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Soviet doctrine of national self-determination in theory and practice

Richard L. Levengood

The University of Montana

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THE SOVIET DOCTRINE OF NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION

IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

by

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Date
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to examine the continuity which exists between the precepts of Marxism-Leninism and present Soviet policy toward nationalism in the underdeveloped countries of the world. To do this systematically, I have chosen the historical approach, tracing as closely as possible the chronological development of Communist theoretical views on nationalism and showing how this has been applied by the Soviet Union since 1917. I originally centered my attention on Lenin's works, assuming that Soviet views on nationalism in the underdeveloped areas have developed out of a careful mixture of Lenin's pre-revolutionary views on the national problem in Russia and his Imperialism. But I soon realized the inadequacy of this approach and felt it was necessary, first, to gain an understanding of Marx's ideas on the subject of nationalism.

Many definitive works dealing with Soviet views on nationalism have been written. However, such substantive studies as Alvin Z. Rubinstein's The Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union, and Walter Laquer's The Soviet Union and the Middle East, either assume that the reader knows the Marxian basis of the Communist approach to the underdeveloped countries or think it is unimportant once one deals with actual Soviet policy. Hugh Seton-Watson's From Lenin to Khrushchev, fails to deal with Marx entirely. I have attempted to correct these omissions by adding a chapter on Marx.

Some students of the Soviet Union, such as E. H. Carr, in Volume I of The Bolshevik Revolution, realize there exists a relationship
between Marx and Lenin, but fail to make the connection. In Carr's case, by the time the reader comes to Volume III of his study, which deals with early Soviet foreign policy, Carr has forgotten Marx entirely. Some scholars, such as Richard Pipes in *The Formation of the Soviet Union, 1917-1923*, and Demetrio Beasner in *The Bolsheviks and the National and Colonial Question, 1917-1928*, recognize the intimate relationship between Marx, Lenin, and Soviet policy toward nationalism, but their approach is limited to particular eras. This study is an attempt to bring it up to the present time. To my knowledge, there has been no such systematic attempt to review the Communists' theoretical views on nationalism and show how these views are related to current Soviet policy.

If Marxism lies at the root of the Soviet concept of nationalism in the underdeveloped world, then it is important that we attain some idea of where modern nationalism fits into Marx's materialist conception of history. For it is the Soviet preoccupation with the Marxian legacy that has essentially defined and limited the Communist approach to nationalism in the colonial areas. The method I have used to study this problem, a careful examination of Communist thought as found in the writings and speeches of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev, as well as Comintern and Soviet documents, clearly bears this out. Thus before launching into the paper itself, I shall attempt,

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1As it will be presently seen, just as "nationalism" has been difficult for Western social scientists to define, it was to be interpreted by some Marxists as something entirely different from what Marx conceived it.
as a way of introduction, to give a short review of Marx's concept of historical materialism and his ideas on the nation and state, and mention briefly how this affected Lenin's views on the national and colonial question.

Marx viewed history as passing through successive epochs of development—primitive-communist, slave, feudal, capitalist, and socialist. According to Marx's conception of history, economic forces or productive forces, which are composed of nature's resources and tools, constitute the economic foundation of every society. These productive forces are purported to be the underlying factor which determines first, the entire character of a particular era and, second, the progression of man's societal development from one epoch to another. Regarding the first proposition, these productive forces determine the relationship man enters into with his fellow man when engaged in production. These are the productive relations. During the primitive-communist stage of development, in which the means of production were socially owned, the productive relations were said to be those of cooperation. But soon some members of society obtained control over the productive forces which enabled a minority to live by the work of the majority. Thus was introduced man's corruption—private ownership over the means of production. From then on man was doomed to be split into antagonistic classes; those who owned property or the productive forces and those who did not. The entire life or the superstructure of society—law, morals, intellectual life, art, politics, and philosophy—reflected the
wishes of the class which dominated society's economic structure.²

Turning to the second proposition, while Marx adopted Hegel's dialectical approach, he rejected the Hegelian idea that subjectivism played a significant role in the passing of history from one epoch to another. A change in the productive forces plays the prominent role.

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto.³

For instance, a new invention permitting iron ore to be mined in a predominately feudal agricultural area would mean that the existing peasant-landlord productive relations, which in turn are reflected in the superstructure of the society, are in conflict with the new productive forces. The old forms of the property relations are no longer capable of adapting to the new productive forces and become "fetters" on the further development of production. The conflict, which takes place to bring the productive relations in harmony with the new economic forces, develops within the framework of a class struggle between the rising bourgeoisie and feudal landlords. The former, deriving its consciousness out of the new


productive forces of society, will strive to subvert the old property relations and replace them with ones which will suit its needs. The feudal order will naturally resist. "Then begins an epoch of social revolution."\(^4\) Eventually, with the bourgeoisie replacing the feudal landlord and the peasant giving way to the industrial worker, the new property relations between the bourgeoisie, who own the means of production, and the proletariat, who own nothing, will be reflected in the legal and political superstructure of the new society. Thus, society enters the bourgeois stage of development. The process repeats itself when the workers become conscious that the social productive forces, into which industrialization forces him, are in conflict with the existing property relations based on private property relations. Once the proletariat overthrows the bourgeoisie and the means of production are placed in its hands, antagonisms between classes will end and man will enter the socialist utopia.\(^5\)

The state, according to Marxist dogma, arose from the need of the dominant class in society to institutionalize its supremacy over the productive forces. As such, it was part of the superstructure which reflected the existing productive relations between the "haves" and "have not" classes. According to Engels:

As the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but as it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of those classes, it is, as a rule, the state of

\(^4\)Ibid.

\(^5\)Hunt, 38-39.
the most powerful, economically dominant class, which through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class. Thus the state of antiquity was above all the state of the slaveowners for the purpose of holding down the slaves, as the feudal state was the organ of the nobility for holding down the peasant serfs and bondsmen, and the modern representative state is an instrument of exploitation of wage labor by capital.  

Thus, in the words of the Communist Manifesto, "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." Once the existing class antagonisms brought on by the productive relations are removed by the abolition of private property the state will no longer be needed, subsequently "withering away."  

Though Marx and Engels devoted little attention to such abstractions as "nation" or "nationality" and did not believe in the right of nations to political self-determination, they attempted to reconcile their materialist outlook of history to the national questions of their day. Indeed Marx assumed in the Manifesto that the bourgeoisie wished to attain a national state and that both stages


7Karl Marx, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Selected Works, I, 36.  

8Hunt, 70.  

of the revolution—bourgeois and proletariat—would develop within the framework of the nation-state. Essentially the Marxian approach to the national questions of the nineteenth century can thus be seen in this light. The approach was of a two-fold nature: (1) the dialectical process within a nation itself; (2) the effect the independence of one nation would have on the revolution in others.

In regard to revolution within a nation, Marx and Engels were anxious to see the development of capitalism and the establishment of a bourgeois society with all its ramifications. Since only England and France by 1848 had reached the stage of development when society was divided into two antagonistic classes, the two revolutionaries turned their attention to Eastern and Central Europe. There the problem was the development of infant industries and the creation of a proletariat. Since the rising bourgeois class was struggling against feudalism as represented by absolute monarchy, Marx declared that Communists were to "support every revolutionary movement against the existing social order of things." Thus, "in Germany, they fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy, and the petty bourgeoisie."11

11 Ibid., 64-65.
But since the establishment of a bourgeois nation-state belonged to only the first part of the revolution, such support the Communists and proletariat would render the bourgeoisie could never be considered an end in itself. The development of nation-states were merely one step in the direction of the millennium. Thus, while Communists allied with the bourgeoisie in Germany against the monarchy;

They never cease, for a single instant, to instill into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, in order that the German workers may straightway use, as so many weapons against the bourgeoisie, the social and political conditions that the bourgeoisie must necessarily introduce along with its supremacy; and in order that, after the fall of the reactionary classes in Germany, the fight against the bourgeoisie may...begin.

Marx, spending the greater part of his adult life in England, placed great emphasis on an English proletarian revolution. When he saw that the English proletariat was falling under the influence of the English ruling class, he advocated separation from Ireland as a means to expedite revolution in England. By the eighteen-sixties, he was calling for the English proletariat to agitate for Ireland's independence. To a lesser degree, Marx and Engels used this same type of tactical reasoning with respect to Poland: Polish

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independence would be instrumental for the bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Central Europe.

But Marx and Engels were restricted by their dialectical outlook. Excepting Ireland, their field of vision was limited to the large nations of Europe both from a strict materialist conception and from a revolutionary standpoint. They largely ignored the colonies.

Lenin overcame these limitations. He insisted that "Marxism is not a dogma, but a guide to action," and that it must be adapted to changing conditions. If this epitomizes Communist tactics as they have been applied to situations prior to, during, and after the Russian Revolution, equally valid is the observation that a given tactical line must be couched in and justified in Marxist terms. This certainly has been the case with respect to the Communist approach to the national and colonial question.

Faced with the task of revolutionizing Russia, Lenin soon comprehended the potential of nationalism. Much as Marx sought to use nationalism in Ireland for purposes of revolutionizing England, Lenin sought to exploit national stirrings in the multi-national Russian Empire against Tsarism. Instead of announcing, merely, that, "We Communists back all nationalism regardless of its form," he sought to justify Bolshevik support of national movements in traditional Marxist terms. As we have seen, Marx regarded modern nationalism to be an expression of the class struggle taking place between tho

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14 Hunt, 7.
bourgeoisie and the ancient regime and felt it was to the advantage of the Communists and proletariat to support this struggle. This was exactly the interpretation Lenin gave to the article in the party program which called for "the right of nations to self-determination." Lenin felt that this interpretation would give the Bolsheviks maximum mileage in the struggle against the Tsar, for he entered into bitter polemics with the rightests who sought, in an un-Marxian way, to placate nationalism. The problem would have been simple enough if it had ended at this point. But it did not. Lenin was faced with the additional dilemma recognized by the left-wing socialists, who regarded any entanglement with nationalism as un-Marxian, of reconciling his desire to burst Russia apart around the head of the Tsar with the Marxian belief in large, centralized states and the international solidarity of the proletariat and his own belief in a highly centralized and disciplined party. How he solved this can be understood only if we recall that nationalism is only a relative phenomenon in Marxian, never something that can be regarded as an absolute. The qualifications Lenin attached to the principle of self-determination manifested this relativeness. It enabled the Bolsheviks to ally with nationalism but never entirely to join it; it enabled them prior to the revolution to declare that the Russian minorities had the right to secede from the state and just as self-righteously it enabled them to deny it once the revolution had come about.
After the outbreak of World War I, Lenin extended this thesis on self-determination to the world at large. Concerned with explaining the economic causes of the war and the slowness of revolution to develop in the East, Lenin centered his attention upon the Eastern colonies. According to his theory of imperialism, the capitalist West had avoided its inevitable overthrow and decay by obtaining in the colonies raw materials, cheap labor, and markets for its commodities and surplus capital, from which "super-profits" were derived enabling the imperialists to buy off certain sections of the working class. From this Lenin assumed that the independence of the colonies was an important stop toward weakening capitalism's hold on the West and in complementing world revolution. Thus, it was imperative that the socialists ally with national movements in the East. As we have observed, Lenin had justified alliances with national movements by resorting to Marx's dialectical argument. But Marx did not regard Eastern society as following the same path of development as Western society. In a manner which fully justified the application of the self-determination principle to the colonies, indeed to Russia's minorities also, Lenin made adjustments in the traditional Marxian concept of Eastern society. Since after the revolution, the Bolsheviks resorted to dialectical arguments to justify the maintenance of Russia's territorial integrity, these doctrinal adjustments were important.

It is necessary to go into some detail about the Communist tactical and theoretical conception of nationalism and show how Lenin
skillfully combined them, for in the second half of the paper we take up the question of Lenin's ideas on self-determination as they were, first, part of Comintern and Soviet thought and, second, as they have become a complement to Soviet foreign policy. But allying with the so-called national bourgeoisie in the East became a necessity only after it became quite clear after 1920 that revolution was going to fail in the West, the basis of world revolution. Until then, with Lenin modifying his pre-revolutionary views on the necessity of the East to pass through the bourgeois stage of development, Communists thought it possible for the colonies to pass directly from "feudalism" to socialism. With this possibility recognized, national liberation movements, as a complement to the European revolution, were to be led by Communists or left-wing radicals.

The Communists have adopted alternatively these two lines as first set down by Lenin in 1920: (1) alliances can be formed with the national bourgeoisie, thereby implying, according to Communist parlance, that the bourgeois stage of the revolution is a necessary prelude to the socialist or communist stage; (2) the East can "skip" the capitalist stage. The first approach has permitted the Soviet Union to strike, in the name of Marxism-Leninism, since 1920, open or tacit alliances with non-Communist nationalists and national leaders in Asia, Africa, and Latin-America. This has been done in the interest of state policy, pushing, for a time, the pure socialist tasks of the revolution into the background. Lenin's tactical line via a via the bourgeoisie, however, has its disadvantages as well as its advantages.
With the Marxist idea that nationalism is only, at best, a temporary phenomenon in man's inevitable march toward utopia, and the Leninist tactical line toward nationalism which took this into account, the Soviet Union has been hampered in its approach to the underdeveloped world by this very dogma-based tactic. That is, the Leninist idea that Communists should ally with nationalism but not join it, or should almost pedantically adopt a neutral attitude toward it, has meant that Communists have been forced to announce to their allies of today their intention of destroying them tomorrow. Between 1956 and 1960, Khrushchev, while certainly accepting the ultimate goal, seemed to overcome this defect by remaining silent about Soviet intentions. But after 1960, the dilemma posed by attempting to apply abstract dogma to concrete reality has been compounded. Up to 1960, the idea that the East could skip from "feudalism" to socialism has always been kept separate from Lenin's tactical approach to bourgeois nationalism. Apparently it has always been recognized in the Soviet Union that the two concepts are mutually exclusive, and that it is difficult enough to ride Lenin's tactical horse down two trails at the same time without compounding the error by adding an additional horse and another trail. By 1960, however, the Communists had announced in the same breath that "while we support bourgeois nationalism, the East can skip the bourgeois state of development." Even with Khrushchev's apparent acceptance of the idea that nationalism will be around for a long time and that Communism may indeed have to develop in nation-states
independent of the Soviet Union, it is difficult to see how the two premises can be reconciled.

Since this paper is devoted to presenting an historical account of the Communist doctrinal and tactical approach to nationalism, I have stuck to the task at hand and attempted not to draw premature conclusions. A work of this scope has its limitations in terms of documentation and factors omitted. Many problems have been either (1) omitted entirely; (2) mentioned only in the interest of historical continuity, or (3) dealt with insofar as they have relevance in pointing out the dilemma posed by a Marxist-Leninist tradition practiced by a state which embodies this tradition. An example of the latter two is the Chinese Revolution of the middle 'twenties. While it alone is certainly a prime example of the dilemma Soviet leaders have faced when attempting to apply a tactic based on abstract dogma to the realities of nationalism, I decided that it was better to mention it only in passing rather than give it at best inadequate treatment. A thorough analysis of Communist blunders in China at that time would certainly have to take into account the Stalin-Trotsky controversy and Stalin's preoccupation with the establishment of his Leninist Legitimacy. I have dealt briefly with the latter.

The paper only attempts to establish a general relationship between the requirements of Soviet foreign policy and the acceptance or rejection of the two basic approaches to the East. Thus, no systematic attempt is made to show the harmony existing between, for instance, a more cautious approach to foreign affairs in general and a "soft line"
toward the "national bourgeoisie" in the colonies. While such compatibility was true in the early 'twenties, it is not possible to say the same for the period between 1928 and 1935, when militancy was the policy in the East just at a time when Soviet internal problems--collectivization and the First Five Year Plan--and a search for security seemed to indicate that the Soviet Union could use every friend it could possibly find. Nor is it valid to claim that after an approach was adopted the Soviet leaders were following the Leninist line of 1920 and the Stalinist line of 1928 for the same reasons or even that they were conscious of the contradictions existing between, for instance, an alliance with the national bourgeoisie and their ultimate mission in history. From 1936 to approximately 1960, the Soviets seemed to have given in, at last, to pure policy expediency. At best we can assume that the Kremlin was aware of its "opportunism."

If it appears that I have not given Stalin and Khrushchev the attention I have Lenin, it is because the two basic lines, as promulgated by Lenin, had been forged by 1920, and because I was unable to come up with original source material which is free of Soviet dictation. At least up until 1928 there were exchanges of opposing views. One man dictatorship and Soviet silence during the interrogation after Stalin's death restricts the researcher unable to read Russian largely to Comintern and Party resolutions, occasional speeches, and secondary sources which may or may not be pertinent. There is nothing, to my knowledge, for instance, available that is comparable to Lenin's
Selected Works which show tactical lines being forged out of the
polemics with fellow Communists. Suffice it to observe here that
Stalin's main contribution after 1928 was to make it evident that
whichever alternative was adopted was interpreted to be "correct" from
the standpoint of Soviet interests, at least so far as Stalin saw them.
Khrushchev's apparent recognition of the durability of nationalism
has been a contribution in itself. It would be an interesting study,
in connection with the latter, to see how the presence of a multi-
centered Communist world has influenced current Soviet policy and
doctrine toward the underdeveloped areas. While there are some
attempts, none seem convincing, if it is ever possible to be very
conclusive when dealing with the Communists.

If, at times, my sentences seem too complex and overloaded with
Communist jargon, I can only apologize to the reader. Perhaps this
is due, in part at least, to a stylistic contagion one is subject to
when spending a great deal of time pouring over Communist documents
and reading and attempting to transmit thoughts derived from the
laborious works of Lenin, Stalin, Marx and Engels.
CHAPTER I

THE MARXIAN CONCEPTION OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE: EUROPE AND ASIA

Though Marx and Engels can be described as proletarian internationalists who saw in the development of world-wide capitalism and the subsequent victory of international socialism a world in which national-state boundaries, like national differences, would vanish increasingly, they, nevertheless, were aware of the actualities of nationalism and of the nation-state as the ground upon which the proletariat would develop fully. ¹ Engels remarked in 1882:

An international movement of the proletariat is possible only among independent nations. ... In order to be able to fight one needs first a soil to stand on, air, light, and space....²

Indeed, it was declared in the Communist Manifesto that the proletariat must, first of all, assume power on the national level, but this could occur only after first allying itself with the bourgeoisie in the latter's struggle to overcome feudal particularism. This was


necessary if the politically and economically unified policies necessary for the development of capitalism were to flourish. Thus, the formation of bourgeois independent states was the first step to proletarian victory both on the national and international levels. But, contrary to Lenin's eventual proclamation that all nations have the right to self-determination, it is not surprising that the Marxian endorsement of political independence with regard to individual nations was influenced by the desire to create industrial societies in which large and politically articulate working classes could grow.

In the first instance, the two materialistic thinkers saw that the existence of large units would be best suited to the requirements of building advanced societies. The fact that a body of people spoke the same language and had similar traditions and customs did not represent the proper justification for breaking up existing or potentially large political and economic units. A nation must, first of all, be composed of a large population, possess resources, and occupy a relatively compact territory to qualify for independence.

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4See Chapter Two.


6Ibid., p. 35.
But the *sine qua non* of a nation’s independence, if not its very right to exist, was whether it possessed the historically discernible vitality and capability to create an advanced society.\(^7\)

In the epoch of capitalism this requirement implied the existence of a national bourgeoisie class. Moreover, nations which possessed this class were the ones Marx and Engels viewed as those best suited to lead in the formation of states which would be composed of various nationalities.\(^8\) This is particularly manifested in the Marxian attitude adopted after 1848 in regard to the national movements in Central and Eastern Europe where the bourgeoisie-democratic revolutions had not yet been consummated.

In so far as the national movements were directed at the reactionary Hapsburg Empire, Marx and Engels could label them as progressive or revolutionary. Indeed, it was felt that "the very first condition of the unification of Germany" was "the total breaking up of the Austrian monarchy."\(^9\) However, the right to self-determination was "restricted to the large and well-defined historic nations of Europe," Poland, Germany, Hungary, and Italy,\(^10\) whose whole history had proven

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7 Ibid., p. 35.

8 Ibid., pp. 35, 57-64.


10 Ibid.
their progressive vitality. The Germans, the Hungarians, and the Italians had each been able to generate a bourgeois class, the carrier of industrial development. Poland, on the other hand, while not possessing a large bourgeoisie, had shown its avidity to be reconstituted as an independent state on a viable basis by its refusal to submit to the "petriarchal-feudal absolutism" which Engels felt characterized the governments of its three oppressors—Austria, Prussia, and Russia. Its independance would be the first step toward an agrarian revolution in Eastern Europe by which the peasants, both serfs and those engaged in statutory labor, would be transformed into free landowners. To Engels, this would represent an agrarian democratic revolution in Eastern Europe comparable to the French bourgeois revolution of 1789.

But Poland's independance was of special significance to the whole of Central European development. For, if bourgeois-democratic revolutions were to overthrow absolutism successfully in Central Europe, thereby facilitating the consolidation of German, Hungarian, and Italian states, Prussian-Austrian reaction must be detached from the

11Frederick Engels, "Panislavism and the Crimean War," ibid., p. 89.


13Frederick Engels, "The Debate on Poland in Frankfort," ibid., pp. 92-93, and "What Have the Working Classes to Do With Poland?" ibid., p. 102

14Frederick Engels, "The Debate on Poland in Frankfort," ibid., p. 92.
Russian Tsar. Only the restoration of Poland could sever the link that bound the bulwark of Central European reaction to Russia. In short, an independent Poland would form a buffer between the European revolutions and Russian retrogression.

The Austrian Slavs, despite their numerical superiority over the Magyars, were regarded as possessing no grounds upon which a legitimate claim for independence could rest. They were considered to be nothing more than:

...those numerous small states of people which, after having figured for a longer or shorter period on the stage of history, were finally absorbed as integral portions into one or the other of these more powerful nations whose greater vitality enabled them to overcome greater obstacles.

They had not developed a bourgeoisie, and had become historically, literarily, politically, commercially, and industrially dependent upon the Italians, the Germans, or the Magyars. According to Engels:

except for the Poles, the Russians and, at best, the Slavs in Turkey, no Slavic people has a future, for the simple reason that all the other Slavs lack the most basic historic, geographic, political, and industrial prerequisites for independence and vitality.

Moreover, were the Slavs to establish independent states, the bourgeoisie

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15 Ibid., p. 72.
16 Meyer, p. 159.
17 Frederick Engels, "What Have the Working Classes to Do With Poland?", ed. Blackstock and Hoselitz, p. 100.
18 Frederick Engels, "Democratic Pan-Slavism," Ibid., p. 77.
19 Ibid., p. 72.
of the dominant nations, not the Slavs themselves, would control the state machinery. For these "small relics of people" to have an equal right to an independent existence alongside the great nations of Central and Eastern Europe was as absurd as granting the Welsh the right to secede from Great Britain.

To prevent their inevitable denationalization, the Austrian Slavs had committed the greatest sin of all—they either had become tools of Austrian reaction in helping to put down the progressive movements of 1848, or they had become the staunchest advocates of Panaclavism. To be connected with such reaction was a clear manifestation of one's counter-revolutionary tendencies. For, not only were the Slavs attempting to seek their salvation under the aegis of the Hapsburg Monarchy and the Russian knout that stood behind it, but would reverse, by their adherence to the exponent of Panaclavism, Russia, the entire European movement which Marx and Engels saw as proceeding from the advanced and civilized West to the backward and agricultural East.

While the motivations behind the Marxist position on Polish restoration rested, at least partially, on the grounds that its independence would be beneficial to the consummation of bourgeois-democratic

20 Ibid., p. 77

21 Frederick Engels, "What Have the Working Classes to Do with Poland?", ibid., pp. 98-100.

revolutions on the Continent, the Marxian endorsement of tiny Ireland's independence from England was, almost totally, a result of the desire to spark a proletariat revolution in England which, it was felt, inevitably would engulf the rest of Europe.\textsuperscript{23} In the eighteen forties, Marx regarded the total separation of Ireland from England as "impossible." This, evidently, was due to Ireland's small size and economic backwardness. He felt that only after England had established socialism would Ireland be emancipated politically and led to social and economic development. But by the fifties and sixties, when no socialist revolution had occurred in England, the country Marx believed to be "the only country in which the material conditions for this revolution have developed to a certain degree of maturity,\textsuperscript{24} he began to think that


Ireland's independence would precede the English revolution.  

Marx regarded the overthrow of the English landed aristocracy as the preliminary condition for a proletarian revolution in England. This, he came to believe, could best be accomplished in Ireland where landlordism derived much of its material and moral strength.  

However, as long as Ireland remained under English subjugation, landlordism in Ireland could not be overthrown.

The prime condition of emancipation here (England)—the overthrow of the English landed oligarchy—remains impossible because its position here cannot be stormed so long as it maintains its strongly entrenched outposts in Ireland. But there, once affairs are in the hands of the Irish people itself, once it is made its own legislator and ruler, once it becomes autonomous, the abolition of the landed aristocracy (to a large extent the same persons as the English landlords) will be infinitely easier than here, because in Ireland it is not merely a simple economic question but at the same time a national question, since the landlords there are not, like

25 Bloom, pp. 38-39. However, as Bloom points out, Marx was reluctant to advocate a complete separation of Ireland from England. Ireland's "independence" to Marx meant total separation only if federation or autonomy would not be sufficient to foster revolution in England. Marx's hesitancy is illustrated in a resolution he wrote in 1869 and submitted to the General Council of the International Workingman's Association (The First International):

"...the essential preliminary condition of the emancipation of the English working class is the turning of the present compulsory union, that is slavery, of Ireland with England, into an equal and free union if that is possible, or into full separation, if this is inevitable."


those in England, the traditional dignitaries and representatives of the nation, but its mortally hated oppressor.27

Only after the English workers had proclaimed publicly that Ireland be separated from England would the English proletariat be able to detach itself from "the leading-strings of the ruling classes ... in a common front against Ireland" and would fraternal association between the workers of both countries be solidly welded.28 Thus, the proletariat of England was to endorse Irish nationalism, not out of any humane feeling for justice toward Ireland, but in the interests of the English workers' own social emancipation and in the interests of the world revolution.29

To Marx and Engels national self-determination in Europe was either a question of the intrinsic right of certain nations, which possessed the historic and material prerequisites (as outlined above)30 which were necessary for the creation of industrial societies; or, as in the case of Poland and particularly Ireland, the Marxian endorsement of political independence to small or less developed nations was based on the probable effects such independence would have on the general European revolutionary movement. Both criteria, however, were

27 Marx to L. Kugelmann, November 29, 1869, ibid., pp. 294-295.
28 Ibid., p. 294.
30 See above, pp. 3-4.
part of the desire to further the historical development of Western society to the day when socialism would be triumphant.

However, while the courting of Irish nationalism by the English proletariat could develop into a doctrine applicable to the Eastern colonies, such was not the case. Perhaps this was due to what one author describes as Marx's concern with only the "immediate periphery" of Europe as the lever with which Western society could be pried loose from capitalism and the colonies were "the outer-most limits of his political vision."  

However true this is, it is strange that Marx and Engels would neglect to see in Eastern nationalism a great potentiality which could be used to aid revolution in the West. It is suggested here that this oversight, as well as the reluctance to grant immediate independence to the colonies despite their immense populations and territory, was based on the Marxian socio-historical analysis of these areas.

In 1848, at the time the Communist Manifesto was first published, Marx and Engels equated China's and India's historical development with the same pattern of development through which Europe had progressed, and was progressing: primitive-communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism. Like the pre-capitalist areas of Europe,

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31 Bloom, p. 203.
notably the backward areas of Central and Eastern Europe, the Orient would succumb to the same fate.\textsuperscript{32}

Just as it [the European bourgeoisie] has made the country dependent on the town, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeoisie, the East on the West.\textsuperscript{33}

And like the "barbarian" and "semi-barbarian" nations of Europe their Asian counterparts would be transformed into bourgeoisie nations.\textsuperscript{34}

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communications, draws all, even the most barbarian nations into civilization. The cheapness of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on the pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce that it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeoisie themselves. . . . \textsuperscript{35}

As a result of the process, it was possible that someday one would find inscribed on the Wall of China: \textit{Républicue Chinoise, Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité}.\textsuperscript{36}

But by the summer of 1853, Marx and Engels had started to reappraise their thinking. In two articles published in the \textit{New York...}


\textsuperscript{33}Karl Marx, "Communist Manifesto," \textit{Ili}, p. 38.

\textsuperscript{34}Wittfogel, \textit{The China Quarterly}, No. 11, pp. 3-4.

\textsuperscript{35}Karl Marx, "Communist Manifesto," \textit{Ili}, p. 38.

\textsuperscript{36}Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "First International Review," \textit{(Excerpt)}, \textit{Marx and Engels on Colonialism}, pp. 13-14.
Daily Tribune on June 25, 1853, and August 8, 1853, Marx cited India as an example of the stagnation of Asia.\(^{37}\) If history in its most profound meaning signified development to Marx, "Indian society had no history at all, at least no known history."\(^{38}\) In a letter to Engels on June 14, 1853, Marx attempted to explain why Asiatic society was motionless:

The stationary character of this part of Asia—despite all the aimless movement on the political surface—is fully explained by two mutually dependent circumstances: 1) the public works were the business of the central government; 2) besides this the whole empire, not counting the few larger towns, was divided into villages, each of which possessed a completely separate organization and formed a little world in themselves....\(^{39}\)

While it is not possible to deal with these two circumstances of Asiatic society at great length here, it is instructive to review briefly what Marx felt to be the developmental consequences which resulted from them and the forces he believed most likely to bring Asia out of its long slumber. In this way, it becomes clearer why


\(^{38}\)Cited in Bloom, p. 50.


\(^{40}\)See Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism*. 
Marx was hesitant to regard national movement in the colonies as contributing to the downfall of Western capitalism.

Then Marx referred to the public works as the business of the central government, he was referring to what he and Engels felt to be a necessary element of Asiatic agriculture—artificial irrigation: 41

There have been in Asia, generally, from immemorial times, but three departments of Government: that of Finance, or the plunder of the interior; that of War, or the plunder of the exterior; and finally, the department of Public Works. Climate and territorial conditions, especially the vast tracts of desert extending from the Sahara, through Arabia, Persia, India and Tartary, to the most elevated Asiatic highlands, constituted artificial irrigation by canals and waterworks the basis of Oriental agriculture. . . . This prime necessity of an economical use of water, which, in the Occident, drove private enterprise to voluntary association, as in Flanders and Italy, necessitated, in the Orient where civilization was too low and the territorial extent too vast to call into life voluntary association, the interference of the centralizing power of Government. . . . 42

This need for a government-controlled water supply, according to Marx, represented the essence and foundation of the Asiatic state. 43 Moreover, so important were these waterworks to agriculture in Asia that "the harvests corresponded to good or bad government, as they changed in Europe with good or bad seasons." 44

41See, for example, Engels to Marx, June 6, 1853, Marx and Engels Selected Correspondence, pp. 66-67.


43Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism, p. 374.

But it was the second peculiar feature of Asiatic society—the isolated village communities—that Marx thought to be the principal reason why Asiatic society had undergone no deep-rooted political, economic, or social change. Each of the dispersed villages had a stereotyped political organization, its own independent agriculture, and its own handicraft industry. Under these conditions of self-sufficiency, the villages were insulated from one another and from the outside world; the inhabitants cared not to whom power of the central government was transferred so long as the village was not disturbed. 45

It was the combination of both these features—government-controlled waterworks and isolated villages—that gave rise to a total power bureaucratic governmental system which Marx termed as "Oriental despotism." However, he emphasized the latter characteristic of Eastern society so that which represented the societal substructure upon which unchallenged despotism could be built:

We must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism. . . . 46

The state's power over the water supply simply represented one of the material foundations by which an Oriental despotism could

45. Ibid., pp. 348-350.
46. Ibid., p. 350.
47. Wittfogel, The China Quarterly, No. 11, 8.
maintain its control over the atomized and fragmented society. It was on this basis that Marx and Engels equated Russian Tsarism with Oriental despotism. Engels remarked in 1875 that:

Such a complete isolation of the individual communities from one another, which creates throughout the country similar, but the very opposite of common, interests, is the natural basis for Oriental despotism, and from India to Russia this form of society... has always produced it and always found its complement in it. Not only the Russian state in general, but even its specific form, tsarist despotism, instead of hanging in the air, is the necessary and logical product of Russian social conditions. . . .

47 Wittfogel, The China Quarterly, No. 11, 8.

48 Frederick Engels, "On Social Relations in Russia," MESW, Vol. II, pp. 56-57. Professor Wittfogel points out that Oriental despotism was not necessarily limited to the geographical area the term "Oriental" suggests: "This going concern constitutes a geo-institutional nexus which resembles industrial society in that a limited core area decisively affects conditions in large interstitial and peripheral areas. In many cases these marginal areas are politically connected with hydraulic core areas; but they also exist independently. Manifestly, the organization and acquisitive institutions of the agrodespotic state can spread without the hydraulic institutions. . . ." Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism... p. 9. For a discussion of Marx's and Engels' view of Russian society see ibid., pp. 375-389, and Karl A. Wittfogel, "The Marxist View of Russian Society and Revolution," World Politics, XII, No. 4 (July, 1960), pp. 487-508.

It is interesting to note that the existence of an independent Poland (see above, pp. 4-5) became much more essential after 1853 when the Asiatic concept of Russian society started to influence Marx's and Engels' thinking. Marx observed in 1867:

"There is but one alternative for Europe. Either Asiatic barbarism under Muscovite direction will burst around its head like an avalanche, or else it must re-establish Poland, thus putting twenty million heroes between itself and Asia and gaining a breathing spell for the accomplishment of its social regeneration." Karl Marx, "Poland's European Mission," The Russian Renace, p. 108.
If Eastern society was ever to enter into the stream of historical progress it was imperative that the social foundations of Oriental despotism be blown up. Neglecting the waterworks would accomplish nothing in this way. Nor would the mere importation of Western goods be sufficient to destroy Asia's sterility as Marx had suggested in the *Communist Manifesto*.\(^{49}\) Marx felt that the only way the stationary character of Asiatic society could be arrested was through the direct intervention, i.e. colonialism, by progressive Western nations. However, as in the case of India, Marx foresaw the destruction of the villages, "not so much through the brutal interference of the British tax-gatherer and the British soldier," as through subjugation of the Hindu hand-weaver and hand-spinner to English free trade and English steam, thereby dissolving the economic self-sufficiency of these isolated communities. By so doing England had produced "the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia."\(^{50}\) The English occupation of India was thus seen as fulfilling the dual task of annihilating the basis of Asiatic society and generating the material foundations of Westernization in Asia.\(^{51}\)

To Marx and Engels, the question of Western control of similarly situated backward and stagnant societies did not revolve around the

\(^{49}\)See above, pp. 20-21.

\(^{50}\)Karl Marx, "The British Rule in India," *KESW*, I, p. 350.

\(^{51}\)Karl Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule in India," *ibid.*, I, p. 354.
issue of the moral evils of imperialism and colonialism, as their Bolshevik successors would have us believe. But rather the issue was whether foreign political and commercial subjugation would bring progress to the conquered. Thus, the French bourgeoisie, "with civilisation, industry, order, and at least relative enlightenment following him," was preferable to the marauding robber of Algeria; the English were preferable to the Turks, the Persians, or the Russians in India. On the other hand, neither Marx nor Engels could condone commercial capitalism that was not accompanied by progress. Engels condemned the Dutch for exploiting Java while "the people were kept at the stage of primitive stupidity." Nor could Marx wink at the placing of European despotism upon Asiatic despotism in India.

But while progress could be considered as the mitigating factor of the conquest of the backward areas of the world by the Western

52 See, for example, the Soviet Publisher's Note, Marx and Engels on Colonialism, pp. 7-10.


54 Karl Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule in India," MARX, I, p. 352.

55 Engels to Kautsky, February 16, 1884, Feuer, Marx and Engels: Basic Writings, Pt. XIX, p. 450.

powers, colonialism was not looked upon as something permanent or immutable. Just as Marx had declared in the Communist Manifesto that the bourgeoisie would create the seeds of its own destruction within Western society, so also would Western imperialism, having annihilated the stationary institutions of the East by the introduction of Western industry and institutions, politically and economically unify the colonial nations, and thus create the first condition of their emancipation. But whether colonial independence would occur prior to the proletarian revolution in the West or after it was a matter about which Marx and Engels were extremely vague. In 1853 Marx remarked:

The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new developments of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, [till] in Great Britain itself the new ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or [till] the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the British yoke altogether.

And, in a letter written in 1882 to Karl Kautsky, a German socialist leader, it was Engels' opinion that:

the colonies proper, i.e., the countries occupied by a European population, Canada, the Cape, Australia, will all become independent; on the other hand, the countries inhabited by a native population, which are simply subjugated, India, Algiers, the Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish possessions, must be taken over for the time being by the proletariat and led as rapidly as possible towards independence. How this process

will develop is difficult to say. India will perhaps, indeed very probably, produce a revolution, and as the proletariat emancipating itself cannot conduct any colonial wars this would have to be given full scope; ... The same might also take place elsewhere, e.g., in Algiers and Egypt, and would be the best thing for us. We shall have enough to do at home. Once Europe is reconquer, and North America, that will furnish such colossal power and such an example that the semi-civilized countries will follow in their wake of their own accord. Economic needs alone will be responsible for this. But as to what social and political phases these countries will then have to pass through before they likewise arrive at socialist organization, we today can only advance rather idle hypotheses, I think. One thing alone is certain: the victorious proletariat can force no blessings of any kind upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory by so doing.60

From these two statements, it cannot be said conclusively that the Western proletarian revolution would either definitely precede or follow colonial independence. The latter statement would seem to indicate that these movements may occur simultaneously with one complementing the other.

But whatever the connection between the European proletarian revolution and colonial independence may have been, the former was not considered to be dependent upon the latter as Marx had thought the English revolution dependent upon Ireland's independence. For in the East there was small likelihood that anything comparable to Irish nationalism could exist prior to dissolution of the atomized social system. Nor was colonial independence considered to be an integral part in the Marxian concept of progressive historical development. In Europe national self-determination, if properly conceived

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60Engels to Kautsky, September 12, 1882, Marx and Engels Selected Correspondence, p. 399.
by socialists, would be beneficial to the socialist revolution; it could establish the necessary social, political, and economic framework within which a proletarian upheaval could take place. Thus, Italian, German, and Hungarian national-states were thought to be the preliminary step to the proletarian's emancipation in Central and Eastern Europe. However, Marx and Engels were hesitant to claim how or when socialism would be achieved within the colonies once they became independent. Witness the doubt expressed by Engels in the 1882 statement: Even after independence he was not sure "what social and political phases these countries will have to pass through before they likewise arrive at socialist organization."

As has been suggested, it was the Marxian view of Eastern society that did much to restrict their endorsement of independence to the nations in the West. As such, the national question in Europe and the colonial question were entirely different phenomena. In the West Marx and Engels conceived national independence as complementing the progressive stages of history and thought that the creation of national-states was a necessary part of this process. But the difficulty of discerning successive epochs of history in the East made it a likewise difficult task to consider the independence of Eastern nations as having much effect on history one way or another.

But it was V.I. Lenin who comprehended the revolutionary, as distinct from the historic importance of Eastern nationalism. The revisions he made in the traditional Marxian concept of the non-Western
world while striving for power in Russia were very consequential for the Bolshevik doctrine of self-determination once power was attained. It is to the examination of the pre-1917 Leninist doctrine of self-determination that we must turn in the next two chapters.
CHAPTER II

THE LENINIST DOCTRINE OF NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION, 1903-1914

I

Around the turn of the century the various socialist parties of Russia and Eastern Europe were seeking solutions to the problem posed by the national minorities within the multi-national Russian and Austrian Empires. Some socialists advocated that a federation of nationalities be adopted, others territorial autonomy, and still others believed that territorial or extra-territorial cultural autonomy represented the true solution to the national question.

On the other hand, there were socialists who were reluctant to broach the subject of nationalism. They believed that Europe had finally reached the point when the proletariat should rise up and throw off the chains of capitalism. Accordingly, they held that socialists should concentrate their efforts toward bringing forth a world socialist revolution, after which the Marxian prediction of a world society, devoid of nationality, would be instituted, rather than occupy themselves with such bourgeois affairs as the national question. To these socialists, the solution to the question lay in the proletarian revolution.

V. I. Lenin, who emerged as the revolutionary and ideological leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor
Party after 1903, was as orthodox concerning the nation-less world society as the world revolutionary or international group. He was, however, convinced that nationalism possessed a revolutionary significance in the immediate struggle against Tsarism. In Lenin's view, neither the advocates of moderate solutions to the national question nor the exponents of views which completely disregarded nationalism were correct. The moderates or "rightists" had forgotten the socialist belief in large, unitary states, the internationally united world under socialism, and the complete organizational unity of the proletariat. The internationalists, on the other hand, were orientated toward revolutionary conditions as they existed in the West. As such, they tended to forget that socialists of the multinational Russian Empire were confronted with the task of overthrowing despotism and in consummating a bourgeois-democratic revolution prior to struggling for socialism. The problem for Lenin, therefore, was to adopt a stance on the national question which satisfied both the requirements of Marxism and the exigencies of revolutionary tactics against Tsarism.

His attention centered on Point Nine of the Social-Democrats' 1903 program, which called for the "right of self-determination" to be extended to "all nations entering into the composition" of the Russian state.¹ The principle of self-determination was one among many of the democratic or minimum demands the Social-Democrats wished to see ful-

¹Carr, I, p. 416.
filled once Tsarist despotism was replaced by a bourgeois-democratic republic. (The maximum demands dealt with the next stage of the revolution, i.e., the socialist stage.) Slowly, out of the polemics he conducted against the internationalists and the rightists, Lenin attached a revolutionary significance to the principle of national self-determination. Accordingly, it is to the task of tracing Lenin's basic views as they were formulated in regard to Russia prior to 1914 that we shall turn in the present chapter.

II

As early as 1897 Lenin expressed his belief in the necessity for Social-Democrats to form revolutionary alliances with the minority nationalities of Russia. But while advocating these alliances, Lenin pointed out that they would be of a temporary and conditional nature, directed toward a common enemy, and that socialists were neither to merge with the disident national movements nor to compromise with non-socialist principles. Thus, when the Social-Democrats of Armenia

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4Ibid., pp. 499-500, 504.
began to advocate a federative solution to the national question and when the Polish Socialist Party, which was imbued with nationalism, demanded that Point Nine in the Social-Democratic Program be given a stronger wording, Lenin reminded both parties that socialists should combat every national injustice from without, but:

our unqualified recognition of the struggle for the right of self-determination does not commit us to supporting every demand for national self-determination. Social-democracy, as the party of the proletariat, considers it to be its positive and principal task to advance the self-determination of the working class within each nationality rather than self-determination of peoples and nationalities, and only in isolated and exceptional cases may we advance and actively support demands tending to set up a new class state or to substitute a loose federal unity for the complete unity of a state.5

In addition to declaring the Armenian federation scheme economically retrogressive,6 Lenin reproached the Polish Socialist Party (PSP) on additional counts. The PSP, by demanding that Poland be given an unconditional right to independence, had subordinated the Polish class struggle to the interests of Polish bourgeois nationalism. Bourgeois nationalism, Lenin declared, should always be subordinated to the class struggle. If, by supporting nationalism, the struggle for the proletariat's political and economic struggle would be aided, socialists should support it. If this condition was not objectively satisfied, support should be withheld.7

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6 Pipes, p. 36.
According to Lenin, an independent Poland in the twentieth century would cease to play the revolutionary role Marx and Engels had ascribed to it in the nineteenth century. Lenin observed that Marx and Engels had thought Poland’s independence to be indispensable for the achievement of bourgeoisie-democratic revolutions in Central Europe. But in the twentieth century, when these revolutions had been completed, Poland’s independence would not contribute to moving this area into the next or socialist era of history. Not only did Lenin consider the awakening of Russia more important in this respect, but the economic consolidation of Russia and the alliance of Russian-Poland’s ruling classes with Tsarist reaction during the preceding fifty years had created a situation in which it was doubtful whether it was economically expedient for Poland to secede or, indeed, whether independence could ever be accomplished under the guidance of the Polish bourgeoisie. It was thus imperative for the proletariat of Poland and Russia to concentrate their united efforts toward the destruction of Tsarism and its reactionary Polish allies and to refrain from engaging in the self-defeating and reactionary activity of seeking to dismember Russia.

Yet, while rebuking the Polish Socialists’ position on Poland, Lenin could not endorse entirely the policy of the internationalists,

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8 See above pp. 4-5, Chapter I.

who totally rejected Polish independence. Franz Mehring of this extremist school felt that:

the time when a bourgeois revolution could create a free Poland has passed; today the resurrection of Poland is possible only as the consequences of a social revolution, in the course of which the modern proletariat will break its chains.10

It was Lenin, the practical revolutionary, not Lenin, the Marxist theoretician, who wrote in answer:

We shall only remark that the conclusion remains unassailable if we do not go as far as Mehring in our arguments. Certainly, the present situation in regard to the Polish question is radically different from that which obtained fifty years ago. But the present situation must not be regarded as permanent. The antagonism of classes had undoubtedly relegated questions of nationality far to the background. But we cannot categorically assert, without running the risk of becoming doctrinaire, that the temporary emergence of the national question on the forefront of the political stage is impossible. Undoubtedly, the restoration of Poland before the fall of capitalism is highly improbable, but we cannot assert that it is absolutely impossible, or that circumstances may not arise under which the Polish bourgeoisie will take the side of independence, etc. And Russian Social-Democracy does not in the least intend to tie its hands. In including the recognition of the right of self-determination in its program, it takes into account all possible and imaginable combinations...11

It can thus be seen that Lenin already by 1903 was confronted with a dilemma in his approach to the national questions: in spite of the dictates of Marxism and the admonishments he uttered in Marxism's name, the requirements of revolution were overwhelming arguments for tactical...
alliances with national movements. Yet the two had to be reconciled.

Worse, however, from the standpoints of Marxism and revolutionary tactics was the scheme of national cultural autonomy, by means of which each nationality had the right to govern its own cultural affairs independent of the central government.

This doctrine had its origin in the program of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party. In 1899, the Austrian Socialists met in Brunn in an attempt to find a practical solution to the disintegrative tendencies which nationalism posed to the party and to the integrity of the Austrian state. At this congress, they agreed to organize the party and the state on the basis of a federation of nationalities which corresponded to the principal national sections within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, they agreed that the proposed state federation would be based on what they believed to be the principal issue involved—that of cultural equality as distinct from political demands. Accordingly, there were two proposals submitted to achieve this goal. Once called for a territorial federation of nationalities, established as closely as possible to the ethnographic limits of each nationality. Within each territory the numerically most dominant ethnic group, determined on the basis of the language it spoke, would have full and independent control over its own cultural and linguistic affairs. Minorities which could not be territorially defined would be protected by special laws. The other proposal, advocating extra-territorial cultural autonomy, was submitted by the South Slav section
of the party. Under this scheme, each nationality, regardless of the territory it occupied, was to have self-rule over its language and culture. The state would not be divided into territories under this proposal, but rather according to nations, thus facilitating a solution to national problems which might arise in areas so ethnically mixed that a meaningful territorial subdivision was not possible.

The Congress adopted the former scheme. But during the next decade the concept of extra-territoriality was further developed by Karl Renner and Otto Bauer, two important theoreticians of the Austrian Social-Democrats. They sought to combine the two proposals made at the Brunn Congress. Thus, they were in full agreement with the principle of territorial cultural autonomy. But, in addition, they felt that, since some nationalities did not inhabit fixed territories and were spread irregularly throughout the Empire, the territorial concept should be supplemented by extra-territorial or personal cultural autonomy. The Renner-Bauer plan would give every member of any given nationality, regardless of the territory he inhabited, a voice in the cultural, linguistic, and educational affairs of his nation.\(^\text{12}\)

The Renner-Bauer scheme of a cultural solution to the national question rested on the un-Marxian premise that the nation and national

\(^{12}\text{Carr, I, p. 419, Beerenbro, pp. 32-35, and Pipes, pp. 24-25.}\)
cultural would still be in existence long after the advent of socialism. Indeed, nations were conceived as being psychological and organic units which, dating from ancient times, had such long lasting historical validity that they would outlast all economic changes, including the transformation from capitalism to socialism. According to this thesis, the dominant class in each epoch in history, and it alone, enjoyed a national culture. Thus, during the Middle Ages the sole possessor of a national culture had been the feudal aristocracy; during the capitalist era the bourgeoisie became its guardian. Only after socialism had been established would it be possible for the worker to enjoy the national culture of which he had been deprived by the patriarchs of the previous epochs. The concepts that the nation had long standing validity, or that it could be conceived in other than socio-economic terms, or that the modern proletariat had any stake in it were completely contrary to the Marxian declarations in the Communist Manifesto, viz., only the bourgeoisie had an interest in preserving the nation, its institutions, and its culture; "the working men have no country"; and after the victory of socialism, the process of destroying national cultural barriers and instituting an international culture, a process already set in motion by modern technology and economic intercourse under capitalism, would be completed by the international proletariat.  

13 Boerhner, pp. 34-35.
By 1900, the federative-extra-territorial concept of state organization had already started to gain adherents among the socialist parties of Russia, the first of which was the General Jewish Labor League of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia. In 1901, this party, known commonly as the Bund, endorsed extra-territoriality as a means of politically organizing Russians.

Russia must in the future be transformed into a federation of nationalities, with full national autonomy for each, regardless of the territory which it inhabits.  

The Bund saw in this scheme a method by which the dispersed Jews throughout the Russian Empire would gain effective political representation. Following its 1901 declaration, the Bund in 1903 asked the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democrats to recognize it as the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat, no matter where it resided in Russia and no matter what language it spoke, and to be, therefore, granted "the status of a 'federal' unit within the party."  

The concepts that a nation could serve as a basis for party and state organization was equally repugnant to Lenin: a federation of nationalities, whether on territorial or extra-territorial lines, weakened the state; and the party organized on the basis of nationality was completely inimical to his conviction that a strong, centrally organized party was necessary for the battle against Tsarism and the

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14 Pipes, p. 28.

15 Ibid. The Congress rejected the Bund's demand, after which it withdrew from the party.
subsequent struggle for socialism. Since, in 1903, he had already denounced the advocates of a federative state organization, he turned his attention toward the Bund’s demand for a virtually independent status within the party. He granted that the Bund should have autonomy concerning specific matters, such as propaganda and agitation in Yiddish, its own literature and congresses, and should have the right to advance special demands concerning the Jewish proletariat.

But:

on all matters relating to the fight against Tsarism, the fight against the bourgeoisie of Russia as a whole, we must act as a single and centralized fighting organization, we must have behind us 'the whole of the proletariat, without distinction of language or nationality, a proletariat whose unity is cemented by having constantly to solve problems of theory and practice, of tactics and organization, in common; we must not set up organizations that would march separately; each along its own track, we must not weaken our offensive by breaking up into a number of independent political parties, we must not breed estrangement and isolation and then have to cure, with the aid of those famous "federation" plasters, an artificially inoculated disease.17

While unequivocally stating his objections to the idea that the party should be organized on the basis of its national sections, it was not until 1913 that Lenin turned his full attention to the

16 Carr, I, pp. 419-420. It was over the issue, raised at the Second Congress, of whether the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party should be a party of disciplined and militant revolutionaries with central control or whether it should be a loosely organized workers’ party that caused the party to split into its permanent Bolshevik and Menshevik wings.

17 "Does the Jewish Proletariat Need an Independent Political Party?" ISN, II, p. 337.
Renner-Bauer departure from Marxism and its attendant idea that the state should be organized on the basis of a concept according to which the explosive forces of nationalism would be channeled into a cultural eddy. Several factors after 1903 forced him to become fully aware of the need for a Bolshevik pronouncement on the matter.

By 1906 the Bund had totally endorsed the concept of extra-territorial cultural autonomy and, in attempting to justify its position in the eyes of other Russian socialists, it had translated into Russian and published many of the Renner-Bauer works on nationalism and socialism, which, as a consequence, influenced other socialists, particularly in the Caucasus. In 1905, the Social-Revolutionary Party came out in favor of federalism and extra-territorial cultural autonomy. By 1912 even the Menshevik wing of the Social-Democratic Party endorsed cultural autonomy. Moreover, Lenin's move to Cracow, Austria-Poland, in the summer of 1912 gave him an opportunity to witness the extent to which nationalism had disrupted a united socialist movement in Austria and in the neighboring provinces of Russian Poland. Thus, after reading Bauer's chief works and several books on the subject of Russian minorities, Lenin dispatched Joseph Stalin to Vienna in order to gather material from which the Georgian could write a polemic against Renner and Bauer. The result was Stalin's "Marxism and the National Question."18

18Pipes, pp. 31, 34, 36, 37.
Stalin's first task in attempting to discredit Ronner-Bauer was to propound his own conception of a nation. According to Stalin, a body of people, claiming itself as constituting a nation, must possess four characteristics, any one of which being absent meant that a nation did not exist. A nation must have: (1) a community of territory; (2) a community of language; (3) a community of economic life or an economic cohesion, and; (4) "a community of psychological make-up, manifesting itself in a community of culture."19 Thus, against the Bund's claim that the Jews of Russia constituted a nation and its resulting acceptance of the extra-territorial culture scheme, Stalin wrote:

It is possible to conceive of people possessing a common "national character," but they cannot be said to constitute a single nation if they are economically disunited, inhabit different territories, speak different languages, and so forth. Such, for instance, are the Russian, Galician, Armenian, Georgean, and Caucasian Highland Jews, who do not, in our opinion, constitute a single nation.20

Moreover, Stalin asserted, nationalism was an historically evolved phenomenon. As such, it could be understood only by placing it in its proper historical and class context. It was during the epoch of rising capitalism that there could be discerned movements to overcome feudal


20Ibid., p. 8.
particularism and movements toward the amalgamation of whole populations, possessing a common language and culture, into independent territorially affixed states. The class which stood to gain most from the formation of a national state was the bourgeoisie, which, owing to its desire to secure the home market, free from foreign encroachments, strove to rally the masses of a heretofore unconsolidated nation around a national banner. It was when the bourgeoisie had accomplished this latter task that the national movement began. Its strength was determined by the degree to which a wide strata of the nation participated in it.  

In Western Europe, Stalin wrote, where nations arose as a result of an expression of the national bourgeoisie, there existed a number of nation states, manifesting the successful bourgeoisie-led onslaught against feudalism. But the existence of multi-national states in Eastern Europe in the twentieth century was indicative of the continued prevalence of "feudalism", the dominance of one nationality in a state, and the relative weakness of capitalism. Thus, in the case of Russia, various nationalities were welded together into an empire "by the Great-Russians, who were headed by an aristocratic military bureaucracy."  

Yet even in Eastern Europe and Russia the beginnings of bourgeois nationalism could be perceived. With the rapid development of

\[\text{ Ibid., pp. 13-15.}\]

\[\text{ Ibid., p. 13.}\]
capitalism, trade and communications, large towns, the press, and the Duma in Russia and the Reichsrat in Austria, the oppressed nationalities were beginning to awaken to national consciousness and a struggle between the ruling classes of the dominant nationalities and the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nationalities was starting to take shape. Inevitably, Stalin declared, whole nations would be drawn into bourgeois struggles for political independence.²³

But while it should be borne in mind by the proletariat that any impending national movement would always be, in its essence, a struggle in which the national bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation sought to enhance its own political and economic well being, this did not mean that the proletariat should not extend support to the national movements against oppression. For national oppression affected the workers no less than it did the bourgeoisie. It diverted the workers' attention from social and class demands, thereby creating a certain harmony of interests between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. And the oppression of one nation by another raised serious obstacles to the task of uniting the workers of all nations in a multi-national state.²⁴ Thus, the proletariat of Eastern Europe and Russia must not only fight against national oppression in any form, but the historical epoch through which these areas were then passing made

²⁴Ibid., pp. 17-18.
it imperative that the proletariat proclaim the right of nations to self-determination.

The right of self-determination means that a nation can arrange its life according to its own will. It has the right to arrange its life on the basis of autonomy. It has the right to enter into federal relations with other nations. It has the right to complete secession. Nations are sovereign and all nations are equal.

According to Stalin, the Austrian conception of extra-territorial cultural autonomy was fallacious from several standpoints. In the first place, it represented a substitution of the question of a nation's cultural rights for its sovereign political rights, the only correct interpretation of self-determination during the capitalist epoch. In Austria extra-territoriality meant the Czechs, Poles, Germans, and so forth, no matter where they resided, were "to be organized into integral nations, and as such to form part of the Austrian state." All this scheme could hope to accomplish was to maintain Austria's former, feudally derived territorial integrity, whereas the true meaning of self-determination for Eastern Europe in the twentieth century transcended the integrity of the multi-national state.

In the second place, the Rennor-Bauer thesis put the nation into a category of historic inviolability. The nation, as Stalin had

\[25\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 19.\]

\[26\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 31.\]
proclaimed at the outset, belonged to the epoch of capitalism; it would tend to disappear as universal free trade and similarity of production in all countries, brought about by maturing capitalism, leveled all differences and artificial barriers between peoples, until, as Marx had prophesied, nations under socialism would vanish still faster.  

Thirdly, in the earlier stages of capitalism, it was possible to think of a nation as a culturally united community. But again as capitalism matured, the former unity and cohesion would be replaced by class antagonism between the workers and their masters. Moreover, a process of dispersion of nations sets in, "whereby whole groups separate off from nations in search of a livelihood, subsequently settling... in other regions of the state." During the course of these events, the members of a nation would cease to understand one another. Was it "possible to unite into a single national union groups that have grown so distinct?" Was it possible, Stalin queried, to turn back the wheel of history?

What sort of Social-Democrats are they who in a period of extreme aggravation of the class struggle organize inter-class national unions? Social Democracy's true task was to organize the workers in common struggle for the socialist revolution, irrespective of the nations to

27 Ibid., p. 13.
28 Ibid., p. 33.
29 Ibid., p. 32.
which they belonged. By adopting national cultural autonomy, Social-Democrats would be following the policy of organizing nations, nations which were already torn asunder by developing capitalism, and totally forsaking the aim of organizing the proletariat.30

Lastly, and perhaps most important, the principle of national cultural autonomy in matters of state organization could readily be extended into the realm of party organization. Stalin cited the Jewish Bund as an example of this proclivity. Instead of a disciplined, centrally organized party, based on the principle of democratic centralism, national cultural autonomy and its tendency to foster national isolation among the workers of the multi-national Russian Empire represented the foundation upon which the party could also be organized along national-federal lines. The latter, Stalin felt, would eventually lead to a complete disintegration of the Social-Democratic Party.31 Thus, while both Stalin and Lenin were willing to burst the Tsarist Empire apart by supporting national movements, neither was willing to go as far as the Austrian Social-Democrats in accepting the principle of a decentralized party organization.

Having fought the rightist tendencies on the national question, Lenin turned his attention toward the leftists, whose chief exponent,

30Ibid., p. 32-33.
31Ibid., pp. 34, 43, 59-61.
Rosa Luxemburg of the Polish Social-Democratic Party, had, in the first decade of the century, become increasingly vocal in her negative attitude toward Polish independence in particular and self-determination in general.

During the first decade of this century, Rosa Luxemburg had written that capitalism had been transformed into a system of international imperialism, which, having permeated every corner of the world, had rendered national struggles for liberation impossible. Even the most seemingly democratic national revolution was, at its foundation, merely an expression of a power struggle within the imperialist camp. It followed from this that the national question could not be solved by secessionist movements within the framework of imperialism, but, since the entire world had been economically united, only through a European-based world proletarian revolution. It was to this goal that the international proletariat, undaunted by bourgeois nationalism, should direct its united efforts.32

Rosa Luxemburg's views were quickly grasped by other leftists, some of whom were Bolsheviks, and were used as a basis upon which their own hostility toward all national movements in Eastern Europe and Russia rested. Thus, soon after Stalin's article appeared, Lenin published a polemical article, entitled "The Right of Nations to Self-
Determination," directed against Rosa Luxemburg and those who adhered to her views.  

Lenin declared that truly to understand the meaning of national self-determination, socialists must not grapple with the legal or abstract definitions of nations, but examine the historical and economic foundations which give rise to national movements. By approaching the whole question in this manner, one comes to the conclusion, according to Lenin, that "throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism was linked up with national movements." As if to put Stalin's definition of a nation in clearer and more concrete terms, Lenin remarked:

The economic basis of these movements is that in order to achieve complete victory for commodity production the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, must have politically united territories with a population speaking the same language, and all obstacles to the development of this language and to its consolidation in literature must be removed... Unity of language and its unimpeded development are most important

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conditions for genuinely free and extensive commercial intercourse on a scale commensurate with modern capitalism. 35

The formation of national states, under which these requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied, is therefore the tendency of every national movement. The deepest economic factors urge toward this goal, and for the whole of Western Europe, nay, for the entire civilized world, the typical, normal state for the capitalistic period is, therefore, the national state. 36

According to Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg had failed to analyze the national question in historical-economic terms. Instead, she asserted that self-determination of nations in the twentieth century had been rendered illusory and impossible due to the economic bonds the imperialist powers had imposed on the world. Such an interpretation, Lenin declared, substituted the question of the economic dependence of small or weaker nations on the capital of the wealthy Western powers for the question of their political independence, no

35 While Lenin did little to add to a meaningful definition of the nation, he did avoid designating culture or Stalin's fourth characteristic, "a community of psychological make-up, manifesting itself in a community of culture" (see above, p. 42) as forming an integral part of the nation. In fact, throughout the article Lenin ridiculed this concept, the theoretical basis upon which the Renner-Bauer thesis stood. For Lenin to accept Stalin's fourth characteristic as a component part of the nation would have been an admission on his part that subjectivism or metaphysics, as opposed to a strict materialist conception, served as a partial explanation of the phenomenon of nationalism. The fact that Lenin's article so closely followed Stalin's indicates to some writers that Stalin's article was considered by Lenin to be an unsatisfactory theoretical statement on the national question. See Pipes, pp. 38-41, and Shaheen, pp. 66-72.

36 Lenin, The Right, p. 10.
matter how economically incomplete, during the epoch of developing capitalism. To say that an item on self-determination should be omitted from the programs of Eastern socialists, as Rosa Luxemburg wished, was tantamount to saying that Eastern Europe, Russia, and Asia had accomplished bourgeois-democratic revolutions, and that the East had already experienced the West's "1871", at which time the national question had been settled with the consummation of the final bourgeois-democratic revolution in Europe. But, in fact, declared Lenin, only after 1905 could there be discerned the beginnings of bourgeois-democratic revolutions in the East, whose task was to throw off the yoke of foreign, including Great-Russian, oppression and form independent national states. These historical circumstances dictated that an article pertaining to self-determination be included in the program of the Russia Social-Democrats. 37 And national self-determination:

in the program of the Marxists cannot, from an historical-economic point of view, have any other meaning than political self-determination, political independence, the formation of a national state. 38

According to Lenin, the proletariat of Russia had a dual task to perform. "During the period of incipient bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe and Asia," the Great Russian proletariat

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37 Ibid., pp. 11-20.

38 Ibid., p. 14. Again Lenin's "all or nothing" interpretation of self-determination, as E. H. Carr calls it (see Carr, I, p. 420), was at variance with Stalin's proclamation that self-determination could mean autonomy, federation, or secession (see above, p. 45).
must "recognize the right of self-determination for all nations."

This was necessary also from the standpoint of cementing closer fraternal class ties, based on the principle of the equality of all nations, between the Great Russian proletariat and the proletariat of the oppressed nations. For the Great Russian socialists to reject self-determination, as Rosa Luxemburg wished, meant that they would be endorsing the oppressive policies of Islam and acting as Great Russian chauvinists. Self-determination, moreover, was one of the many democratic demands that the proletariat must fight for in the interest of revolution. To substantiate this argument, Lenin referred to the admonition Marx gave to the English workers on Ireland's secession.39

Socialists of the oppressed nations, on the other hand, must not interpret his doctrine to mean that unconditional support could be extended to bourgeois nationalism. Granting unconditional support to the bourgeoisie in its struggle for political and economic emancipation would inevitably arouse the suspicions among the proletariat of other nations concerning the motives behind such unconditional support. Suspicions thus created would tend to split proletarian international solidarity, the factor, Lenin declared, which must be maintained throughout any redrawing of Russian political boundaries.

so that the various nations of Russia, once socialism was achieved, could be reunited. 40

By declaring that the proletariat of Russia was, in effect, to remain neutral of all nationalism, Lenin's doctrine of self-determination was given the necessary flexibility to walk down two different paths at the same time—those dictated by Marxism and those derived from political realities. On the basis of the former, he rejected the Polish Socialist Party's demand for Polish independence. On the other hand, however, when Rosa Luxemburg used similar arguments against him, Lenin reproached her for asking the Great Russian Socialists to go to the extreme of Marxism by trying to apply European conditions to Russia. To Lenin the dilemma posed by the principle of national self-determination was resolved when it was placed in the perspective of revolution. In a resolution submitted to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party in August, 1913, Lenin declared:

The question of the right of nations to self-determination (i.e. the guarantee by the constitution of the state of an absolutely free and democratic method of deciding the question of secession) must not be confused with the question of this or that nation seceding. The Social-Democratic Party must decide the latter question in each separate case from the point of view of the interests of social development as a whole, and in the interests of the proletarian class struggle for socialism. . . . 41

40 Ibd., pp. 24-27, 40-41, 47-51, 60.

41 Shaheen, p. 75.
Such a pragmatic attitude reflected, as his whole tactical approach to the national question indicates, the relativity Lenin regarded national movements for political independence. Clearly, questions of secession which might arise either before or after 1917 could be resolved quite readily when viewed in this light.
CHAPTER III

EXTENSION OF THE DOCTRINE, 1914-1917

Prior to 1914, Lenin was aware of the incipient national movements in Asia. As a result, he felt it necessary for his party to take an affirmative stance on the question of national self-determination within the Russian Empire, which embraced two continents and whose people, he believed, would be affected by stirrings beyond the Empire’s Asian frontier. The very nationalities which composed Persia, Turkey, and China and which were beginning to awaken to a national consciousness were precisely those which had ethnic counterparts in the Russian Empire. Lenin thus felt that Russia’s Asiatic nationalities were destined to be drawn into a struggle against Tsarist oppression.¹

Beyond the significance Eastern nationalism held for Russia’s own minorities, after 1905 Lenin expressly linked the Eastern national liberation movements with the movement of the continental proletariat.

¹Lenin, The Right . . . . , p. 19. See Ivor Spector, The First Russian Revolution: Its Impact on Asia (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1962) for a description of the effect the Russian Revolution of 1905 had on Asia. While this chapter deals specifically with Lenin’s pre-1917 treatment of the Western powers’ colonies and subject nations, Lenin’s belief that an intimate relationship existed between the Eastern nations beyond Russia’s frontier and those under the Tsar’s jurisdiction makes it extremely difficult totally to divorce one from the other. For instance, the Turkic peoples of the Volga-Ural region and of Central Asia and of the Caucasus were considered to be Russian colonies just as Afghanistan was considered to be a British colony. In short, when Lenin, after 1914, spoke of “colonies” he spoke also of Asian nations within the Russian Empire.
He regarded the increasing proletarian activity in Europe and the heightening movements for national liberation in Asia as generating "quite clearly the outline of a new and incomparably higher stage in the international struggle of the proletariat."2

However, while connecting the two movements distinguished him from other socialists of Europe, Lenin, like most socialists, radical and moderate alike, endorsed the thesis that social revolution in the West would precede and liberate the colonies and oppressed nations of the East.3 In an article published in 1913 which attempted to equate Asia's democratically minded and "progressive" bourgeoisie with Europe's "sole remaining" advanced class, the proletariat, and which was sardonically entitled "Advanced Asia and Backward Europe," Lenin declared:

all young Asia, that is, the hundreds of millions of toilers in Asia, have a reliable ally in the shape of the proletariat of all the civilized countries. No force on earth can prevent its victory, which will liberate both the peoples of Europe and the peoples of Asia.4

A year later he indicated that while the growth of capitalism in Asia was bound to precipitate movements for national political independence, Western Europe, possessing the historical and material bases for

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3Boersner, pp. 29-32.
socialism, would undergo revolution before the East could "become crystallized into a system of independent states, like Europe."\(^5\)

After the outbreak of the war, however, Lenin altered this interpretation and nationalism outside of Russia attained a position in his revolutionary calculations similar to the one which he gave to forming alliances with nationalism in Russia—it was regarded as a weapon to be wielded by the proletariat for purposes of weakening and ultimately destroying the established order of Europe. As in the case of Russia, moreover, the approach Lenin adopted toward the national and colonial question centered around the principle of self-determination, and, reminiscent of the pre-war period, bitter polemics between Lenin and the internationalist wing ensued.

Though there was no quarrel over whether the war was by nature imperialist, fought "for the political and economic exploitation of the world, for export markets, sources of raw materials, spheres of capital investment,"\(^6\) there were vociferous exchanges between Lenin and those who endorsed Rosa Luxemburg's pre-war views on self-determination.\(^7\) The disagreement was particularly sharp in the Bolshevik party. A group known as the Bukharin-Piatkov group felt that the principle of


\(^{7}\)Boersner, p. 49. On Rosa Luxemburg see above p. 28-29.
self-determination was a Utopian attempt to seek minimum or democratic reforms during an epoch of "the absorption of small states by large units" for the purpose of maintaining the dominance of finance capital. The true solution to the problem lay in mobilizing the proletariat for a class war for socialism, which could not be accomplished by seeking to unite the workers with the national bourgeoisie under the slogan of self-determination:

It is therefore impossible to struggle against the enslavement of nations otherwise than by struggling against imperialism, ergo—by struggling against imperialism (sic), ergo—by struggling against finance capital, ergo against capitalism in general. Any deviation from that road, any advancement of "partial" tasks, of the "liberation of nations" within the realm of capitalist civilization, means diverting the proletarian forces from the actual solution of the problem, and their fusion with the forces of the corresponding national bourgeoisie groups.8

Furthermore, Karl Radek, of the Polish Social-Democratic Party and also of the extremist school, asserted in an article published in April, 1916, that while socialists should condemn the oppressive policies of imperialism, its policy of destroying state boundaries through conquests and annexations in Europe was a matter about which socialists should rejoice. Every encroachment on national sovereignty was a step in the direction of an international community and a world revolution. Thus:

Social Democracy does not advocate either an erection of new boundary posts in Europe or the re-erection of those which

have been torn down by imperialism. Wherever capitalism has developed unprotected by its own state, the historical development had shown that an independent state was by no means an absolute prerequisite for the unfolding of the productive forces and for the introduction of socialism. Wherever the crushing wheel of imperialism passed over an already existing capitalist state, there through the brutal means of imperialist oppression a political and economic concentration of the capitalist world takes place which prepares for socialism.9

The internationalist condemnation of self-determination, as a principle repulsing full proletarian solidarity, as a Utopian demand during the era of imperialism, and as being inimical to the economic and political prerequisites of international socialism, applied equally to Europe and Asia. Its implementation, moreover, after socialism was established was considered to be unnecessary and socialists who advocated it would have failed to understand that: (1) the victorious proletariat would establish an international society devoid of nationality; (2) once the class basis upon which national oppression rested was destroyed, self-determination was superfluous.10

The internationalists were, however, willing to concede that the proletariat of Europe could support national uprisings in the "non-capitalist countries or countries with an embryonic capitalism."11

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10 ibid., pp. 509-512.
11 "Theses and Program of the Bukharin-Piatkov Group," ibid., p. 221.
This was considered to be a pure tactical question of "using" the colonial bourgeoisie to aid the continental proletariat. But even in regard to the colonies it was considered of more importance to educate the colonial proletariat in the tasks of socializing the East and in maintaining firm ties with the proletariat of Europe.  

Lenin, however, while working on his essay on Imperialism, perceived that an intimate relationship existed between imperialism's exploitation of the colonies of Asia and Africa and the national question. That is, while being economically exploited by capitalism, the colonies, at the same time, were victims of national oppression. Thus, imperialism did not eliminate the national question, as the internationalists claimed, or eliminate the need for statements pertaining to self-determination. On the contrary, the era of imperialism saw national oppression transferred to the entire world to include not only oppressed nationalities of Europe but the backward colonies of the East.  

Further, when the internationalists declared that imperialism had rendered the political as well as the economic independence of the colonies and oppressed nations of Europe illusory, they were, according to Lenin, not only playing into the hands of the imperialist bourgeoisie and acting like "imperialist economists"--socialists

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13 Pipes, p. 48.
justifying the continuance of national oppression on economic grounds, but were ignoring a vast number of potential allies in the struggle against imperialism. They were forgetting that social revolution was not something "pure," in which there was a clear line drawn between the class conscious proletariat, on the one hand, and the bourgeoisie, on the other. Social revolution was not conceivable, Lenin declared, without the mass movement of the bourgeoisie and of the non-class conscious proletariat and semi-proletariat against the oppression of foreign nations, an oppression heightened by imperialism.\(^\text{14}\) And, as in the case of Russia, to gain the confidence of the proletariat's erstwhile allies, the proletariat must raise the unequivocal demand for the immediate political independence of all nations and colonies oppressed by imperialism.\(^\text{15}\)

But on what basis could Lenin justify proletarian collaboration with nationalism during the era of imperialism and the beginning of

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\(^\text{15}\) Alfred D. Low, *Lenin on the Question of Nationality* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1958), pp. 76-78. It was precisely from the standpoint of his belief in mass action tactics that Lenin condemned the internationalists for wishing to make "use" of Eastern nationalism (see above, p. 59) while forgetting the small nations of Europe. For, despite his preoccupation with nationalism in the East after 1914, Lenin felt that a European national uprising was more important in terms of the social revolution than one in a colony: "A blow delivered against the English imperialist bourgeoisie by a rebellion in Ireland is a hundred times more significant politically than a blow of equal weight delivered in Asia or Africa." "Discussion Summed Up ..." *ISM*, V, p. 304.
a world engrossing socialist epoch? Was not self-determination, normally associated with the dawning of the bourgeois epoch, contrary to the historical facts?

Proceeding from where he left off in his pre-war polemic with Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin recognized three different types of countries in relation to self-determination: there were the countries of Western Europe and North America, the countries of Eastern Europe—Austria, the Balkans, and Russia, and the colonies and semi-colonies of the East. But "the advanced countries of Western Europe alone are ripe for socialism," Lenin wrote in October, 1916. In these countries the national unity of all classes had long outlived its purpose and the time had come for it to be forsworn in favor of the class unity of the proletariat for the socialist revolution. But due to the uneven development of capitalism there stood alongside these highly developed states "a number of nations only slightly developed economically, or totally undeveloped." In the latter, encompassing nations in the second and third types of countries, there still remained to be fulfilled the bourgeois-democratic task of "throwing off foreign oppression" before national unity could be

16 Such countries as Turkey, Persia, and China were considered semi-colonies since, according to Lenin, they had a nominal political independence but were militarily and economically dependent on the imperialist powers.
replaced by proletarian solidarity. The extremists, in denouncing self-determination as historically obsolete had, according to Lenin, directed their attention solely towards England, France, Italy, and Germany and had forgotten Asia and Africa where national movements were "a thing of the present and the future." 

By defining nationalism in terms of uneven development, the tactical relevance the principle of self-determination held for the proletariat was immediately established. Contrary to the inter-nationalists' argument that the expected revolution against imperialism would be of socialist nature with even the proletariat of the colonies entering the battle, the revolution against imperialism, according to Lenin's hypothesis, would witness a Western social revolution of the proletariat and an Eastern national liberation struggle of the bourgeoisie. As to which revolution would occur first, or whether they would occur simultaneously, Lenin was extremely ambivalent. But he was certain that social revolution in the West could not be divorced from national revolution in the East.


19"A Caricature of Marxism..." ibid., pp. 294-296, and Boersner, p. 57.

20Low, pp. 80-82.

Just as in the case of the combined national and proletarian struggles against Tsarism in Russia, the two movements against international imperialism should be connected by the same dualistic action on the part of the proletariat. The proletariat of the oppressor country should militantly oppose its country's imperialist policies. Not only must it demand self-determination:

but must render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their rebellion---and if need be, their revolutionary war---against the imperialist powers that oppress them. 22

since the oppressed nations and colonies had yet to fulfill the tasks of liberating themselves from foreign domination, the proletariat of these nations must act jointly with their national bourgeoisie against the oppressor nation, provided that it did not fuse with bourgeois nationalism and that it strove for complete international and, particularly in the case of Russia, organizational unity. 23

It may be useful at this point to present a general summary pointing out some of the main features in the evolution of the Communist doctrine of national self-determination.

The Marxian basis for extending self-determination almost exclusively revolved around the question of whether a nation was an objective carrier of historical progress. For example, whether by creating large


23Ibid., pp. 271-272, 275.
capitalist nation-states, as in the case of Germany, Hungary, Italy, and Poland, the necessary basis for the next step in the historical ladder—socialism—would be facilitated. Likewise, Marx and Engels opposed the national movements they considered to be objective carriers of reaction, as was the case regarding their view of the national stirrings of the Austrian Slave.

However, the criterion Marx and Engels applied to national political independence was not dependent solely on whether large political and economic units could be established. A small nation, even though it was not necessarily viable, could be regarded as a carrier of progress if its independence would help the revolutionary process in other areas. This was true in the case of Poland and particularly Ireland. If bourgeois democratic revolutions were to be consummated in Central Europe, an independent Poland, acting as a cordon sanitaire, would separate Europe from the Russian Tsar. Ireland's independence after 1860 was considered indispensable in bringing forth the English proletarian revolution.

But the Eastern nations or colonies were not considered to be in the same category with those of the West, neither from a standpoint of whether they would precipitate revolution in Europe nor from the standpoint of whether a large nation such as India having gained independence would represent a milestone in the historical development of Asia. Marx's and Engels' socio-historical analysis of the East led them to conclude that first the historically stationary institutions, which produced the societal order of Asiatic despotism, had to be
destroyed prior to the Eastern colonies' political emancipation. Insofar as the European bourgeoisie intervened and destroyed the isolated village system in Asia and politically and economically unified the individual colonies, it was fulfilling a progressive historical task.

Lenin, however, concerned with bringing forth the demise of Tsarism in Russia and expediting social revolution in the West, adopted an approach to the national and colonial question which was similar to Marx's position on Ireland's independence. Lenin, more than Marx himself, defined and justified his revolutionary doctrine in Marxian terms, but like Marx Lenin's endorsement of national independence was not to be interpreted as an absolute right. It was to be judged from the standpoint of its effect on the final victory of socialism. Hence, Lenin attempted to maintain a precarious position between socialism. Hence, Lenin attempted to maintain a precarious position between the extremes of leftist and rightist, by declaring in effect that the proletariat must remain free of nationalism while allying with it.

He fought the advocates of federalism and those who associated themselves with the Renner-Bauer theory of national cultural autonomy on the basis of their deviation from Marxism and his own conception of a centrally organized party. And he struggled against the internationalists for failing to take into consideration the revolutionary potential which was afforded by forming alliances with nationalism. His doctrine of national self-determination represented an attempt to overcome the shortcomings of both the rightists and leftists. On
the other hand, it held that the Great Russian proletariat should demand self-determination for the oppressed nations of the Russian Empire, while, on the other hand, the proletariat of the oppressed nations were to strive for international or organizational unity with the Great Russian proletariat. These simultaneous tasks were calculated to overcome proletarian acquiescence to nationalism: the Great Russian socialists would be free of Great Russian chauvinism and the oppressed nations' proletariat of bourgeois nationalism. Moreover, during the socialist epoch this dual action of the workers would permit the two nations to be fused on the basis of equality and mutual trust, on the basis of democracy. But because such dual action prepared for the fusion of nations during the proletarian era this did not mean that the principle of self-determination would be rendered superfluous once the socialist revolution came about. Just as demanding self-determination in the era of imperialism was regarded by Lenin as an integral tactic in the battle against the imperialist bourgeoisie, so was it indispensable to the construction of a multi-national socialist state on a non-imperialist basis. In this regard Lenin remarked:

Victorious socialism must achieve complete democracy and, consequently, not only bring about complete equality of nations, but also give effect to the right of oppressed nations to self-determination i.e., the right to free political secession. Socialist Parties which fail to prove by all their activities now, as well as during the revolution and after its victory, that they will free the enslaved nations and establish relations with them on the basis of a free nation—and a free
union is a lying phrase without the right to secession—such parties are committing treason to socialism.24

In another place Lenin declared:

Just as mankind can achieve the abolition of classes only by passing through the transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed classes, so mankind can achieve the inevitable merging of nations by passing through the transition period of complete liberation of all the oppressed nations, i.e., the freedom to secede.25

After 1914 the doctrine was extended to the world at large where nationalism was seen as a device which would help foment social revolution in the West. Thus, while the Rosa Luxemburg-Radek-Piatokov-Bukharin group saw the future in world-wide social revolutionary terms, Lenin saw it in terms of social revolution in the East.

The doctrine's application in relation to both the European and Russian revolutions concentrated heavily on non-European nationalities. But as one of the by-products of the conscious effort Lenin conducted after 1914 toward revising the Marxian conception (and Lenin's own for twenty years prior) of Asiatic and specifically Russian society,26 there emerged the law of the uneven development of capitalism, which, when applied to the East, completely justified in Marxian terms proletarian support of nationalism against Western and Tsarist imperialism. Notwithstanding Lenin's insistence on granting nations the right to secede even after the victory of socialism, the practical implications

24Ibid., p. 267.
25Ibid., p. 271.
26Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism, pp. 395-397.
associated with moving the East into the Marxian conception of
historical development became fully apparent in Russia after 1917.
There the relativism which was inherent in Lenin's approach to the
question of secession was buttressed by an irreproachable dialectical
argument.
CHAPTER IV

THE NATIONAL AND COLONIAL QUESTION, 1917-1941

I

Relapse of National Self-Determination in Russia

Once the Bolsheviks assumed the mantle of power, they were faced with the problem of a rapidly disintegrating empire, a problem which in no small measure was derived from their desire to weaken the Tsered and Korensky regimes by exploiting the national problem. By February, 1918, the Soviet regime had lost the Baltic provinces of the Tsered Empire—Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, and Finland through proclamations of independence. Russian Poland by Soviet de-facto recognition of its independence at the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations with Germany. In other areas, governments were formed and proclamations of statehood were made, the most notable of which were in the Siberian, North Caucasian and Ural regions. Not only were these secessionist activities contrary to Lenin's belief in large states, but without its borderlands Soviet Russia could not materially survive. Thus, soon after the Bolsheviks achieved power in Russia, a cry arose for an adjustment in the doctrine of national self-determination which would better serve the purposes of the regime.1

In December, 1917, and January, 1918, Stalin, speaking for the majority of the Bolsheviks and acting as the Commissar of Nationalities, advocated replacing Lenin's old formula of national self-determination with a doctrine which was compatible with the Russian proletariat's struggle for socialism. He felt that self-determination, interpreted in the old manner, whereby the national bourgeoisie exercised the right of secession, was counter-revolutionary and that henceforth self-determination in Russia could only be exercised by the proletariat. Thus, the Council of Peoples' Commissars, the ruling clique of the new regime, would recognize the independence of any republic, Stalin declared, but only "upon the demands of the working population of such an area."^2

The advantages of Stalin's scheme of proletarian self-determination were obvious. Whereas Lenin's doctrine of national self-determination presupposed the existence of close collaboration among the various classes of a nation, bourgeois and proletarian alike, in the common quest for the establishment of a national state, proletarian self-determination meant the establishment of a workers' dictatorship under Bolshevik direction. But when the Bolsheviks^3 finally met in March, 1919, at the Eighth Party Congress to revise the program

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^3 The party became officially "Communist" in March, 1918, and hereafter the two terms will be used interchangeably.
originally formulated in 1903, Lenin still favored keeping the old slogan in the new party program.

According to Lenin, proletarian self-determination assumed there existed a clear-cut class differentiation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the nations of Russia, a distinction that was not even present in the economically advanced countries of Europe. Furthermore, the national program must take into account the realities of the Civil War being waged between the Bolsheviks and the Allied-backed White forces. In this matter the slogan of national self-determination could still serve as a valuable tool in turning the local populations in White occupied regions against these same White forces, who, believing in the slogan of "Undivided Russia," wished to re-establish against the will of the population the former control of the Great Russians.4

On similar grounds, Lenin condemned the proponents of proletarian self-determination. The advocates of such a scheme, according to Lenin, would be Great Russian Communists, who, like the Whites, strove to reunite Russia under the aegis of Great Russian nationalism: "In my opinion, this kind of Communist is a Great Russian chauvinist; he lives inside many of us, and must be fought."5 As we have seen, it was such chauvinism that Lenin bitterly attacked prior to 1917.

4Fischer, p. 133, and Pipes, p. 110.
5Cited in Pipes, p. 110.
Yet, whatever intellectual qualms inspired Lenin to condemn Great Russian chauvinism after 1917, a compromise program on the national question was formulated, which, while retaining the self-determination clause, was so qualified that its former meaning was totally abrogated:

2. In order to overcome the distrust felt by the toiling masses of oppressed countries towards the proletariat of states which oppressed these countries, it is necessary to abolish all the privileges enjoyed by any national group whatever, to establish complete equality of rights for all nationalities, to recognize the right of colonies and non-sovereign nations to secession.

3. With the same aim in view the Party proposes, as one of the transitional forms toward complete unity, a federation of states of the Soviet type.

4. On the question as to who is to express the will of the nation to secede, the Russian Communist Party adopts the historical class viewpoint and in this takes into consideration the stage of historical development of the given nation: whether it is evolving from mediaevalism to bourgeois democracy or whether from bourgeois democracy to Soviet or proletarian democracy, etc.  

The new program took into account the realities of the Civil War, it justified Bolshevik territorial consolidation and placed a premium on the formation of a federation of nationalities.

The Communists could declare that the White occupied areas had the right to form independent states once the Red forces were victorious. Simultaneously, the Bolsheviks could sanctimoniously point to the successful application of the doctrine of secession in the Baltic states, though in reality the regime was in such straits it had little voice in the matter.

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6Stalin, Marxism and the National and Colonial Question, p. 286.
The adoption of the federative principle, which Lenin had so violently opposed prior to the Revolution, owing to the centrifugal tendencies it suggested, was now regarded as the centripetal factor which could once again make Russia one. Moreover, it can be considered the first step toward invalidating the principle of national self-determination, a principle which Lenin, prior to 1917, had thought self-evident if multi-national socialist states were to be built on a non-imperialist basis:

Just as mankind can achieve the abolition of classes by passing through the transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed classes, so mankind can achieve the inevitable merging of nations by passing through the transition period of complete liberation of all the oppressed nations, i.e., the freedom to secede.

But the qualification of the doctrine of secession in point four of the new program was perhaps the most significant step toward abrogating the pre-revolutionary meaning of self-determination. Henceforth, the Communists possessed the "historic" right to crush any national opposition with which they might be confronted when attempting to establish their control over the border areas. By approaching the question of secession from "the historical class viewpoint," moreover, the warning Engels gave to socialists regarding the colonies was conveniently shelved: "The victorious proletariat can force no blessings

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7 Pipes, p. 111, and see Chapter II, pp. 32-33.

8 "The Socialist Revolution and the Right . . .," ISw, V, p. 271, and see Chapter III, p. 75.
of any kind upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory by so doing." This admonition was declared by Lenin in his pre-1917 polemics with the leftists as the "one absolutely internationalist, principle." Largely through Lenin's dialectical arguments the total "socialization" of Russia's oppressed minorities and colonies was completely justified. But the intellectual bankruptcy which resulted from such arguments is hardly shocking. The relativeness which surrounded the principle of secession fits well with Barghoorn's observations: the belief in the justice of the Bolsheviks' cause made it legitimate to use all available means to win against their enemies. First, this meant the use of demagogic promises in the Bolshevik nationality program; later it meant suppressing national groups who wished to see those promises fulfilled. Perhaps it was inevitable that the principle of secession as well as other ideals would be subverted to the interests of Great Russian totalitarianism when this *modus operandi* was applied by Stalin and those who practiced and refined Lenin's ideas on party and state organization. Lenin, himself, started to realize before his death that the centralized party and state apparatus he

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9Engels to Kautsky, September 12, 1882, Marx and Engels *Selected Correspondence*, p. 399.


created actually precluded beforehand whatever true convictions he held regarding Great Russian chauvinism and the rights of national minorities.12

II

Soviet Russia and the East

If Lenin's doctrine of national self-determination was rendered meaningless within Russia after it had served its revolutionary purpose, both the potential force of national movements and the principle of self-determination as an instrument of Soviet foreign policy still possessed validity when applied to the world at large and particularly to the colonies and semi-colonies of the European powers.

On December 7, 1917, Lenin and Stalin signed a double barrelled appeal "To All the Moslems of Russia and the East." The appeal presented the Soviet nationality policy as the key to liberating the oppressed nations of the whole world. The nationality policies of Tsarism were denounced and it was declared that:

henceforth your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions, are declared free and inviolable! Build your national life freely and without hindrance. It is your right. Know that your rights, like all those of all the peoples of Russia, will be protected by the might of the revolution.13

Support this revolution and its authorized Government!


The second part of the appeal exhorted the peoples outside Russia--Persians, Turks, Arabs, and Hindus specifically—to overthrow the imperialists that subjugated their countries:

Lose no time in throwing off the yoke of the ancient oppressors of your land! Let them no longer violate your hearth! You yourselves must arrange your life as you yourselves see fit! You have the right to do this, for your fate is in your own hands!14

The appeal ended with the declaration:

We inscribe the liberation of the oppressed peoples of the world on our banner:
Moslems of Russia!
Moslems of the East!
We look to you for sympathy and support in the work of regenerating the world!15

The appeal, moreover, contained an important Soviet foreign policy statement. It declared the German secret treaties with Great Britain pertaining to the partition of Persia and Turkey to be null and void. It denounced the Tsar's plan to annex Constantinople:

The Russian Republic and its Government, the Council of Peoples' Commissars, are opposed to the seizure of foreign territory; Constantinople must remain in the hands of the Moslems.16

A similar act of generosity was extended to China by July, 1919, at which time the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs expressed in a note to Peking a "willingness to renounce all concessions and special

14 Ibid., p. 17.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. 16.
privileges which the Tsars' Government had gained from unequal treaties with China." 17

Though such acts built for the Soviet leaders a great amount of good will in the East, prior to 1921 cooperation with the national governments in Asia was limited. The Bolsheviks clung to the belief that if the new regime hoped to survive and socialism was to be established successfully in Russia, the revolution of November, 1917, could only be the prelude to a more general social revolution, which would engulf first Western and Central Europe and ultimately the entire world. 18 Thus, beyond proclamations on self-determination and denunciations of imperialism and secret treaties, the Bolsheviks, having their attention centered upon what seemed to be an incipient European social revolution in the period between 1917 and 1920, were not yet prepared to sacrifice local Communist parties and militant

17 Boeckner, p. 65.

18 Though for many years he opposed Trotsky's ideas on the "permanent revolution," i.e., under proletarian leadership the two revol-utions--bourgeois-democratic and socialist--in Russia should be "telescoped" into one continuous revolutionary process, which would enable Russia to skip the capitalist stage of development altogether, by 1915 Lenin felt that by pursuing its "minimum" demand of overthrowing Tsarism the Russian proletariat could ignite the flames of social revolution in the West, thereby effecting a social revolution in Russia. Alfred G. Moyer, Leninism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 139-144.

revolutionaries in the East in order to cooperate with the so-called Eastern bourgeoisie even where national interests required it. It was in fact Lenin's belief or disbelief in the imminence of European and World Revolution after the Bolsheviks' assumption to power that explains first the eclipse of his doctrine of self-determination in the years immediately after 1917 and second its re-emergence in the context of Soviet foreign policy between 1920 and 1928.

The prospects for a European upheaval were bright after the German collapse in the fall of 1918. In the first months of 1919 revolution had occurred in Germany, during the course of which Rosa Luxemburg had been killed; Bela Kun had proclaimed in Budapest the existence of a Hungarian proletarian government; and in Bavaria a Soviet government was established. The moment, it was believed, had at last arrived when the Bolsheviks' Western comrades would come to Soviet Russia's rescue. The world proletariat and its First Republic were now no longer on the defensive.

Amid the atmosphere of revolutionary euphoria brought on by these events in Central Europe, the First Congress of the Communist

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19 Carr, III, pp. 233-234, 250. Carr points out that only Stalin, preoccupied with Asia in his capacity of Commissar for Nationalities, remained fully cognizant of the revolutionary potential of the East in the immediate post-1917 period. Ibid., p. 234. Stalin warned that while everyone's eyes were turned toward the West, the East could not be forgotten for a single moment. "The truth," Stalin declared, "must be grasped once and for all that whoever desires the triumph of socialism must not forget the East," imperialism's "most reliable" reserve. Joseph Stalin, "Don't Forget the East," Works, IV, pp. 174-175.
International met. Lenin, speaking at the opening session of the Comintern on March 2, 1919, expressed the feelings of the delegates when he declared that "the progress of events since the imperialist war is inevitably facilitating the revolutionary movement of the proletariat; the international world revolution is beginning and gaining strength in all countries." He felt that the Soviet system of organizing the workers, the "practical form that will enable the proletariat to achieve its domination," had "conquered not only in backward Russia" but its conquest could also be discerned in the "most developed country of Europe—Germany, and in the oldest capitalist country—Great Britain."  

The "Manifesto of the Communist International" was written by Trotsky and it reflected the optimism which filled Lenin and the Soviet leaders. Trotsky's pronouncements on the national and colonial question, however, with Lenin voicing no opposition, resembled the position the Internationalists had occupied prior to 1917:

The emancipation of the colonies is possible only in conjunction with the emancipation of the metropolitan working class. The workers and peasants of Annam, Algiers, and Bengal, but also of Persia and Armenia, will gain their opportunity for independent existence only when the workers of England and France have overthrown Lloyd George and Clemenceau and taken state power into their own hands. Even now the struggle in the more developed colonies is more than a struggle for national liberation;

20Fischer, p. 124, and Carr, III, pp. 111, 122.


22Boersner, p. 65.
it is assuming an explicitly social character. If capitalist Europe forcibly dragged the backward sections of the world into the capitalist whirlpool, a socialist Europe will come to the aid of liberated colonies with its technology, its organization, its spiritual forces, in order to facilitate their transition to a planned and organized socialist economy. 23

The concept that the colonies could be transformed directly from their pre-capitalist past to socialism was, as in the case of Russia, considered to be an integral part of the permanent revolutionary process by which the establishment of socialism in the backward areas of the East, would take place within the context of European social revolution. 24 At the Second Congress of the Comintern, held in the summer of 1920 and at a time when the revolutionary hopes of 1919 were renewed by the advance of the Red Army into Poland, 25 Lenin echoed Trotsky's pronouncements and further exemplified the course the East would take in the face of revolutionary conditions. Using the Bolsheviks' experience with the Tsars' former "colonies" as an example, Lenin declared:

Can we recognize as correct the assertion that the capitalist stage of development of national economy is inevitable for those nations which are now liberating themselves . . . ? We reply to this question in the negative. If the revolutionary, victorious proletariat carries on systematic propaganda among them, and if the Soviet governments render them all the

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assistance they possibly can, it will be wrong to assume that the capitalist stage of development is inevitable for the backward nationalities. We must not only form independent cadres of fighters, of Party organizations, in all colonies and backward countries, we must not only carry on propaganda in favor of organizing Peasants' Soviets and strive to adapt them to pre-capitalist conditions; the Communist international must lay down, and give the theoretical grounds for, the proposition that, with the aid of the proletariat of the most advanced countries, the backward countries may pass to the Soviet system and, after passing through a definite stage of development, to Communism, without passing through the capitalist stage of development.  

Lenin's ultra-revolutionary stance required the adoption of ultra-revolutionary tactics. As we have seen, Lenin was certain that social revolution in the West must be closely connected with national uprisings in the East. But in 1920 he believed the colonial East could skip the capitalist stage of development, a possibility he rejected prior to 1917. Thus, instead of relying on the colonial bourgeoisie to aid the workers of Europe against imperialism, in one portion of his Theses on the National and Colonial Question, Lenin placed primary emphasis on the masses of the East to lead the national onslaughts against imperialism. Soviet Russia occupied the vanguard position for both the Eastern national revolts and the world socialist upheaval:


27 See Chapter III.

The cornerstone of the whole policy of the Communist International in the national and colonial question must be to bring together the proletarians and the masses of the toilers of all nations and countries for the joint revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the landlords and the bourgeoisie; for this alone guarantees victory over capitalism, without which the abolition of national oppression and inequality is impossible.

The world political situation has now placed on the order of the day the dictatorship of the proletariat, and all events in world politics are inevitably concentrating around one central point, viz., the struggle of the world bourgeoisie against the Soviet Russian Republic, which is inevitably grouping around itself the Soviet movement of the advanced workers of all countries, as well as all the national liberation movements in the colonies and among the oppressed nationalities which have become convinced by their bitter experience that there is no salvation for them except the victory of the Soviet power over world imperialism.

Consequently, one must not confine oneself at the present time to the bare recognition, or proclamation, of the need for bringing together the toilers of the various nations; it is necessary to pursue a policy that will bring about the closest alliance of all the national and colonial liberation movements with Soviet Russia; the form of this alliance is to be determined by the degree of development of the Communist movement among the proletariat of each country, or of the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement of the workers and peasants in backward countries or among backward nationalities.

29V. I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Question," ISW, X, p. 233. The phrase "bourgeois-democratic liberation movement of the workers and peasants in the backward countries, etc." may appear to contradict itself. That is, "bourgeois-democratic liberation movement" of "workers and peasants" may appear to be an attempt to connect two mutually exclusive dialectical terms. Lenin, however, pointed out at the Congress that "every nationalist movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, for the bulk of the population in backward countries are peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relations." "Report of the Commission on the National...," ISW, X, p. 240. Presumably, then, Lenin felt that national liberation struggles, though bourgeois-democratic tasks per se, could be either mass movements led by the proletariat and Communists or mass movements led by the national bourgeoisie. It is used in the former sense here. Cf. Carr, III, p. 253.
Seeking to establish this alliance with the Eastern masses, the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) issued an appeal "to the oppressed masses of Persia, Armenia, and Turkey," urging them to meet in Baku. Neither the appeal nor the proceedings of the "First Congress of the Peoples of the East" revealed any inclination favoring alliances with the national bourgeoisie. Indeed, the Comintern's leaders concentrated upon 'reinforcing the cavalry of the West with the infantry of the East' \(^{30}\) in the struggle against capitalism in general.\(^{31}\) The appeal duly took this task into consideration:

Why is the Communist International convening a congress of Persian, Armenian and Turkish peasants and workers? What can it give them? What does it ask of them? The militant workers and peasants of Europe and America turn to you, because, like them, you are suffering under the yoke of world capital. Because, like them, you have to fight the exploiters, and because the amalgamation of Persian, Turkish, and Armenian peasants and workers with the great army of the European and American proletariat will strengthen this front, hasten the death of capital, and so doing bring about the liberation of the workers and peasants of the entire world.\(^{32}\)

But the tactic of forming an anti-imperialist, anti-national bourgeois front with the masses in backward countries presupposed the existence of a world or European revolutionary situation. What tactics should be pursued if Western revolution failed to come about?

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\(^{30}\) Fischer, p. 205.

\(^{31}\) Carr, III, pp. 260-267, and Fischer, p. 279.

Displaying an ambivalence, derived from his sense of realism, Lenin also recognized this possibility in his Theses:33

"In regard to more backward states and nations," the Theses declared, "in which feudal or patriarchal, or patriarchal-peasant relations predominate, it is particularly important" for Communists to bear in mind:

"First, that all the Communist Parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries." The workers of the countries upon which the colonies were dependent had a particular obligation in this respect;

Second, Communists must fight against the "clergy and other reactionary and mediaeval elements in backward societies;"

Third, Pan-Islamism and other movements "which strive to combine the liberation movement" against imperialism with the strengthening of reaction in Asia must be combated;

Fourth, not only must Communists render assistance to the peasant movements in the colonies and semi-colonies against the landlords and "all manifestations or survivals of feudalism," but strive to bring the peasant and proletarian movements into alliance;

Fifth, while recognizing that the Communist International must support and "enter into temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries," Communists should neither paint the movement in Communist colors, nor forget that for future

33Boersner, p. 84.
revolutionary purposes against the national bourgeoisie they "must unconditionally preserve the independence of the proletarian movement even in its most rudimentary form." 34

Thus, two tactical alternatives regarding national movements in the East were recognized by Lenin at the Second Congress. But whichever alternative was adopted there existed an intimate relationship between the national revolution and the class basis upon which it would proceed, on the one hand, and the success or failure of the Western revolution, on the other. If the Western Revolution came about, the Communists would form a "united front from below," whereby they would ally with the Eastern masses against both Western imperialism and the national bourgeoisie of the East. Though politically oriented at its inception, the alliance would facilitate the passing of the East directly from feudalism to socialism by means of organizing the peasantry into Peasant Soviets and with the help of the proletariat of Europe. If Western revolution failed to eventuate, the East still remained the weakest link in the imperialist chain and an "anti-imperialist, anti-feudal united front from above" could be formed between the revolutionary section of the national

34 "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National . . .," LSW, X, pp. 236-237.
bourgeoisie and the Communists; this course presupposed that the socialist stage of development could only be reached by first passing through the intermediary stage of capitalism.

It was not long until the Soviets chose between the two alternatives. For, whatever optimism the Communists held in the summer of 1920 concerning the imminence of World revolution, this feeling did not last out the Russian winter. The war with Poland had produced negative results; plans for the New Economic Policy, representing a partial retreat to individual economic initiative, were announced in March, 1921; and a Communist uprising in Germany in the spring of 1921.

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35 The term "national-revolutionary" was substituted in the final draft of the Theses for the term "bourgeois-democratic" to distinguish between bourgeois parties which actively fought imperialism and those which in one way or another collaborated with it and prevented communists from organizing the masses for socialist tasks. "Report of the Commission on the National . . .," ibid., p. 241. This restriction was, however, soon forgotten.

36 M. N. Roy, the Indian delegate to the Congress, introduced a "supplementary" set of Theses on the national and colonial question. Roy argued that the West would never become socialist until it was deprived of the super profits and huge markets the colonial East afforded Western capitalism. According to Roy, national liberation in the East must precede social revolution in the West. Roy proposed, furthermore, that though at first the revolution would be of bourgeois character, i.e., a revolution in which many "petty bourgeois reforms such as "the division of land" would be necessary, the proletariat and the Communists should from the outset lead the national struggle, turning it immediately into a socialist revolution. Though Roy's Theses, along with Lenin's, were passed unanimously by the Congress, they were not referred to after 1920. M. N. Roy, "Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Questions," Xenia Joukoff: Eudin and Robert C. North, Soviet Russia and the East, 1920-1927: A Documentary Survey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), pp. 65-67, and Alvin Z. Rubinstein, The Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union (New Yorks: Random House, 1960), p. 345n.
failed, thereby effectively stifling Communist hopes of early European revolution. At the Third Comintern Congress held in the summer of 1921, Trotsky, speaking of capitalism's "temporary and uncertain equilibrium," remarked dismally:

We are now confronted with the chaotic and elemental assault that we witnessed in Europe in 1918-1919. . . . At that time it seemed to us, with some historical justification, possible that the assault would mount and move forward in higher and higher waves . . . and that the working class would in a year or two achieve State power. It was a historical possibility, but it did not happen . . . History has given the bourgeoisie a fairly long breathing spell. . . . The revolution is not so obedient, so tame, that it can be led on a leash, as we imagined. It has its ups and downs, its crises and booms.37

The retreat of the revolution in Russia and Europe was accompanied by a shift in Soviet foreign policy. Prior to 1920, Soviet policy had been greatly influenced by revolutionary considerations. But now it began to follow the dictates of national interests. The requirements of the New Economic Policy, for example, meant that a more conciliatory and compromising attitude had to be adopted vis-à-vis the Western democracies. One of the results of the new policy was the signing of a trade agreement with Great Britain on March 12, 1921, which not only furnished the Soviet regime with much needed material from abroad, but ended Soviet diplomatic isolation.38

The retreat of the revolution also had its effect on Soviet relations in the East. The establishment of normal diplomatic relations


between the governments of Eastern countries and the Soviet government began to gain precedence over the establishment of relations between Eastern and Russian revolutionaries. Thus, the assemblage at Baku of the "First Congress of the Peoples of the East," in September, 1920, proved also to be its last. In accordance with this new approach, Soviet Russia by 1921 had concluded treaties with the so-called national bourgeois governments of Central Asia. By backing such nationalists as Kemal in Turkey, Prince Amanullah in Afghanistan, and Riza Khan in Persia, who were actually in power and pursuing anti-imperialist policies, the Kremlin considered itself to be furthering Soviet national interests by supporting the establishment of strong national states between Soviet Russia and the British Empire.  

The socio-economic character of these states, moreover, was supposedly bourgeois-democratic. Speaking on the subject of Persian nationalism, these two themes were stressed by a Soviet commentator:

Her [Soviet Russia's] direct interests are that Persia should be a strong centralized state capable of defending itself against any interference in its affairs by third parties and especially, of course, by England. Such a position would guarantee Soviet Russia against any utilization of Persian territory by English forces for an attack on Russia. In a strong central state power, resting on a single national army, will also be found a pledge of the commercial and cultural development of Persia and of her transition from feudal to modern forms of economic and political existence.

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40 Cited in Carr, III, pp. 469-470.
This shift away from the policy of promoting social revolution in the East to cooperation with the established governments was indicative of the Soviet Russia's full awareness of a situation from which both governments of the East or the nationalist groups which aspired to power and Soviet Russia could derive mutual benefits: Soviet Russia, for its part, saw in this the existence of potential allies in its struggle against the capitalist West; the Eastern national bourgeoisie, provoked to enjoy the privileges associated with the Kremlin's declarations on the right of the colonies and semi-colonies to national self-determination, gravitated toward Russia. Thus, the practical foundations for the employment of Lenin's second or retreat alternative were established. All that was needed was a concrete doctrinal expression; this came at the Fourth Comintern Congress, held in the autumn of 1922.

Lenin, speaking to the Congress, stressed that the Fourth Congress' program and tactics must coincide with the possibility of a retreat occurring in the revolution. Accordingly, the tactic of establishing a united front with Western non-communist workers organizations, a tactic which had been promulgated at the Third Congress and one which George Zinoviev later described as a tactic of defense, was reiterated.

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41 Ibid., p. 315.


The united front tactic in the East took the form of a "United Anti-Imperialist Front" between the Communists and the bourgeois nationalist parties.44

The Theses stated that since the Second Congress, which "drew up a general statement of principles on the national and colonial question in the epoch of protracted struggle between imperialism and the proletarian dictatorship," there had been a marked intensification of national revolutionary movements.45 The imperialist war of 1914-1918 and the subsequent economic crisis in the West, it was contended, had weakened imperialism's grip on the East; and rivalry between imperialist groups had strengthened the development of domestic capitalism. Consequently, there could be envisaged further conflicts between imperialism and native capitalism:

The demand for national and economic independence advanced by the national movement in the colonies expresses the needs of bourgeois development in those countries. The progress of indigenous productive forces in the colonies thus comes into irreconcilable conflict with the interests of world imperialism, for the essence of imperialism consists in exploiting the different stages of development of the productive forces in the different areas of world economy to gain monopoly super-profits.46

The Theses maintained that at their inception national liberation movements could only be led by the national bourgeoisie and that it would draw the proletariat and peasant masses into the struggle against


46 Ibid., p. 384.
imperialism and feudalism, the latter being the chief instrument by which imperialism exercised its continued rule and exploitation of the colonies and semi-colonies. Whether the struggle would be successful, moreover, depended on the extent to which it was able to break with this "reactionary feudal element, . . . to win over the broad working masses to its cause, and in its program to give expression to the social demands of these masses."47 Of greatest importance in the latter realm was the question of land. In order to draw the peasant masses into the national liberation struggle, it was necessary for Eastern Communists to compel the bourgeois-nationalist parties to include within their programs a radical solution to the question of large feudal landholdings, i.e., expropriation.

But as the masses are drawn into the national struggle and their social interests come to the forefront, the bourgeoisie, heretofore the champion of the national revolution, would turn reactionary. Thus, Communists must prepare the proletariat to assert its leadership over the national revolution and prepare to go beyond bourgeois-democracy. But to do this it was necessary to maintain the independence of the workers' movements. Only when this was recognized was it permissible to enter into temporary alliances with the bourgeoisie.48

The workers must, moreover, struggle to gain political leadership of

48 Ibid., pp. 388-390.
the peasants. "Only when they have mastered this job and won influence over the social strata nearest to them will they be in a position to come out against bourgeois democracy." At the same time, political ties must be made between the labor movements of the backward countries and the international proletariat and the Russian Soviet Republic, for "colonial revolution can triumph and maintain its conquest only side by side with the proletariat revolution in the highly developed countries."

In general there were two errors the Communists must guard against. The first error was to refuse to take part in the bourgeois-democratic struggle on the grounds of maintaining communist purity (leftism). The second type of error was considered to be equally injurious—in the name of national unity and "class peace" with the national bourgeoisie, communists must not fall into the error of refusing to struggle for the special class interests of the working class and for its ultimate leadership in the national revolution (rightism).

While the Theses appear to maintain the remarkable balance disregard which imbued Lenin's thinking on the national and colonial question, viz., social revolution— the end—could be reconciled with the tactics of allying with national movements— one of the means—by recognizing the relative nature of the alliance, the Fourth Congress'
line on the Eastern Question actually lent to Soviet foreign policy a great degree of flexibility. For, in 1922, the possibility was recognized of striking temporary alliances where "feudal patriarchal relations" had not been broken up and a feudal aristocracy still existed: "the representatives of these upper strata may come forward as active leaders in the struggle against imperialism." Thus:

The chief task which is common to all national revolutionary movements is to bring about national unity and achieve political independence. . . .

Taking full cognizance of the fact that those who represent the national will to State independence may, because of the variety of historical circumstances, be themselves of the most varied kind, the Communist International supports every national revolutionary movement against imperialism. . . .

Pan-Islam, moreover, was no longer described as a reactionary movement, as had been the case at the Second Congress, but as the "religio-political" expression of future concrete political demands.

In January, 1924, after a long illness, Lenin died. In the struggle for succession, Stalin sought to associate himself with the Leninist tradition and claim, thereby, a degree of legitimacy. In a series of lectures delivered on the Foundations of Leninism in the spring of 1924, Stalin spoke on "The National Question." He leaded

52 "Carr, III, pp. 482-484.


54 Ibid., p. 385, and see above p. 93.

Lenin for expanding the doctrine of national self-determination to the colonies in Asia and Africa and expressed the view that "the road to victory of the revolution in the West lies through the revolutionary alliance with the liberation movement of the colonies and dependent countries against imperialism," a familiar Leninist line.

At the Fifth Comintern Congress, held in the summer of 1924, Stalin, getting a firmer grip of the reins of power in the Soviet Union, a position which enabled him to dictate Comintern policy, continued the process of identifying himself with the legacy of Lenin. In the principal speech delivered at the Congress on the national and colonial question, D. Z. Manuilsky, one of Stalin's followers, placed Stalin's name alongside that of Lenin as the co-originator of the "idea of the united revolutionary front between the proletariat and the oppressed nations and colonies." In the best of the Leninist tradition, Manuilsky pointed to four main errors local Communists had committed in their approach to the national question: (1) deviations from Marxism of the Renner-Bauer type; (2) social-imperialist errors

56Cited in Rubinstein, p. 349.

57At the Fifth Congress, "foreign" Communists' opposition to the policy of cooperating with bourgeois nationalism was silenced. This was indicative of the Soviet Union's progressive control over the Comintern once it became clear that the revolution was going to be restricted to Russia alone. Boersner, p. 175, and Seton-Watson, p. 104.

58Boersner, p. 154.

such as those committed by some of the European Communist parties; (3) "Luxemburgist" deviations, and; (4) the mistakes of Communists in the East who wished to maintain their alliance with the national bourgeoisie even after the latter had triumphed against imperialism. 60

Repeating what the Bolsheviks had determined at the Eighth Party Congress in 1919, Manuilsky declared that the question of who or which class could exercise the nation's right to political secession must be based "on a careful analysis of the concrete historical conditions under which the self-determination of the nation in question takes place." 61 The German Communist Party, according to Manuilsky, had failed to analyze the question from this standpoint after the occupation of the Ruhr by France in January, 1923. The German Communists had pursued tactics which presupposed that there could be established close collaboration between the German bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Such an approach, Manuilsky contended, tacitly assumed that Germany was a backward colony in which class contradictions had not yet precluded cooperation between the bourgeoisie and the Communist-led workers' movement; it assumed that Germany was in the transition period from feudalism to capitalism, from a colonial status to political independence, and not passing from capitalism to socialism. 62

60 Ibid., pp. 188-189, 191, 193.
61 Ibid., p. 189.
62 Ibid.
Generally, in the years between 1922 and 1928, Eastern Communist parties, at the dictation of the Russian Communists, cooperated with the national bourgeoisie against the Western Powers. At the Fourteenth Party Congress of the Russian Communist Party held in December, 1925, the policy of supporting national movements in the East was described by Stalin as one of the factors which contributed to the weakness of capitalism and as one of the levers by which peace and a "provisional equilibrium of forces" could be maintained between the capitalist powers and the Soviet Union.

In the middle twenties, the Soviet Union attempted to apply this thesis of foreign policy in China as it had done in the Middle East, by striking an alliance with the nationalist party, the Kuomintang, against the West. The basis upon which collaboration would proceed was contained in a joint manifesto issued after Sun-Yat-sen, the leader of the Kuomintang, and A. A. Joffe, Moscow's agent, met in Shanghai in January, 1923:

Dr. Sun is of the opinion that, because of the nonexistence of conditions favorable to their successful application in China, it is not possible to carry out either Communism or even the Soviet system in China. M. Joffe agrees entirely with this view; he is further of the opinion that China's most important and most pressing problems are the completion of national unification and the attainment of full national independence. With regard to these great tasks, M. Joffe has assured Dr. Sun

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of the Russian people's warmest sympathy for China, and of (their) willingness to lend support. 64

Under Stalin's direction, the policy, implicit in the above declaration, of separating the Chinese revolutionary process into fixed stages, in which the national bourgeoisie had to play out its role of national liberator before Communists could raise the banner of social revolution, was so rigidly applied, much to the chagrin of Trotsky and those who opposed Stalin, 65 that the Chinese Communists suffered disaster during the revolutionary outburst in China between 1925 and 1927. But local Communist parties were willingly sacrificed by Stalin as long as there was any chance for Soviet national interests to be served and these interests, it was believed, called for the continuance of the Communist-Kuomintang alliance, with the Communists remaining the subservient partner. Lenin's tactical thinking which called for Communists to maintain their independence for future revolutionary activity, even while cooperating with the bourgeoisie, had been subverted to Soviet interests entirely. 66 But if the spirit of Lenin's teachings had been lost on Stalin, all during the Chinese

64 Sun Yet-sen and A. A. Joffe, "Joint Manifesto," Rubinstein, p. 92.

65 It was over what policy to follow in China that formed the background of part of the Stalin-Trotsky controversy in their struggle for power. Trotsky argued, as he had prior to 1917 in the case of Russia, that the revolution in China could by-pass the bourgeois-democratic stage and proceed directly to the soviet stage, thereby precluding any necessity for forming alliances with the Kuomintang.

66 Seton-Watson, pp. 139-145; Issacs, p. 49.
Revolution the Stalin-dominated Comintern kept right on announcing to the Kuomintang allies the Communist intention of throwing the Chinese bourgeoisie on the trash bin of history once the Communist stage of the revolution matured. Chiang Kai-shek did not miss the implications of such advanced warnings and acted accordingly.

By the Sixth Comintern Congress of 1928, however, new tactics toward the colonies and semi-colonies emerged, which reflected a change in Stalin's overall analysis of the world situation. The period of equilibrium between the West and the U.S.S.R., of "peaceful coexistence" and "capitalist stabilization," which had characterized the years after the retreat of the European revolution, was seen as being replaced by a policy by which the Western states sought to provoke a war against the Soviet Union. It was, therefore, most important for Communists to wage an intransigent struggle for control over the masses. The new line signified a return to the Comintern's ultra-revolutionary policy. 67

The united front from above tactic was discarded and the more militant policy of forming a united front with the proletariat and peasantry in the colonies was adopted. The Kuomintang and Sun Yat-senism in China, Ghandism in India, Sarekat Islam in Indonesia, and all such nationalist parties, which local Communists had been required to support and, indeed, join previously, were denounced in 1928 as being incapable of leading the bourgeoisie-democratic revolutions. These

67 Rubinstein, pp. 84, 99-102, Boersner, p. 262.
parties, according to the Theses, vacillated between cooperating with imperialism and its ally, native feudalism, and following a policy which would mean the end of both feudalism and foreign oppression in their country, the two tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the East. The task, therefore, of liberating the colonies from both the yoke of imperialism and feudalism fell to the Communist-led proletariat. But the Theses warned that the "hegemony of the proletariat" in the bourgeois-democratic revolution would not be possible unless the Communists struggled for the liberation of the masses from the influence of the national bourgeoisie and sought to include the peasantry, described as the key to proletarian efforts to consummate the bourgeois revolution, in the struggle.68

With the proletariat leading and consummating the bourgeois-democratic revolutions the way was thus open for the revolution to pass directly to the socialist stage, the most important prerequisite of which was "the development of a strong Communist party with a big mass influence."69 But this trend to the left had little in common with Lenin's thinking in this regard at the Second Comintern Congress of 1920. At the Second Congress the concept that the East would pass directly from feudalism to socialism was depicted as being possible only within the context of Western Revolution and the incitement of national movements of the masses in the East was seen as contributing

69 Ibid., p. 1665.
toward this end. Even Lenin's second tactical alternative--the united front from above--in which it was presupposed the East would pass through the epoch of capitalism, rested squarely on the premise that revolution had failed to eventuate in the West. With the adoption of Stalin's scheme of "socialism in a single country," which was given theoretical justification at the Sixth Comintern Congress, not only was the way open to shelve officially the World Revolution but the embodiment of revolution in a single state placed primary emphasis upon the resources of the U.S.S.R. to supply the required impetus to push the revolutions in the colonies beyond the bourgeois-democratic stage directly to the Soviet stage. In other words, social revolution in the U.S.S.R. was substituted for the European Revolution. The analysis of contemporary world economy as a whole in no way leads to the perspective of a new prolonged period of flourishing capitalism, but, on the contrary, leads to the inevitability of the overthrow of capitalism, which has already fulfilled its progressive historical role, has already become a brake on further development, is already in process of disintegration, is already giving place to the proletarian dictatorship (U.S.S.R.) ... all this denotes the presence of the objective possibility of a non-capitalist path of development for the backward colonies, the possibility of the "growing-over" of the bourgeois-democratic revolution ... in the colonies into the proletarian socialist revolution. ...  

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70 See above, pp. 86-95.


72 "Theses on Colonies ...", Inoret, VIII, Noi 88, p. 1661.
The Soviet Union and the workers' movements in the capitalist countries, the Theses declared, must effectively support the proletarian emancipatory struggles in the colonies and semi-colonies. The latter, in turn, must seek to ally with the Soviet Union, for this "creates for the toiling masses of the people of China, India, and all other colonial and semi-colonial countries, the possibility of an independent, free, economic and cultural development, avoiding the stage of the domination of the capitalist system or even the development of capitalist relations in general."

After 1920, the Comintern and its affiliates displayed uncompromising hostility toward the national bourgeoisie of the East. But in the nineteen-thirties, when Soviet security began to require that Communists adopt a more mellow attitude toward non-Communist groups and states who were potentially opposed to Germany and Japan, it was essential that a corresponding adjustment be made in the Comintern's line. This took the form of the Popular Front, which was adopted by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935 and which was a reaffirmation of the validity of the united front from above tactic. According to the "new" line, Communists were to combine with the nationalist groups which were hostile to fascists, Nazi Germany, or Japan. Despite, however, general Soviet unwillingness to disrupt cooperation with the West by pursuing anything but moderate policies in

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73 Abid.

74 Seton-Watson, p. 177.
the East between 1935 and 1945 and Soviet encouragement to the local
Communists, particularly in areas under Japanese occupation, to
cooperate with the nationalists, the doctrine of the Sixth Congress
of the Comintern was recognized as correct. It was not until after
the advent of Khrushchev that this doctrine was substantially altered.
It is thus the post-1945 era with which we shall deal in the final
chapter.

75 Wilhelm Pieck, "Report on the Activities of the Executive
Committee of the Communist Internation," Inncorr, XV, No. 35
CHAPTER V

SOVIET POLICY AND THE EASTERN REVOLUTION AFTER 1945

After Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in June, 1941, and the Soviet Union had been drawn into the war against Japan, it became the duty of every Communist in the world to contribute toward the allied war aim of destroying the Axis powers. Thus, left-wing movements in the East, particularly in South-East Asia, emerged from the war with a record of cooperating with the non-Communist nationalist groups in the resistance effort and began the post-war period by participating in popular fronts and adopting nationalist programs, which omitted mention of Communist goals.

Though there were no ideological pronouncements on the subject of revising the Sixth Congress of the Comintern's Theses on the colonial question, until the end of 1947 the Moscow line generally required that local Communists in South-East Asia continue to remain within the confines of bourgeois anti-imperialist, anti-feudalist struggles. The Soviet Union's own policy, moreover, was largely

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1Soviet post-war involvement in the East, until Stalin's death, is largely one which deals with South-East Asia. After the Soviet Union failed to expand its influence in the Middle East via Turkey and Iran in 1945-1946, a "hands off" policy was followed until after Stalin's death. And in tropical Africa and South America, Soviet and Communist influence was slight. Seton-Watson, pp. 319-327, and Rubinstein, p. 378.

restricted to verbal assaults on the West's colonial policies, while shying away from material commitments. The West was pictured as the cause of the Eastern countries continued backwardness and poverty, while the Soviet Union was championed as the defender and liberator of oppressed nations; the U.N. Trustee-ship System was seen as another form of Western exploitation of the East; the British Commonwealth symbolized the postwar attempt by British imperialism to maintain its vast Empire; the French and the Dutch were condemned for following a similar course in the case of Indochina and Indonesia; and the United States had, according to the propaganda line, taken England's place as the main prop of reaction and feudalism and had become the chief initiator in suppressing national liberation movements.

However passive Soviet and Communist activity may have been from 1945 to 1947, after the formation of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) in September, 1947, a more active, indeed militant, policy was adopted. Reacting to the steady deterioration of East-West relations after World War II, Stalin tended to view the "cold war," which was rapidly coming to the forefront of international relations, as encompassing the entire world. The world, according to Stalin, was bipolar, with the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe pitted against the entire non-Communist world. At the opening session

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3Rubinstein, p. 377.


5Rubinstein, pp. 214-216.
of the Cominform, the organization around which international communism was to be unified for the impending struggle, A. A. Zhdanov, one of the outstanding figures in Stalin's power apparatus, declared:

The fundamental changes caused by the war on the international scene and in the position of individual countries has entirely changed the political landscape of the world. A new alignment of political forces has arisen the more the war recedes into the past, the more distinct become two major trends in post-war international policy, corresponding to the division of political forces operating on the international arena into major camps: the imperialist and anti-democratic camp, on the one hand, and the anti-imperialist and democratic camp on the other. The principal driving force of the imperialist camp is the U.S.A. "

The "anti-imperialist and democratic camp," basing itself "on the U.S.S.R. and the new democracies," included those countries which had "broken with imperialism and [had] firmly set foot on the path of democratic development, such as Rumania, Hungary and Finland." But Zhdanov included within the "imperialist and anti-democratic" camp "countries politically and economically dependent on the United States, such as the Near Eastern and South American countries and China."8

The significance of Zhdanov's "two camp thesis" soon became evident in South-East Asia. Throughout the winter of 1947-1948, Communists were informed of the policy to be followed through Soviet

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8Ibid., p. 217.
publications and such gatherings as the "South-East Asia Youth Conference," held in Calcutta in February, 1948. Henceforth, Communists were to stage an uncompromising "struggle against imperialism, for national independence, and for democracy and freedom for the peoples of the colonies and dependencies." Accordingly, by the summer of 1948, Communist-led revolts had been staged in Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, India, and the Philippines.10

When extended to the domestic scene of the colonies, Zhdanov's thesis and its attendant insurrectionist tactics were as much aimed at non-Communist nationalist leaders as at the West. Thus, in declarations which, in retrospect, were similar to those of the Sixth Comintern Congress, it was held that only the Communist vanguard, aided by the Soviet Union, could lead the struggle against foreign imperialism; the national bourgeois leaders were denounced as lackeys of imperialism; and Communists were obliged to regard the attainment of independence by means other than violent class struggle as reactionary.11

An outstanding example of Communist hostility toward the national bourgeoisie was the case of India. Ghandi's policy of struggling for Indian independence by the use of "non-violent direct action" was


10Rubinstein, p. 377.

denounced as reactionary and interpreted as "the most important ideological weapon in the hands of the Indian bourgeoisie for keeping the masses under its influence." Moreover, Ghandi was criticized for preaching class peace and upholding the sanctity of private property, thereby serving the interests of the bourgeoisie and landlords. India's decision in 1949 to maintain ties with Great Britain by joining the Commonwealth was depicted as proof that the Indian government, "the principal agent of Anglo-American imperialism in South-East Asia" and the principal bulwark for the preservation of feudalism in India, did not want to struggle for complete independence.

Similar treatment was accorded to other newly created governments of South-East Asia and to the bourgeoisie nationalists heading them. Such inclemency was clearly shown in the Soviet Union's economic policy toward the underdeveloped nations: prior to Stalin's death little if any money was spent either through the United Nations or on a bilateral basis for the economic development of the former colonies.

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12 Cited in Rubinstein, p. 379.
13 Ibid.
15 For instance, in an article written for the New Times, a Soviet publication, Sukarno was declared to be an enemy of the Indonesian Republic and a representative of the most reactionary section of the national bourgeoisie and feudal nobility, I. Steklov, "Imperialist Aggression in Indonesia," New Times, No. 47 (November 16, 1949), pp. 4-9.
But after Stalin died and new policies began to emerge, the new leaders of the Soviet Union strove quickly to revise Stalin's 'hard' line and press for expanding Soviet influence in a long neglected area. The U.S.S.R. began to enter into expanded trade relations and cultural exchanges, and financial and technical assistance programs with the emerging nations. These activities were supplemented by arms shipments to former colonies and the extension of support to them whenever their interests conflicted with the West's. The latter was calculated to present the U.S.S.R. as the disinterested protector of the weak against the threat of Western imperialism.

The most notable example of such support was in regard to Egypt during the Suez crisis in 1956. Good will toward the Soviet Union was, moreover, enhanced in the East by the visit Khrushchev and Bulganin paid to India, Burma, and Afghanistan in 1955 and by Soviet declarations of solidarity with the national aspirations of Asian and African nations yet to become independent.

The new approach, itself a revitalization of the importance Lenin attached to the East in Soviet Russia's struggle against the West, required that changes be made in Stalin's doctrinaire view of the world; this was recorded in 1956 by the Twentieth Party Congress.

The primary considerations the Soviets seemed to have taken into account in preparing for the Congress were the realities of the

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17 Rubinstein, p. 380.
post-war world, the aspirations of the emerging nations themselves, and the Soviet Union's increased material capabilities, which enabled it to exploit these aspirations and the contradictions existing between the former colonies and the Western democracies.

First, the colonies had in fact gained or were in the process of gaining the political independence Lenin and his successors had demanded for half a century. Khrushchev recognized that this independence meant that the East would "play an active part in deciding the destinies of the whole world" and had become a factor which influenced international relations. It was in the Soviet Union's interest to adopt a doctrinal line which would correlate both to this new phenomena in world politics and to the Soviet Union's ability to extend its political influence by trade and economic and technical aid into areas which still smarted from the memory of Western colonialism. Accordingly, a further stage in the self-determination process was recognized:

The winning of political freedom by the peoples of the former colonies and semi-colonies is the first and a very important prerequisite of their complete independence—that is, of achieving economic independence. The liberated Asian countries are building up their own industry, training their own technicians, raising the peoples' living standards, and reviving and developing their age-old national cultures. Historic prospects for a better future are opening up before the countries which have embarked on the path of independent development.

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19 Rubinstein, pp. 381-383.
These countries, although they do not belong to the socialist world system, can draw on its achievements in building an independent national economy and in raising their people's living standards. Today they need not go begging to their former oppressors for modern equipment. . . .

The very fact that the Soviet Union and the other countries of the socialist camp exist, that they are ready to help the underdeveloped countries with their industrial development in terms of equality and mutual benefit, is a major stumbling bloc (sic) to colonial policy. . . .

Secondly, Stalin's rigid bipolar view of the world, which included the newly independent nations within the camp of imperialism, could not explain why many of the developing nations, concentrating on domestic affairs, wished to remain uncommitted or neutral in the struggle between the Western and Communist blocs. The desire to refrain from military or political commitments complemented Moscow's objective of limiting the West's military, economic, and political sphere of operations against the Communists. India's desire to remain aloof from military alliances was seen as valuable in helping to erode the alliance system in Asia embodied in SEATO; similar ambitions in regard to the Bagdad Pact prompted the Kremlin to court the United Arab Republic.21 To promote non-alignment, Khrushchev's promise that the Soviet Union would help the newly independent nations achieve economic independence was accompanied by the pledge that economic and technical

20 Khrushchev, "Report of the Central Committee...", Current Digest, VIII, No. 4, 7.

aid would be "free from any political or military obligations."22

Thus, while concluding that the influence of the underdeveloped
countries contributed toward "peaceful coexistence" between the
socialist and capitalist systems,23 Khrushchev felt obliged to
include all those non-socialist, peace-loving states in Asia, which
had "proclaimed non-participation in blocs as a principle of their
foreign policy," in the 'peace zone,'24 an honor which had been
previously limited to the nations within the Communist orbit.

Since the Soviet Union wished once again to influence the
"national bourgeoisie," it was necessary for the Communists to
reviso the line which had been officially in effect since the Sixth
Comintern Congress and militantly practiced during the 1947-1953
period. Otto Kuusinen, one of the old Bolsheviks, acknowledged at
the Twentieth Congress that Mahatma Gandhi had played a prominent
role in gaining Indian independence. Kuusinen declared, moreover,
that "solely on the basis of criticism of Gandhi's philosophical
views, which, as is known, are not at great variance with the views
of Marxism-Leninism, led some Soviet Orientalists to deny Gandhi
played a positive role in history." Such "sectarian errors," present
during the post-1928 period, must be corrected, Kuusinen proclaimed.25

22 Khrushchev, "Report of the Central Committee . . .," Current
Digest, VIII, No. 4, 6.


24 Khrushchev, "Report to the Central Committee . . .," Current
Digest, VIII, No. 4, 6.

Communists after the Twentieth Congress were once again to cooperate with rather than seek to destroy the national bourgeoisie and form united anti-imperialist fronts similar to those formed in the 'twenties. But as one author points out, in this as well as in Soviet foreign policy, the sole criterion for determining what constituted an "historically progressive national bourgeoisie" in any country and, therefore, acceptable as a partner in the alliance was the extent of its hostility toward the West. If this requirement was met, it mattered little whether the bourgeoisie was right-wing, capitalist, despotic, or totally corrupt. This contemporary disregard for "historical class purity" has as its parallel the line set down at the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922.

Since 1956, however, the controversy, first raised by Lenin at the Second Comintern Congress in 1920, over whether Communists should cooperate with bourgeois nationalists or whether they should struggle to by-pass the capitalist stage of development and go directly to socialism, has increasingly occupied Soviet attention. At first foreign policy considerations dominated. This was especially true in regard to the Middle East and Asia. Here the nationalist leaders were

27Seton-Watson, p. 399.
28See above, pp. 102-103.
29See above, pp. 88-95.
subjected to criticism for their failure to pursue policies which would make their countries completely economically independent of the West and for their suppression of local Communists, who have since 1920 been consistently sacrificed if the Kremlin's policy requirements called for it. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union continued to support the nationalists and maintain that the national bourgeoisie played a major role in the liberation movements. Such policies, if not beneficial to furthering the cause of Soviet socialism, at least assure that such key states as Egypt, India, Indonesia, Burma, and Afghanistan do not come any closer to the West. 

Thus, during the first years after the death of Stalin and particularly after 1956 the Soviet Union, though somewhat more critical of the national bourgeoisie, sought to cultivate close and friendly ties with the East. As in the case of the 1921-1928 era, such an alliance implied that the capitalist phase of development was inevitable.

Tropical Africa appears to be the exception to this pattern. There the Soviets, while courting nationalism, were not compelled to take into consideration a strong national bourgeoisie as in India, Burma, Egypt, and Indonesia, but instead a radical nationalist intelligentsia. Nor were the Communists required to move slowly in

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31 See above, pp. 94-95.
their efforts to include radical solutions to the land problem and foreign property in the national liberation struggles.32 Hence, Soviet writers on Africa, being faced with no necessity of advocating political alliances with the national bourgeoisie, proclaimed that "the most consistent fighter for independence is naturally the working class."33 And with the struggle for independence being placed on the shoulders of the Communist-led masses of Africa, it was recognized that a distinct possibility existed for a "non-capitalist path of development," that a direct transition from feudalism to socialism could occur.34

But at the November, 1960, Moscow Conference of Representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties the concept of the "national-democratic state" was introduced, which represents a new stage in the Soviet Union's doctrine of the Eastern revolutionary process. It provides that after a country has attained its independence by a national bourgeois-democratic revolution, which can assume either a military or non-military character,35 the establishment of a "national


35Compare Zhdanov's conception, see above p. 114.
democratic state" by Communists, opens up the possibility for any country, whether it is located in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, or Asia, to by-pass the capitalist stage of development, gain total independence by ousting Western political and economic influence entirely, and establish proletarian dictatorships.36 Thus, despite the political expedience which motivates Soviet willingness to maintain good relations with the national governments in the East, equally prominent in Soviet calculations after 1960 is the desire to sovietize these areas.

First, the new doctrine holds that the struggle for the political independence of the colonies "was achieved as the result of anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, democratic national liberation struggles" and waged "by the main class and social groups of these countries—workers, peasants, the intelligentsia, artisans, and the national bourgeoisie."37 At this stage, the national bourgeoisie was regarded as fulfilling a progressive role. But, according to the Twenty-Second Congress' Program:

A national liberation revolution does not end with the winning of political independence. This independence will be unstable and will turn into a fiction unless the revolution brings about


radical changes in social and economic life and accomplishes the pressing tasks of national renaissance.\(^3^8\)

As the revolution deepens, moreover, and takes on a social character in which the social, political, and economic demands of the workers and peasants start coming to the forefront, the bourgeoisie, unwilling to give up the political and economic power it acquired after independence was attained, draws closer to feudal reaction.\(^3^9\)

The national liberation struggle cannot, furthermore, be completed unless a struggle is waged against "foreign monopolies." In an elaboration of Khrushchev's theme that economic independence is an indispensable portion of a colony's independence, it has been declared that:

Political independence is the first step toward the achievement of complete freedom. The second and no less important step is the achievement of economic independence and the creation of a developed indigenous economy. Without this condition, independence cannot be considered assured. That is why the countries that have won freedom consider their chief task to be that of creating their own economy independent of the imperialist powers.\(^4^0\)

In this realm of the liberation struggle, also, the national bourgeoisie is depicted as incapable of fulfilling this function which the Communists and other "progressive forces" of the country demand. While wishing to weaken the influence of foreign capital on the national

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\(^4^0\)Ibid., p. 3.
economy and even nationalizing some foreign property, the bourgeoisie maintains "ties with the imperialist powers and provides opportunities for the continued flow of their capital." 41

It is at the point when the bourgeoisie breaks away from the united struggle of those classes wishing to liberate the nation from feudalism, social evils, and foreign domination that the "national democratic state" is established. It is to be formed by a bloc of all the progressive, patriotic forces fighting for complete national independence and broad democracy and for carrying through to the end the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal democratic revolution."42

Though that portion of the bourgeoisie willing to advance the nation further along the path of independence and social and economic transformation are not expressly excluded from participation in the national democracy,43 the emphasis is on the workers: "The most consistent fighter for carrying through to the end the tasks of a national revolution is the working class. Its ally is the peasantry."44

The Communists, regarded by the new Party program as consistent fighters for the complete liberation of the nation from feudalism and

41Ibid., p. 5.


imperialism and "whoso goals correspond to the supreme interests of the
nation," are to assume the leading position in the new entity. Thus, the
policies followed by some nationalist leaders, such as Nasser, of
suppressing the local Communists are bitterly condemned as "reactionary,
terrorist methods" against "honored anti-imperialist fighters." 46

Within the framework of the national democratic state complete nation-
el liberation is to be accomplished and the nation is to pass to the
socialist mode of production under the direction of those "patriotic"
Communists, despite the continued presence of a portion of the
bourgeoisie. In the first place, the national democratic state is
defined as "a state that is consistently defending its political
and economic independence and struggling against imperialism and
its military blocs, against military bases on its territory." 47

Without these basic prerequisites of political and economic independence,
it is held, it is impossible to speak of a state as possessing genuine
sovereignty. In the economic realm, state-owned and operated indus-
tries are described as the most effective way to undermine the position
of the "imperialist monopolies," the basis according to Communist

45 "Party Program of Communist Party ..." ibid., XIII, No. 45, 12.

46 B. Ponomarev, "The Concept of National Democracy ..." ibid.,
XIII, No. 22, 6.

47 Ibid., p. 5.
parlance, of continued political subservience. Thus, the nationalization of American industries by the Castro regime, Indonesia's law of 1957, which nationalized Dutch property, and Ghana's efforts to assert government control over the economy and replace British officials with Ghanians were seen as the first and indispensable step in achieving an independent position from the West.48

State ownership of the means of production, moreover, has a bearing on the class composition of a government and a country's further revolutionary development. It enables Communists on the one hand, to occupy increasingly important positions in production and to increase their political influence." This, of course, makes it possible for such states as Cuba to pass from the status of "national democracies" to the "peoples democratic revolution," in which Communists have total control.49 On the other hand, developing

48Ibid., p. 3.

49van Stockelborg, "Renewed Attacks . . ." Bulletin Institute for the Study of the U.S.S.R., VIII, No. 8, 9. It is interesting to note that in the fall of 1961, when it was common knowledge in the United States that Castro and Cuba were "Communist," Cuba, however, in the eyes of the Soviets was still regarded as a "national democracy" and Castro, a "progressive nationalist," not a Communist. Speaking to the Twenty-Second Party Congress on how granting the Cuban people economic, social, and "broad democratic rights and freedoms" enabled the state to stand during the Bay of Pigs fiasco, Khrushchev declared: "In hour of danger, when the American imperialists organized the invasion of Cuba, the whole people stood like a solid wall in defense of the gains of their revolution. Under the leadership of the courageous patriot and revolutionary, Fidel Castro, the Cubans quickly routed the American mercenaries . . . Khrushchev's Report on the Program . . .," Current Digest, XIII, No. 40, 9.
a state sector of industry under "a national democratic system and
making it a determining factor in the country's economy can prepare
the material basis for the gradual transition to a non-capitalist
path of development."50

That a distinct possibility exists for the East to skip the
capitalist stage of development is inherent in the Soviet belief,
since the advent of Khrushchev, that the balance of economic,
ideological, and military forces in the world have shifted decidedly
in favor of world socialist, with the Soviet Union assuming the
dominant position. The fact that the East is potentially hostile to
the West contributes to this belief.51 Seen in this context it is
now possible for the Soviets to apply Lenin's 1920 declaration to
contemporary conditions:

The experience of history has proved that in the present
epoch the capitalist stage of development is by no means
mandatory for economically backward countries. The Leninist
thesis to the effect that the backward countries, with the
help of the working class of the advanced countries, can
make the transition to socialism, and, through definitive stages
of development, to communism without passing through the
capitalist stage of development . . . is being fully confirmed

30 S. Ponomarov, "The Concept of National Democracy . . .," ibid.,
XIII, No. 22, 5.

31 U. S. Congress, Senate, Khrushchev on the Shifting Balance of

52 S. Ponomarov, "The Concept of National Democracy . . .," ibid.,
XIII, No. 22, 7.
For the time being, at least, it appears that the question of how the East shall develop after independence has been achieved, a problem that has plagued Communists from Marx to Khrushchev, has been resolved by the belief that the East will reach the Soviet millennium via the route of the national democratic state.
CONCLUSIONS

It is hoped the relationship which exists between the precepts of Marxism-Leninism and Soviet policy toward nationalism in the underdeveloped world has been brought out by this paper. With a sense of realism as the basis of his approach, Lenin was able to promulgate, from the assumptions Marx and Engels first made with respect to the independence of European nations, a doctrine which possessed universal validity and which the Bolsheviks could use in their struggle against the Tsar and the West. Not the least of Lenin's efforts to justify proletarian support to national movements in Marxist terms were his ideas on the uneven development of capitalism, a concept which placed the East squarely within the scope of the traditional Marxian concept of historical development.

Lenin's approach to the national question, from the outset, was an attempt which simultaneously sought to maintain Marxist orthodoxy and to exploit, rather than solve, the problems associated with Russia's minorities and the colonies. As a result, he rejected both the rightists' scheme of cultural autonomy and federation and the leftists' indifference to the national and colonial question. The meaning he attached to national self-determination was an attempt to maintain a precarious balance between Marxism and political realities.

After the Bolsheviks achieved power, dialectical arguments were provided to explain away the re-assemblage of the Russian minorities under the auspices of the Great Russian Communists. This was the final
expression in Russia of Lenin's ability to reconcile the requirements of a given situation with the predispositions of Marxism.

If, in Russia, the Communists resolved successfully any contradictions which were inherent in Lenin's attempt to square theory with political expediency, such has not been the case entirely with regard to the application of Lenin's ideas in the Soviet approach to the Eastern national movements. For here the Soviet Union has been caught between the two mutually exclusive desires of wishing to sovietize the East while at the same time conducting a foreign policy which calls for cooperation with the non-Communist nationalists. Again the contradiction can be traced to Lenin's doctrine of self-determination. Its preaching against "rightism," i.e., fusing with national movements and consequently forsaking the goal of the eventual Communization of the country, and "leftism," i.e., remaining aloof from mass movements by arguing Communist purity, is symptomatic of what has been described as a Kremlin wish "to have its cake and eat it too." That is, the tactics associated with Lenin's doctrine suggest that your adversary will not understand your announced intentions of displacing him, "that he will continue to cooperate with you as long as you want it, and allow himself to be overthrown when it suits you."1

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1 Frank Borkenhau, The Communist International (Faber and Faber, Ltd.), 1938, p. 293.
During periods when the Soviet Union considered cooperation with the Eastern national bourgeoisie against imperialism to be expedient—the 1921-1928 and 1939-1945 periods and in the first years of the post-Stalin era—the dilemma issuing from the legacy of Lenin's doctrine has been greatest. During these periods, Soviet national interests have forced the Kremlin to choose between backing the local Communists and supporting the "national bourgeoisie." The difficulty of such a decision has been made somewhat easier by the existence of a ready-made formula which holds that the national bourgeoisie is performing "progressive tasks" in struggling against "feudalism" and "imperialism"; and that, therefore, the Soviet Union must strike an alliance with it, and the local Communists must remain docile until the bourgeoisie has finished its stage of the revolution. This may help the Kremlin to justify its course of action and it may help the nationalists decide to accept Communist support, but doctrine inevitably catches up with policy and it soon becomes evident that there is another—the socialist stage of the revolution remaining to be fulfilled. And non-Communist nationalists have reacted to Soviet duplicity by suppressing local Communists and maintaining an aloofness from the Soviet Union which may not have been the case had total expediency reigned. To the extent that this is true, the Soviet doctrine of national self-determination has not only been an expression of what the Soviet leaders consider to be in the immediate national interests, but it has also been a brake on what may have been a more complete fulfillment of these national policies in the East.
In other words, practical policy dictates doctrine, but doctrine hamstring practical policy.

The contradictions inherent in attempting to walk down the dual roads of reality and Marxist doctrine at the same time appear to have deepened since 1960. For prior to that time, the concept that the East could skip the capitalist stage of development has been reserved to either "hard" phases in Soviet policy, as in the 1928-1935 and 1947-1953 periods, or minimized, as in the 1935-1947 period, or emphasized, as in the pre-1921 era. But never has the Soviet Union sought alliances with the national bourgeoisie while simultaneously and vociferously demanding that it be replaced by Communist dictatorship. But perhaps this is indicative of a new era in the Soviet approach to the East. Confident that the world balance of forces, especially the psychological and ideological forces, is in Communism's favor in the East, the Soviet leaders apparently feel that promoting sovietization can begin to take precedence over forming alliances with the national bourgeoisie. But on a recent trip to Egypt, calculated to win Nasser's and the Egyptian "national bourgeoisie's" favor, Khrushchev, in a gaudy display of Marxist podantry, declared that the Egyptians would live better under Communism. Since the Soviet leaders reject the idea that Communism can be built without Communist domination, it is difficult to see an easy

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solution to the quandry posed by advocating a policy of communization at the risk of sacrificing whatever advantages which may be attained by courting the national bourgeoisie. Perhaps what Walter Laqueur points out aptly expresses why the Soviet Union has been and continues to be faced with the dilemma posed by the traditional Communist conception of nationalism:

Communism is an essentially dynamic movement; it does not want to stagnate, and cannot afford to. Applied to the Middle East, this observation means that Communism cannot be satisfied in the long run with its present status in the Arab world, where it has to play second fiddle to "bourgeois nationalism." Probably it will not even have patience enough to rest content with the steady but slow progress it makes within the national movement. It is, therefore, unlikely that the present alliance between Russia and the Arab "bourgeois" nationalism will last. The Arab movement toward unity will be supported as long as it can be used as a weapon against the West but hardly any longer. Nasser and his colleagues may not have developed clear ideas as to the future political and social goals of the Arab peoples but they are certainly not Leninists. The Communists are probably right in thinking that anti-imperialist slogans, leanings toward a planned economy and partial nationalization are no equivalent, in the long run, to a Communist monopoly of political power. To them the present phase of Arab nationalism may be "progressive" but presents obstacles to the complete transformation of Arab society—the consummation that they may be willing to see delayed, but not indefinitely.3

3Ibid., 342.
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