevik to draw attention to the East after the Revolution and to reintroduce Marx's thesis of a link between revolutions in Asia and Europe, leaves no question as to the ultimately greater importance of Europe. Note, for instance, his formulation of the problem in his article "Don't forget the East," referred to above: "At a time when the revolutionary movement is rising in Europe, when old thrones and crowns are tumbling and giving way to revolutionary Soviets of workers and soldiers . . . , the eyes of all are naturally turned to the West. It is there, in the West, that the chains of imperialism, which were forged in Europe and which are strangling the whole world, must first of all be smashed. It is there, in the West, that the new socialist life must first of all be forged."²³ Only after this reminder does Stalin come to the point of his article: "Yet the East should not be forgotten for a single moment, if only because it represents the 'inexhaustible' reserve and 'most reliable' rear of world imperialism." Stalin added very little to this formulation in subsequent years.

Lenin, in the meantime, although perhaps less consistent than Stalin on the Eastern question in the years before the Second Comintern Congress in 1920, appears to have given a similar priority to Europe. On the eve of the Second Congress he gave this answer to a direct question by a Japanese correspondent concerning the best chances of Communist success, in the East or the West: "True Communism can succeed only in the West at the present time. However, the West lives at the expense of the East; the European imperialist powers prosper chiefly as a result of their Eastern colonies. At the same time they are arming their

²³ Stalin, *Sochineniia*, IV, p. 171.

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colonies and teaching them how to fight, and in doing so they are digging their own graves in the East."²⁴

THE EASTERN QUESTION AT THE SECOND COMINTERN CONGRESS: 1920

The increasing attention given the Eastern question by Soviet spokesmen ensured its being included conspicuously on the agenda of the Second Comintern Congress in July and August 1920. Lenin himself, early in June, drafted theses on the national and colonial question, which were published prior to the congress. Following a discussion of the theses in the Commission on the National and Colonial Question, Lenin personally introduced them to the full congress on July 26. Adopted with minor changes, Lenin's theses became the major statement of Comintern policy in the East for many years.²⁵

The discussion of the colonial question during the Second Congress reveals many differing viewpoints which Lenin's theses could not wholly resolve. Had the question put to the congress been simply "Shall there be greater attention to the East?" there would have been negligible disagreement. Subsidiary questions, however, inevitably injected themselves into the debate and in the end all but submerged the basic query: How *much* attention to the East? Was the East to be considered more important than the West? Was revolution in Asia to precede revolution in Europe, or vice versa? These were issues which, as we have seen, had already been debated to some extent by Bolshevik spokesmen and which were now for the first time being discussed in an international Communist forum. The widened forum raised new questions: What responsibility for nurturing revolutionary movements in the colonies fell on the metropolitan parties? What allies in the East were Communists to seek?

Lenin's draft touched, though often vaguely, on most of these questions. Developments since the end of the war, he argued, showed that promises by capitalist states to honor the principles

²⁴ *Lenin i Vostok*, p. 63; the interview, with Katsuchi Fuse, took place on June 4, 1920.

²⁵ The text of the draft is in Lenin, *Sochineniia*, xxxi, pp. 122-9; the theses as adopted are in *Vtoroi Kongress Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala*, pp. 491-5, and are widely reprinted and translated in other sources.

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of equality and self-determination were fraudulent, that national boundaries would continue to be altered—or not altered—in accordance with the economic interests of the imperialist powers, and that the “so-called League of Nations is nothing but the insurance contract by which the victors in the war mutually guarantee each other’s spoils.” Accordingly Comintern policy on the national and colonial question must seek “the closest alliance of all national and colonial movements of liberation with Soviet Russia, the precise form of this alliance to correspond to the stage of development of the Communist movement among the proletariat of each country or of the bourgeois democratic liberation movement of workers and peasants in the backward countries or among backward nationalities.” In the case of countries able to create soviet regimes, Lenin proposed a temporary form of federation with the Soviet Union, such as the RSFSR, and argued that without such a federation “it will be impossible for the Soviet Republics to survive, surrounded as they are by the imperialist powers of the world which from a military viewpoint are incomparably stronger.”

Lenin does not appear to have had the colonies of the East specifically in mind in this proposed federation for he returns to the special problem of the “more backward feudal or patriarchal or patriarchal-peasant nations” later in the theses.²⁶ In paragraph 11 he advances six policies for these areas:

- a. “All Communist Parties must support the bourgeois democratic movement of liberation in these countries,” primary responsibility to fall on the workers of the country on which the backward nation is dependent.
- b. The influence of the priesthood and of similar reactionary and medieval elements must be resisted.

²⁶ The extent to which the “national” or “Eastern” question still referred to Europe, rather than Asia, is also suggested by Stalin’s response to Lenin’s draft, which was sent to him for comment prior to publication: in a short letter to Lenin (Stalin was in South Russia at the time) he virtually ignores the Asian colonies and confines himself to the argument that confederation, not federation, will better ensure the union of future soviet republics in Europe to the USSR and thus make the theses “more elastic.” The text of Stalin’s letter is in Lenin, *Sochineniia*, 2nd ed., xxv, p. 624, translated in Eudin and North, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-8.

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- c. Pan-Islamic and like tendencies must also be resisted.
- d. The peasantry must be supported and peasant movements given a more revolutionary character through the formation of soviets.
- e. Any tendency to paint bourgeois democratic movements in Communist colors must be avoided. "The Communist International must support bourgeois democratic national movements in the colonies and backward nations only on condition that elements of future proletarian parties in these countries . . . be grouped together and educated to appreciate their special tasks: to struggle against the bourgeois democratic movements in their countries. The Communist International must enter into temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonies and backward countries, but must not merge with it and must above all preserve the independence of the proletarian movement even if it exists only in the most rudimentary form."
- f. The deception of the imperialist powers in creating ostensibly independent states which are in fact wholly dependent must be systematically exposed.²⁷

At Lenin's request, supplementary theses were prepared by the Indian delegate M. N. Roy²⁸ and discussed by the commission prior to presentation to the congress. Roy's theses were not fundamentally in conflict with Lenin's, but they treated two aspects of the problem differently. First, Roy placed more emphasis than Lenin had on the dependence of European revolutions on Asian. "Super-profit obtained from the colonies," he asserted, "is the mainstay of modern capitalism. It will not be easy for the European working class to overthrow the capitalist order until the latter is deprived of this source of super-profit. . . . Consequently, the Communist International must widen the sphere of its activity."²⁹ This idea was reiterated throughout the supplementary

²⁷ Lenin, *Sochineniia*, xxxi, pp. 122-9; the portions quoted are translated from the text, the remainder paraphrased. It should be noted that these are the original theses, before revision.

²⁸ Roy, who was to become one of the most active, and controversial, Asians in the world Communist movement during the 1920's, was 22 at this juncture; he had recently arrived in Moscow from the United States and Mexico, where he had already engaged in revolutionary activities. Lenin, who was attracted to Roy as an authentic Asian revolutionary, evidently felt that Roy's views would support and amplify his own.

²⁹ *Vtoroi Kongress Kommunisticheskogo internatsionala*, p. 497; an English

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theses. Secondly, Roy's theses noted, as Lenin's did not, that peasant-proletarian movements were already growing in the colonies parallel to bourgeois democratic movements. He was accordingly more insistent than Lenin that the Comintern's efforts be directed primarily to the former. "The foremost and immediate task," he stated, "is to form Communist parties which will organize the peasants and workers and lead them to the revolution and to the establishment of soviet republics."

These were the two sets of theses which were presented first to the Commission on the National and Colonial Question and later to the full congress.

Although the time of the commission was largely taken up with lengthy reports of revolutionary developments in the colonies,³⁰ the delegates did from time to time discuss the two sets of theses. Attention was drawn especially to Roy's argument—which he stated with particular force in introducing his theses—concerning the dependence of European revolutions on Asian. His argument was repudiated by most speakers, including Lenin. Although Lenin himself had made the same argument on previous occasions (for instance, in his remarks to the Second Muslim Congress in 1919), he now felt that Roy went "too far in declaring that the destiny of the West will depend exclusively upon the degree of development and the strength of the revolutionary movement in the Eastern countries."³¹

Lenin and Roy also disagreed on the substance of paragraph

translation is in Eudin and North, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-7. This is the final version of Roy's theses, after revisions made in the commission; the original is not extant so far as is known.

³⁰ A report on Indonesia, for instance, was delivered by Maring, on Persia by Sultan-Zade, on China by Lan, on Korea by Pak, etc. Summaries of these reports may be found in *The Second Congress of the Communist International, as Reported and Interpreted by the Official Newspapers of Soviet Russia*, pp. 40-6. Approximately a dozen Eastern delegates (excluding those from within the Soviet Union) attended the Second Congress, of a total of 217 (voting and non-voting); two, Pak and Sultan-Zade, were elected to the 26-man Executive Committee, and Maring was elected to represent Java.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44, citing *Petrogradskaia Pravda*, July 29, 1920; it is not clear whether the passage quoted represents Lenin's exact words (in translation) or a paraphrase of them.

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11-a of Lenin's theses: the obligation to support alliances with all liberation movements in the colonies. Roy's analysis of the mass revolutionary movements emerging in Asia, especially in India, led him to propose the elimination of this recommendation in its entirety. The course of the debate on Roy's proposal is not clear, but a compromise appears to have been worked out. This was to substitute for "bourgeois democratic" the term "national revolutionary," not only in the paragraph under discussion but throughout Lenin's theses. In explaining the change to the full congress, Lenin appeared wholly satisfied with the substitution, arguing that it now permitted the necessary distinction to be made between revolutionary and merely "reformist" movements.³²

The Commission on the National and Colonial Question also discussed the problem of soviets in backward countries. In his opening address to the congress Lenin referred to "the beginning of a soviet movement throughout the entire East, in the whole of Asia, among all colonial peoples."³³ Since no soviets outside the Soviet Republic had been formed at this juncture, apart from the abortive efforts in 1919 in Bavaria and Hungary, Lenin was doubtless using the term freely to describe revolutionary movements in general. Yet he continued to insist, later in the congress, that "the idea of soviet organization is a simple one." The discussion in the commission, Lenin reported, had demonstrated that "we must base the theses of the Communist International on the assumption that peasant soviets, the soviets of the exploited, are applicable not only in capitalist countries but also in countries with pre-capitalist conditions and that it is the absolute duty of Communist parties, and of elements preparing to form Communist parties, to propagate the idea of peasant soviets and soviets of toilers everywhere, including the backward and colonial countries."³⁴ Concerning the related question of whether colonies must pass through a capitalist stage before reaching socialism, Lenin said that the commission had decided after "lively debates" that, "if the victorious revolutionary proletariat conducts

³² Lenin, *Sochineniia*, xxxi, pp. 216-7.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

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systematic propaganda among the backward peoples and if the Soviet [i.e., Russian] government comes to their help with all means at its disposal, then it is incorrect to assert that a capitalist stage of development is unavoidable for backward nationalities.”³⁵ To these propositions, it may be imagined, there would have been no objections from M. N. Roy.

The discussion of the national and colonial question during the fifth and sixth plenary sessions of the full congress, following the deliberations of the commission, should have been more or less routine. It was not. Unexpected opposition arose to portions of the theses, and each of the two sessions ended more acrimoniously than any others during the entire congress. A brief review of the discussion, from the stenographic record of the congress, is instructive.³⁶

Lenin reported for the commission, expanding somewhat on his theses, the text of which had already been given to the delegates. Maring, the secretary of the commission, read the few changes in wording agreed upon by the commission. Roy then read his supplementary theses, which had not been previously circulated, and commented briefly on them. His approach was more moderate than it had been during the debate within the commission. He no longer argued, for instance, that Asian revolutions must precede European but asserted merely that the colonial question was urgent because its resolution would hasten Communism in Europe. Whether the coming revolution in India, for instance, would be Communist or not was less important than the impetus it would give to the collapse of British imperialism, “which would be of enormous significance to the European proletariat.” In short, Roy had abandoned his earlier position, which gave the appearance—rightly or wrongly—of pitting East against West, and now argued that the East was important because it could *help* the West.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

³⁶ The full official record is *Vtoroi Kongress Kommunisticheskogo internatsionala; stenograficheskii otchet* (1921), reprinted in 1934 as *Vtoroi Kongress Komintern. An abbreviated English record of the congress is Second Congress of the Communist International: Proceedings* (1921).

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Following Roy, John Reed spoke about the American Negro, and Fraina about Latin America. Radek then took the floor. Two of his remarks deserve notice. The first concerned an assertion made before the commission by a British delegate, Quelch, that British labor would not support any uprising in India. If the assertion was meant to reveal the cowardly position of British labor, Radek pointed out, it was acceptable, but did not "exonerate the British comrades for being passive." He then made a remark often quoted in later years: "The International will judge the English comrades not by the articles they write in *Call* and *Workers' Dreadnought* [two British Communist publications] but by the number of comrades who are thrown into prison for agitation of the colonial question." Radek also sought to reassure the colonial delegates present that Comintern tactics in the East were not, as Roy and others implied, "an auxiliary device in our struggle against European capitalism," but a distinctive and separate feature of the world struggle. He went on to support Lenin's notion that capitalism could be bypassed in the East, opening the way for a direct transition to socialism.

At this juncture the Italian delegate Serrati, charging that most of the speeches thus far had been irrelevant (he singled out John Reed's speech in particular), moved that the list of speakers on the colonial question be closed. The motion raised a storm of protest led by the Dutch representative Wynkop, the most outraged of the delegates, and supported by Maring, Radek, and others. Maring called attention to the irony of Serrati's seeking to silence the delegates from the East when he had not taken the trouble to attend sessions of the commission. Sensing the certain defeat of his motion, Serrati withdrew it and the meeting adjourned at 2:30 a.m.—an hour which perhaps explains the frayed tempers during the final minutes of the session.

The sixth session opened peaceably enough with a new round of reports by delegates from Eastern countries, most of whom had already been heard in the commission. Early in the session an Italian delegate, Graziadei, proposed an amendment to paragraph 11-a of Lenin's theses, the same previously challenged by Roy in the commission: instead of requiring that Communist

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parties "support" national revolutionary movements, Graziadei argued, they should be required merely to "show active interest" in them. The purpose of the amendment was not made clear, but, to judge from subsequent reference to it by an Irish delegate, Graziadei was motivated by the same considerations that would later prompt Serrati to deny any responsibility of the European parties for colonial movements. The proposal in any case attracted little attention and was never brought to a vote.

Following a second unsuccessful attempt by Serrati to close debate, Maring, drawing on his long experience in Indonesia, delivered one of the major—and surely one of the most pertinent—speeches during the debate on the Eastern question. "There is no question in all the proceedings of the congress," he began, "of greater importance for the development of the world revolution than the colonial and national question." He then discussed the revolutionary movement in Indonesia in some detail before turning to the two sets of theses before the congress: "I find no distinction between the theses of Comrade Roy and those of Comrade Lenin. They are alike in essence. The difficulty lies only in finding the precise formula for the relationship between the revolutionary national and the socialist movements in the backward countries. The difficulty does not exist in reality. In actual practice we find it necessary to work together with the revolutionary nationalist elements and our work would be half done if we should deny the nationalist revolutionary movement and play the dogmatic Marxists."

Maring closed with the first concrete proposals for an Eastern policy: publication of the theses in various Oriental languages, especially Chinese and Hindi; the establishment of a Bureau of Propaganda for the Far East and Near East; and the summoning of Eastern leaders to the Soviet Union for periods of half a year to study Marxism. "Moscow and Petrograd," he concluded, "have become a new Mecca for the East."

Serrati in the meantime had not said his final word. Following a series of interventions which had little to do with the theses under discussion (including a sharp exchange between several Jewish delegates on the integrity of the Jewish Socialist Bund),

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the controversial Italian volunteered an explanation of his objection both to the unnecessarily prolonged debate on the Eastern question and to the theses themselves. The theses, he said, were vague; the very expression "backward countries," used throughout the theses, was ambiguous as well as chauvinistic. His main objection, however, was that the proposed alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonies was a dangerous policy for proletarians. "A struggle for national liberation carried on by the democratic bourgeoisie, even when insurrectionary methods are used, is not a revolutionary movement. . . . The movement for national liberation can be revolutionary only when the working class maintains its own class lines. . . . Only by means of a proletarian revolution and through a soviet regime can the subject nations obtain their freedom. This cannot be done by temporary alliances of Communists with bourgeois parties called nationalist revolutionaries." Serrati announced that because of lack of clarity in the theses he would abstain from voting.

The congress was not prepared to let the matter rest there. Attacks on Serrati's position now multiplied in intensity. Zinoviev denied "that the theses, which are nothing but a summary of propositions of Marx and Engels, can furnish any ground for misinterpretation" and went on to impugn Serrati's standing with Italian workers. Wynkop accused Serrati of calling Lenin's theses "counter-revolutionary" and "compromising." Roy, identifying himself wholly with Lenin in the crisis, made the same charge. At length, obviously stung by the abuse directed against him, Serrati again took the floor. Wynkop and Roy, he said, had misunderstood him: if he felt the theses were "counter-revolutionary," he would surely vote against them. As it was, he merely felt that they "could serve as a source of misinterpretation by chauvinists and nationalists" and therefore he proposed to abstain from voting. Serrati pointed out that he had long opposed such formulations as those in the theses because he found them in contradiction with the principles of "revolutionary socialism"; he was resigned, he said, to the fact that the congress must vote on—and pass—the theses, but his conscience did not permit him to join the majority. The question, Serrati continued, could not

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be objectively discussed under the circumstances. Nonetheless he had been on the point of offering the following substitute resolution: "The congress sends its fraternal greetings to all the peoples suffering under the oppression of the imperialist powers. It stands ready actively to support every movement directed against all exploiters and it declares that in this struggle against capitalist oppression the proletariat may take advantage of every national insurrection in order to turn it into a social revolution." Such a resolution, he said—he did not make it clear whether he intended it as a substitute for the theses altogether, or for paragraph 11-a of Lenin's theses—would obviate the need for any firm policy of alliance with the bourgeoisie while giving some freedom of action to the colonial proletariat to "take advantage" of favorable local situations. He closed with a rebuke to Zinoviev for questioning the responsibility of delegates at the congress to workers at home.

Zinoviev, chairing the session, allowed time for a few final insults to be leveled at the Italian—before calling for a vote on the theses as recommended to the congress by the Commission on the National and Colonial Question. They were passed unanimously, with three abstentions, and the Second Congress passed on to other business.

The foregoing must destroy any notion that Lenin's famous theses were final or definitive. They were adopted as he presented them to the congress largely, it may be imagined, because of his great prestige. But the debate on them, as well as on Roy's supplementary theses, revealed a variety of viewpoints on the colonial question which must have confounded any observer attempting to form a concrete idea of Moscow's Eastern policy. Lenin, who evidently left the meetings after presenting his theses, was not present to give direction to the deliberations and in consequence they meandered aimlessly. From an ideological standpoint, Serrati, in insisting on traditional class differentiations, exhibited the purest orthodoxy and greatest consistency. But his view was unacceptable to a congress bent on exploring and glorifying the "mysterious East." As Radek said, in protesting one of

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Serrati's efforts to close debate: "We are concerned with the *political* significance of the colonial question"—by which he meant that what was decided at the congress was less important politically than the fact that Eastern delegates were heard and that the Third International, unlike its predecessors and its contemporary rivals, was considering the colonial question at all. Serrati's influence, moreover, was undermined by his evidently arrogant manner and by his direct assault on Lenin's theses.⁸⁷

It is useful, given the importance of the deliberations in 1920 on the future course of Soviet policies in the East, to attempt a recapitulation of the divergent views expressed during the Second Congress:

On the question of *how* important the East was, at one extreme would be Roy, Maring, Wynkop, Pak, and perhaps other Asian delegates, arguing that the Comintern should devote its major efforts to the East. Serrati would be at the opposite extreme, along with a handful of Europeans, arguing that revolution in the East was impossible—and therefore irrelevant to Marxists—until completed in Europe. Lenin's position was intermediate, reflecting his obvious bewitchment with the East, especially its size,⁸⁸ and his feeling that it had been neglected, but with no conviction that activity in the West should be curtailed to allow more attention to the East. Zinoviev, Radek, Bukharin, and most of the European delegates associated themselves with Lenin.

On the question of *why* the East was important, the alignment defies easy classification. Roy again stands at one extreme, with his argument that European revolutions are contingent on Asian. However, the shift in his position during the discussion in the Colonial Commission and in the congress suggests that he stressed the contingency in order to persuade reluctant Europeans that an investment in colonial movements would in the end

⁸⁷ Serrati, known as a "maximalist" in Italian socialist circles, quarreled incessantly with both socialists and Communists until his final break with the Comintern in 1923.

⁸⁸ Lenin, it should be noted, referred several times during the Second Congress, as on other occasions, to the 70% of the world's population living under colonial rule; e.g., *Sochineniia*, xxxi, pp. 202, 216.

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benefit them. By the same token, it is possible that Lenin, together with Radek and others, *minimized* the connection between Asian and European revolutions in order to avoid giving the idea to Asians that their efforts were merely "auxiliary." Radek, Maring, Sultan-Zade, and others reflected an emotional commitment to the East, evidently generated by the congress itself, and indicated that there was something noble and uplifting in the West helping the East. Lenin and Zinoviev, on the other hand, were more pragmatic and indicated merely that timely uprisings in Asia might facilitate revolution in Europe and prove the best way of saving the Soviet Republic.

On the question of *alliance with the bourgeoisie*, an issue which was to remain in the forefront of Soviet Eastern policy for the next three decades, the felicitous rephrasing in Lenin's theses—substituting "national revolutionary" for "bourgeois democratic"—allowed the differences to be somewhat obscured. The differences nonetheless existed. Lenin here would appear at one extreme (though, to be sure, with the majority) in encouraging alliance with "national revolutionary" movements in the East.³⁹ Roy, along with Sultan-Zade, would permit such alliances only under very restrictive conditions, emphasizing instead more vigorous support of bona fide peasant-proletarian movements. Serrati, with whom it may be noted Roy was in closer accord on this point than with Lenin, would reject the alliances altogether. Indeed it was precisely his suspicion of such alliances that led him to deprecate any serious effort at all in the East: unless there was a proletariat strong enough to stand alone, there could be no Marxist revolution. The most realistic comment on the matter was doubtless Maring's reminder that in actual practice it was not too difficult to decide whether to ally with bourgeois nationalists or not.

On one issue all but Serrati and his handful of supporters appeared to agree: the European parties must devote more attention

³⁹ Although the Second Congress left no doubt about the intent henceforth to substitute "national revolutionary" for "bourgeois democratic" in all Comintern pronouncements, in actual practice both terms continued to be used interchangeably.

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to the colonial question, especially those parties in countries with colonies. And yet the accomplishments in this area in the years following the Second Congress were negligible.

FROM THE SECOND COMINTERN CONGRESS TO THE FOURTH: 1920-1922

Despite the rejection by the Second Congress of Roy's thesis concerning the dependence of European revolutions on Asian, the idea continued to appear in Soviet commentaries on the East. An authoritative article in *Zhizn' natsional'nostei*, for instance, appearing less than a month after the close of the congress, reiterated Roy's argument as though it had never been disputed. "It is necessary," the article stated, "to break and destroy the capitalist front by means of organizing the revolution and the revolutionary fighting forces behind the capitalist lines. . . . This new field of revolutionary work will mean striking a blow in the rear of the rapacious Entente and this *in turn* will clear the way for the triumphant march of the proletariat of the West."⁴⁰ In October, two months after the Second Congress, Stalin himself asserted that "the more developed proletarian West cannot finish off the world bourgeoisie without the support of the peasant East."⁴¹ Several years later, in a retrospective glance at the era following the Civil War and Intervention, Stalin acknowledged that the forward momentum of revolution had been stopped when Red Army troops failed at Warsaw in 1920 and that it had been necessary to reestablish contact with the base, especially "the heavy reserves in the East which are the main rear of world capitalism. . . . One of two things: either we succeed in stirring up, in revolutionizing the remote rear of imperialism—the colonial and semi-colonial countries of the East—and thereby hasten the fall of imperialism; or we fail, and thereby strengthen imperialism and weaken the strength of our movement. That is how the question stands."⁴² Statements such as these show that whatever formulation the Second Comintern Congress attempted to give to

⁴⁰ *Zhizn' natsional'nostei*, September 2, 1920, p. 2; cited in Eudin and North, *op. cit.*, p. 17 (emphasis added).

⁴¹ Stalin, *Sochineniia*, IV, p. 351; from an article in *Pravda* on the government's policy on the national question in Russia.

⁴² Stalin, *Sochineniia*, V, p. 237; from an address to the Twelfth Congress of the CPSU in April 1923.

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the matter, a sense of urgency concerning revolution in the East as a means of hastening revolution in Europe persisted in certain quarters. In Stalin's case, indeed, the conviction appears to have grown stronger as time passed.

In the years following the Second Congress, special efforts were made to encourage revolutionary movements in the East. In September 1920, for instance, a Congress of Toilers of the East, attended by nearly 2,000 Muslims from the Near East and Central Asia, convened in Baku; the congress was addressed by Zinoviev, Radek, and other Comintern spokesmen who pressed the delegates to declare a "holy war" against imperialism.⁴³ The Baku congress established a Council for Propaganda and Action to coordinate Comintern activities in the East and to publish a journal, *Narody Vostoka*. The council was soon subdivided into three sections, located in Baku, Tashkent, and Irkutsk, with responsibilities, respectively, for the Near East, Central and South Asia, and the Far East; Southeast Asia was not included in this early effort to make concrete contacts with revolutionary movements in the East. In January 1922 a Congress of Toilers of the Far East, attended by representatives from Korea, China, Japan, Mongolia, and Java, met for a week in Moscow and Leningrad; this congress too, like the Baku congress, was dominated by Comintern spokesmen who stressed the themes of the Second Congress.⁴⁴ Similar conferences of Asian youth and of Asian women were held in Moscow at about this time.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU, or Profintern) was established in 1921 and the Peasant International (Krestintern) in 1923, both of which in due course were to play an important role in carrying out Soviet policies in Asia.⁴⁶

⁴³ For the proceedings see *Pervyi s'ezd narodov Vostoka: stenograficheskii otchet*; although called the "First Congress," it was not followed by others.

⁴⁴ The official record of the congress is *Pervyi s'ezd revoliutsionnykh organizatsii Dal'nego Vostoka* (1922). Like its predecessor at Baku, this congress was the first and last; it was prompted by the Washington Naval Conference, which convened in November 1921, and no machinery was set up for the implementation of Comintern policies in the Far East.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 293-314, 333-42; for a fuller discussion of these early Soviet efforts to organize Asian revolutionaries, see Eudin and North, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-81, 145-7.

⁴⁶ At least three Asians attended the founding congress of the *Krestintern*, and one of them, Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh), was elected to the presidium; *ibid.*, p. 267.

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During this period the Soviet government also established schools and training centers for Asian revolutionaries, an effort that perhaps stemmed from Maring's recommendation at the Second Congress. During the winter of 1920-1921, for instance, a training school for Indian revolutionaries was organized in Tashkent by Roy, a member of the Comintern's three-man Turkestan Commission; thirty-six Indians are reported to have attended the school. In 1921 the Communist University of Toilers of the East (*KUTV*) was formally launched and by January 1923 was reported to have had 800 students, mainly from Asia. There were also a number of institutes for Russians training in Oriental studies, both for future revolutionary work and for research. Among these were: the Narimanov Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow (formerly the Armenian Institute), dating from 1919; the Oriental Institute of Leningrad; the Scientific Association of Oriental Studies, founded in 1921 under M. P. Veltman (M. Pavlovich); and various military schools and faculties devoted to Eastern affairs.⁴⁷

In addition to these institutional facilities in the Soviet Union, both for Asians seeking more knowledge of Communism and for Russians seeking more knowledge of Asia, Comintern agents made a number of direct contacts with Asian revolutionary movements. Gregory Voitinsky, for instance, was sent to China in the spring of 1920 to contact Chinese Marxists with a view to organizing a Communist party. In 1921 Maring arrived in Shanghai as the Comintern's representative in the Far East; he attended the founding congress of the Chinese Communist Party in July 1921 and remained in China for several years before being replaced by Voitinsky. Another Soviet agent named Dalin conferred with Sun Yat-sen in Shanghai in mid-1922.⁴⁸ These early contacts with Chinese Communists and Nationalists, it should be noted, occurred before Adolf Joffe's fateful negotiations with Sun Yat-sen in January 1923, which opened the door to a flood of Soviet ad-

⁴⁷ The work of these institutions is described in *ibid.*, p. 86-8.

⁴⁸ For an account of the activities of these early Soviet agents in China based on Chinese Communist materials, see Wilbur and How, *Documents on Communism, Nationalism and Soviet Advisers in China*, pp. 79-90 *passim*.

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visers and Comintern agents in China during the remainder of the decade. Roy in the meantime maintained contact with Indian revolutionaries he met in Tashkent during 1920 and 1921, after their return to India. He also arranged for a British Communist, Charles Ashleigh, to visit India in September 1922, but Ashleigh's mission was frustrated by his arrest and deportation.⁴⁹ Similar contacts were made in Persia, Turkey, Afghanistan, and other Eastern countries.⁵⁰

These widely varied activities of the Soviet government during the years immediately following the Second Congress testify to a growing interest in the East which can doubtless be traced to the decisions of the congress and to Lenin's theses. The impact of Soviet activity, however, should not be exaggerated. Very little was changed in the course of events in Asia until 1925 or 1926, and the total number of Asians directly exposed to Soviet influence remained negligible. These years, in retrospect, must be looked upon as years of preparation, when the ground-work was being laid for a future assault on the East; no one, after all, should have imagined that decisions reached by a conclave in Moscow, made up largely of Europeans, would immediately affect social processes in Asia involving hundreds of millions. A question of greater consequence, in attempting to comprehend Soviet Eastern policy during these years, is whether Moscow was demonstrating an interest proportionate to the importance attached to the East in official pronouncements or merely responding, in a perfunctory way, to warnings that the colonial world must not be overlooked.

As the Third Congress approached, the Comintern's Executive Committee (ECCI) issued a circular on the agenda which attached continuing importance to the Eastern question. "The Third Congress will have to deal with the Eastern question not only theoretically, as the Second Congress, but as a practical matter," the circular declared. "Without a revolution in Asia there

⁴⁹ See Overstreet and Windmiller, *Communism in India*, pp. 39, 42.

⁵⁰ An account of early Soviet efforts in the Near East may be found in Eudin and North, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-120.

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will be no victory for the world proletarian revolution. This must be firmly grasped by every proletarian Communist."⁵¹

But these proved to be words, no more. The Third Congress, meeting in June and July 1921, gave slight attention to the colonial question. Lenin touched on the matter only casually in two of his four speeches during the congress.⁵² Trotsky, who drafted the principal theses on the world situation adopted by the congress, also gave the Eastern question cursory treatment.⁵³ The resolutions and manifestos adopted at the close of the congress ignored the East altogether and the new Executive Committee included no representative from the East. The colonial question reached the agenda only during the next to last session, and the discussion appears to have given little satisfaction to anyone. Roy, one of the three Eastern delegates who spoke, used the five minutes allotted to him to protest the "opportunist way" in which the colonial question was being treated; a Bulgarian delegate dismissed his protest, reminding him that the Eastern question had after all been thoroughly discussed at the Second Congress and at Baku.⁵⁴ Roy also complained that no American or European delegates had attended the single meeting of the Commission on the National and Colonial Question held the preceding day. This meeting, given over largely to developments in the Near East, evidently reaffirmed over Roy's objections the policy of close—but temporary—alliance with the colonial bourgeoisie, the tactic approved by the Second Congress; the meeting does not appear to have taken concrete steps to implement the 1920 theses.⁵⁵

⁵¹ *Kommunisticheskii International*, June 1921; translated in Degras, *Communist International*, 1, p. 223.

⁵² Lenin, *Sochineniia*, xxxii, pp. 430, 457-8.

⁵³ See Section 26 of "Theses on the World Situation and Tasks of the Comintern" adopted by the Third Congress; translated in Degras, *Communist International*, 1, p. 234.

⁵⁴ *Protokoll Des III Kongress Der Kommunistischen Internationale*, pp. 1018, 1035; cited in Page, *Lenin and World Revolution*, p. 198.

⁵⁵ The only account of the meeting known to the writer is taken from the memoirs of the Chinese delegate at the Third Congress, Chang T'ai-lei; see Boris Shumiatskii, "Iz istorii Komsomola i Kompartii Kitaia," *Revoliutsionnyi Vostok*, No. 4-5, 1928, pp. 218-22. A summary of the portion of the article dealing with the meeting of the commission may be found in Eudin and North, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

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During the sixteen-month interval between the Third and Fourth Comintern Congresses, from July 1921 to November 1922, the Eastern question came before the ECCI only half a dozen times, as compared to the more than sixty occasions when European problems were discussed.⁵⁶ The Comintern's only directive regarding the East during this period was an ECCI resolution dated March 4, 1922, urging all parties in countries with overseas colonies, especially the British Communist Party, to establish colonial commissions "for the purpose of supplying regular information about colonial affairs, of establishing regular contact with the revolutionary organizations of the colonial countries, and of making this contact practically operative."⁵⁷ This was evidently the first specific Comintern instruction on Eastern policy since the Second Congress, two years earlier.

The colonial question received considerably more attention during the Fourth Comintern Congress, in November and December 1922. The Fourth Congress could record a certain progress in the East. A pro-Soviet regime had been established in Mongolia. Strike movements had gained headway in China and India. The Near East was in ferment as a result of the Turkish revolution of Kemal Pasha. Communist parties now existed in eight or ten Eastern countries. The number of Eastern representatives at the congress was larger than heretofore and included delegates from countries not previously represented.⁵⁸

Zinoviev, who delivered the keynote address during Lenin's illness, touched briefly on the colonial question, but the principal discussion of the issue occurred at two sessions midway through the congress. Ravensteyn of Holland introduced the theses on the Eastern question which had been previously drawn up by

⁵⁶ See *Fourth Congress of the Communist International*, pp. 9-10; the Eastern areas discussed were: Near and Far East (three times), China, Japan, and South America (once each).

⁵⁷ *Inprekorr*, April 1, 1922, p. 9; translated in Degras, *Communist International*, 1, pp. 326-7.

⁵⁸ The Eastern nations represented at the congress included China, Japan, India, Java, Turkey, Egypt, Tunisia, and Persia; Katayama and Safarov were elected to represent the Orient on the ECCI, with Roy as alternate. See *Fourth Congress of the Communist International*, p. 296.

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delegations from the colonial countries in collaboration with the Eastern section of the ECCI. The theses attempted no conscious departure from Lenin's theses at the Second Congress, but they analyzed developments in the East in far greater detail and in effect altered several of Lenin's formulations. The Fourth Congress theses, for instance, took cognizance of greater variety in national revolutionary movements that had been acknowledged two and a half years earlier. The Comintern still undertook to support "every national revolutionary movement against imperialism," but the danger of confusing these movements with "feudal-bureaucratic," "feudal-agrarian," and "feudal-patriarchal" elements was underscored. Pan-Islamic movements, which Lenin had singled out for attack in 1920, were now largely exonerated. "In Muslim countries," the theses declared, "the national movement at first finds its ideology in the religio-political watchwords of pan-Islam . . . but to the extent that the national liberation movements grow and expand, the religio-political watchwords of pan-Islam are increasingly replaced by concrete political demands." Ravensteyn stressed this new positive approach to pan-Islamic movements and stated that "the international proletariat therefore acclaims the political aspirations of the Mohammedan nations." The change in Comintern policy on this issue was to have significant consequences in Indonesia.⁵⁹

The theses went on to enumerate the tasks of colonial Communist parties with regard to the agrarian question, the labor movement, and, in particular, the united front—the general strategy adopted by the Fourth Congress for all sections. In the East, because of the prospect of a protracted struggle with imperialism, the form of the united front was to differ from that in the West by being anti-imperialist rather than proletarian (that is, "from above" rather than "from below"). This, of course, was the justification for the recommended alliance with national revolutionary movements. Refusal to enter into such alliances, "on the ground

⁵⁹ Impetus for the change may have come from the Indonesian delegate Tan Malaka, who requested clarification of the Comintern's view on the Islamic question in the light of recent developments in the Muslim world; see below, p. 84. He was supported by another Muslim delegate, a Tunisian; see *Fourth Congress of the Communist International*, p. 214.

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of the ostensible 'defense' of independent class interests," was labeled "opportunism of the worst kind"; remaining aloof from the class struggle "in the name of 'national unity' or of 'civil peace' with bourgeois democrats" was equally reprehensible. The colonial parties, the theses proclaimed, have a dual task: "they fight for the most radical possible solution of the tasks of a bourgeois democratic revolution, which aims at the conquest of political independence; and they organize the working and peasant masses for the struggle for their special class interests, and in doing so exploit all the contradictions in the nationalist, bourgeois democratic camp." The Fourth Congress, then, came no closer than its predecessors to formulating a clear directive to Asian revolutionary leaders on the conditions necessary to justify an alliance with nationalist movements; the pitfalls on each side of Moscow's razor-thin line were equally hazardous. The theses closed with a fresh reminder to the metropolitan parties that they must assist the colonial movements, but not by forming overseas European Communist organizations, which were considered "a concealed form of colonialism."⁶⁰

Discussion of the theses was far milder than during the stormy sessions of the Second Congress, perhaps because Serrati, though present, took no part in the debate; perhaps because Moscow's hold over the Comintern was surer than it had been in 1920. Ravensteyn's attention was directed mainly to the Near East, which continued to be the major focus of the Comintern's Eastern policy. Roy, delivering the principal supporting speech, appeared more subdued than on previous occasions. He no longer argued, for instance, that revolution in the East must precede revolution in the West, but merely that any efforts the European parties made in the East "would not be gratuitous . . . because capitalism is today very closely linked with the situation in the colonial countries."⁶¹ Nearly all speakers, Eastern and Western alike, underscored the urgency of more attention to the East by the Euro-

⁶⁰ An English text of the "Theses on the Eastern Question" adopted by the Fourth Congress may be found in *Inprecor*, December 22, 1922, pp. 979-90; also in Eudin and North, *op. cit.*, pp. 231-7, and Degras, *Communist International*, 1, 383-93.

⁶¹ *Inprecor*, December 22, 1922, p. 990.

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pean sections. At the close of the discussion the theses were passed unanimously and without amendments.⁶²

The more extended treatment of the Eastern question during the Fourth Congress, as compared to the Third, should not be interpreted as the signal for any significant turn in Comintern policy. The Comintern's principal focus remained, as before, in Europe. The officials of the organization were predominantly European, its strength lay in the European parties, and the current crises were European—for instance, the Ruhr and German reparations. Both before and after the Fourth Congress the Comintern, to judge from its published records, devoted incomparably more attention to these problems than to developments in the East.⁶³ The Fourth Congress, moreover, exhibited no great confidence, as earlier congresses had, in the prospects of revolution either in the West or the East. Lenin, in his only appearance before the congress, urged moderation and caution: "I submit that after five years of the Russian revolution the most important thing for all of us to do is to study, Russians and foreign comrades alike. We have only now gained the opportunity of studying. I do not know how long this opportunity will last; I do not know how long the capitalist powers will allow us to study in peace. But we must use every moment of respite from fighting and war to start learning from the beginning."⁶⁴ Radek echoed Lenin's sentiment. In his remarks on the colonial question he cautioned the Chinese comrades "not to indulge in too rosy expectations or to overestimate your strength. . . . Neither the question of socialism, nor of a soviet republic, are now the order of the day." The current task facing the Chinese was the more prosaic one of organizing the worker's movement and regulating

⁶² Ravensteyn's and Roy's speeches are given in full in *ibid.*, December 22, 1922, pp. 979-90; a summary of the debate on the colonial question is in *ibid.*, December 7, 1922, pp. 894-5. See also *IV Vsemirnyi Kongress Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala*, pp. 250 ff., and *Fourth Congress of the Communist International*, pp. 204-24.

⁶³ In 1922 *Inprecor*, for instance, carried fewer than fifteen articles on Eastern problems, as against hundreds on European affairs; in 1923 the increase in Eastern coverage was negligible.

⁶⁴ Lenin, *Sochineniia*, xxxiii, p. 393.

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the party's relations with the revolutionary bourgeoisie preparatory to a prolonged struggle against imperialism.⁶⁵

The actions of the Comintern, in retrospect, appear to be a surer measure of Moscow's commitment to the East than the existence in Russia of various Oriental institutes and universities for Asians, and the presence in Asia of half a dozen Soviet agents. Through the Fourth Congress at least, to judge from all evidence, Soviet attention continued to be focused on Europe, despite the waning prospects of revolution there. It is a caution against too great a reliance on theory as an indicator of Soviet policy, for the theory throughout this period—at least as it was articulated by such spokesmen as Stalin, Radek, Roy, and others—continued to emphasize the critical importance of the East.⁶⁶

A TARGET IN THE EAST AND THE COMINTERN'S RESPONSE: 1923-1924

During the interval between the Fourth and Fifth Comintern Congresses, Moscow acquired an objective in the East which was materially to affect the course of Soviet policy. The objective was China. For several years after the Russian Revolution, Soviet interest had centered first on the Muslim world and later in India. Roy, the principal spokesman for the East in Moscow, helped to sustain interest in India through the Fourth Comintern Congress.⁶⁷ Following this congress, however, a series of reverses in India, including the arrest of most of the Communist leaders in the so-called Cawnpore Conspiracy, all but eliminated any chances of success there.⁶⁸ It was during this period of acute frustration in India that Moscow's attention was drawn to China.

Soviet policy in China in the 1920's has been extensively dealt

⁶⁵ *Fourth Congress of the Communist International*, pp. 223-4.

⁶⁶ For a contrary view on the shift of Soviet attention to the East during the Fourth Congress, see Whiting, *Soviet Policies in China, 1917-1924*, p. 97.

⁶⁷ It should be noted that, despite his occasional differences with the official Comintern line, Roy continued to be held in high esteem by Comintern spokesmen, at least through the Fourth Congress; see, for instance, the favorable remarks on Roy at that congress by Zinoviev and Radek in *Fourth Congress of the Communist International*, pp. 26 and 224.

⁶⁸ For a detailed account of Soviet efforts in India during this period, see Overstreet and Windmiller, *Communism in India*, pp. 53-69.

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with elsewhere⁶⁹ and needs no detailed treatment here. Moreover, Moscow's actions in China—despite the fact that the Chinese revolution was for some years the major focus of Soviet interest in the East—are not necessarily representative of Soviet Eastern policy in general for reasons we will explore. It will therefore satisfy our purposes to note from time to time certain crucial landmarks in the Sino-Soviet relationship without attempting to retell the long and extremely complex story.

Diplomatic exchanges between Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary government in Canton and the Soviet government date from the formation of the two regimes within two months of each other in late 1917 and early 1918. In the early 1920's these links were strengthened by interviews between Sun Yat-sen and Soviet agents such as Voitinsky and Maring, although the primary mission of these agents was to hasten the development of Chinese Communism. Sun was also in correspondence with Chicherin, the Soviet Foreign Minister, despite the fact that Soviet policy during the early 1920's was moving toward normalization of relations with Peking, the seat of the internationally recognized government of the Chinese Republic; in September 1923 the arrival of Leo Karakhan in Peking marked the resumption of formal diplomatic relations between Russia and China. Sun Yat-sen in the meantime, having abandoned hope of assistance from the Western powers in his struggle against Peking, had met another Soviet emissary, Adolf Joffe, in January 1923 and concluded with him the Sun-Joffe agreement which became the basis of Soviet-Kuomintang collaboration. This agreement assured Moscow's aid to the revolutionary regime in Canton, and the latter's acceptance of it, on condition that Moscow not consider China suitable terrain for "the Communistic order or even the soviet system." In the autumn of 1923 Mikhail Borodin, Moscow's representative to the Kuomintang, arrived in Canton and became almost immedi-

⁶⁹ E.g., Whiting, *Soviet Policies in China, 1917-1924*; Brandt, *Stalin's Failure in China, 1924-1927*; Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*; North, *Moscow and Chinese Communists*; Wilbur and How, *Documents on Communism, Nationalism and Soviet Advisers in China, 1918-1927*; Eudin and North, *op. cit.*

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ately the dominant figure, after Sun himself, in the revolutionary regime.

In China, then, there was established by 1924, without benefit of mass organizational efforts and without too much reliance on theory, a working alliance between Moscow and a major revolutionary movement in the East. One might imagine that this first significant breakthrough in the East would be accompanied by a prompt reorientation of the Comintern's interests and energies. This was not the case. The Comintern as such appears not to have been directly involved in the Sun-Joffe negotiations. Joffe, a Soviet diplomat dispatched initially to Peking where he opened the negotiations subsequently concluded by Karakhan, evidently used diplomatic rather than Comintern channels in reporting his progress and received instructions in the same manner. Indeed it is likely that the terms of the agreement with Sun Yat-sen were worked out largely on his own initiative.⁷⁰ The Comintern, at any event, indicated no foreknowledge of the agreement and even after its announcement showed little interest. On January 12, 1923, an ECCI directive to the Chinese Communists—the first explicit instruction to the Chinese comrades, incidentally, and dated a fortnight before the Sun-Joffe agreement—gave no hint of the approaching alliance between Moscow and Sun's organization.⁷¹ Another directive to the Chinese Communists in May, on the eve of their Third Congress, was phrased in a manner that suggests as much suspicion of Moscow's new Chinese allies as confidence in them; the directive, for instance, explicitly warns the Communists against Sun's possible accommodation with the

⁷⁰ For an account of Joffe's mission in China, see Whiting, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-207.

⁷¹ The text of the resolution is in *Strategiia i taktika Komintern v natsional'no-kolonial'noi revoliutsii*, p. 112, translated in Degras, *Communist International*, II, pp. 5-6. The resolution attempted to settle a tactical dispute which had divided the Chinese leadership for some months—the question of Communists' holding dual membership in the CCP and the Kuomintang. This proposal appears to have originated with Maring a year earlier, probably in response to a suggestion by Sun Yat-sen himself that while a formal alliance between the two parties was at that time inappropriate, Communists would be welcomed in the Kuomintang as individuals; see Wilbur and How, *Documents on Communism, Nationalism, and Soviet Advisers in China*, p. 83.

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militarists.⁷² The Comintern press, in the meantime, made no mention of the Sun-Joffe agreement and, as observed above, gave limited coverage of Chinese affairs during 1923; in 1924 there were fewer than half a dozen items on China in *Inprecor* until the introduction of a special section in October entitled "Hands off China!"

Above all, for our purposes, there was no evident impact of the Sun-Joffe formula on the Comintern's general approach to colonial policy. To judge from the Comintern's few pronouncements on the Eastern question between the Fourth and Fifth Congresses, the 1920 theses remained in force, muddled somewhat by the theses adopted by the Fourth Congress. Alliance with national revolutionary movements was still desirable and, in some countries, such as China, might go as far as dual membership in Communist and bourgeois parties; but the risks of such collaboration were sounded as frequently as the virtues. The Comintern, as an organization, appeared to take the position that what Soviet diplomats did in Peking, Shanghai, or elsewhere was their own affair; it should not, however, be confused with the business of waging revolution.

The Fifth Comintern Congress, the first without Lenin and the last in which honest differences of opinion were freely aired, did little to clarify an Eastern policy. Like its predecessors, the congress was concerned mainly with European problems, especially the German question in the wake of the abortive rising in the Ruhr in October 1923. The composition of the congress was also predominantly European, even more so than at earlier congresses since representation was now weighted to reflect actual party strength.⁷³ The "Russian question"—that is, the attitude to

⁷² *Strategiia i taktika Kominterna . . .*, p. 114 and Degras, *Communist International*, II, pp. 25-6; the instruction is concerned mainly with the need to give more attention to the Chinese peasantry in view of the agrarian nature of the Chinese revolution.

⁷³ According to the report of the Mandates Commission, 5 of the 41 countries represented (Germany, France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, and Russia) accounted for nearly two-thirds of the 336 voting delegates, and Russia alone accounted for approximately one-third; delegates from the East numbered fewer than ten. See *Inprecor*, August 12, 1924, p. 608.

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be taken toward the opposition within the Russian Party centering around Trotsky—overshadowed the congress. The issue, which had been thoroughly debated during the Thirteenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party just prior to the Comintern Congress, was not debated in any open sessions of the congress but was the subject of a resolution which passed unanimously; the resolution endorsed the action of the Thirteenth Congress condemning “the platform of the opposition as petty-bourgeois and its conduct as a threat to the unity of the party and consequently to the proletarian dictatorship in the Soviet Union.”⁷⁴ Only a naïve foreign delegate would not have appreciated the consequences to his career of failing to acknowledge the ascendancy of the new Soviet triumvirate—Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev.

These circumstances provided a poor atmosphere for a fruitful discussion of colonial problems. Zinoviev, reporting for the ECCI, barely touched on the Eastern question, an oversight that caused two Eastern delegates, Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh) of Indochina and Sen Katayama of Japan, to utter muted protests.⁷⁵ Manuilsky, who delivered the report on the national and colonial questions, conceived the central problem in terms of the right of self-determination and related notions; he accordingly drew his illustrations mainly from the Balkans and Central Europe and touched only casually on the problem of colonies overseas. Two full sessions of the congress were set aside for a discussion of the report, but they failed to place Eastern policy in a clearer perspective. Of the two dozen interventions during the day-long debate, all but five were by Europeans and the principal focus of their interest continued to be the Balkans and

⁷⁴ Excerpts translated in Degras, *Communist International*, II, p. 140. This volume, pp. 96-161, includes full or partial translations of the principal resolutions passed by the congress, with helpful commentaries by the author. An abridged account of the proceedings, without resolutions, is *Fifth Congress of the Communist International* (London, 1924). *Inprecor*, Nos. 41-64 (July 16-September 5), 1924, gives an abridged account of all discussion in plenary sessions as well as the final English text of the resolutions. The fullest and most authoritative record of the Fifth Congress is *Piatyi vsemirnyi kongress Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala; stenograficheskii otchet* (2 vols).

⁷⁵ See *Inprecor*, July 17, 1924, p. 424, and July 24, 1924, p. 500.

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Central Europe. The discussion ended in a personal feud, wholly irrelevant to national or colonial questions, between the German delegate Sommer and Karl Radek, the principal scapegoat of the congress.⁷⁶ An Irish delegate, urged by Zinoviev to take the floor because of the congress' interest in Ireland, said bluntly: "I have failed to notice it. The congress seems interested only in those parties which have the largest membership."⁷⁷ The delegates from the East, it may be imagined, identified themselves with this view.

Roy, again the chief spokesman for the East, was troubled in particular by the formulation given in the draft resolution on Zinoviev's report. He quoted the resolution as stating that "in order to attract the peoples of colonial and semi-colonial countries to the struggle of the proletariat, the Executive Committee must maintain direct contact with the national liberation movement." This, Roy argued, violated the sense of Lenin's 1920 theses, which stated that "the nature of the support must be determined by existing conditions." Conditions have in fact changed, Roy continued. In India, for instance, nationalist elements which in 1920 had been sufficiently revolutionary to be suitable allies of the Communists (Roy had denied this at the time, it should be recalled) had now deserted the liberation movement. He flatly contradicted Manuilsky's appraisal of a nationalist revival in India; on the contrary, Roy said, the past year had seen the "worst depression" in the national movement. It was the workers and especially the peasants who had become revolutionary, and it was with them that the Comintern should establish "direct contacts."⁷⁸ Roy indicated that Manuilsky was equally in error in his analysis of the situation in other colonies.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Radek, a sympathizer with Trotsky, had been sharply attacked earlier in the congress by Zinoviev and others for his part in the Ruhr uprising; he had responded with a vigorous counterattack on Zinoviev's report. The exchange between Sommer and Radek during the debate on the national question was a continuation of the same quarrel.

⁷⁷ *Inprecor*, July 26, 1924, p. 524.

⁷⁸ Roy had altered his view during the preceding year or two on the role of workers in the East and said, according to one version of his speech, that "it is mere romanticism to speak of a revolutionary proletariat" in the colonies (*Fifth Congress of the Communist International*, p. 196); his emphasis had now shifted to the revolutionary potentialities of the peasantry. His new estimate, however,

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Roy's concern was, of course, not new. He had from the outset opposed too rigid a commitment by the Comintern to national movements in the colonies; he had given ground at the Second Congress, at Lenin's insistence; now, standing virtually alone at the Fifth Congress, he was making a desperate attempt to check a policy that appeared to him to go even further than the 1920 formula. The tide, however, was running against Roy. Moreover, his tactless attack on Manuilsky, and implicitly on Zinoviev, made it comparatively easy for Manuilsky, who was riding the tide, to dismiss Roy's objections in the closing session of the congress.⁸⁰ Roy, Manuilsky said, exaggerated the importance of social movements in the colonies at the expense of national movements. Even if his allegation were true that a sharpening of the class struggle could be demonstrated in India, it was not true that the national movement in the colonies had everywhere run its course and lost its usefulness. "In regard to the colonial question," Manuilsky continued, "Roy reflects the nihilism of Rosa Luxemburg. The truth is that a just proportion should be looked for between the social movement and the national movement. Can the right of self-determination become a contradiction to the interests of the revolution?"⁸¹

in no way altered his negative view of the national movement, in India and elsewhere.

⁷⁹ The full text of Roy's speech is in *Piatyi vsemirnyi kongress Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala*, 1, pp. 604-18; abbreviated versions may be found in *Inprecor*, July 25, 1924, pp. 518-9, and in *Fifth Congress of the Communist International*, pp. 196-8. The speech, it should be noted, was unusually long and was interrupted at one juncture by an Indonesian delegate who proposed a limitation of Roy's time.

⁸⁰ Roy, as the principal speaker on the national and colonial question after Manuilsky, was offered an opportunity to speak before Manuilsky in the summing up of the debate, but refused; his position was that he should follow, not precede, Manuilsky inasmuch as the latter was planning to refute his argument. "If an opportunity is denied me to reply to Comrade Manuilsky's remarks against me," he announced, in obvious ill humor, "then I have absolutely nothing further to say here on this question." *Piatyi vsemirnyi kongress Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala*, 11, p. 963; the incident is passed over in the accounts in *Inprecor*, August 12, 1924, p. 608, and *Fifth Congress of the Communist International*, p. 271.

⁸¹ The phrasing here is from the abbreviated report; the full text makes the same point more circuitously.

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What Manuilsky appeared to be saying, whether intentionally or not, was that nationalism in Asia, no matter what forces were behind it, provided a surer source of harassment to Russia's enemies in Europe than any colonial proletarian or peasant movements yet in sight. Asian Communists accordingly should not obstruct the development of Asian nationalism in the pursuit of their social goals. At one juncture Manuilsky argued that Communists in Asia should be prepared "not only to collaborate with petty-bourgeois parties but to *take the initiative in organizing them* in backward countries."⁸² Such views, needless to say, were more narrowly European and more contemptuous of the revolutionary aspirations of Asians than any previously accepted by the Comintern. They passed unchallenged, however, except by Roy. The great majority of the delegates, we must assume, were too preoccupied with other problems to become involved in what appeared to be a private feud between Manuilsky and Roy over an obscure detail of Eastern policy.

On one point regarding colonial policy there was general agreement at the Fifth Congress—the need to give more attention to the East. In paying lip-service to this recurrent thesis, the European delegates doubtless felt they were discharging their obligation to the East. Manuilsky, for instance, was caustic in his attack on the French Communists for their failure to implement the Comintern's colonial policies and only a shade less severe on the British. "The Russian comrades," he said, "are grateful to you for launching the slogan 'Hands off Soviet Russia' at the time of the armed intervention [1918]. But the entire International would rejoice even more if you were now to launch another no less courageous call: 'Hands off the colonies.'"⁸³ He closed his report with a reminder that "the time for declarations of a general character have passed; we have now a period of creative, revolutionary work in the colonies and among national minorities."⁸⁴ Both Eastern and European delegates underscored and expanded his

⁸² *Piatyi vsemirnyi kongress Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala*, 1, p. 590 (emphasis in original).

⁸³ *Fifth Congress of the Communist International*, p. 193.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

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remarks during the discussion of the national question. Meanwhile, the congress formalized the sentiment by acknowledging, in the resolution on the ECCI report, the inadequacy of work in the colonies thus far and demanding "not only the further development of direct links between the Executive and the national liberation movements of the East, but also closer contacts between the sections in the imperialist countries and the colonies of those countries."⁸⁵ The words, of course, have a hollow ring measured against the meager attention given to the East by the Fifth Congress, which failed even to propose a separate resolution on the colonial question.⁸⁶

The inattention to the East at the Fifth Congress deserves comment, especially since the time spent on both the *national* and colonial questions has led some students of Soviet policy to emphasize the growing Comintern commitment to the East revealed at this congress.⁸⁷ It is entirely understandable, of course, that the congress should show concern with the national question in the Balkans and Central Europe. This was an important problem facing the Comintern and one of particular interest to the large number of delegates from these areas, many of whom were attending a Comintern congress for the first time. The issue, moreover, seemed particularly relevant in light of the recent formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which Manuilsky called "a great experiment in solving the national question under the proletarian dictatorship."⁸⁸ It was also appro-

⁸⁵ Degras, *Communist International*, II, p. 106.

⁸⁶ Manuilsky, in his concluding remarks on the national and colonial question, proposed that a commission including himself, Bukharin, Stalin, Roy, Katayama, and others be appointed to prepare definite theses. It is doubtful, however, that the commission met. Reporting at the ECCI plenum following the congress, where residual business was dealt with, Manuilsky recommended that the final resolution on the national and colonial question be referred to the Presidium; that was the last heard of the matter. The only resolution to emerge from the discussion of Manuilsky's report in the congress was one on the national question in Central Europe and the Balkans, which reaffirmed "the right of every nation to self-determination, even to the extent of separation"; text in *Inprecor*, September 5, 1924, pp. 682-5.

⁸⁷ See, for instance, Eudin and North, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

⁸⁸ The last portion of Manuilsky's report on the national question was given over to this theme; see *Fifth Congress of the Communist International*, pp. 194-5.

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priate for the national question to be linked to the colonial question, as it had been at previous congresses. The colonial question, we have seen, was an outgrowth of the national question, as this question had been formulated before 1917, and was an extension of it in the context of overseas empires in Asia and Africa. The Comintern had not troubled to make rigid distinctions between the two, or between either and the Eastern question.

What is more difficult to understand is why the national question in Europe should have virtually submerged the colonial question in Asia. This had not occurred at previous congresses. While discussion of the East, to be sure, had never matched the attention given to the West, when there had been discussion of the Eastern (or national, or colonial) question, it had concerned Asia, not Europe. The argument had been that revolution in Asia was, if not a prerequisite for revolution in Europe, at least a vital accompaniment to it. This idea is conspicuously absent in most of the discussion of the colonial question during the Fifth Congress. Moreover, the Fifth Congress took place at a time when revolutionary prospects in Europe were at their lowest point since the war and when a more serious look at prospects in the East might have been anticipated.

This was also a time when the tempo of events in China was accelerating daily. Yet the congress' treatment of developments in China was casual: a recent strike of railway workers in Hankow, leading to several executions, was made the occasion for a hastily drafted "Manifesto Against the Oppression of the Peoples of the Orient," which was introduced midway through the congress and adopted unanimously, without discussion;⁸⁹ Manuilsky noted that the Comintern had authorized Chinese Communists to join the Kuomintang, and he chided the Chinese comrades for their continuing opposition to this policy on the grounds that it led to "class collaboration";⁹⁰ one of the two Chinese delegates at the congress—both minor figures in the CCP—described recent developments in China during the debate on Manuilsky's report, emphasizing the gains resulting from Communist-Kuo-

⁸⁹ *Inprecor*, July 17, 1924, p. 416.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, August 4, 1924, p. 570.