CHAPTER 1

STRATEGY AND TACTICS OF REVOLUTION

As noted earlier, Roy’s views on the national question had been formed a few months before he started for Moscow. While busy with meeting the communists in Berlin, he maintained contact with the members of the Indian Revolutionary Committee (Berlin Committee) which had been dissolved a year ago. He met Bhupendranath Datta and Champakraman Pillai in Berlin. Virendranath Chattopadhyay was then away in Sweden. About this time he also met Abani Mukherji, a Bengali national revolutionary, who had come from Java via Netherlands, on way also to Moscow to attend the Second Congress of the Comintern. Mukherji’s delegation was arranged by the Dutch communists on introduction from their common friends in Java.

While in Berlin sometime in February 1920, Roy issued a manifesto signed also by Mukherji and Santi Devi (Evelyn Roy) addressed to the Indian revolutionaries. Following a controversy, Datta did not sign the manifesto. It was perhaps the first writing of Roy, purely from Marxist standpoint on Indian situation; it foreshadowed his views in a rudimentary form, contending Lenin’s thesis on National and Colonial Question at the ensuing Second Comintern Congress. Far away from the Indian scene for a long period, Roy had no direct contact with India, nor seemed to have a clear awareness of the trend of India’s contemporary national upsurge. He had arrived at an extreme position, perhaps via the Left Communism of Europe. This led him at the very outset of his communist career to make an overview of the Indian situation; it revealed itself in the manifesto, stating that the nationalist movement in India had failed to appeal to the masses, because it strived for a bourgeois democracy. However, one may agree that the manifesto was correct in identifying that there had been two tendencies in the Indian movement, distinct in principle and aim,” but it showed an erroneous understanding of the
role and relation of classes in the then Indian context, where
the manifesto said that the nationalists advocated an auto-
nomous India upon a "vague democratic programme," and the
"real revolutionary movement" stood for the "economic
emancipation of workers," resting on the strength of a "class-
conscious industrial proletariat and landless peasantry."
Similarly, at another place, although the manifesto rightly
traced the source of the "growth of class-consciousness in the
Indian proletariat" to the powerful and organised strikes in
India after the first World War, yet it made a wrong contra-
position of the two stages of revolution by concluding that the
"idea of proletarian revolution distinct from nationalism" had
come to India in the wake of the unprecedented strikes caused
by industrial unrest, growing cost of living and unemployment.
It will be noted later that Roy soon realised that the character
of the Indian revolution was historically bound to be bourgeois
democratic and not proletarian; it was destined to liberate the
country from the alien rule, as also to bring about a radical
socio-economic change in favour of the workers and peasants.
He, however, wanted to place the workers, peasants and other
exploited classes in the leadership of the revolution, and was
reluctant to give any place to the bourgeoisie.

LENIN-ROY DEBATE

The Second Congress of the Comintern (July-August, 1920)
which met on the first day in Petrograd and subsequently in
Moscow, set out to determine a policy on "the National and
Colonial Question." The Congress had appointed a Commi-
ission to consider the issue on the basis of a preliminary draft
report prepared by Lenin. M. N. Roy, who was then thirty-
three years old, attended the Congress as a delegate from
Mexico and for the first time that he had ever been able to
take part "at the Congress of the revolutionary proletariat." 5

The session of the Commission was the scene of a confron-
tation between Lenin and Roy over two sets of theses on the
National and Colonial Question. 6 The debate revolved basic-
cally around two points: (a) how the national liberation
movements should be assessed in terms of world socialist revolution, and (b) what policy the Comintern ought to follow in strategic level (importance of Asia in the world revolution) and on tactical level (collaboration with the national bourgeoisie). The general approach to liberation of the oppressed peoples through a world revolution was common to both. But two minor differences, besides a major difference, brought about a controversy between them. Roy projected a radically different scheme of the world strategy of communism.

First, Roy narrated the economic order obtaining in the colonial and semicolonial countries as "pre-capitalist." Majority of the Commission wanted to substitute the phrase as "dominated by capitalistic imperialism." Roy readily accepted this amendment to his theses. Secondly, Roy declared flatly that the fate of the revolution in the European countries depended entirely on the success of revolution in Asia. He based this view on the hypothesis that the main resources of world capitalism flowed from Asia's exploited markets and raw materials. Referring to Lenin's concept of super profits in Imperialism; the higher stage of Capitalism, Roy argued that unless this source of life-blood for world capitalism were cut at the root by Asian revolutionaries, the western proletariat would not be able to defeat their exploiters. 7

Lenin refused to accept Roy's "Asiocentric" view, although he conceded that colonial expansion contributed to reinforcement of capitalism in Europe. His contention centred around his own thesis that a successful colonial revolt could be achieved by supporting the national liberation movements, in as much as the colonial proletariat was incapable of leading a successful revolution; hence the bourgeoisie in the colonies was to take the lead. He laid primacy on revolution in Europe for the success of world revolution. But unlike other European delegates he took a balanced view. Lenin blamed Roy for going "too far" and rejected Roy's view that the European revolution would not succeed unless the amorphous Asian masses were freed from imperialist bondage. 8 Roy was thus forced to accept amendments to his theses into substantial agreement with those
of Lenin. Nevertheless, despite extreme European view-point and opposition of some representatives of western parties, especially the Italian delegate Serrati, the Second Congress modified the line of the First Congress. In a reformulated manner, Roy's draft was thus adopted: "extra profit" gained in the colonies formed the "mainstay of modern capitalism" and so long as the latter was "not deprived of this source of extra profit," it would "not be easy for the European working class to overthrow the capitalist order." 

The third and major difference turned on a practical issue of tactics, destined to be a "constant source of embarassment both to the Soviet Government and to the Comintern." This was the main issue, which was debated first in the sessions of the Commission and then in the plenary session of the World Congress. Lenin in his Preliminary Draft of the theses maintained that the Comintern "must conclude a temporary alliance with the bourgeois democrats in the colonies and backward countries, but should not merge with them." His argument was that the Communists could strengthen their initial position in the colonies and the semicolonies by allying themselves with local groups opposed to imperial rule.

Roy, on the other hand, maintained in his theses that "in the dependent countries two distinct movements" could be found which "every day grow apart from each other." One was the "bourgeois democratic nationalist movement," having a programme of "political independence under the bourgeois order," while the other one was the "mass action of the poor and ignorant peasants and workers" for their freedom from all sorts of exploitation. "The former," Roy felt, "endeavours to control the latter." This feeling led him to advocate that the Comintern should "struggle against such control" and boost up "class consciousness in the working masses of the colonies." As a corollary, "the first and most necessary task," according to Roy, was the "formation of communist parties" which would "organise the peasants and workers" to lead them to revolution, for establishment of Soviet republics "not through capitalist development, but led by the class conscious proletariat of the
advanced capitalist countries."15 Thus, the "real strength of the liberation movements in the colonies" was "no longer confined to the narrow circle of bourgeois democratic nationalists". In most of the colonies, he claimed, there already existed, although "not very large," organised "revolutionary parties," with which the Comintern should establish relation. While, however, communist parties of class conscious workers were to take the lead, the revolution as visualised by Roy, was "not going to be a communist revolution in its first stage."16 His argument was that the leadership, if from the outset was "in the hands of a communist vanguard," the revolutionary people "will not be led astray," but might go ahead "through the successive periods of development." The agrarian problem in those countries "must be carried on" with a programme of "petty bourgeois reforms" and not on communist principles. Possibly he intended to emulate the policy followed by the Bolsheviks in Russia in October, 1917.17

Taking strong exception to Roy's contention, Lenin reminded the delegates about the support rendered by the Bolsheviks to the liberal groups during their fight against the Tsarist regime.18 Lenin, however, took serious cognisance of Roy's theory of "non-capitalist path of development" and said that "there was quite a lively debate on the question", and assured further that if the victorious proletariat and the Soviet Government came to their aid, "it will be a mistake to assume that the backward peoples must inevitably go through the capitalist stage of development." Thus, the Second Congress endorsed an important theoretical proposition clinched by Roy, and adopted by Lenin in the following terms: The Comintern "should advance the proposition, with the appropriate theoretical grounding, that with the aid of the proletariat of the advanced countries, backward countries can go over to the Soviet system, and through certain stages of development to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage."19

**Lenin considered Roy's theses as "very important" because they were written mainly from the point of view of the situation**
in India and other large nationalities which were oppressed by Great Britain. The reasons of Lenin’s “ignorance of the relation of social forces in the colonial countries” were later explained by Stalin. Replying to a question as to how could it happen that Roy's special theses “were needed” to supplement Lenin’s theses, Stalin declared that “Lenin’s theses had been written and published long before the Second Congress opened and long before the representatives from the colonial countries had arrived.” And since the deliberations in the Congress “revealed the necessity” for different treatment of countries like China and India, Stalin held, the “necessity for the Supplementary Theses arose.”

Lenin endorsed Roy’s one aspect of analysis and held that there had been “a certain rapprochement between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies.” Very often and if not “in most cases” the national bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, maintaining its support to the national movement, was “in full accord with the imperialist bourgeoisie” and “goes against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes.” In order to explain the significance of the amendments made to his draft theses, Lenin said, “we as Communists, should and will support bourgeois liberation movements in the colonies..... when their exponents do not hinder our work of educating and organising” the peasantry and the masses. And if these conditions did not exist the Communists “must combat the reformist bourgeoisie...” But over the years, course of events hardly testified bourgeois tolerance of educating the masses in a revolutionary manner.

Lenin later explained to the Congress that by substituting “bourgeois democratic” with “national revolutionary” he had contrasted a “reformist” with a “revolutionary” bourgeois movement only when those movements were really revolutionary.” However, in consequence of Roy’s criticism, Lenin’s theses on the National and Colonial Questions were amended, counselling the Comintern to support “revolutionary movements of liberation,” instead of “bourgeois democratic
liberation movements." Lenin's theses were subjected to a number of amendments, while Roy's theses, also suitably amended as "Supplementary Theses," were finally adopted together in the Congress. While Lenin's theses were adopted with three abstentions, the theses introduced by Roy were adopted unanimously.\textsuperscript{97}

It may be investigated as to what prompted Roy, a new recruit into communism, to challenge the mighty Lenin, skilled in revolutionary tactics and intricacies of Marxism. At the first session, Lenin in his Report on the international situation, maintained that the socialist Second International had excluded the oppressed masses of Asia and Africa and declared that the Third (Communist) International would be a true world organisation by including in its programme the promotion of national revolutionary movements in the non-European countries. Lenin had further declared that the Russian proletariat having captured power, had won the privilege of liberation of the oppressed masses of the world.\textsuperscript{98} Roy was vexed with the question that in the capitalist countries there were communist parties which could take the advantage of Lenin's pronouncements, but how could the Comintern "develop the national liberation movements" in the absence of "similar instruments for revolution" in colonial countries.\textsuperscript{99}

Roy no doubt had exaggerated his estimation of the numerical and ideological strength of the proletariat and the revolutionary fervour of the Indian masses. Naturally, to Lenin those views were "to a large extent unfounded," as he saw that in spite of those claims made by Roy, the Indian communists had "not yet succeeded in creating a communist party in their country."\textsuperscript{100} Lenin did not set the task of immediately organising a mass communist party in India. Rather, "on the contrary it was Roy who adhered to such a point of view." Lenin did not see the "prerequisites" for organising a mass communist party.\textsuperscript{101} Roy had recommended "formation of communist parties" on the ground that, "as a guarantee against the danger of the nationalist bourgeoisie compromising with imperialism", the movement for "National
liberation must be socially based on the workers and peasants.” Contrarily in Roy’s version, “Lenin believed in the revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie in the colonial countries on the analogy of European history.”

Secondly, during the Second Congress Roy was very much preoccupied with the ideas of the “changed economic policy” of the British Government in India and consequent political overtures made during and after the First World War. The change in the economic policy of the Government was marked by the Indian Industrial Commission (1916), which in its report (1918) declared various concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie. The thirty-third session of the Indian National Congress held in Delhi in December 1918, conveyed its loyalty to the king and congratulations on “the successful termination of the war.” To Roy the political expression of Government’s reconciliation with the Indian bourgeoisie was couched in the form of Montague-Chelmsford Reform scheme.

Thirdly, Roy observed that Gandhi who embodied “simultaneously revolution and reaction,” transcended the limits of the Moderates in “mere indignation meetings and passing resolutions of protest.” Thus, for the first time in its history, Roy felt, that the Indian national movement had entered the period of active struggle by calling upon the masses under the leadership of Gandhi. Roy differed with Lenin on the evaluation of the revolutionary significance of national movement in India, centered on the role of Gandhi. Lenin believed, writes Roy, that as the inspirer and leader of a mass movement, Gandhi was a revolutionary. Contrarily Roy maintained that as “a religious and cultural revivaiist, Gandhi was bound to be a reactionary socially, however revolutionary he might appear politically,” and Roy sought to derive support for his argument by referring to Plekhanov’s judgment of the Russian Populist and Socialist Revolutionaries, which judgment, Roy contended, was similar to Indian nationalists of the extremist and Gandhian variety. The Russian Populists and Socialist Revolutionaries believed in the special genius of the Slav race, and denounced capitalism as western vice. They
upheld a return to the village and the revival of the "Mirs" of the olden days. Plekhanov characterised these movements as politically revolutionary, but socially reactionary. With this analogy Roy developed the view that "the Indian national movement, actuated by the spirit of Gandhism cannot succeed because in that case it would defeat its own end."

Fourthly, to Roy the state of affairs in 1919 was "ripe" for mass action under the impact of economic forces and other objective conditions. There had been various strikes in the industrial centres and the call for a hartal was responded to by the working class. Roy believed that it was "a great mass upheaval, an essentially socio-economic and not a mere national demonstration." The "mighty mass revolt," he maintained, "scared the Moderates." The upheaval was the "prelude to the coming class-struggle." While fifty thousand textile workers were on strike in Ahmedabad and railway workers were holding up traffic to prevent rushing of troops in the Punjab, Roy to his dismay noticed that Gandhi had unconditionally suspended the CD movement.

Lastly, Roy saw the signs of steady emergence of workers and peasants from the "first confusion of a great social upheaval" and an eventual divorce of the mass movement from bourgeois leadership. Workers and peasants did not find the Congress programme include their interest. Thus, Roy believed that bourgeois nationalism would "end in a compromise with Imperial supremacy," and the liberation of the country would be "left to the political movement of the workers and peasants" organised on the basis of class struggle.

Analysing Roy's actions, Overstreet and Windmiller have suggested that Roy's opposition to Lenin constituted a "bid for supremacy" in the communist activities in India. The authors might have been influenced by the writings of Saumyendranath Tagore, who played an important role for Roy's expulsion from the Comintern in the Sixth World Congress in 1928. Tagore writes that a group, representing the Indian revolutionaries, who had organised a revolutionary centre in Berlin during the world war of 1914, submitted a
thesis on the Indian political situation to Lenin. Lenin personally acknowledged it to Virendranath Chattopadhyay, the leader of the group. An interview with Lenin was arranged in which a detailed discussion was to follow. But M.N. Roy "who was then the handyman of the powerful clique (Borodin etc.) dominating the Comintern managed through the clique to frustrate all the efforts of the deputation," Tagore concluded.\textsuperscript{43}

The proposition put forward here is that Roy's challenge to Lenin's thesis had not been prompted by such opportunistic considerations. The views expressed by Roy in his thesis were foreshadowed in his so called "Indian Communist Manifesto" issued from Berlin, much before he came to know the contents of Lenin's thesis. The rudiments of his extreme views and unrealistic estimations contained in the manifesto were later elaborated by Roy in his thesis, contending with those of Lenin. It seems that Roy was largely influenced by the Left Communists of Germany.

Some scholars maintain that the debate "reflected a great confusion of ideas" over the National and Colonial Question and there was "a gap between those who took a purely western attitude," placing all their faith in advanced countries and the proletariat, and "those who leaned towards the East" looking at the backward countries and the peasantry, as a "precious and necessary force" for world revolution.\textsuperscript{44} This viewpoint seems to have been enlarged by Carrere d'Encausse and Schram who held that the principal spokesman of the "Asiocentric view" was Roy, while Lenin adopted "a more balanced position," and some of the other speakers were divided along geographical lines.\textsuperscript{45}

The hypothesis that Roy's differences with Lenin reflected an "Asiocentric" view on the revolutionary timetable, has been somewhat exaggerated. Actually the issue of Asia's primacy over Europe arose incidentally. Here disapproval of Asia's subordination to Europe was not the major issue which prompted Roy to oppose Lenin. Roy felt that Lenin's policy of harnessing the colonial bourgeoisie to the interest of revolution
in Europe, would be detrimental to the future of the proletariat in Asia. Roy had observed in the Second Congress that the European delegates were more concerned with their own internal issues, to give adequate attention to the colonies. Roy argued that the possession of the colonies delayed the process of revolution in Europe, because of the fact that "imperialist capitalists" had been trying to placate the workers of the home country with super-profits gained by colonial expropriation, in order to cripple the revolutionary tendencies. The policy of supporting bourgeois nationalism in the East, Roy apprehended, would do harm to the cause of revolution in the colonial countries.

In his supplementary thesis as amended and adopted by the Second Congress, Roy held that the "breaking up of the colonial empire, together with a proletarian revolution in the home-country will overthrow the capitalist system in Europe." Therefore, with this in view, he maintained that "these two forces must be co-ordinated" for the final success of the world revolution. Further, he believed that through the direct support of the proletarian and peasant movements would the Comintern be serving the interest of the Indian masses. To Roy the national bourgeoisie, however anti-imperialist it might appear, was potentially reactionary. He had argued in the Commission that "afraid of revolution, the nationalist bourgeoisie would compromise with imperialism in return for some economic and political concessions to their class."

Lenin did not subscribe to Roy's scepticism about the anti-imperialist national movements. To Lenin nationalism could be a progressive force when directed against imperialism. It was rather expedient to support nationalism which would deprive the imperialists of the super-profit and at the same time hasten the cause of revolution in Europe. Lenin believed that it was possible to maintain class conflict in colonial countries, while simultaneously promoting national struggle against imperialism. Contrarily, Roy feared that by promoting nationalism the class demarcations would be blurred; and hence he felt that adherence to such a course would turn into sacrifice
of the interest of the proletariat in the colonial countries for the cause of revolution in the West. Thus, Roy’s thesis conformed more to the Marxist theory in the sense that national sentiments had no place in Marx’s programme and ideology. Nationalism was viewed by Marx as a bourgeois category. Marx regarded classes, not nations, as the determining factors of history.49

Lenin’s thesis implicitly conceded that the leadership of the colonial countries would, for a long time to come, remain with the national bourgeoisie, although on the international scale the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle would remain in the hands of the proletariat of the advanced countries. Roy recognised the role of the latter. But in the case of the colonies he wanted to rely directly upon the exploited masses without the intervening national bourgeoisie. Lenin stressed the need for giving special support to peasant movements in the colonies. To him the peasants were the essential component of bourgeois democracy. Lenin wanted to give this democracy a revolutionary orientation by establishing an alliance between the proletariat of the west and revolutionary peasant movement in the colonies. He, therefore, found no obstacle to an alliance with the national bourgeoisie. Lenin’s idea of united front tactics had a four class structure, consisting of bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, peasantry and proletariat. Roy advocated an extremist, anti-capitalist strategy of three classes, leaving out the bourgeoisie, against foreign and national exploiter under the leadership of the Communist Party. Over the years, although Roy changed his position, yet he all through consistently maintained that that national bourgeoisie in colonial countries would not play any progressive role.

As a result of the amendments of both the theses of Lenin and Roy, the differences between them were apparently narrowed. But in effect the ambiguities of wording in Lenin’s thesis, as finally adopted, kept in abeyance a basic ideological dispute and subsequently gave rise to much controversy, especially between Roy and the Comintern. Given the circumstances of early 1920-s, Lenin’s thesis had substantial merit.
in view of the imminence of proletarian revolution in Europe. The alliance with the colonial bourgeoisie was of transitory nature. Roy's estimation of Lenin's colonial policy proved correct when the transitory period was shifted for an indefinite period. Despite erroneous assessments of the Indian proletariat, Roy correctly anticipated that an ambivalent policy of supporting the nationalists and simultaneously boosting up the class conflict would fall a prey to its inherent contradiction.

**Birth of CPI at Tashkent**

After the Second Congress when large-scale exodus of Muhajirs started from India following the Khilafat movement, Roy made a plan "to raise, equip and train" an army in Afghanistan, taking the advantage of the then hostility of Afghan king Amanullah against the British Government. His idea was to use the frontier territories as the base of operation and with the support of tribesmen would march into India and occupy some territory where a civil government would be established. The requirements for implementing the plan were finally approved by the Russian authorities and Roy proceeded to Tashkent with two train-loads of arms and ammunition, money and military personnel. Soon after an Indian Military school began to function, difficulties arose from large influx of Pan-Islamic Muhajirs without political orientation, necessary for an army of liberation, and secondly, as Lenin had earlier cautioned, the Afghan Government began to create impediments. Thirdly, the British Government, with which the Russians had established economic relations, made a strong protest. The School had therefore to be closed. This attempt of Roy was no doubt impractical, and therefore ended in a natural failure. His next move was to establish in Moscow a centre for the political training of the revolutionaries from various Asiatic countries; it was named Communist University of the Toilers of the East. With a select group of 22 Muhajirs Roy returned to Moscow in May 1921 to start the University.

One of the main events within two and half months after
the Second Congress was the formation of the Communist Party of India on October 17, 1920 at Tashkent, during the period of Roy’s first sojourn to the city. The party was formed initially with seven persons. Roy was no doubt responsible for the formation of the emigre party, but according to his own account he was largely instrumental in forming the Party on the insistence of a minority group of emigrants, headed by Abdur Rab and Trimul Acharya. In his Memoirs Roy writes that he found “no sense in a few emigrant individuals calling themselves” the Communist Party of India. However, willy-nilly he agreed with the proposal of forming the Party with the hope that the Party might function as the nucleus of a real Communist Party to be organised eventually. Soon afterwards, a strong opposition against forming a party under the banner of communism came from a section of Roy’s Indian rivals in Europe. On the eve of the Third Comintern Congress, a delegation from the Berlin Committee arrived in Moscow. They declared that the Committee alone had the authority to speak for India and they had decided to shift the headquarters of the Committee to Moscow, if favourable conditions were provided. A series of meetings ensued (from March to July, 1921) which “proved a fiasco”; Roy and Chatto, “disputing leadership” and being “unwilling to work together”. The news of formation of the CPI had perhaps frightened the old nationalist leaders “as a challenge to their authority.” It is true that Roy represented none but himself; he, however, declared that he was prepared to work under the Committee. The Committee’s main charge against Roy was that he had harboured Abani Mukherji whom they considered to be a spy. Mukherji made a counter-charge that those who had come from Berlin were “German Agents.” The delegation submitted a draft thesis to Lenin and wanted the Comintern to alter its colonial thesis adopted in the Second Congress. It also demanded dissolution of the newly born CPI at Tashkent. It was natural for Roy to plead inability to do so as it was formed at the “initiative of a number of others who would not agree to the dissolution,” even if he had recommended it. In a
rage the delegation left Moscow as its ultimatum was not accepted. Apart from the issue of leadership, the underlying ideological dispute cannot be overlooked. It transpired that when the conference did nothing but quarrel, the Comintern authorities intervened and decided in favour of communism against nationalism. It seems that the bone of contention was the Comintern "policy of only recognising and giving help to Communist Parties"; this was opposed by Chatto. He contended that the first necessity was the overthrow of imperialism from India, after which communism could be established. He urged on the Commission to exploit "every available revolutionary tendency in and outside India."\(^6\)

NOTES & REFERENCES


Roy in the debate had stated that compared with the rural proletariat the industrial proletariat in India was small. It numbered 5 million workers, among whom trade union movement was “spreading rapidly” and a recent strike movement had developed strongly among the Indian working class. The strikes originating from 1906 assumed “veritable insurrection.”—*Ibid.* p.151.


It will be later discussed that after his arrival in India, Roy realised the fact that the proletariat played “a minor role in the scheme of Indian politics” which was still “heavily coloured with the national sentiment.” The “overestimation of the actual significance” of the proletariat, writes Roy, led to the “corresponding undervaluation of the importance of other elements” in the revolution.—Roy. *Our Differences.* Calcutta, 1933, p.132.


43. *Historical Development of Communist Movement in India.* ed. and pub. by Politburo, CC, RCPI, and printed at the Red Front Press, Calcutta, 1944. p.3. Nowhere the name of Tagore appears as author of the booklet. Since he was the founder and leader of the Party, Overstreet and Windmiller have taken him to be the author of the booklet.


46. See the text of the debate in: Carrere d’Encausse and Schram. *op. cit.* pp. 154-63.


49. In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* Marx and Engels said, “Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the term.”—Marx and Engels. *op. cit.* v.6, pp. 502-3. See also Marx and Engels. “On the Polish Question,” *Ibid.* p.549.


57. The meeting had been arranged by Borodin who met some members of the Committee in Berlin—Datta. *op.cit.* p.288.

58. It included among others V. Chattopadhyay, B.N.Datta, P.S. Khan-khoje, B. Dasgupta, G.A.K.Luhani, Nalini Gupta and Agnes Smedley, the wife of Chatto. Virendranath Chattopadhyay was in popular parlance called Chatto.


Evidently the Commission was heedless of the appeal made by Chatto. Evelyn Roy, writing to a correspondent in Paris, said that the decision was that “all work is to be carried on by the Communist Party which already exists here (Moscow)” and the Comintern “cannot aid Nationalist causes except through a Communist Party as intermediary.”—*Ibid.*
CHAPTER 2
RADICAL TRENDS IN INDIAN POLITICS

The year 1920 opened with a new political panorama in India. Earlier, the liberals had seceded from the Congress. Now a schism developed amongst Congress leaders left behind. Madan Mohan Malaviya and Gandhi wanted to work the reforms contained in the Government of India Act of 1919, offering cooperation; C. R. Das was for rejecting the scheme. At Amritsar Congress (1919) the issue was cooperation versus destruction. A few months later the position of the Amritsar parties was reversed. Gandhi stood for non-cooperation, while those who had opposed him ranged themselves against non-cooperation. The events of 1920 centred mainly around the Khilafat movement and Gandhi proposed to synchronise the issue of non-cooperation with it. Gandhi’s programme of non-cooperation was opposed by most of the leaders including Das and Jinnah, at the special session of the Congress in Calcutta in September; but the resolution was adopted by a majority. Gandhi's “personal triumph” was conclusive and confirmed at the annual session at Nagpur in December. While the opposition headed by Das surrendered, the Congress reaffirmed the resolution on non-cooperation passed at the Calcutta Session. Constitution of the Congress was also amended, declaring its creed as “the attainment of Swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means.”1 Henceforth the object was no longer the attainment of self-government within the British empire, because any attempt to define the meaning of self-government would have split the Congress. Indeed to most of the leaders, “Swaraj meant something much less than independence.” In a sense Gandhi himself seemed to be “delightfully vague on the subject and he did not encourage clear thinking about it.”2

The policy of non-cooperation received a countrywide response. The no-vote campaign in the general election (1920) to the reformed Councils had been a remarkable success. By the first quarter of 1921 a systematic agitation against the
Government had commenced in all the provinces. The development of the agitation followed, however, two different courses: (1) non-cooperation on the issues of the Punjab atrocities, Khilafat wrongs and unacceptable reforms, and (2) economic struggle of peasants and workers under the impact of the national movement. Evidently there was a conflict of feelings between the newly awakened popular zeal mixed with economic unrest and Gandhi's policy of restraint tempered with non-violence. Non-cooperation movement, however, gathered an additional momentum when the Government announced the visit of Prince of Wales to India in November 1921. The Congress promptly reacted by declaring a complete boycott of all the functions connected with the Prince’s visit, but was hesitant in giving a signal for a CD.

While the Government lost no time to step up its repressive measures, the national volunteer movement consolidated itself, side by side with militant Khilafat volunteers. Together they organised hartals and boycott. Volunteer organisations were gradually banned in different provinces, followed by mass arrests. Country-wide arrests included prominent leaders like Lajpat Rai, C. R. Das, Maulana Azad and the Nehrus.

In the second stream of struggle not directly connected with the political movements were mainly the mass of industrial workers and the peasants who “were affected,” however vaguely, by the non-cooperation agitation. The period immediately following the end of the first World War was marked by industrial strife on a scale previously unknown. Under the impact of the political agitation, the workers became more conscious of their rights and more bold in securing them. With the end of the war, prices of consumer goods instead of falling rose sharply, while rise in wages did not keep pace with rise in prices of commodities. During the war, Indian industries made fabulous profits, but there was a decline of real wages. This set the stage for the wave of spontaneous strikes which began in 1918. Throughout the year 1919, official reports admitted that discontent of the workers revealed itself in strikes, causing “serious dislocation” of industry, railways
and postal services. Bombay witnessed in the first quarter of the year the first great mill strike involving 1,50,000 workers. In November 15,000 men in the Kanpur mills went on strike in protest against rise in prices.

In the wake of protests against the Rowlatt Act and Jalianwala Bagh massacre, strikes involving thousands of workers in the railway workshops, mint, dockyard and engineering industries broke out in Kanpur, Jamalpur, Bombay, Sholapur and Ahmedabad. With the turn of the year there had been an upsurge of strike movements in the country. In the opinion of the Royal Commission on Labour, the "years following the close of the war saw the formation of a large number of organisations, owing their origin mainly to the grave economic difficulties," and the effect of this "upsurge was enhanced by political turmoil" leading to a spontaneous trade union movement. Official reports continue to maintain that high prices and poor conditions of living in 1920 had their effect in nearly 200 strikes, among which textile workers in Bombay and Ahmedabad figured prominently. Serious strikes also took place at the Tata work in Jamshedpur followed by railway and postal strikes in UP and Bombay. Protracted strikes accompanied by disorder occurred in most of the important industrial centres, particularly in Madras, Calcutta and Bombay. Not until 1937 the number of striking workers in any one year exceeded the number of workers involved in 1921. Bombay and Bengal were the most disturbed provinces which accounted for 308 out of 396 strikes that took place in 1921, involving about 6,00,000 workers; nearly seven million manday were lost. Some of the strikes were of a semi-political nature.

The non-cooperation movement was raging in the country and at some places strikes had nothing to do with economic demands; such as the strike on the North Western Railway on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales whom the Congress decided to boycott. It became a universal practice all over India for labour crowds convened for trade union purposes to raise slogans of non-cooperation. Curiously, the strike movement was not backed by permanent trade unions.
With the exception of some unions, the majority originated in strike committees and disappeared as soon as strikes were settled.

Against this backdrop, the All India Trade Union Congress, which was formed in 1920, evidently "was not a spontaneous growth." The idea of forming it was mooted by some liberal intellectuals who received support from the British Labour Party. The Party sent two emissaries to the first conference of the AITUC in Bombay; Lala Lajpat Rai presided. At this embryonic stage the AITUC, formed and led by liberals with humanitarian inclinations, was naturally unconnected with revolutionary ideas. In its formation M.N. Roy saw the omen in the attempt of British Labour imperialists to detach the Indian proletariat from the post-war revolutionary upheaval. To him while the whole country was in the throes of a revolutionary turmoil, the AITUC was presided over by a bourgeois politician, who, in Roy's opinion, had no sympathy for socialism. Roy could not approve of the new trade union movement being "allowed to fall into the hands of the reactionary British trade unionists," yet despite this neglect the nationalists, according to Roy, exploited the strike movement for political agitation. In a sense he seemed to be justified because of the tactics pursued by the nationalists in their use of the workers, as a result of which long series of strike failures and repression spoilt the morale of the workers by their premature participation in political life"; the strike movement suffered a setback.

But Roy himself was not free from overestimating the situation, when he viewed the strikes as "revolutionary labour movement." When socialist ideas, let alone an organised party with a clear ideology, were yet to crystallise in India, Roy's expectation of a "conscious Vanguard to snatch the leadership from the petty bourgeois pacifists," was largely preposterous; it betrayed his ignorance of the real situation of the country.

Similar to the industrial sphere, the war and the immediate post-war years were also a period of agrarian unrest, owing mainly to the increasing burden of rents and Government
revenue. Earlier, there developed a peasant struggle which had a more direct bearing on the political movement. It was the Champaran struggle led by Gandhi against the indigo planters in 1917, and it continued for seven months. Gradually "symptoms of awakening" among the peasant masses assumed important proportion and by 1921 "Kisan Sabhas" had become "increasingly prominent" in various parts of India. Attempts were made to link the Sabhas with the Congress. Peasant delegates were mustered at the Congress sessions of 1918 and 1919, by which time Gandhi led another peasant campaign; this time against the Government at Kaira in Gujarat. A "surprisingly radical" draft resolution was moved by the U.P. kisan delegates at the Amritsar Congress (1919), urging the Government to declare peasants to be the owners of the land, that they cultivated. But the Congress set it aside for investigation by the AICC. The hesitant attitude of the Congress led to the growth of a militant movement in the U.P. known as Eka, a kind of "one big union" among the cultivators; it spread rapidly in other districts of the province by the end of 1921. The moderate elements supported by the Government developed a counter-movement called Aman Sabhas with the idea of maintaining peace.

Agrarian distress in Oudh and other districts of the U.P. had actually aggravated in the wake of the rise in prices, when the landlords resorted to illegal exactions and eviction of the tenants. Peasants became restive and lawless; Government intervened and took repressive measures against the peasants. The situation became critical in Pratabgarh and Rae Bareli districts. Climaxed by police firing on peasants in the Rae Bareli, Government repression continued along with sporadic looting and disorder. Meanwhile, circumstances had thrust Jawaharlal Nehru into the peasant movement. To Nehru the national movement and the peasant movement "overlapped and influenced each other," though they were objectively supposed to be "quite separate." With "no clear ideas about peasant participation," Nehru sought to link peasant discontent with nationalist politics. Though opposed to moderate approach,
Nehru had no scheme to provide a revolutionary dimension to peasant movement. To him, ejectment of the tenants was a minor part of the major issue of ejectment of the British. He was more inclined to kisan-zeminder unity in the pattern set by Gandhi, who, opposed to radical measures, believed in “betterment of relations between the zeminders and the kisans.” As a fight against the British, Gandhi exhorted the peasants to be “ready to suspend payment of tax to the Government, but not to deprive the zeminders of their rent.”

But the discontent of the peasants was “entirely with landlords and was not in any way anti-British or anti Government.” They were little interested in the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs when their own existence became precarious. Hence at a stage the zeal “to associate kisan sabhas with the Congress programme led to a split” in the parent U.P. Kisan Sabha itself. When the Congress, true to its conciliatory position, launched the CD movement in November 1921, non-payment of tax was permitted, but not of rent to the zeminders, despite ejection, illegal exaction and exploitation of the tenants.

The peasant unrest during 1920 and 1921 was not confined to the U.P. only; movements in some other provinces also assumed a serious proportion. Peasants in Madras and Assam were “successfully incited” to defy the Forest Laws, while no-tax campaign was “vigorously preached.” In Bengal, the peasant movement, besides being directed against the European planters, achieved “considerable success” in the no-tax campaign. During the year 1921, which was viewed by the Government Intelligence as the “year of agrarian labour unrest,” coolies of Assam tea gardens resorted to strike, demanding higher wages, and they left the gardens en-masse followed by general strike of the railway workers and steamer service workers in Assam and East Bengal. Last but not the least in importance in the series of country-wide unrest was the Moplah rebellion, which was basically a peasant movement in Kerala, although some of its communal excesses received undue prominence.

Under these conditions, Roy’s scheme shunned spinning,
constructive programme and self-help as advocated by Gandhi. Roy continued to maintain an extreme position, which practically had little relevance with the contemporary ideological awareness and organisational preparations in the countryside. He, however, voiced the innate feelings of the unorganised rural folk by supporting the demand for national ownership of land and its distribution among the poor peasantry. As against panchayats sponsored by the reformist Congresemens, Roy envisaged village councils as militant class organisations. In summary, in the early 1920-s Roy's programme included demands for reduction of rents and taxes and to back up such demands as to refuse payment and resist arbitrary collections by the zeminders. He called upon the peasants to organise mass demonstrations against high prices, low wages and usury. Thus, Roy's programme of action was to wage a class struggle against the zeminders and to culminate it in a fight against the imperialists, whom he considered to be the protectors of native exploiters.20

The growing tempo of the non-cooperation movement with its militant calls like "Swaraj in one year"21 gradually accelerated the spontaneous struggle of the workers and the peasants with a programme of action different from Gandhi's non-aggressive movement.22 The radical elements who had drawn inspiration from the wartime activities of the national revolutionaries and joined the non-cooperation movement, had naturally a different approach to the situation. Critical of Gandhi's ideology as also methodology of his movement, the young Left-wing elements were attracted by extraneous events, particularly the Bolshevik revolution in Russia.23 Despite preventive measures taken by the Government, the news of Russian revolution and the activities of the Comintern trickled through various media in India.24

ROY'S MANIFESTO TO AHMEDABAD CONGRESS

Roy had been keeping a close watch over the development in the national movement in India. The "total absence of any positive programme of the movement" very much surprised him,
because he found none "to have any idea of what would take the place of the paralysed administrative system." And in the absence of a "concrete programme of political and economic reconstruction," he thought, the movement would "break down." But he was quite alive to the fact that a "spontaneous mass discontent" formed the social background of the movement. At the same time he could not but express his feeling that the "religious ideology" and "mediaeval mentality" of Gandhi "discouraged any revolutionary mass action." Contemporary newspaper reports convinced Roy that in spite of its imposing appearance, the non-cooperation was "essentially weak." Presumably, to remove the weakness by making the movement conscious of its revolutionary role, Roy saw the necessity of a "concrete economic programme, which would attract the workers and peasants to join the movement," with an abiding enthusiasm.95

When the annual session of the Congress, at Ahmedabad (December, 1921) was approaching, the political situation in India had further aggravated, as if "revolution seemed to be smouldering everywhere, ready to burst into flame."96 Das was elected President of the Congress. Roy made a miscalculation from press reports that Das did not fully share Gandhi's ideology and might favour alternative method of mass struggle, if a suitable programme could be submitted for his guidance. Roy hoped moreover, that the bulk of the delegates comprising the middle class elements, who did not share the conservatism of the nationalist leaders, might accept a programme enthusiastically.

With this perspective, Roy decided to address an appeal to the Ahmedabad Congress, recommending "radical changes in the relations of property such as were introduced in the French Revolution." Both Lenin and Stalin "enthusiastically welcomed the idea."97 Signed by Roy and Abani Mukherji, the appeal, contained in a manifesto, eulogised the new leadership of the Congress for discarding the "old impotent tactics of securing petty reforms by means of constitutional agitation" carried on by the "Moderate leadership of Mehta-Gokhale-Bose-Banerji
combination.” With due emphasis on unity and full-hearted support of the people, the manifesto did not hesitate to comment that “several thousands of noisy, irresponsible students and a number of middle-class intellectuals, followed by an ignorant mob momentarily incited by fanaticism,” could not be the basis of the political organ of the nation. It, therefore, emphasised the need for participation of workers and peasants in greater numbers, with the slogan of “land to the peasant and bread to the workers.” Going against the mainstream of the prevailing Indian political movement, the manifesto had the conviction to repudiate the Khilafat Movement as “abstract idealism” based on “sentimental trimmings,” looking for some unknown regions and devoid of any relevance to the hungry mortals; it advocated helping the people in the “economic fight” with a “definite programme of economic and social reconstruction.” And instead of “utilising the ignorance of the masses,” it pointed out that “their consciousness must be aroused,” because Swaraj could be realised only with conscious action of the masses. Quoting Gandhi who had declared, “it is dangerous to make political use of the factory workers,” the manifesto asserted that the noncooperation movement was “bound to fail” as the working class had been left out.

But the appeal as envisaged by Roy did not reach Das, who had been arrested before the session. Two delegates reprinted the appeal on their signatures and formally submitted it for discussion in the session. The appeal, as conjectured by Roy, gave Maulana Hasrat Mohani, a prominent Muslim leader, the idea to move for the first time a resolution for “complete independence free from all foreign control.” Opposing the resolution, Gandhi argued that it would “redound not to your credit, not to your advantage, but which may cause you irreparable injury.” He, therefore, asked the delegates “in full confidence to reject” the resolution.

RADOLO AT BARDOI

The Ahmedabad Congress reiterated the non-cooperation
resolution of Calcutta and Nagpur in view of the repressive policy of the Government. While the year 1922 opened with non-cooperation and Khilafat agitation "flourishing" all over the country, Malaviya and Jinnah showed anxiety for an understanding with the Government. They convened an All-Parties' Conference (Bombay, 14 January) to bring about a truce. But the attempt failed. By this time, Gandhi, who had received an initial jolt in his faith in the CD, because of the riots in Bombay during the visit of the Prince, wrote to the Viceroy that he was prepared to postpone the proposed CD at Bardoli, if the Government revised its policy and released the prisoners. The Government rejecting his demands, Gandhi sent a rejoinder (7 February), which scarcely had been issued from Bardoli where he had gone to lead the CD, news came from Chauri Chaura about setting fire by an infuriated mob to the police station leading to burning to death of 21 constables. Gandhi put his "doubts and troubles," before the members of the CWC (11 February) who did not agree, but on his insistence resolved to suspend the CD and to "stop all activities," excepting constructive programme of popularising charka, national schools, temperance and panchayats. Later Gandhi was arrested. Curiously, on the basis of complaints from the zemindars, the CWC resolved to inform the ryots that "withholding of rent" to the zemindars was "contrary to the Congress resolutions," and that it was "injurious to the best interests of the country." The CWC also assured the zeminders that the Congress movement was "in no way intended to attack their legal rights," and that even where the ryots had grievances, the Committee's desire was that the "redress be sought by mutual consultations" and by "usual recourse to arbitration." What actuated the movers of the resolution is not far to seek. It clearly seems to be a cover to protect the interests of the zemindars, to the detriment of the peasants. On the plea of violence, the CWC laid emphasis on the issue of the non-payment of rent and legal rights of the zeminders. Chauri Chaura was not alone a case of violence emanating from peasant unrest. In the U.P., Malabar, Bengal and else-
where the national movement had earlier manifested itself in violence. Evidently, the Congress led by Gandhi called off the movement, because it was afraid of growing radicalisation of the masses. Gandhi believed in conciliation, and not in conflict of classes. In effect, the Congress sided with the zeminders and the Government against the peasants. It transpired that the question of class interest in opposition to the class movement was the "breaking point of the Nationalist Movement in 1922."\(^{34}\)

It was natural that the Bardoli resolution greatly disappointed Roy, whose reading was that the situation had been "extremely revolutionary" when the "powerful slogan" of CD had roused immense response from the poor peasantry. To him it was a "rank betrayal of the revolutionary forces by the bourgeois leadership."\(^{35}\) In Roy's view, Gandhi had made a common cause with the Moderates who aggrandised the native capitalists and landlords. He believed that the movement led by Gandhi did not suffer a defeat at the hands of the external forces. It was Roy's argument that during the year 1920-21, the entire country was the "scene of a powerful strike movement" on the one hand, and a series of "agrarian insurrection" on the other, and in proportion as the revolutionary forces grew powerful, the leaders turned against them. In Roy's opinion this contradiction between the leadership and the movement led to the collapse of the latter.\(^{36}\)

The non-cooperation camp became seriously divided. The Aligarh students condemned the abandonment of the CD as it adversely affected the Khilafat Movement. For three months after Gandhi's arrest, there was a lull in the Congress activities. In June, the AICC at Lucknow debated the theory and practice of non-cooperation, passive resistance and CD. C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, V. J. Patel were in favour of changing the line and to carry non-cooperation into the Councils. To investigate the dispute, a committee called the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee was formed. It transpired from the report of the Committee that half of its members regarded CD as impractical for the present, and suggested that it be abandoned and a
new party be formed to work in the Council. However, the final decision was left to the ensuing Gaya session of the Congress.²⁷

THIRD CONGRESS OF THE COMINTERN

The National and Colonial Question was "scarcely touched" on in the deliberations of the Third Comintern Congress held towards the end of June 1921.³⁸ Zinoviev in his long report, which was presented on behalf of the ECCI, analysed at great length the situation in the West, but made only a passing reference to the problems of the East, eulogising the working of the Propaganda Council created by the Baku Congress.³⁹ Enthusiasm of the delegates from the colonial countries was dampened when their tendency to speak at length was curbed by the Presidium. The debates in the Third Congress reflected the urgency of the diplomatic interests of the Soviet Government in the context of the commercial agreements signed three months earlier with Britain. The Soviet leaders were reluctant to spoil the provisional détente with the western powers, when the economic condition of Russia was difficult, by open breach of the contract.⁴⁰ The Third Congress took cognizance of the fact that a new situation had emerged through the failure of immediate revolution in the West.⁴¹ Trotsky, who with Eugene Verga had drafted the thesis on the "World Situation and the Tasks of the Comintern," concluded that capitalism had "managed to restore a temporary and uncertain equilibrium" in the course of which the Comintern would direct the "defensive struggles" rather than offensive tactics.⁴²

Commenting on Trotsky's thesis, Roy reiterated the revolutionary potential of the East. He explained that the first world war had left two great powers, England and America, in a position of domination of the World. In Roy's view, the world had been divided into two hemispheres—the western one was taken over by America, while the eastern one went under England. In regard to colonial policy, he saw a new dimension of economic policy which kept the British imperialism alive. His argument was that before the war, England used her
colonies “as a market for finished goods,” and tried to obstruct industrialisation. But after the war, England encountered a different crisis and, therefore, sought to “industrialise the colonies, so as to create market for her primary goods (machinery etc.).” The colonies, according to Roy, constituted “a potential means for the stabilisation of the tottering capitalist system.” Since the colonies were thus the reserve of imperialism, Roy contended, it should be the task of the revolutionaries to deprive England of such a reserve and to convert the colonies into a reserve of socialist revolution. But his arguments had only a very limited impact on Trotsky, who continued to hold that “of the three beds in which the revolutionary tide flowed, the third was the colonial world.” Trotsky took cognizance of Roy’s views relating to the colonies, but did not want to give primacy to the Colonial Question.

Between the Third and the Fourth Congress new international developments prompted the Comintern to change its course of tactics on the Colonial Question. It had to adopt the tactics of united front in 1922, to oppose the reactionary rise of Fascism in Italy. Those tactics in Europe could also serve as a model for a different type, in keeping with the national movements in the colonial countries. The first ‘enlarged plenum’ of the ECCI endorsed (March 1922) various tactical measures to implement the Bolshevik theories on the National and Colonial Question into practice. The issue which was neglected in the Third Congress was discussed, and a general resolution was adopted. Roy declared that a “revolutionary workers’ and peasants’ movement was growing up and that Gandhi would have to choose between bourgeois reformist appeasement of colonialism and the national liberation struggle of the exploited masses.” In March 1922 when Gandhi was arrested, the Comintern expected in vain that there would be an armed uprising in India. In Roy’s view, the bourgeois nationalists were “uncertain and unreliable allies” for which he proposed in the plenum that the Comintern should base its activities on the industrial workers and the peasantry in countries like India.
FOURTH CONGRESS OF THE COMINTERN

The eastward trend of communism as evident in the course of the Fourth Comintern Congress (March, 1922) debates was an impetus to the Asian delegates who could speak at length on their problems, while Zinoviev’s report devoted a good deal of attention to the revolutionary situation in the East. Contrary to Tan Malaka of Java, who felt the need for support to all national movements, M.N. Roy sought to follow a more Leftist course based on an analysis of newer tactics of imperialism. He visualised that imperialism, owing to dislocation in Europe after the war, was bent on accelerating the industrial growth in the colonies to create markets for capital goods, and on the other hand the national bourgeoisie of the colonies was inclined to seek an understanding with the imperialist powers, the attitude of which was congenial to its interests, but opposed to that of the toiling masses. To Roy the social character of the movements in the western countries was uniform, while the eastern countries could not be taken as a homogeneous whole, politically, economically, or socially. Thus, the eastern countries posed a question of greater complexity. He, therefore, divided the countries in the east into three categories. On the issue of development of revolutionary movement in those three categories of eastern countries having different social, economic and political structures, Roy concluded that the programme and tactics of revolution of those countries must vary.

Roy reaffirmed his previous observation that the readjustment of the imperial capital with the native capital in the colonial countries would play a big part in the wide scheme of capitalist offensive. In order to fight the capitalist offensive in European countries, he insisted that the Comintern must coordinate forces engaged in a struggle against colonialism. But he could not rule out the experience of coordinating the revolutionary forces with bourgeois nationalist parties; it showed that by way of coordination, the bourgeois parties could also be utilised to a great extent. “We must organise,” Roy admitted, “the united anti-imperialist front in the colonies,” encompassing all the available revolutionary forces in a big
united front. But at the same time, experience of the previous two years had also strengthened his belief that organisation of the front “could not be realised under the leadership of bourgeois parties.” The desire to take the lead in organising the front, led Roy to emphasise the need for a different party of workers, peasants and other exploited classes.54

“The Theses on the Eastern question,” drafted by Eastern Commission and adopted by the Fourth Congress partly supported Roy’s analysis. Roy’s earlier assumption that the imperialists offered concessions to the nationalists was confirmed in the theses: “While the native bourgeoisie and bourgeois intelligentsia are the pioneers of colonial revolutionary movements, with the entry of proletarian and semi-proletarian peasant masses into these movements, however, the rich bourgeoisie and bourgeois landlords begin to leave it as the social interests of the masses assume prominence.”55 The main inconsistency in the theses of the Fourth Congress, similar to that of the Second Congress remained in the fact that while the Communist parties of the colonial countries was spelt out to fight for “bourgeois democratic revolution” for attainment of independence, the parties were at the same time directed to “organise the working and peasant masses for the struggle” for their class interests, and for that to “exploit all the contradictions” in the nationalist camp.66 Thus the inconsistency, so evident at the Second Congress, still pestered the Comintern. For the Fourth Congress while upholding Roy’s argument, was at the same time making plans for tactical cooperation with the nationalists.

RISE OF COMMUNIST GROUPS IN INDIA

Meanwhile, after the Third Congress of the Comintern, Roy had transferred the headquarters of the CPI to Berlin from where he brought out (May 15, 1922) the Vanguard of Indian Independence (later renamed Advance Guard) as the fortnightly organ of the Party.57 He was also in correspondence with some of his former colleagues in the revolutionary activities in Bengal, of both the Jugantar and Anusilan parties.
While many of them like Pulin Das expressed their willingness “to work in cooperation with Roy,” some others preferred to remain nationalist. Roy tried to bring them to his line by arguing that they were all working for the same end, the political freedom for India. In addition to the Vanguard and “voluminous correspondence,” Roy’s large propaganda output included his first monograph, India in Transition, a booklet India’s Problem and its Solution, while the third one published in quick succession was a pamphlet What do we want? All these propaganda activities were put forward with two main objects: (1) to appeal by reasoned argument to responsible politicians, such as those who lead the Congress, and (2) to rouse the masses by direct incitement. Apart from correspondence and printed materials, the third medium which Roy adopted was to depute emissaries secretly to India, carrying his messages to radical groups and elements in the country. Nalini Gupta, who arrived in India on the eve of the Ahmedabad Congress developed contacts in Bengal, Madras and Ceylon, while Shaukat Usmani, formerly a Tashkent student, who had arrived in September 1921, succeeded in organising communist groups at Banaras and Kanpur. In Bombay, S.A. Dange, who took the initiative in forming a “radical Group” within the Congress, had earlier attracted Roy’s attention. Dange’s weekly The Socialist which appeared from the beginning of August 1922, was first reviewed by Roy in October 1 issue of the Advance Guard. Meanwhile, Roy had sent Charles Ashleigh, a British communist, to meet Dange, Muzaffar Ahmad and others in India.

As a result of Roy’s propaganda campaign, Singaravelu Chettiar in Madras and S.A. Dange in Bombay became interested in communism and opened up communication with Roy little before Ashleigh’s brief visit to Bombay. Both of them took leading part in forming communist groups in their respective cities. The last among the communist groups in India during 1922, was formed at Lahore by Ghulam Hussain who also published a newspaper Inquilab. By the autumn of 1922, Roy succeeded in extending organisation in Bengal
(Muzaffar Ahmad), Bombay (Dange), Madras (Singaravelu) U.P. (Usmani) and the Punjab (Ghulan Hussain). And Dange appeared to be "the directing spirit of Communism in India," and Ashleigh put him in a position to "co-ordinate the work throughout India." Besides organisational success, Roy's Vanguard influenced a number of Left-wing journals appearing in 1922, e.g., Atmasakti, Dhumketu, Desher Bani in Bengali, brought out by former revolutionaries of Bengal, Socialist, an English fortnightly (now a monthly) run by Dange, Navayuga, a Telugu fortnightly run by Krishna Rao, Madras and Inquilab in Urdu run by Ghulam Hussain. A number of important papers including the Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), the Servant (Bombay) and Bande Mataram (Lahore) had been publishing articles which had appeared in the Vanguard.

In September 1922, Roy from abroad set to consolidate and co-ordinate the communist activities, which were being conducted from different places in India in an isolated manner. Charles Ashleigh, who had called on Dange in Bombay in September made over a list of workers and sympathisers in India with whom Roy had built up regular contacts. Roy became rather eager for a parley with his associates in India and asked them to send delegates to the Fourth Congress and he focussed it in the Vanguard. In the ECCI in November 1920, Zinoviev claimed that organised political (Communist) parties had been formed in India. Speaking before the Colonial Commission of the Comintern, Roy informed that the Central Committee of the Indian Communist Party had been formed in Bombay, with branches in Peshawar, Calcutta, Madras and Allahabad. Roy's optimism was "ample justified," according to Intelligence reports, by the growth and activities of the communist groups which came into being in "almost every province of India."

It seems from some of the superficial evidences that radical ideas had also percolated among prominent Indian politicians, such as C.R. Das who emphasized the necessity of organising the masses to achieve self-government "not for the classes, but for the masses." About the beginning of November, Das
suggested at Lahore that the changed programme of the Congress should include the organisation of labour. Earlier at the U.P. Provincial Conference held at Dehra Dun (October, 1922) while V.J. Patel spoke of the interests of the masses as against those of the capitalists, Das declared that he had “no intention of playing into the hands of the bourgeoisie.” As it was, Intelligence reports concluded that this idea came to Das “undoubtedly” from Roy in Berlin. The same report observed in another context that the revolutionaries, in Bengal, realising Gandhi’s ascendancy on the wane after Bardoli, had been attempting to capture the Provincial Congress Committees also at the instigation of Roy. The radical phrasology of these leaders soon proved to be largely superficial and illusory.

Over the polemics among the Congress leaders after the AICC at Lucknow (June, 1922) on the question of entering the reformed Councils, Roy communicated the strategy that boycott itself was not aimed at. Boycott of the Councils did not injure the government. The Councils, he exhorted, “should non-cooperate with government; revolutionary non-cooperators should enter the Councils” to use them as a “weapon of resolute warfare.”

**ROY’S ADVOCACY FOR PEOPLE’S PARTY**

Even during the heyday of the Congress, Roy felt that the “leadership of the national struggle must be taken over by a mass party,” representing the interests of the workers and peasants. Clearly, he had a design to penetrate and ultimately to capture the Congress with the help of such a party that would “breath vigour in the Congress” which was lying prostrate. In the long run, Roy’s purpose was that by “mobilising the revolutionary energy of the toiling masses in battle array,” the party would strengthen and push the middle-class democrats in the struggle against the foreign rule. But the utterances of C.R. Das after his release from jail, somewhat disillusioned Roy about Das’s much awaited leadership. To Roy the utterances of Das typified “the confusion and bankruptcy” of the present leadership which was prone to
“doctrinaire pacifism and metaphysical aberration.” Perhaps as a result, his eagerness for a people’s party was accentuated in a letter to Singaravelu; he said that the Congress “must revolutionise its outlook and be a revolutionary organisation,” else a “new party must be found,” in accordance with the needs and desires of the people with a “revolutionary objective.” To revive the Congress, he felt, was “an almost hopeless task.” Congress appeared to him as “politically dead.” Nevertheless, he looked forward to the outcome of the Gaya Congress. To assume the lost leadership of the Congress and to prevent the masses from leaving the path of struggle, he disfavoured joining the Labour Party sponsored by its British counterpart at the ensuing AITUC conference at Lahore.⁷⁸

**Roy’s Message to Gaya Congress**

By the end of 1922, Roy not only put forward an “Action Programme of the Indian National Congress,” which was circulated at the Gaya Congress, but also gave an outline of Swaraj in his pamphlet *What do we want?*; it set forth the demands of political independence, abolition of landlordism, nationalisation of public utilities, minimum wage and eight-hour day for the workers, workers’ control of industry and village councils.⁷⁹ Obviously, Roy’s feeling was that to make the national movement more effective, there must be an economic programme.

Meanwhile, the AICC met in Calcutta in November, 1922 and concluded that the country was “not prepared for mass disobedience”; the harder question of Council entry was held over till the Gaya Session.⁸⁰ The AICC resolution was virtually ratified by the Gaya Congress, calling upon the nation to get ready for the triple boycott. C. R. Das, who presided, advocated Council entry and put forward a plan of obstruction to defeat all measures of the Government.⁸¹ The Gaya Congress was “a battle royal” between the two contending parties called pro-changers and no-changers. The latter group headed by C. Rajagopalachari wanted the Congress to re-affirm the non-cooperation and outvoted the resolution of the former group led by Das, Motilal Nehru and V. J. Patel.⁸² Das in
his presidential address belied the myth of his radicalism as viewed by Roy, when he expressed abhorrence of the method of the Russian Revolution, the outcome of which appeared to him as an “attempt to force Marxian doctrines and dogmas on the unwilling genius of Russia.” Believing that violence would fail, he hoped for a “counter-revolution” in Russia. “The soul of Russia,” Das held, “must struggle herself from the socialism of Karl Marx.”83 Thus, he was clearly taking a hostile attitude towards the growing radical trends in the country.

The Fourth Congress of the Comintern sent a message to the Gaya session. While characterising the situation in the previous two years as a period of “mighty revolutionary upheaval in India,” the message criticised the leadership of the Congress for its failure in the movement, despite “intensely revolutionary situation.” The Comintern offered to “stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of India in their struggle against imperialism.”84 On the eve of the Gaya Congress, what Roy had foreseen was that a split was “inevitable.” In essence his observation was that the Right-wing was heading towards a “reunion” with the moderates. The Left-wing standing closer to the revolutionary nationalists behind the scene, advocated the use of violence for the overthrow of the foreign rule. The Left-wing extremists had “a limited political outlook and were full of petty-bourgeois ideas.” They were opposed to class struggle and a revolutionary programme. But they advocated the use of mass action and organisation of workers and peasants to make the mass action effective.85 Roy sought to influence the latter group with his ideas and methods.

It was at this “psychological moment,” Roy claimed, “the Vanguard Party, whose centre of activities” was in Europe, had been setting forth the view-point, principles and tactics of socialism; it issued a “Social Democratic Programme” among the Indian nationalists and students abroad, through a leaflet “A Programme for the Indian National Congress.” The programme circulated on the eve of the Gaya Congress, received
a wide publicity, broadcast by Reuter as “Bolshevik Plot” for India, hatched up by Roy.\textsuperscript{86} It was natural for Roy to be disappointed on the proceedings of the Gaya Congress, which in his words, “met, deliberated and adjourned without committing itself to any of the heinous doctrines of moderate Social Democracy as set forth” in the programme of the Vanguard Party and as “incorporated in most of the modern republican governments of postwar Europe.”\textsuperscript{87} This was the first attempt to formulate a programme for democratic revolution in India on the basis of the united anti-imperialist front as envisaged by the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. Thus, clearly the hopes of Roy for the radicalisation of the national movement were frustrated; the national movement became involved in the tussle between the Swarajists and the supporters of non-cooperation.

\textbf{Notes and References}

4. Gandhi’s “hope of reviving mass civil disobedience” had been later “dashed to pieces” owing to riots in Bombay on the day of arrival of the Prince.—Gandhi. \textit{Collected Works}. Ahmedabad, 1966. v. 21, p. 464.  
5. Bamford.  
11. Roy. \textit{op. cit.}  
19. The Committee appointed by the Madras PCC to inquire into the Moplah rebellion, reported that the real cause was “agrarian dispute” and the charges of rioting, looting and forcible conversion of the Hindus was “caused” by the district authorities and the news was grossly exaggerated—*IAR.* v. 1, 1921-22, pp. 825-32.
20. M. N. Roy. *What do We Want?* Geneva, 1922. In: *India in Transition.* Bombay, 1971. p. 268. In his Manifesto to the Ahmedabad Congress (1921) when Roy included abolition of usury in the list of demands for the peasantry, Stalin remarked that if the moneylenders were driven out, where would the poor peasants get the money and if all the usersers disappeared, the peasantry would be deprived of the only credit available to them. To Roy abolition was a revolutionary measure, which would enthuse the peasants. On Stalin’s suggestion the programme was amended as “control of usury; the rate of interest should be fixed at 6 per cent.”—Roy’s *Memoirs,* pp. 545-6.
21. At the Special Congress (1920) in Calcutta Gandhi said that if there was sufficient response to his programme, Swaraj would be attained in a year—*Young India* (1919-22) p. 872.
22. Gandhi made a distinction between aggressive and defensive movements and adhered to the latter—*Ibid.* p. 983.
27. Roy. *op. cit* p. 545. Nalini Gupta, who carried the leaflets to India, had gone to Moscow with the group of members of the Berlin Committee in the middle of 1921. He remained back in Moscow and joined Roy.—Adhikari. *op. cit.* p. 342.
29. *Ibid.* pp. 14-15. The Manifesto was distributed and broadcast throughout the country to the delegates before the session at Ahmedabad. The document created a “good deal of sensation” and was reproduced in a number of newspapers.—Roy. *op. cit.*


39. In an ECCI Circular issued in May 1921 on the agenda of the Third Congress, Roy's earlier analysis was thus vindicated that "without a revolution in Asia there will be no victory for the world proletariat revolution." *Ibid.* p. 223.

40. Carrere d'Encausse and Schram. *op. cit.* p. 41.


45. Roy. *op. cit.* For Trotsky, the first great river-bed of revolutionary development was the "rotten Europe", the second was the feverish development of America and the third was the colonies to which Roy gave primacy.—Boersner *op. cit.* p. 137.

46. The Laussanne treaty (1923), from which Russia was excluded, enraged the Soviet leaders who had no longer the same reasons as in 1921 to limit the propaganda against the British imperialism.—Carrere d'Encausse and Schram. *op. cit.* p. 42.

47. *Inprecor* v. 2, n. 15, February 24, 1922. p. 112. At the session of the enlarged ECCI India was represented, but no names were given. India was obviously represented by Roy.


51. *Ibid.* Roy said that, since the Second Congress the Comintern had realised that different action was required in different countries. Degras. *op. cit.* p. 382.


Roy visualised that in the first category of countries where capitalism was relatively developed as in India, the bourgeoisie felt itself to be threatened by disturbances of national movements. Hence they took advantage of the foreign power to restore peace and order. In the second category of countries where capitalism was of commercial nature, the dominant feudal elements tried to forge compromise with the imperial power. But according to Roy, it was difficult in the third category of countries to conciliate the interests of the feudal bureaucracy with highly developed bourgeois colonial power, although the tendency of compromise was prevalent there in a different form.—*Ibid.*
55. *Theses on the Eastern Question*—Fourth Comintern Congress, 1922, section 5.  
57. To defeat the “prohibition against the entry” into India the *Vanguard* after the first nine issues was named the *Advance Guard*. From February 15, 1923 it reappeared in its original name until December 1 and continued as *The Vanguard of Indian Independence* till December 15, 1924. Hereafter referred to as *Vanguard*.


59. *India in Transition*, written in collaboration with Abani Mukherji “received considerable international recognition” and was translated into Russian and German. The book foreshadowed Roy’s Decolonisation Theory.—Adhikari. *op. cit.* v. 1, p. 27. Incidentally, written at a time when Marx’s “Letters on India”, (New York Daily Tribune, 1853) were yet to be put together and published, Roy’s approach to the Indian scene closely resembled Marx’s reasoning on several points despite the fact that Roy was not familiar with them when he wrote the book.  
60. Kaye. *op. cit.* p. 27.


68. NAI. Home (Political) F. No. 261 of 1924.


71. NAI. Home (Political) F. No. 261 of 1924 (Secret) p. 49.


74. Bamford. *op. cit.* p. 82.


76. Roy. *India’s problem and its solution* Geneva, 1922, p. 34.


80. ROY. *What do we Want?* pp. 255-78.


CHAPTER 3

GROWTH OF LEFT-WING NATIONALISM

After their defeat at Gaya, C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru raised a standard of revolt and formed a party named the Congress-Khilafat-Swarajya Party, which while remaining inside the Congress was to capture the Councils. The tussle in the Congress between the Swarajists and the no-changers continued, the former gradually gaining ground. The Swarajists triumphed at the special session of the Congress at Delhi (September, 1923). The revolt at Gaya had borne the fruit; the Swarajists received the mandate for contesting the 1923 Council elections. The Party secured majority in several provinces and captured about half the seats in the Central Assembly. The no-changers still pinned their faith to raising the banner of orthodox non-cooperation at the next annual session at Cocosandara. A compromise formula was, however, reached, permitting the Swarajists to enter the Councils, while people were urged to carry out the constructive programme and to prepare for CD.1 In the central legislature, the Swarajists commanded a working majority by securing the support of the moderates, who had seceded from the Congress on the issue of their non-acceptance of CD.2 With this added strength, the Swarajists secured a series of victories, and they brought the Councils to a deadlock in the provinces. The Swarajists contained two types of elements. One, led by Das and Nehru, who finding that the Charka programme had ceased to appeal to the country, wanted to carry the programme of non-cooperation in the Councils, while the other led by Kelkar had never believed in non-cooperation, but merely acquiesced in it. Their own programme was responsive co-operation.3 When the year 1924 opened, the Swarajists were busy wholly in the Councils. The coming of Labour Party to power in England, and the unexpected release of Gandhi in February, were the two significant events in the first quarter of the year. The moderate leaders expected much from the Labour Government,
while the Swarajists were optimistic that no direct action against India’s interest would now be taken. Ironically, events proved that the attitude of the new Cabinet was more or less the same as followed by the Tory Government.  

NEW MANOEUVRE OF ROY

Roy’s attempt to capture the Congress with the help of the so-called Left-wing led by Das at Gaya ended in a fiasco. Das was not the type of man who was required to pursue the course to the degree of Roy’s radical line. Despite Das’s apathy, Roy’s illusion about Das still lingered; it was, however, to disappear before long. Roy in an open letter to Das, deplored that the “defeat of the Left-wing” led by Das was the result of its failure to attract under its banner the sentimental revolutionaries from the ranks of the no-changers, because they were suspicious about the Left-wing led by Das, owing to the failure of the latter to “stand out separately”; a section of the pro-changers who advocated responsive co-operation, identified themselves with the views of the moderâtes. The schism in the Congress ranks, according to Roy, was not the conflict between upper and lower strata of the middle class, but the issue was how to rise up to the “height of revolutionary outlook” required to drag the Congress out of the “miserable rut.” With this perspective, he felt the need for necessary change to involve into the national movement those social forces which were “uncompromisingly revolutionary, namely the workers and peasants,” who alone could provide the desired leadership. He reiterated that to organise those “objectively revolutionary elements,” a political party of its own would be necessary, which would be the people’s party of India. The result of Gaya led him to realise that “in the din of clash between upper and middle-class interests, the revolutionary voice of the workers and peasants raised through the declassed Chittaranjan was drowned.”

The failure of anybody from India to attend the Fourth Comintern Congress greatly disappointed Roy. He thought that the time had come for the organisation of the party in
India, and earnestly "expected to begin the work by taking the
delegation to the Fourth Congress" as the basis; but as none
could come, he decided to hold a conference in Berlin. His
scheme was to "utilise the break in the situation created by the
deadlock of the Congress," in the perspective of suspension of
CD after the Bardoli resolution and consequential controversy
over the Council-entry. In his two-pronged scheme, a revolu-
tionary mass party was to be organised as a part of the Congress
under the "control and direction" of the CPI. "Built on a
very-firm foundation" on the basis of Leninist principle, the
CPI was thus advised by him to "work both in legal and illegal
ways." About the same time, Roy was writing to Singaravelu
and Muzaffar Ahmad, asking them to come to Europe with the
intention of conferring with the Comintern leaders, and on
return to convene in India a national conference of the
communist groups to form the proposed all-India open mass
party. But Dange and Singaravelu did not approve of Roy's
idea of holding a conference in Europe. Nevertheless both
of them made serious attempts to hold a conference in India to
form an open mass Party as suggested by Roy. Singaravelu
organised a conference which, for difference of opinion Dange
did not attend, towards the end of April, 1923, in Madras on
the basis of a manifesto which was identical with an earlier one
formulated by Dr. Manilal." The first May Day celebration in
India took place under the Labour Kisan Party of Hindusthan
formed at the conference. In a series of letters (February,
1923) to political friends in India, Roy expressed his realisation
that the Congress had "forfeited all claim to any distinction"
from the moderates, by proving conclusively that "none of its
leaders, whether orthodox non-cooperators or the Das-Nehru-
Kelkar combinations," would go any further than the liberals.
This reaffirmed his feeling for the necessity of organising the
proposed new party, which was to gather under its banner all
the "good revolutionary elements" from both the factions of
pro-changers and no-changers with the social basis of workers
and peasants.

Alongside, by an analysis of the perspective and role of
different classes in Indian society, Roy developed a theoretical framework to determine the course of Indian revolution. In essence his conclusion was that, in the context of the dominating feudal overtone of the Indian society, the character of the nationalist movement was bourgeois democratic; but owing to the abnormal development of Indian history, the national bourgeoisie did not possess the same revolutionary significance as did its prototype had in Europe in the last century. Being too weak and too timid to lead revolution, the Indian bourgeoisie, in his opinion, needed collaboration of other social forces which were more revolutionary. This analysis led him to conclude that Indian revolution would not succeed "purely as a bourgeois revolution." Again, the programme which he circulated at Gaya, was "not a Communist Programme," but a "simple democratic document," adapted to India's "special circumstances." Thus he tried to strike a balance between the bourgeois democratic and socialist revolution.

Roy had outlined his ideas of a new party to Ahmad in May 1923, directing him "to organise small parties secretly among labour and peasants in different places", and along with that an open party was "also to be organised" and to be styled the "People's Party or Workers' and Peasants' Party." He made it clear that open activities were to concentrate on nationalism, which meant the ejection of the British; the question of "dictatorship of the proletariat" was to be "kept in background, to be openly preached only after the first objective had been attained." One perhaps cannot overlook the fact that Roy unrealistically ignored the combined forces of nationalism. His scheme to fight for national freedom with a programme of democratic revolution, which was to be led only by the exploited classes, yielded no result in a period of all out struggle for national independence.

On Singaravelu's insistence, Roy had recognised the Labour and Kisan Party of Hindusthan as the "centre and others—merely provincial branches," and he instructed Dange, Ahmad and Usmani to co-ordinate with Singaravelu. But when the full text of Singaravelu's manifesto reached Roy, much later, he found
in it "the pernicious" denunciation of "Bolshevism and foreign agents." Roy warned that if the party disowned the Comintern, the latter would withdraw support from it.\textsuperscript{18} His assumption in a sense was correct that the clause was meant to "give protection against imaginary government persecution." He inferred that it was inserted by "an intriguing hand," obviously alluding to Abani Mukherji, who had meanwhile deserted Roy. Gradually Roy became dissatisfied with Singaravelu and his Labour and Kisan Pary. Roy suggested a fresh start by a new organisation, and the formation of a fresh party, to be pushed at the annual Congress session due to meet at Cocanada towards the end of December.\textsuperscript{19}

**Government Attack on Communists**

Very soon the communist movement in its embryonic form sustained several setbacks. Government made lightning arrests of Usmani, Ahmad and Hussain in May, 1923, who were later produced in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case in 1924, just at the time when the Peshawar trial of Roy's Moscow-trained students was concluding. Those arrests were in effect a continuation of Government repression, which started with the series of Peshawar Conspiracy Case. The Kanpur trial, unlike the earlier Peshawar Conspiracy Case, created a good deal of sensation both in India and abroad. The ascendancy of the Labour Party to power for the first time in Britain (1924) seemed to encourage Roy to send an open letter to the Prime Minister and the British working class on behalf of the workers and peasants of India, calling attention to the "flagrant attempt to throttle the constitutional right of agitation," which existed "unchallenged in every other part of the British empire." Although not a believer in non-Marxist socialism of the British Labour Party, Roy probably intended to exploit the socialist ideals, whatsoever, held aloft by the British Party. Thus, he claimed that as a party committed to international solidarity of the workers, the British Government was "bound to protect the rights of the Indian workers."\textsuperscript{90} If socialist propaganda had not been banned, he questioned, "why should it be declared illegal in British India."\textsuperscript{91}
But Roy did not fail to take the outcome of the Kanpur trial as a challenge to his attempt to organise a mass party in India. Although he had been receiving substantial coverage in the Indian press, he blamed the Indian nationalist press for allowing the mockery of a trial and for remaining silent over the issue. He cited Gandhi’s similar imprisonment without being protested by an “organised action” and hanging of Gopinath Saha, a Bengali revolutionary, without any agitation or popular resentment. Further, Roy took this opportunity to hold the Second International responsible for their inaction over the Kanpur trial. He tried to justify his earlier contention that it was a sign of the “new policy of British Imperialism to come to some agreement with the Indian bourgeoisie,” in order to convince the latter of the “utility of British protection.”

The Kanpur trial evidently dislocated, however temporarily, the connections of Roy with India. Nevertheless, he was determined to “persevere with the establishment of communist party in India on a firm footing.” In July, the ECCI endorsed Roy’s suggestion to form a new Indian communist party as a branch of the Comintern on the same footing of the CPGB. For sometime in the middle of 1924, Roy conducted his activities from Paris, where a Colonial Bureau was set up. In October, the French Government prohibited publication and circulation of the Vanguard in French and ordered Roy to quit the French territory. Meanwhile, after Ahmad’s arrest, Roy appointed Jibanlal Chatterjee as Ahmad’s successor. R.C.L. Sharma of Pondicherry, who was a “valuable recruit” of Roy early in 1923, became his intermediary. Through an associate, Khusi Mahomed alias Sepassi, Roy resumed despatch of money and literature to Sharma. Eventually by February 1924, Pondicherry authorities banished Sepassi from the French India, while Sharma was interned in a nearby village. Thus, Roy’s attempts to maintain contact received another jolt.

After the arrest of Usmani, who was convicted in the Kanpur trial, his mantle had fallen on Satya Bhakta, around whom communist activities subsequently centered in the U.P.
In August 1924, Satya Bhakta announced that a communist party would be formed shortly at Kanpur. He realised that the Kanpur Conspiracy Case had settled that "to have faith in communism in itself is no offence." Curiously, to him the conviction was "due to their conspiracy against the empire." Since Bhakta did not have any such design, his "fear of the law against communism" had been "removed." In November, he announced that a CPI had been formally established in September 1924, and more than 50 members had been enrolled.  

**Renewed Programme of Roy**

About the outcome of the Kanpur Conspiracy Case, Roy had a different reaction that it had "had its good effects too," in as much as the people "get used to hearing things which simply terrified them." This actuated him to "reap the benefit of this situation." With a renewed scheme to capture the Congress, he began to motivate his adherents in India with the idea of introducing the communist elements in the AICC and to "rescue the Congress" at the time of the Belgaum Congress, "from the present degeneration." But Roy was little aware of the formation of a communist party at Kanpur in September, 1924, under the leadership of Satya Bhakta who intended to remain outside the influence of the Comintern. Janaki Prasad Bagerhatta, an associate of Satya Bhakta, had come in touch with Roy. Bagerhatta believed in the concept of a legal communist party and sought aid from the Comintern to capture the Congress. Bagerhatta was Roy’s main spokesman at the Belgaum Congress, where Roy envisaged a show-down for a programme, with the hope that it would "mark the birth" of a party, which could, after the Congress session, call a conference of "all the elements" prepared to subscribe to not a communist but a "revolutionary national democratic programme." Roy expected that the conference would declare the "inauguration of the party," which could be "called people's party or the republican Party."  

As arranged with Bagerhatta, Roy sent a manifesto entitled an "Appeal to the Nationalists" which was meant for distribu-
tion at the Belgaum Congress (December, 1924). It was printed in India after several modifications made by Bagerhatta, on the pretext of "differences in opinion," and was distributed among the delegates.\textsuperscript{33} Roy remarked in the manifesto, that progress had been "positively retrograde"; because the Congress had resumed the old programme of "evolutionary nationalism," from which "under the pressure of popular revolt it broke away in 1920." He made an appeal to the revolutionary nationalists "to mark out a new way" to the goal of freedom. He pointed out that the national leaders were "no less afraid of and hostile to a revolutionary movement than the British," although they stood at the head of a movement "essentially revolutionary."\textsuperscript{34} Roy put forward a "programme of revolutionary nationalism." He seemed to be correct in his assessment that the "Government was no more afraid of threatening speeches" and the unanimous protest of the entire nation, because it knew that there was no desire on the part of the nationalists "to translate their protest into action," nor they were prepared "to back up their threats by action."\textsuperscript{35}

Meanwhile, communal bitterness in India had assumed an alarming proportion in the latter half of the year. The feeling of the Muslims was that while "boycott of the Councils prevented our able men from going to the Councils," the Congress decided at last to enter the Councils.\textsuperscript{36} Towards the close of October 1924, Government struck in Bengal, promulgating an ordinance followed by indiscriminate arrests and house searches. Swarajists became the main target of the onslaught. Gandhi made a pact with the Swarajist leaders to suspend the non-cooperation programme. Congress President Mahomed Ali convened an all-party conference in November to unite all the parties and induced the moderates, who had parted company in 1920, to rejoin the Congress and to meet the Government repression. A unanimous agreement known as the Calcutta Pact, was finally ratified at the Belgaum Congress which was presided over by Gandhi. His spinning franchise was to be retained, suspending the triple boycott. As for the independence resolution, which had been moved unsuccessfully ever
since 1921, and which was again placed by Roy’s adherents before the Belgaum Congress, Gandhi urged “every Congress-man not to be insistent on independence, not because there was anything impossible,” but because it was “wholly unnecessary” till it had become “perfectly manifest that Britain really meant subjugation in spite of her declaration to the contrary.”

Thus, Roy’s second attempt after the Gaya Congress to penetrate, let alone the design to capture the Congress, fizzled out. His estimation of Das proved wrong. Roy’s expectation that Das would lead the national revolutionaries, had actually no basis; on the other hand, Roy’s programme of work in India was crippled when his followers were all arrested. Nevertheless he continued his efforts to rope in all the radical elements and called upon the revolutionaries to give a “new leadership” and not to waste their energy in “futile terrorism.” His purpose was to make them “join hands with the Indian workers and peasants” and to “establish close relations with the advanced proletariat of the world.” To make a renewed attempt of inroad in the national struggle, he pledged support to them that the communists would “fight side by side with the revolutionary nationalists” in the front ranks. At the Belgaum Congress, a division of work was arrived at between the Congress and the Swaraj Party; the Congress was to confine itself mainly to the constructive work of Charka, Khaddar and the like, rather to become a spinning association, while the Swaraj Party was to carry on the politics of non-cooperation inside the legislatures. The politics of 1925 largely centred around Council work.

C.R. Das Climbs Down

To the utter dismay of the rising Left-wing, Das, in his presidential address at the Bengal Provincial Congress (Faridpur, May 1925) declared that Dominion Status was “in no sense servitude,” rather it was “essentially an alliance.” On the question whether the ideal of Swaraj could be “realised within the Empire,” Das seemed to be convinced that if the Empire furnished “sufficient scope for the growth and develop—
ment” of the national life of India, the Empire idea was “to be preferred.”
40 Das echoed Gandhi that one of the “real and effective” things necessary for co-operation with the Government in working the present reforms was “a real change of heart in our rulers.”
41 He seemed to be more eager that “some sort of undertaking” that revolutionary propaganda should be discouraged, and “every effort to put an end to such a movement” should be made.
42 Das’s overture probably resulted from the Secretary of State Lord Birkenhead’s exhortations in the Parliament to the Swarajists to “co-operate and not to wreck” the Reforms Act.
43 Moreover, Prime Minister Macdonald had also been trying to bring about a settlement. Gandhi, who had participated in the Faridpur Conference, remarked that “Das had pilfered his thought.”
44 Gandhi had been doing everything in his power to put the Swarajists at ease and even asked the “waverers” to join the Swaraj Party. In fact, Birkenhead’s eulogy of the Swaraj Party as the “most highly organised political party in India” had a gratifying effect. The Swaraj Party had not only entered the Councils, but also passed budgets and sat on select committees. It had declined a seat on the Muddiman Committee but accepted one on the Sleen Committee.
45 Birkenhead, Das and later Motilal Nehru hoped that “some kind of settlement could be effected.”
46 Lajpat Rai went a step further, expressing his readiness “to co-operate with the Government.”

Politics of Compromise: Split in Swaraj Party

Erosion of the Swaraj Party started in Bengal after Das’s death (1925) and gradually spread to other provinces; the Congress had completely identified itself with the politics of the Swaraj Party. Elections were no more to run in the name of the latter, but in the name of the Congress. Gandhi decided to wind up non-cooperation in order to embrace the Council front.
48 In August 1926, Lajpat Rai, who considered the Swarajist policy of walk-out of the legislatures as distinctly harmful to the interests of the Hindus, resigned from the Swaraj Party and helped Malaviya to form a new party, the Indepen-
dent Congress Party, to oppose the Swaraj Party. The new party appeared with a moderate outlook and it was more to the right than the Swaraj Party.

The history of the Congress had by this time "became a monotonous tale of pious resolutions at the annual session and perpetual strifes in the Councils." Again an attempt was made at the Gauhati Congress (1926) to move a resolution on independence, which was "smothered and scorched under the fire of Gandhi’s eloquence." The formal omission of the reference to CD in Gauhati resolution created a new atmosphere in the following year. Provinces were all forming ministries and working Dyarchy; but gradually, even Lajpat Rai lost the charm in the Council programme. Dr Ansari in his presidential address at the Madras Congress (1927) summarised the Congress policy as one of co-operation for thirty-five years, non-cooperation for a year and a half and obstruction within the Councils and constitutional deadlocks for four years. "The non-cooperation did not fail us," he remarked, "we failed the non-cooperation."

Having thus given a connected account of the political developments, it may now be examined how M.N. Roy reacted to the political doldrum in India. In summary, his ultimate conclusion about the Swaraj party was that it was the outcome of the "collapse," originating from the contradiction between the leadership and the popular movement. The dissatisfied lower middle class had drifted into the turmoil of a revolutionary mass movement, while the Swaraj Party gathered under its banner those who could give an intelligent hostility against the revolutionary character of the nationalist movement.

Referring to the All Party Unity Conference, Masses, edited by Roy, commented that the Congress, unable to "face the urgent issues of the hour, had abdicated its proper function at Belgaum," and had committed itself to the decision of those committees. This appeared to Roy as a "bankruptcy" of the Congress.

The Hindu-Muslim problem, held Roy, was "principally the creation of the Congress politics. He particularly blamed
Maulana Mohammed Ali and Swami Shraddhanand for aggravating the problem, and concluded that the committees had extended the Hindu-Muslim differences further to the legislatures and local bodies. In his view the members of the committees exploited the situation for their own narrow political ends, while the Hindu and Muslim sections of the masses were provoked by “a false and artificial propaganda to engage in.”\(^5\) Roy seems to be justified in his analysis that the Khilafat Movement had in effect brought about “a revival of the acute rivalry” between the two communities dealing a “disastrous” blow to the national movement.\(^6\) Evidently, the leaders of both the communities stood “dismayed” at the turn of events; and being unable to find a solution they evaded the issue, while bitter communal conflict ate into the very vitals of the movement.

True to his radical and secular framework, the solution which Roy suggested, was the “total abolition of separate communal organisations” and placing the agitation among the masses more on a nationalist and “more upon economic struggle than upon religious fanaticism.”\(^7\) All the confidence of Roy in the Left potentiality of Das was finally lost, when Das issued a manifesto repudiating violence and seeking co-operation with the Government. Roy was late to realise that it was a “definite alignment” of Das and his Party, “on the side of compromise and negotiation as opposed to resistance and obstruction for the attainment of not independence, but Home Rule within the empire.”\(^8\) Roy’s apprehension came true when the British authorities succeeded in driving a wedge between the Swarajists and the revolutionaries; the “Swarajists were manoeuvred into a position of isolation from the revolutionaries.”\(^9\) Das’s new stance was characterised by Roy as a “blunder” similar to the “retreat of Bardoli.”

In the given condition of political consciousness of the people and organisational framework, Roy all through made an overestimation of the potentiality of a revolution in India. This caused failure of his attempts. In the absence of an
organised party with a clear ideology, it was an exaggeration when he said that at Bardoli a "position rich with immense offensive possibilities of carrying the battle into enemy's ground was given up." Ever since the "offensive" failed at Bardoli, Roy had to lament, "we have been retreating — giving up position after position under the pressure of enemy offensive." Persistent over-estimation of the situation led him to believe that ever since 1921 the non-cooperation "became so powerful that the Government was thrown into a state of panic." Roy's assessment of the situation in terms of "threatened overthrow of the demoralised Government or at least a serious weakening of its position," was largely unfounded. It seems that all through his career in the Comintern, Roy was fed with inflated reports about the potentiality of the Indian communists to develop a revolution. On the basis of such exaggerated reports sent to Roy in Moscow, writes Sundar Kabadi in retrospect, financial aid was reaching the Indian Communists. Kabadi, who met Roy in Berlin in late 1920-5, tried to disillusion him about the situation.

NOTES & REFERENCES

2. Das made a statement before the elections in September 1923 that impossible demands should not be made in the Council, nor should Government resolution for the public good be opposed. The object was to rope in the Moderate waverers.—Ibid.
3. IAR. v. 2 (Sup) 1923. pp. 4-5.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid. 
10. NAI. Home Pol. F. No. 261 KWI. 1924.
11. A regular contributor to Dange's Socialist, Dr Manilal produced a manifesto at the Gaya Congress, advocating a Labour Peasant Party of India. It was later reformulated. Roy sensed in it the hand of Abani Mukherji who attended the Gaya Session after break with the Comintern.—David Petrie. Communism in India 1924-27. Calcutta, 1972. p. 43.
14. Ibid. p. 11. 15. Ibid. p. 18. 16. Ibid.
18. Ibid p. 64. 19. Ibid. p. 80.
20. Out of eight persons, Roy in Berlin and R.C.L. Sharma formerly a Bengali revolutionary residing in Pondicherry, could not be brought before the court. Case against Hussain, who made a confession, was withdrawn. Likewise, Singaravelu was spared on medical grounds. Rest of others—Gupta, Usmani, Dange and Ahmad were sentenced to four years' imprisonment.—Adhikari. *op. cit.* p. 98.
26. Ibid. p. 69. 27. Ibid. p. 82.
28. Petrie. *op. cit.* p. 158. An elaborate account of the CPI formed by Satya Bhakta has been given in a subsequent chapter.
29. Ibid. pp. 89-90.
32. Ibid. 33. Meerut Trial. Exhibit : D 374. 34. Ibid.
35. The British Intelligence divided the Congress during the mid-twenties in three main divisions: (a) the orthodox section; (b) the Swarajist section and (c) the "extreme left" or revolutionaries. Police authorities on the eve of Belgaum Congress in 1924, found no need for shorthand notes of speeches dealing with boycott, spinning, untouchability and the like of "weary repetition" in regard to the first category. The Swarajists of the second category were also ignored by the Police as they intended to get at the masses through select committees and conferences which received adequate publicity in the press. In regard to the third category, i.e. the revolutionaries, Police knew that they were dangerous, but did not speak in public at all. NAI. India Home Political F. 391 of 1924.
The adherents of Roy even failed to persuade the Belgaum Congress to adopt a resolution condoling the death of Lenin.—Ibid.
The substance of the Calcutta Pact was that to secure co-operation of all parties, non-cooperation should be suspended as a national programme.—Sitaramyayya. *op. cit.* v. 1, p. 276.
38. Supplement to *Vanguard.* December 15, 1924.
41. Ibid. pp. 311-33. 42. Ibid. p. 333.
43. Tendulkar. op. cit. v. 1, 183. 44. Sitaramyya. v. 1, p. 285.
45. As a result of a resolution tabled by the Swaraj Party in February, 1924 in the Central Assembly, the Reforms Enquiry Committee, headed by Alexander Muddiman, was formed to enquire into the working and defects of the Government of India Act, 1919. Among the non-officials T.B. Sapru was a member of the Committee.—Government of India. India in 1924-25. p. 57. Consequent of a resolution passed by the Central Assembly in 1925, the Government of India also appointed a committee headed by Andrew Skeen to consider the problem of military training of the Indians for the King’s Commission.—Sitaramyya. op. cit. p. 286.
46. Sitaramyya. op. cit. p. 287. 47. Ibid.
49. The three-point formula, well-known as “national demand” was tabled by the Swaraj Party, when it entered the Central legislature in February 1924. The demands were : (1) to revise Government of India Act, 1919 for a full responsible Government ; (2) an RTC to work out a scheme ; (3) to dissolve the Central legislature and to submit a scheme of responsible government for approval of the British Parliament—Government of India. India in 1924-25. p. 304.
50. Tendulkar. op. cit. v. 1, p. 234. Elections were dominated more by communal sentiments than political issues. Ibid p. 234.
53. Tendulkar. op. cit. v. 1, p. 304.
55. “Point of view of the masses,” Masses of India. v. 1, n. 4, April, 1925. Hereafter referred to as Masses. 56. Ibid.
58. Ibid. “Special appeal was being made,” writes Prafulla Ghosh, to the religious sentiments of the Mussolmans and a galaxy of Maulanas was in the front rank of the Congress and ulamas were heard of in the Congress circle.” Along with Bandemataram Congress volunteers used to shout Alla-ho-Akbar—Prafulla Chandra Ghosh. From Nagpur to Lahore. Comilla, 1930. pp. 11-12.
60. “C.R. Das at Faridpur,” Masses. v. 1, n. 6, June 1925. 61. Ibid.
CHAPTER 4

WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' PARTY AND THE CPI

The national movement which, broadly speaking, had taken up the cause of workers, had "not been of any great practical importance." On the other hand the AITUC, as Roy said, "did not concern itself with the nationalist agitation which was in high tide, sweeping the working masses in its whirlwind course." It was in these conditions that Roy tried to radicalise the nationalist movement and at the same time exhorted Singarvelu and other colleagues in India to capture the AITUC. To influence the trade unions as one of the media to organise a Communist movement in India, Roy made strenuous efforts to contact the leaders of trade unions in India, sent the copies of his journal and requested for information or reports. In February 1923, he established a Labour Information Bureau in Berlin for opening a legal channel of communication with the Indian labour organisations.

WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' MOVEMENTS

During the years before and after the middle of 1920-s in consequence of the post-war trade depression and rise in prices of essential commodities, there were widespread strikes and trade union activities in Bombay, Madras, Bengal and the Punjab. The workers were striving to unite and achieve their demands. The refusal by the Bombay textile owners to pay the customary bonus in 1923 gave rise to a "protracted" strike involving 1,60,000 workers, and the number of working days lost was close upon 8 million.

Roy voiced the cause of Indian workers in Vanguard and wanted to give a political orientation to the strikes by holding mass demonstrations in the streets. To him the bourgeois leadership was "more interested in the maintenance of peace and order" than the defence of the proletarian interests. The Vanguard criticised Joseph Baptista, the leader of the AITUC, for his conciliatory attitude to break up the
fight. The bitter struggle waged by the Bombay textile workers in 1924 fizzled out after having lasted for over two months. But the under-current continued till the great strike struggle of 1928. Meanwhile, in 1925 the textile workers rose again in struggle when the millowners resumed their offensive. The year was rocked also by another long-drawn strike of the North West Railway (NWR) workers followed by a similar railway workers’ strike at Gorakhpur involving 6,000 workers. This period formed the transition between the spontaneous strike wave of 1919-24 and the organised strike struggle of 1927-29, which gave rise to the militant trade union movement led by the communists. Though spontaneously developed, in the NWR strike red flag was hoisted for the first time in an organised manner. Continuing over two months the strike involved 20,000 workers. It was claimed to be the biggest strike in India since the general strike of Bombay mill workers in the spring of 1924 — the biggest railway strike ever in India.

The communists became active in trade unions around 1923. Their activities at the initial stage centred in the two cities of Bombay and Calcutta. Some younger workers were influenced by the communist way of thinking; those who had participated in the non-cooperation movement became sceptic about the effectiveness of the Gandhian technique, and they were attracted by the communist ideas and slogans. The communists in course of time won over some of the older leaders, and through them made inroads in established trade unions, not only in Bombay and Calcutta, but in U. P., Madras and the Punjab also. They gradually penetrated the railway and jute workers’ unions in Calcutta and the neighbourhood, textile workers in Bombay and oil workers in Madras. Their activities were co-ordinated and controlled by the Workers’ and Peasants’ Parties formed in a number of provinces. The first of May was observed for the first time in India in 1923 as a "proletarian holiday." The meeting was held in Madras under the leadership of Singaravelu against the background of a strike upsurge of the first years of the 1920-
On the eve of the third AITUC session at Lahore in 1923, Roy advocated a revolutionary and not a reformist policy for adoption by the AITUC. He called for "revolutionary mass-action involving the pauperised peasantry, as well as city and rural wage-earners," who were to be organised by those who wanted to see "free India enter a period of social progress." The Fourth Congress of the Comintern (1922) sent a message to the Lahore session, promising "fullest support" in the fight for "economic liberation" of the workers and peasants depending upon "nation's political liberty." Commenting on the Lahore session, Roy deplored that the spirit reigned there was "one of pure nationalism and humanitarian idealism." In his view, leaders representing all classes except the working class were the self-appointed "Labour Delegates". He was disappointed at the presidential address of C. R. Das, who appeared to Roy as a "utopian" suffering from the confusion about socialism.

Unlike other nationalists, Gandhi, who had involved himself in labour movement in Ahmedabad as early as 1918, never blessed the AITUC. During the Bombay textile strike in 1925, Gandhi exhorted the workers not to ask for more pay when millowners were going through great difficulties. He expected loyal labourers to forego their wages, lest the mills were closed down. He dealt with the relation between labour and capital from his concept of trusteeship. The Masses criticised Gandhi that on moral and ethical grounds he had distaste for modern industries, but as a practical politician Gandhi supported national industries on capitalist lines.

From 1925 onwards communist impact on the AITUC became quite discernible. The Fifth Comintern Congress (1924) gave a directive to the Indian communists that "it must bring the trade union movement under its influence. It must reorganise it on a class basis and purge it of all alien elements." What Roy then advised was that "every Communist must be an active trade union worker and will endeavour to liberate the labour movement from the harmful influence of the nationalist politicians like Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru etc." Evidently,
Roy wanted to establish hegemony over the labour movement in a period when the nationalists were active in the movement. He raised a polemical issue just before the Calcutta session (1924) of the AITUC over the question of International affiliation. Opposing the proposed affiliation of the AITUC to the International Federation of Trade Unions (Amsterdam), which was tagged with the reformist Second (Socialist) International, Roy suggested extensive discussion and serious thought before any decision was arrived at. The issue was not taken up in the session, but it later assumed a serious proportion, causing a split in the AITUC.

Similar to spontaneous as also organised trade union movement during the transition period of 1924-26, peasant unions which existed, according to the Government reports, in various parts of India, had been strengthening their hold upon the cultivators. The hesitant attitude of the Congress leaders culminated in retarding the masses, and resulted into the growth of independent peasant movements in U. P., the Punjab, Malabar and Bengal. It has been noted in the previous chapter how the peasant movement in Oudh created its own leaders and ventilated its grievances, which were different from those of the Congress.

It was natural for Roy to repudiate the "reactionary pacifism" of the national leaders and to eulogise the spontaneous peasant movements at Gorakhpur, Rai Bareily, Chauri Chaura, Malabar, Central India and the Punjab with this expectation that "peasant revolts should spread like wild fire." Because, to him the "most powerful factor" in the national movement was the "spirit of revolt that had affected the peasantry." After suspension of the non-cooperation movement, Roy's optimism, obviously based on his usual overestimation of the situation, remained unabated, despite Government repression of Moplah outbreak. The Akali Movement in the Punjab, the Aikya (Eka) Sabhas in U. P. and the Bheel revolt in the Central India appeared to Roy in an exaggerated form. He wanted to take advantage of the Akali movement, which in his view, was decidedly an agrarian question aiming at the
“reform” of the large temples holding vast estates, on which millions of poor peasants toiled. In order to involve a large number of Indian population, Roy found “non-payment of rents” as the most suitable slogan. The rent question affected the landlords; tenancy legislation hardly protected the tenants against enhancement of rent and eviction. Hence non-payment of rent could draw in the masses of rent paying tenants. To Roy the temporary proclamation of CD had “caught the imagination of the poor peasantry” as it culminated in agrarian disturbances all over the country. He claimed that the agrarian movements had repercussions on the Congress, while the radical elements sought to use the masses for revolution.

The Eastern Commission of the Comintern, of which Roy was a member, in a thesis (1922) had extended support to the Moplah rising and the revolt of the Sikhs. It clearly declared that the revolutionary movement in the backward countries would not be successful unless it was “based on the action of the masses of the peasantry.” The effort of the Krestintern (Red Peasants’ International; a subsidiary of the Comintern) to establish contact with the Indian peasant organisations, began around October, 1925. Communication channels were gradually developed through leaflets and other literature with the Swarajist Forward, communist Langal in Calcutta and the Sikh communist paper Kirti in the Punjab. The Nadia Peasants’ Union led by Hemanta Sarkar and the Kirti Kishan group of the Punjab were the forerunners of the Workers and Peasants’ Party which picked the thread of organised peasant movement in different parts of India in the second half of 1920-s.

FIFTH CONGRESS OF THE COMINTERN

During the years of 1922-23 and 1923-24, when the national movement reached a moribund stage and the Swarajists were tending towards constitutional manoeuvre, Roy focussed attention on the signs of revolt of the working class and peasant movements at different places in India. Therefore, when the ECCI sometime before the Fifth Congress (June, 1924) debated
over the task of the Indian communists, Roy continued to hold that the agitation in India was more directed against the native exploiters, who in fear of the mass upheaval were seeking compromise with the alien exploiters.\(^{26}\) In this context, Roy stressed the theme that the communists must have closer contact with the revolutionary classes, namely the proletariat, the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. Accordingly, he was in agreement with a part of the report of the ECCI which set forth the task of restoration of the national liberation movement (abandoned by the big bourgeoisie) on a revolutionary basis; formation of a national people’s party, which was to consist of the “urban petty bourgeoisie, the pauperised intellectuals, the small clerks, the rebellious peasantry and the advanced workers,” and formation of a “proletarian class party.”\(^{26}\) But he opposed the other part of the report which enjoined “direct connection” between the communists and the “national liberation movement.”\(^{27}\) This assessment of India and the task set forth by the ECCI, though not fully shared by Roy, was largely based on reports made by him. The report failed to convince Zinoviev who rejected Roy’s pessimism about the attitude of the bourgeoisie in the Indian national movement.

In course of the debates of the Fifth Congress of the Comintern (17 June to 8 July, 1924) Roy continued to put forward his own original ideas, which were considered to be the most extreme view-point by the spokesmen of the Presidium, and his position was finally condemned. The basic difference between Roy and the leaders of the Comintern centred as usual around relations with the bourgeoisie in the colonies. Among the defenders of the official policy, Manuilsky maintained that the alliance with the bourgeoisie was essential during the entire bourgeois democratic stage of the colonies, and this alliance should be continued until imperialism had not been defeated and social conflicts had not sharpened.\(^{28}\) Roy contended that in India, where capitalism was thriving rapidly, the national bourgeoisie was won over to support the imperial power. “Because,” he argued, “the Indian bourgeoisie knows better than anybody else that the discontent of the masses is economic
and not nationalistic." In Roy's view, the exploiting class in India "demands protection from the exploited" and the Indian capitalist "is running straight into the arms of British imperialism" and the same tendency would soon be found in other countries. Although Roy was later vindicated in his analysis of the compromising tendency of the exploiting classes, yet he was unrealistic in his assessment of the revolutionary fervour of the exploited classes. However might be the economic discontent of the masses, the dominating issue in the period was united national struggle for independence.

Criticising Zinoviev's draft, Roy said that the CPGB was not doing enough in India to counteract the activities of the Labour Party; he pointed out that the British proletariat was soaked through with the spirit of British imperialism. The CPGB, Roy demanded, should transcend the boundaries of the British Isles, so that British proletariat might not "be bribed at the expense of workers in the other parts" of the empire. As evident from his speech on the national question, as reported in the Vanguard, Roy did not seem to share the idea of giving a blanket support to the national movement without reservations. He thus argued: "a movement which might have had a revolutionary significance in 1920 is not in the same position in 1924. Classes which might have been allies of the revolutionary proletariat in 1920 will not be allies in 1924." The resolution adopted by the Fifth Congress rejected Roy's argument and declared the tactics of collaboration with the bourgeoisie as the fundamental policy for all the colonial countries. The Fifth Plenum of the ECCI (March, 1925) recommended that the Indian communists should work in the Indian National Congress and the Swaraj Party.

**Prelude to Roy's Downfall**

After the Fifth Congress a new complication had developed between Roy and his Indian Communist Party on the one hand and the Comintern on the other. From 1924 onwards new tactics became more discernible in the Comintern's handling of the Indian affairs. Restraint was exercised in offending nationa-
Illeism, which was rather utilised in furthering the goals of the
Comintern. Roy’s emissaries in India had also reportedly lost
credibility in the eyes of the Comintern. The resolution of the
Fifth Congress had called not only for “direct contact between
the Comintern and national liberation movements,” but also
for “very close contact between the section in the imperialist
countries and the colonies of those countries.” It helped to
awaken the CPGB to its obligations. It had meanwhile started
a Colonial Bureau, which began to work through Indian sea-
men. Early in 1925 it despatched an emissary, Percy E. Glad-
ing, a member of the CPGB, to investigate the Communist
movement in India. Glading attended the AITUC session in
Bombay and met some prominent nationalist leaders. Glad-
ing returned three months later with a report that “no Indian
Communist Party existed at all.”

Earlier, the CPGB had contacted some moderate leaders of
India who were then in London (June, 1925). They included
D. Chamanlal, former Secretary of the AITUC, T. C. Goswami,
Treasurer of the Swaraj Party, D. N. Singh of Bihar and N. M.
Joshi, General Secretary of the AITUC, and with their help
Saklatvala, a British M.P. of the CPGB, tried to draw up a list
of invitees to attend an oriental conference arranged at Amster-
dam (July 11-12, 1925). Roy had been apprised “neither of
Glading’s mission nor of the project for a conference.” He
lodged a complaint in Moscow; his apprehension of the danger
of “crossed lines” was obvious. However, a representative
of the Comintern, Maring, who presided over the proceedings,
and Roy were invited to attend the Amsterdam conference.
Roy criticised Glading’s report, declaring that he (Roy) had
documentary evidence of communist groups in India; he
denounced the idea of an oriental conference as futile and
thought that the claim of the CPGB to control the party activ-
ities in India “smacks of Imperialism.” The conference
could not take any positive decision and was “not qualified to
take any.” But it marked a stage “in the transfer of authority,”
as the recognised intermediary of the Comintern in regard to
Indian affairs from Roy to CPGB. Thus, the new orienta-
tion of this policy of the Comintern and the erosion of Roy's monopoly of power were evident, when in spite of Roy's objection, the first of a series of British Communist emissaries in the persons of Percy E. Glading followed by George Allison were deputed to India in April 1926. In December, Phillip Spratt, in the guise of a bookseller, arrived in India. Spratt was joined in September 1927 by Benjamin Francis Bradley. The last of this chain of foreign emissaries to India was Hugh Lester Hutchinson who came in September 1928.\textsuperscript{49}

ROY REGAINS GROUND

The process of "centralisation and bureaucratisation" of the Comintern under the leadership of Stalin became manifest through the fact that no world Congress was convened until 1928. Meanwhile, Stalin had consolidated his position and had become the undisputed leader of the Comintern. Between 1924 and 1928 decisions were arrived at in the meetings of the smaller committees and the "enlarged ECCI," which included the permanent members of the ECCI plus a certain number of ideologically orthodox delegates from different countries. The first enlarged ECCI conference, after the one which ended with the Fifth Congress, was held in March 1925. The Colonial Commission of the Fifth Plenum of the enlarged ECCI (18 March to 14 April 1925), while denouncing the opportunism of the Right-wing nationalists, directed the Indian communists to work inside the National Congress, in order to win the petty bourgeois Left-wing of the Congress over to their side. It enjoined that they must agitate, as before, among both workers and peasants and advocate the formation of a revolutionary people's party including workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie.\textsuperscript{44} But it cautioned against the "overestimation of revolutionary nature of the existing national parties (Swaraj, National Congress)."\textsuperscript{44}

Shortly thereafter, Stalin echoed what Roy had been maintaining from the time of the Second Congress of the Comintern. In a speech at the University of the Toilers of the East (May 1925), Stalin visualised that the "fundamental new" feature-
in the conditions of the colonies like India, was that the bourgeoisie had "split into a revolutionary party and a compromising party," and the compromising section had already "managed in the main to come to an agreement with imperialism" and it was drifting towards the camp of the irreconcilable enemies of the revolution, "having entered into a bloc" with imperialism against the workers and peasants. With this perspective, he proclaimed that the said bloc should be "broken" and "exposed", to rid the toiling masses from the influence of the "bloc" under "systematically prepared" hegemony of the proletariat. He urged for preparing the proletariat to play "the role of leader in the liberation movement," by "dislodging" the bourgeoisie.\(^{46}\) The task, as Stalin envisaged, was to create a revolutionary anti-imperialist bloc, ensuring proletarian hegemony, which might not always assume the form of a joint workers' and peasants' party, formally bound by a single platform. Because he felt that "independence of the Communist Parties" in countries like India must be the "basic slogan." The Communist Party, he enjoined, must enter into alliance only with the revolutionary section of the bourgeoisie after isolating the compromising one.\(^{46}\)

Thus, Stalin's pessimism in regard to the revolutionary potentiality of the Indian bourgeoisie was more than what was held by Roy and set him to the Left not only of the Comintern but also of Roy. It was, however, clear that the differences among Roy, Stalin and the Fifth Plenum of the ECCI concerning the role of the Indian bourgeoisie were actually "differences of degree; none of them viewed the bourgeoisie with enthusiasm."\(^{47}\) During 1926-27, Roy's analysis of the national bourgeoisie as a hesitant and non-revolutionary force was accepted by the ECCI as "basically correct." The stand taken by the Swarajists against Gandhi's tactics of non-cooperation, vindicated Roy's contention that the communists should limit themselves to a three class alliance of workers, peasants and the middle class. The Comintern was made to admit that the Indian bourgeoisie had ceased to have vital conflicts of interest with the imperialists. The ECCI viewed this fact as being due-
to the overall stabilisation of world capitalism. The Comintern took cognizance of a rise in class consciousness of the organised workers in India. Strike struggles, as noted earlier, were spreading throughout the country. It thus appeared that a phase in the Indian national movement was over, and that the social question was becoming acute. Evidently, from these conclusions the Sixth Plenum of the ECCI (February and March, 1926) was forced "tacitly to recognise the correctness of Roy's analysis."^48

In the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI (November, 1926), Zinoviev was relieved of the chairmanship of the International and was replaced by Bukharin. The Presidium of the Plenum was made up entirely of Stalin's supporters, including M.N.Roy, who was also named Chairman of the Eastern Commission.^49 The Plenum was more concerned with the Chinese question; other countries received scanty attention. Bukharin made a general analysis of the world situation, while Roy made a prelude to his theory on "decolonisation," declaring that India was developing her own native capitalism. He explained that British needed to export more capital to India, as a result of which the relationship between Britain and India was being transformed from a colonial relationship into one between two rival capitalist countries.^50

During 1926 Roy gradually reached the zenith of his career in the Comintern. In February he was appointed to the editorial staff of the Inprecor, the multilingual journal, which had been published ever since the birth of the Comintern. He was already a member of the ECCI, the Orgburo and the Secretariat. After the Seventh Plenum, he was chosen to serve as a Joint Secretary of the Chinese Commission.^51 Thus, he attained membership of all the four main policy-making bodies of the Comintern — the Presidium, the Political Secretariat, the ECCI and the World Congress.^52 After the Seventh Plenum, Roy proceeded early in 1927 to China as a representative of the Comintern to help implement the policy, in the formulation of which he had taken part.^53 The period of Roy's sojourn to China does not come within the purview of this study.^54
Workers' and Peasants' Party

We now turn to the story of Workers, and Peasants' Party, which was a product of the communist movement in India in the middle of 1920-s. When the internal dissensions in the Swaraj Party was gradually increasing, a section of the radical elements in Bengal took up "the question of organising a new party based on class struggle in order to secure the liberation of the masses." Just about a couple of months before the Kanpur Communist Conference, a party was formed (1 November, 1925) in Calcutta, called the Labour Swaraj party of the Indian National Congress. The Party drew up a programme on vague communist lines, and brought out its weekly organ Langal (plough) which was later incorporated with Ganavani (voice of the masses) from August 1926. In the second All Bengal Praja conference held in February 1926 at Krishnagar, the Labour Swaraj Party was renamed as Bangiya Krishak and Shramik Dal (Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party).

Soon afterward, Roy directed Muzaffar Ahmad and Nalini Gupta, who were just released from jail, to work for the newly formed Party. But Roy clung to his original proposition of dropping the name of Communist Party of India, substituting by that of a Workers' and Peasants' Party. In essence his argument was that "they are two entirely different things; one is a veiled communist party, while the other is a revolutionary nationalist party." Roy had sent a draft manifesto for adoption in the CPI conference, which was to take place in November 1926. Curiously, although Workers' and Peasants' Party (WPP) branches were duly formed, the CC of the CPI decided in March, 1927 that the formal dissolution of the Party was not necessary. Further, in May 1927 the annual session of the CPI retained the title CPI, contrary to Roy's advice. It was obvious that this state of confusion prevailed, because of two different types of directions which were sent from abroad — one from Roy, while the other one from CPGB through its emissaries in India. By this time, Roy had lost much of his control over the communist movement in the country.

The WPP organisations were gradually formed in different
provinces as the open platform of the CPI; the latter remained underground. The chief aim was to obtain a "legal cover," signifying not so much to deceive the police but to avoid giving them any material which could be used in the court against the communists.  

First Communist Party on Indian Soil

The Communist Party, which, as briefly noted earlier, was formed by Satya Bhakta before the Belgaum Congress, faced early in 1925 a "serious split" in its ranks. Bagerhatta, S. V. Ghate, Shamsuddin Hassan, Muzaffar Ahmad and some others were in favour of amalgamation with Roy's party and the Comintern. Accordingly, steps were taken by Bagerhatta, Hasrat Mohani and others to form a republican or people's party as advocated by Roy. After the Kanpur Case, Roy had felt that the word communism would unduly scare the nationalist politicians. For this reason he insisted that the new party which would replace the Swaraj Party should have no ostensible connection with communism. In March 1925, Satya Bhakta published his second quarterly report of the Indian Communist Party and towards the middle of the year he issued a leaflet called "The Future Programme of the Indian Communist Party," in which he opposed the question of affiliation to the Comintern and insisted on the "absolute independence" of the Party. By September 1925, Satya Bhakta was preparing for a communist conference in conjunction with the annual session of the Congress at Kanpur. The idea of holding such a conference was first mooted by the leaders of the recognised communist groups according to the directives of Roy, and particularly by Dange who was then in Jail.

But it would be erroneous to place Satya Bhakta's Indian Communist Party on the same level of "genuine communist groups of the period" as those of Roy followed by Dange. Satya Bhakta believed that genuine communist groups were prosecuted and not allowed to function, if affiliated to the Comintern. In accordance with his definition of the object of the party and its tasks, it resulted in the formation of his
National Communist Party.\textsuperscript{67} Dange’s idea of holding an “open conference of the Communist Party” was not implemented by the communist groups, while Satya Bhakta, believing that propaganda of communism was not illegal, went ahead to organise his own Indian Communist Party “legally.” He objected to the name CPI “as he smelt Bolshevik flavour.”\textsuperscript{68} However, in the last analysis, the Indian Communist Conference (26-28 December, 1925), which synchronised with the Kanpur Congress, served as instrumental in bringing together all the communist groups in the country, thus providing the first opportunity of creating a Central Committee of the CPI and adopting a programme and constitution of the Party.\textsuperscript{69}

Although Satya Bhakta had convened the conference, his “own ideas were rejected.” As a matter of fact the Kanpur event had two consecutive phases. Satya Bhakta’s confused “definition of the object of the Party and its tasks” resulted in his peculiar concept of “National Communist Party,” which caused his defeat and isolation in the conference itself. Considerable dissatisfaction was expressed with his views about communism. Opposed to Satya Bhakta’s intention to keep the Party free and independent of the Comintern influence, others were able to gain a decision favouring affiliation to the Comintern. As a result, Satya Bhakta left the Party.\textsuperscript{70} Shortly thereafter, his Party disappeared, yielding place to the CPI, which in the closing years of 1920-s gave leadership to the militant trade union and peasant movements through the WPP-s in various provinces. Clearly, the Party born at Kanpur was responsible for rousing the working class in the strike struggles launched in 1928.\textsuperscript{71}

On receipt of incomplete and fragmentary reports, the Masses exclaimed at the appearance of a “Communist Party of Kanpur on the scene with an open office, signboard, red flag and all, in spite of the legal ban of communist organisation.”\textsuperscript{72} Roy, however, knew well that there was no official ban on the Communist Party. But because of “accidental combinations of events,” he perhaps believed that “attempts to organise a legal communist party are tolerated by our rulers.” Therefore,
it was natural for him to caution, "we must be prepared for attack any moment" and organise the Party in such a way that "an attack on legality will not destroy the Party.""73

Despite being isolated and deserted by the "full blooded communists" like Muzaffar Ahmad, Bagerhatta, Ghate and others, Satya Bhakta continued his activities for a while at Kanpur. He not only persisted in his refusal to toe the line of Roy, but issued a leaflet, denouncing Roy as a "British spy," although Roy "made no such allegation" against him.74 Roy condemned Satya Bhakta for "attempting to mislead the Indian working class," and advised his followers that the communist movement must be "protected from sinister designs of impostors"; he asserted that the Indian proletariat would "not require leaders who would revise Communism."75

Roy did not have any information about the simultaneous development of the second phase of the Kanpur event mentioned earlier. Immediately after the Conference, Satya Bhakta resigned from the Party that he had built up; it was thereafter taken over by Bagerhatta, Ahmad, Joglekar and others. On receipt of reports about subsequent development, Roy congratulated Bagerhatta on the formation of the Party in a renewed manner. He reiterated the necessity of a people's party and said that the "line should be a dual organisation, a legal nationalist party with a radical republican programme with an illegal Communist Party inside it."76

At an informal conference of the CPI in the middle of April 1926, it was "unanimously decided" that the Party should "completely disown" Satya Bhakta. The utterances of Satya Bhakta before and after the Kanpur Conference gave rise to share reaction in the Comintern reports, saying that "Communist groups had existed in India from the beginning as an illegal body," and when Government repression "took a more sinister form during 1924-25......a bogus Indian Communist Party was founded by very questionable elements."77 The arrival of some foreign emissaries deputed by the CPGB, namely Fazl Elahi, Philip Spratt in December 1926 and the British M.P. Saklatvala in January 1927, gave a distinct direction and impetus to the communist movement in India.78
4. Petrie. *op. cit.* p. 34.
6. *Vanguard* v. 4, n. 6. March 1, 1924. Baptista and N. M. Joshi in Bombay, B. P Wadia in Madras, Milner, M. A. Khan and Dewan Chamanlal who were active among railway workers, Qutubuddin Ahmed and Mukundalal Sarkar in Calcutta were the liberal leaders active in the early trade union movement in India.—Adhikari. *op. cit.* v. 2. p. 324.
17. From the Fourth to the Fifth World Congress, London, CPGB, 1924. p. 68.
22. *Ibid.* Roy blamed the nationalist leaders and the moderates for organising the rival bodies called the Aman Sabhas (peaceful association) as against the Aikya Sabhas (unity association).
32. *Inprecor.* v. 4, n. 42. July 17, 1924.
49. *Inprecor.* v. 6, n. 17. March 4, 1926.
51. *Inprecor.* v. 6, n. 83. December 1, 1926.
54. According to Robert C. North, if Roy had remained in his European headquarters, or in Moscow or if he had returned to India at this juncture, the whole course of Roy's career might have taken a different turn.—R. C. North, "M. N. Roy: The Revolution in Asia," *Soviet Survey.* n. 32, April-June, 1960.
Despite Roy's opposition to the Comintern policy on China, he was deputed to China. He himself wanted to go to India, not to China. Roy might have been sent to China so that he could be removed from participation in Indian affairs and to give the CPGB a free access to the Indian Movement.—Overstreet & Windmiller. *Communism in India.* pp. 93-94.
61. G. Adhikari. *Communist Party and India’s Path of National Rege-
This two-tier policy created a lot of confusion at the Calcutta
conference of the WPP in December, 1928, when former members
of Jugantar and Anusilan Parties broke up the meeting, because
‘they did not relish being admitted to the ‘front’ party but not
to the genuine inside party.’—*Ibid* Muzaffar Ahmad writes that
during the All India Conference “whenever intervals were available
we held meetings of the Communist Party.”—Ahmad *op. cit.* p. 452.
65. Satya Bhâkta in his first quarterly report stated that the Party had
been formed on September 1, 1924.—*Ibid.* p. 159.
68. S. V. Ghate. “Foundation Conference of the Communist Party of
India,” *New Age.* February 6, 1966.
69. Adhikari. *op. cit.* v. 2. p. 590. A participant of the Kanpur Con-
ference, Muzaffar Ahmad corroborated the same view.—*New Age.*
April, 1958.
70. “First Indian Communist Conference at Kanpur”. *Mainstream*
September 6, 13 and 20, 1969.
77. *The Communist International between the fifth and sixth World Con-
the British Parliament, records that Saklatvala, who sent a message to
the Kanpur Conference, after arrival in India, reportedly told the
leaders of the CPI that owing to the “Party’s ill-defined position,” the
Party had “forfeited the moral and financial support” from outside.—