Chapter: I

COLONIAL QUESTION IN SOVIET IDEOLOGY: A MARXIST-LENINIST DISCOURSE

Although, the word "ideology" itself, had no inherent ontological significance; it does not include any arrived decision as to the value of different realms of reality, since it originally denotes merely the theory or ideas. 1 Ideologies are abstractions that meet only in minds of political philosophers, whose job is to ponder the 'manipulation of ideas and forces at the metaphysical level'. 2 The concept of ideology from Napoleon to Marx despite changes in context, has retained the same political criterion of reality — present criterion of reality is found primarily in an ontology arrived from political experience. With the emergence of the general formulation of the total conception of ideology, and the transformation of simple theory of ideology into sociology of knowledge, it turned more holistic and complex concept transcending spheres of pure ontology and sometimes overlaps other noological categories as well.


However, it was Marxist theory, which first fused the particular and total conceptions of ideology.\(^3\) With the emphasis on the role of class position and class interests in thought, Marxism went beyond the mere psychological level of analysis and posited the problem in a more comprehensive philosophical setting. The Marxist theoretical package on the conception was so overwhelming that ideology is regarded integral, and sometimes even synonymous with Marxist proletarian movement.

Marxism contended that in historical and political matters there can be no “pure theory”. The phenomenon of collective thinking which proceeds according to interests, social and existential situation, Marx calls of as ideology. To Marx and Engels ideology is essentially a superstructural connotation. To them, a close analysis of objective laws of social development reveals that political and ideological superstructure is ultimately determined by economic relation, existing at a given historical stage of development for the simple reason that ‘social being of men determines their social consciousness’.\(^4\) The ideological structure does not change independently of class structure and the class structure does not change independently of the economic structure, this is precisely the inter-connection which


makes the ideology a dependent variable of infrastructure i.e. production relationship.

In exclusive Marxist conception, ideology is closely related to the history of men, since almost the whole ideology amounts either to a distorted interpretation of this history or to a complete abstraction from it.\(^5\) Ideology itself is one of the aspects of this history. For Marx—"ideology" signifies a false consciousness of social and economic realities, a collective illusion shared by the members of a given class and in history distinctively associated with that class.\(^6\)

But "ideology" in its operational Soviet sense indicates the guiding principles, the direction of the future and the realization of some future values in that direction. From the scope of belief and the justification of doctrine — the doctrine certitude that becomes guide to action — and these are defining aspects of ideology. Thus, it becomes what Talcott Parsons calls a 'system of value orientations' held in common by the members of the social system, which serves as the main point of reference for analyzing structure and process of that society.\(^7\) Adam Ulam has suggested the main objectives of ideology in

\(^5\) Ibid, p. 28.


soviet system in its more explicit precision; 1) as a package of implied prescriptions; 2) a prism for viewing the political world; and 3) as a "symbol and quasi-religion giving its practicener a sense that the success of their state is predicted upon the truth of the doctrine".8

Colonial question in Soviet ideology has been a scattered and diffused doctrine marked with ambivalance if not ambiguity. Its a set of coherent and homogenous ideological contributions ranging from original contributors Marx and Engels to the contemporary Marxist scholars, which also takes into account the proceedings and doctrinal developments of different ideological forums especially convened to discuss the colonial question. Thus in generic terms Marxist approach to the subject of colonialism is a mixed package of different individual thinkers and ideologues.

For Marx and Engels colonial question was always a subject of 'transitory interest' and de-colonization was never a telos in Marxist literature rather it was mere a means to accelerate the predestined historical defeat of capitalism and the subsequent proletarization of the globe. They remained unambiguous in ascertaining whether colonies constitute a subject or object of history. And indeed, Marx's view on colonialism are secondary to the main focus of his theoretical

work, namely, the crisis of social formation in which capitalist mode of production was dominant.9 Having developed in European context, colonies constituted only a peripheral importance in Marx's lexicon, which was primarily Euro-centric in its approach.

This Euro-centric view almost inevitably portrayed capitalism as 'progressive' and led Marx and Engels to conclude it positive and historically 'necessary' — the breaking down of the pre-colonial structure by expanding European colonialism. This initial stance was facilitated by the preassumption that the bourgeoisie by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by immensely augmented means of communication draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization.10 This initial exegesis found expression in Communist Manifesto (1848) where 'the cheap prices of British commodities' were viewed as the 'heavy artillery battering down the Chinese walls', whereby the 'British bourgeoisie creates a world after its own image'. Marx while analyzing the Indian context echoed the same, 'England' 'has to fulfill a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerative — annihilation of old Asiatic society and the laying of the material foundation of western society in


India'. Thus, capitalism and colonialism was taken as a ‘necessary evil’ by the Marx in his initial writings simply because they offered the pre-industrial peoples of Africa and Asia, the most efficacious means of advancing to the higher stage of development. Here, he does not argue that capitalism in Britain had to have colonies, but that, once history had taken that turn, there was no going back.

However, while conceding colonialism as ‘progressive’ and ‘historically necessary’ Marx never appears as a champion of the cause of colonial oppressors and he was at immense pain while describing the ‘genesis and modus operandi of colonial imperialism, which was evident in his later writings. He never fails to highlight the ill effects of colonialism in his writings while describing its destructive roles. While postulating the modus operandi of colonialism he writes, “the profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilization lies unveiled before our eyes, turning from its home, where it assumes respectable forms, to the colonies where it goes naked”.

Marx never ignores the brutal and unscrupulous means persuaded by the colonial oppressors in strengthening their colonial rule and he feels intense repulsion when describing the genesis of

---

11 Ibid, p. 84.
capitalism and primitive capital accumulation — "while cotton industry of England was built upon child labour it was in the United States built on naked slave labour". A couple of pages further on, he continues:

The colonies secured a market for the budding manufacturers, and through the monopoly of market an increased accumulation. The treasures captured outside Europe by undisguised looting, enslavement and murder, floated back to mother countries, and were their turned into capital.

In the *Poverty of Philosophy*, while analyzing the aetiology of colonial evolution he held slavery as the pre-condition for large scale industries—"Without slavery you have no cotton; without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that gave the colonies their value; it is the colonies that created world trade, and it is the World trade that is the precondition of large scale industry".

This initial sympathetic depiction is to be understood in its eschatological meaning. For Marx, 'end justifies the means' which epitomised in his dialectical progression of history as the natural objective laws i.e. whatever is the objective outcome of the immanent dialectic of history is morally and otherwise self-justified. Marxian

---


14 Ibid, p. 753.

‘dialectical aetiology’ perceived the advancement of history towards the teleological goal of communism, where each and every historical step of development is irreversible and hence unavoidable. History advances through a series of contradictions where all values are relative. This process ultimately culminates in the final synthesis where all contradictions ceases and value relativity would automatically be disappeared. Thus, the progressiveness of colonial capitalism lies only in destruction of relatively inferior mode of production, and replacing it with its most advance counterpart. He describes it revolutionary “only in objective sense, and he never accepts it “morally desirable”, for rest of other effects he brands it ‘Swinish’. Further, he could see the inherent contradictions of transformation of mode of production by the European colonizers and he explained it how England destroyed the native cotton industry of India in the process of industrialization. Thus Marx and Engels supported colonialism keeping in mind its long term repercussions rather than its instant merits and demerits.

However, European colonialism and world socialist revolution coincides in two ways — colonialism will push the backward nations into capitalist mode of production with its inherent contradictions which will ultimately lead to self-destruction by digging its own graveyard; and ii) capitalism would inevitably lead to marked social
and economic changes which will be beneficial for socialism in future. Hence, Marx's initial view can best be analyse in the light of its historical and dialectical materialism where imperfect present is subordinated to perfect future.

However, from 1850 to 1860 we find a marked shift in Marx's writings about colonialism. This reversal was most obvious in his treatment of Irish Question where he arrived at the contradictory conclusion that the colony was being prevented form industrializing and kept in the role of an agricultural producer in order to contribute with cheap labour and capital to the 'great factories of Britain'. In similar fashion Marx, still in 1853 adhered to the theory that destruction of Indian native industry by British capital was revolutionary. By 1867 he arrived at the opposite conclusion, that 'the destruction of the old world by British industrial capital, far from bringing about the material base for the development of new productive powers, is quite likely to result in the 'destruction and plundering of the very mechanism that assures the development of productive power'

---


17 K. Marx, "Letter to Engles", June 14, 1853.

18 Mohari, n. 16, p. 39.
Marx and Engels saw capitalism as a global system and perceived the origin of capitalist industrialization as the inseparable outcome of the formation of an international division of labour and a global accumulation process. As a logical conclusion of their understanding of capitalism as an international system, Marx and Engels suspected the correlation of struggle of European working class with the liberation of colonies. Taking the case of Ireland, Marx wrote in a letter to Engels in 1860: 'It is in the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connections with Ireland'.\(^{19}\) It is worth mentioning here that the bond between Ireland and England was considered as a 'proto-colonial' relationship then. And the getting rid of connection is not an altruistic act rather it was held by Marx as the first condition of their own social emancipation.

The initial suspicion of Marx and Engels towards the historical role of colonies led to their conclusions quite ambivalent and discursive, mainly because of two factors: Firstly, Marx and Engels were living in an era where capitalism was on upgrade and they had hardly any concrete idea about the forces and methods of colonial peoples liberation. Engels in his letter to Karl Kautsky of September 12, 1882, accepts it categorically that Marxist scheme does not have

\(^{19}\) K. Marx and F. Engels, n.12. p. 329.
any blue print for post-independence progress of colonies towards socialism, — “we today can advance only idle hypothesis”. Secondly, in the contemporaneous scenario, any kind of relationship between working class movement in Europe and National Liberation Movements in the colonies was yet to take any concrete shape.

However, Marx and Engels were quite categorical in aiding and supporting anti-colonial movements. They were in favour of extending support only to those movements, which were “progressive” in content. Marx favoured and supported the struggle of all nations, which appeared to him ‘objective carriers of progress’. He never declared that nations have an intrinsic or absolute right to be free; but only granted that right to those who might pave the way for the future socialist revolution.

Thus they declared the immediate task of the workers of these countries lay in aiding the bourgeoisie — which was revolutionary in opposition to the aristocracy — to destroy feudalism. Marx envisaged the establishment of bourgeois democracy as the precondition for the socialist revolution. Marx therefore, supported the national movements directed against the Tsar and Habsburg Monarchy, while condemned those national movements which were developing objectively in the ‘wrong direction’ and were indirectly strengthening the ‘unprogressive forces’. Precisely on this ground they criticized the Czechs and Slavs because they lacked the liberating intentions and
henceforth void of any revolutionary significance.\textsuperscript{20} Marx and Engels were agreed on the relative importance of each nation and they changed their attitude towards a given nation as soon it ceased to play a historic role. They were favourable to the Italian liberation and unification movement. But they sharply criticized the Mazzini programme of 1851.

For Marx and Engels the sole justification for any movement lies in its social content and its relevance was only for a certain ‘progressive social transformation’ or as an auxiliary agent in a social upheaval taking place in another country. Thus, despite the incompatibility of the concept ‘nationalism’ with Marxian philosophy they supported the national movements. In Marxian theory socio-economic classes rather than nations were perceived as the principle vehicles of history and Marxism does not believe in ‘vertical cleavages’ that divide people into artificial enthnonational groups. On the contrary, Marxism rests upon the conviction that most fundamental division are ‘horizontal class distinctions’.\textsuperscript{21} For Marx national consciousness was a part of "illusory communal interest" as contrasted with real communal interests and it is precisely in this backdrop he heralds that ‘workers have no country’.

\textsuperscript{20} F. Engels, “Germany: Revolution and Counter-revolution”, in K. Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works, V. 2, pp. 87-93.

But it seems paradoxical that Marxism while proclaiming the non-dualistic preposition of 'workers having no country' at the same time attaches so much importance to the question of national liberation and self-determination. Although, on few occasions this has been interpreted as a pre (Bolshevik) vision where Marx seems to suggest that workers are yet to create a country out of their own will. But, a close analysis of Marxist teleology makes the later interpretation void of any real essence expect for the immediate justification of soviet state.

Although, primarily 'Euro-centric' in his views, Marx sometimes mooted a dependency and symbiotic relationship between liberation struggle in the colonies and class struggle in the metropolis although obviously the precedent being given to the former.

Marx and Engels believed that the colonial salvation is intrinsically attached with the liberation of working classes in the metropolis. The oppressed countries could only be liberated through a revolution taking place in the oppressor countries. In the case of Ireland they made it more clear while mooting the idea that Ireland could only be free after the English workers overthrew their own bourgeoisie and abolished the colonial system. He further concluded that the immediate secession of Ireland from Great Britain was
absolutely necessary for the further strengthening of revolutionary cause in Europe.

But throughout the colonial discourse Marx kept on juggling with ideas and his writings are ambivalent and self contradictory sometimes. While himself postulating the revolution in metropolis as the precondition for revolution in the periphery. By 1870 he refuted himself by coming to the quite opposite conclusion: “After occupying myself with the Irish question for many years, I have come to the conclusion that the decisive blow against the English ruling classes can not be delivered in England but only in Ireland.”22

This marked a great change from Marx and Engel’s earlier position of 1853 where revolution in the advanced oppressor country was supposed to precede the liberation of the subject nations. In earlier Marx recognized the insurgent nationalism as an auxiliary force in bringing about socialist revolution. But the experience of 1848 disapproved the possibility of “imposed liberty” from above, that led Marx and Engels to draw the paradoxical conclusion.

Marx and Engels did not support the revolution from above and they believed that colonies should secure their emancipation on their own, which was clear from Engels letter to Karl Kautsky in 1882

22 K. Marx and F. Engels, Selected Correspondence, April 9, 1870, p. 288.
where he heralds that colonial countries should free themselves by their own efforts since “We shall have enough to do it at home”. And even though European Countries attaining Socialism much before colonies they must not attempt to force it on other since “victorious proletariat can force no blessing upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory by doing so.”

Marx and Engels oscillation from one conclusion to another which appear to be opportunistic some times is mainly attributed to their immediate assessing of objective realities in different parts of the globe. Thus in 1853 he was entirely western because he could see the possibilities of proletarian revolution in industrially advanced countries. In September 1882, in his reply to Karl Kautsky about the altitude of the English workers in regard to colonialism, Engels was convinced that Europe would undergo proletarian revolution before any of the colonial countries. But when these possibilities started fading and remained elusive for two decades, he turned towards East where his hopes were still alive in national democratic revolution. Here they adopted a new orientation, and saw the bourgeoisie democratic revolution as preceding and conditioning the proletariat revolution.

---

23 Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, 1955, p. 423.
Nevertheless, Lenin analyzed the colonial question in terms of its universality, a world wide phenomenon. And right from the beginning of his theoretical formulations he was more than convinced about the imminent collapse of colonial system. For him, this inevitable dismantling was to be brought about by a revolutionary collaboration between the oppressed colonial people and the proletariat of the advanced countries. This “union of revolutionary proletariat of the industrially advanced countries.... with the oppressed masses of the Eastern colonial countries” were supposed to deliver decisive blow to the world capitalist system.  

Thus, in his profound theoretical analysis there was no confusion over the historical role of colonial people in bringing the capitalist world system on its knees, where masses of toilers... will play a very important revolutionary role in the coming phases of world revolution”. In his seminal work, Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism, he described the global class struggle which had engulfed Asian and African colonial societies, transcending the capitalist world. So in his revolutionary strategy — the upheaval of western proletarian and the struggle of colonial people would merge into a single


revolutionary process directed against their common tormentors. And indeed, "he was the first to realize and assess the full importance of drawing the colonial people into the revolutionary movements..."27

He repeatedly emphasized this "revolutionary collaboration" to rally around Soviet Union to wedge a joint struggle against imperialism. After Bolshevik revolution all the documents he drafted and speeches he delivered, he frequently mooted this close alliance. In his "Preliminary Draft Thesis on the National and colonial Question", he stressed that "the Communist International's entire policy on the national and colonial question should rest primarily on a closer union of the proletariats and the working masses of all nations and countries for a joint revolutionary struggle to overthrow the landowners and bourgeoisie".28

The precise interconnection between these two forces was facilitated by the inherent contradiction of capitalism what Lenin calls "Universal Law of capitalism." The world capitalist system would itself pave the way for the proletariat internationalism, although indirectly. On the one hand it would engender national feelings, sparking the

national resentment against foreign rule and on the other it would strengthen the interconnections by, “bringing down national barriers....” 29

Therefore, in the Lenin’s strategy of a broader anti imperialist coalition colonial people were destined to join the socialist forces in order to bring the ‘balance of forces’ in favour of Soviet Union. Lenin’s revolutionary optimism which saw the imperialist social system a dying phenomenon as a result of inter-imperialist First World War and the emergence of Soviet Union after the Bolshevik revolution. This theoretical conclusion could see an imminent collapse of entire imperialist structure. The help of colonial people would serve as a catalyst to accelerate the pace of already decaying capitalist system with their “more than expected revolutionary role”. 30

Colonial question has been an epiphenomenon in the entire Marxian discourse falling outside the principal etiology, henceforth, only indirectly related to proletarian class struggle. This view was quite evident at Stuttgart congress in August 1907, where the interrelationship between colonialism and socialism was discussed at length. The resolution of the colonial commission appointed by the congress didn’t even condemn the colonialism as whole but only

29 V. L. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 20, p. 27.
capitalist colonialism, "(The congress) does not reject on principal and for all time every colonial policy, which under a socialist regime could have a civilizing effect".\(^{31}\)

Dutch man Von kol argued colonialism as a necessary phase in historical development which could save the colonial people from barbarism and savagery. Similarly, Edourd David came in support of Von Kol, while justifying the historic necessity of colonialism he insisted that "one doesn't pass form savagery to socialism by a single leap".\(^{32}\) Karl Kautsky forcefully attacked this reformist resolution and hold the colonialism a direct antithesis of revolution. Therefore he pointed out the task of socialist in 'liberating the toiling masses of the whole world form the Chains of capital in the colonies as well as in the Europe'.

This discursiveness about the intrinsic colonial position whether they constitute a subject or object of history continued in Lenin's discussion with Rosa Luxembourg. Lenin insisted in subordinating the national self-determination to the class struggle. To him the value of national liberation struggles can be gauged by its contribution to the world wide proletariat revolution. Thus he was interested in supporting the "general democratic content of the movement while he

---


\(^{32}\) Ibid, p. 31.
was opposed to nationalism which implies the oppression of other people. He quoted from the resolution of the 1896 London congress of the second international in defense of his hypothesis, which reads “Congress upholds the full right of self determination of all nations... while calling on the workers of all nations to unite in a common front against capitalism.”

Even other Bolshevik theoreticians Bukharin and Pitakov, who found Lenin’s affirmation of importance of national liberation movements to be contradictory to his theory of imperialism, were in favour of supporting the positive content of this uprisings which “does not split the proletarian forces and weakens the dominant classes in the continent.”

After the great Bolshevik Revolution, it was a common belief amongst dominant Soviet theorists that the revolution has detonated the huge explosive forces that had accumulated all over the colonial East, sparking off a crisis in the colonial system. Thus, an urgent need for a common forum with a purpose of forging ecUMANIC unity among all the revolutionary forces of the world was felt. It was perceived a “historical necessity” conditioned by the “requirements of

---


the proletariat class struggle in the epoch of imperialism and proletariat revolution".35

As a result, the communist international was officially formed on March 4, 1919, with the objective of assisting the revolutionary colleagues in other countries and providing an effective platform for revolutionary discourses. The aim of the international was defined as "to make the workers of different countries not only feel but act as brethren and comrades in the army of emancipation".36

Although, in the first Comintern congress colonial problem was not discussed in full length. And whatever attention did it receive was only of a subsidiary nature. Trotsky in his manifesto, prepared for the congress, proclaimed to the "colonial slaves of Asia and Africa" that "the hour of proletariat dictatorship in Europe will strike for you as the hour of your own emancipation",37 only tended to regard colonial emancipation as a natural by product of European revolution rather than as an essential precondition for its success.

This was a quite natural relegation as most of Bolsheviks by then had tended to retain the traditional Marxist concept of Europe as revolutions primus locus and had been inclined in practice to treat

colonial agitation merely as an extension of European revolution. Thus, amidst high hopes of revolutionary proliferation in entire Europe, the 'epicentre of revolutionary optimism' was Europe and not the colonies. Naturally, the colonial question received an attention not more than of a 'ceremonial importance' where the "emancipation of colonies" was perceived as "conceivable only...in conjunction with the emancipation of working class in the metropolis", where it was mooted that "socialist Europe would come to the aid of liberation of colonies."

This subordination of colonial problem was hardly surprising as the period immediately after the Bolshevik revolution was marked by a high revolutionary optimism in Europe amongst Communists. For short period between 1918 to 1919 Europe was showing a conformist trend towards many of Leninist prophecy's and entire continent was presenting a brighter scope for revolution sweeping the continent. Bolshevik were reigning in Russia, sister parties were at the helm of power in Budapest and Munich and separatist attempted to seize power in Britain with a left wing revolt in Germany.

secondary status and the fate of colonial emancipation was inseparably tied to proletariat revolution in Europe.

But the importance of colonial movements were appearing increasingly bold before the Soviet ideologues by the second congress of the Muslim communists held in November 1919. Although the auxiliary role of colonial people continued, their support was felt more than necessary. Lenin declared that final victory can only be gained by the proletariat of the all advanced countries. The assistance of colonial people was duly conceded, “we must realize that they will not be victorious unless the toilers of all oppressed colonial peoples render their help”.40

By the start of the Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East, the Soviet theorists were beginning to be convinced that the proletariats of the advanced countries and the colonial people were predestined to align with socialist forces against their common oppressors. Thus, the Zinoview assertion that “historical destiny has bound the toilers of the East to the workers of the west...”41 was merely an attempt to find an organic affinity among the goals of proletariats of the West and the toilers of the East. Although their role was still relegated to the

40 V.I. Lenin, Sochineniia, XXIV, pp. 550-5.
secondary task of assisting their European brothers. As Karl Radek argued, "your destiny and ours is one, either we and the peoples of the East shall be united and consequently hasten the victory of Western Europe (over capitalism), or we shall perish...". Accordingly the congress went up to instigate the revolutionary zeal of the Eastern people by evoking them to "wage a holly war against the robbers and oppressors... first of all against imperialism". But despite these polemics, the only concrete result of the Baku meetings was the establishment of a council of propaganda and action which was to guide all nationalist revolutionary movements.

However, it was not until the second Comintern congress (July 19-August 7, 1920) that the theoretical base for the active communist involvement in colonial world was first enunciated. Lenin in his well known "Thesis on the National and Colonial Question", described the interrelationship between colonial emancipation and impending proletarian revolution in the Europe. But before analyzing the colonial discourse in the second Comintern congress it is necessary to discuss the prevalent trends of both Europe as well as colonies during the period. In the colonies, a new wave of nationalism was awakening and gaining pace against imperialism as a result of multitude of

42 Ibid, p. 70.
43 Ibid, p. 15.
factors. Izvestia summarized the essence of this untamed tide of nationalism "a new world is awakening to life and to struggle — the world of oppressed nationalities...".44 Thus, Comintern was all set to utilize this colonial discontent, working in accordance with Lenin's directives that Bolsheviks "would be very poor revolutionaries if in the great proletariat war for emancipation and socialism, (they) did not... utilize every popular movement against... imperialism in order to sharpen and extend the crisis of imperialism...".45

Similarly, the prospect for European revolution was not seen very promising as this 'pet project' soon began fading amidst frustrating events for Soviet Union. With the miserable fiasco of European working class and the crushing pacification of separatist and left socialist upheavals in Germany, the prospects of European revolution looked gloomy. Naturally, the second Comintern tried to surrogate its failures in Europe by turning its hopes towards East. Consequently, the colonial question gained a high priority in the discussions of the Comintern and the resolution of the congress admitted confessingly that "the problem of international social

44 Izvestia, no. 176, August 11, 1920, p. 1.
revolution can not be solved without the participation of the East as a definite social and economic unit."\textsuperscript{46}

Furthermore, the shift of Comintern from its earlier 'Eurocentric' approach to colonies was to be analyzed in terms of growing strategic importance of the colonial people. Long before the Marxist theorists had conceived the idea that "...for whoever is able to approach the subjugated nations of the East and make them his allies... will come out as conqueror in the last struggle between labour and capital."\textsuperscript{47} The "East" was seen as a potential field which could destabilize the "correlation of balance of forces" in favour of socialism by its sheer numerical strength and unmatched fighting spirit. As Lenin, began his thesis by stating that seventy percent of world's population inhibit in colonial oppressed countries. He continued that imperialist war had drawn the dependent nations into history, by making soldiers out of them. Thus, their numerical strength combined with their unmatched fighting velour during the first imperialist war made them really an asset to be allied with socialist forces in their historically predestined struggle against world capitalist order.

\textsuperscript{46} Eduin and North, n. 41, p. 164.

\textsuperscript{47} Communist International, Petrograd, June-July 1920, p. 2316.
Thus, Lenin visualized a broader anti-imperialist alliance between “the proletariats and working masses of all nations and countries for a common revolutionary struggle”.\textsuperscript{48} Thus when Lenin said that communist victory in Europe was contingent upon the prior success of revolutionary movements in colonial world, a reorientation of Comintern policy in the direction of a “union of the proletariat with the colonial slaves” seemed indeed to be in order. He did not only view the colonies as the weakest point in the armor of imperialism or so to speak in the exclusive Bolshevik parlance “the Achilles heels”\textsuperscript{49} but he also felt it strongly that this broader alliance would accelerate the pace of already decaying imperialist order. So he called upon communist parties affiliated with Comintern to “give direct support to the revolutionary movements among the dependent nations... and in the colonies.”

Lenin was equally prompt in drawing the colonial people in this great struggle because of his conviction that ‘only such a union can assure the victory over capitalism...’. For that he warned the colonial people not to align with the imperialist powers as their unceremonious methods of settlement of national question had already been exposed in the wake of Brest-Litovsk, Versailles, 

\textsuperscript{48} He stated, the second congress would be marked by the union of the proletariats of the “colonial slaves”.

\textsuperscript{49} The term "Achilles heel" was first used by Karl Radek and subsequently by Pavlovich and other Bolshevik writers to describe the position of colonies vis-à-vis British Imperialism.
Bucharest and Saint-Germain treaties after the first imperialist war. He further stated uneuphemistically in the same breath that... “there can be no salvation for them except in a union with the revolutionary proletariat and in the triumph of Soviet power over world imperialism...”.

In general second, communist international discussed two problems in great detail:

i) to what extent can the international proletariat make use of national movements in its mission of liberating mankind from the thralls of imperialism; and

ii) to what extent can the oppressed colonial peoples, supported by the international proletariat, bypass the capitalist phase of development.

Regarding the strategy to support the national movements Lenin favoured to support the national bourgeoisie led revolutionary movements although it would only be a “temporary alliance”. But M.N. Roy, questioned this alliance with bourgeoisie elements in the colonies. He urged the congress to determine its relationship with revolutionary movements and mass struggles led by bourgeoisie

---

50 X. J. Eudin and R. C. North, n. 41, pp 63-64.
forces. For Roy, these were 'two distinct movements’ one aiming at the establishment of bourgeoisie order while other was struggling for liberation from various forms of bourgeoisie exploitation.

Roy did see the possibility of immediate communist revolution in the colonies so he was all against extending any kind of support to bourgeoisie leadership which would only help the cause of imperialist forces in the ultimate analysis. In contrary, he was in favour of giving the leadership in the hands of 'vanguards', in the colonies. In disagreement, Lenin said that Roy assumptions that the 'revolutionary destiny' of the west would heavily depend on the degree of development and strength of “revolutionary fate” of the East, was far from being realistic.

Roy was categorical in his assessment of colonies as the main stay of modern capitalism which was drawing its strength from the colonial oppression and dependencies what he calls “Super profit”. Hence he asserted that unless the communist revolution triumphed in the East, the communist movement in the West would remain powerless.

However, with the change of phraseology from “bourgeoisie democratic” to “national revolutionary” the differences were temporarily bridged. Later on while concluding the meaning of this
change, Lenin said, "we should support the bourgeoisie liberation movements only if these are really revolutionary".\textsuperscript{51}

On the second question – would it be possible for the Soviets to lead a backward country into the social revolution through national without making it to pass through capitalist phase of development. The commission agreed that with certain preconditions, backward countries might skip the capitalist phase of historical development. The preconditions were suggested as systematic propaganda by victorious proletariat in the west and the effective aid by soviet government.

Thus, the second Comintern congress put the colonial question a high rank in its discussions. But despite the discussion of colonial question in full length the colonial question remained a subject rather than an object of Marxist discourses and their preassumption that revolution in the west would precede the revolution in the colonies remained more or less the same. What was important in the discussions for the colonies was the increasingly high importance conferred to the colonial problem. Lenin himself accepted the importance in his speech to the congress later on... "in coming

\textsuperscript{51} V. I. Lenin, \textit{Sochineniia}, XXV, pp. 352-55.
struggle against the capitalist powers the revolutionary potentials of the colonies must not be underestimated”.

But despite this shift of Comintern the nature of colonial question remained epiphenomenal during the Third Comintern congress and colonial question listed very low in the priority discussions. 52 The relatively low attention was clearly evident in the Trotsky reply of the M. N. Roy’s allegations that the colonial question has not been paid a proper attention. He asserted that “colonies were merely one of three river beds along which the revolution flows”. 53 However, whatever importance it could receive, was because of its relative importance for socialism vis-à-vis capitalism rather than by the merit of the intrinsic crisis of the colonial question itself. As colonies were regarded reserves of capitalism and it was felt that their alignment with socialist system would not merely deprive the capitalist world from this ‘inexhaustible resources’ but also turn it into a “reserve of socialist revolution”. 54

This discriminate neglect of colonial problem was to be analyzed in terms of Soviet Union’s domestic exigencies as well as the new political configurations in Europe, which was taking shape. At

52 The national and colonial question was classed under number nine on the agenda of the congress.


54 Protokoll, pp. 8-9.
domestic levels soviet economic retrenchment policy, popularly known as NEP, redirected the Bolshevik attention to domestic economic affairs, to some extent. In European political front a détente with the capitalist powers was already in pipeline. Thus, soviet unwillingness to jeopardize the prospects of this newly conceived détente by avowedly supporting the colonial upheavals, had profound bearings on the proceedings and conclusions of third Comintern congress.

But simultaneously, enthused by some of positive trends in the colonies, especially the birth of three communist parties in the East and the disappointing revolutionary prospects in the West facilitated the convocation of the congress to come out with an “Eastern” spirit.\(^{55}\) So, it turned many of its own assumptions arrived at during the first two Comintern congresses, up side down. Thus the earlier claim that the proletariat of the west would revolutionize the East was stated oppositely, — ‘the nationalists of the East would revolutionize the west’. Finally it was conceded that without a revolution in Asia the proletarian world revolution could not be victorious.

But it was clear from the protests registered by colonial delegation at the congress, that colonial question was discussed far from being satisfactorily and adequately. M.N. Roy clearly highlighted his desent “the way in which the oriental question has been treated at this congress is purely opportunistic and more befitting the congress

---

\(^{55}\) In addition to Chinese and Indonesian Communist parties, the Korea communist party was also formed in May 1921.
of the second international".\textsuperscript{56} Thus, amidst confusion the third congress failed to take any concrete and definite stand on the national and colonial problem. The general conclusions of second Comintern congress remained the principal guidelines for the Comintern action in colonies.

However, the period between Third and Fourth congress, the Comintern continued with its eastward tendencies, despite the opposition of "western" elements to collaborate with nationalist forces in the colonies and semi-colonies. The Soviet Union continued her friendly relations with the eastern nations who were busy in combating the western imperialist powers. But during the period serious differences cropped over the issue, whether the revolution must preceed the national liberation movement or vice-versa, between Western minded left and East oriented rightists.

This ideological deadlock continued in the E.C.C.I. convened "congress of the Toilers of the Far-East" in 1922. Zinoview, who was, representing the left wing westerns, was yet to recognize that a national liberation movement might be successful even before the proletariat revolution. Although he seemed to have abandoned the idea that revolution in the west must necessarily preceed the same event in the East, but still he was convinced that proletarian

\textsuperscript{56} Protokoll Des Kongress, p. 1018.
revolution had to precede national democratic revolution. In Contrary Safarove, spoke in a eastern spirit of Eastern-minded rightist. In a report presented by him on “The National Colonial Question and the Communist Attitude Thereto”, he declared that for China the first objective must be national democratic liberation from imperialism. But even though supporting the eastern movements he had some reservations in his mind which were clearly reflected in his speech, “we say: in Colonial and Semi-Colonial countries the first phase of the revolutionary movement must inevitably be a national democratic movement. We give our support to this movement as such, to the extent that it is directed against imperialism... but at the same time we can not recognize it as our struggle, as the struggle for the proletarian revolution”.57

At the same time the approach to the national colonial question in the light of the eventual conflict of the interests of nationalism and communism was being widely discussed inside the communist party of Russia. Stalin's conclusions in this regard were so confusing that they some times appeared to be loaded with hypocritic opportunism. Although he was representing the eastern tendency in favour of collaborating with bourgeoisie nationalists at the international level,

at the same time his ideas were not confirming it at the domestic level where he was all out for a brutal subordination of national interests to communism. Lenin, denounces all attempts to subordinate national autonomy to administrative convenience and went on to say even that "Russian administrative apparatus is not socialist, for "what we call ours is an apparatus still thoroughly alien to us and representing a bourgeoisie Tsarist mechanism, which we had no opportunity of conquering during the five years...".58

Fourth Comintern congress began in an atmosphere, which looked quite favourable for the proliferation of revolutionary ideas in the colonies. The success of Mustafa Kemal, which was suggested by Radek as 'playing a revolutionary role against imperialism', the Persian Majlis reluctance to rectify the Anglo-Persian Treaty the revolutionary unrest in India (1919-21), formation of communist parties in some countries, China (1921), Indonesia (1920), strong anti-Japanese movement in Korea, revolutionary movements in Mongolia and the Egyptian unrest against British empire. Thus, the period was marked by a sporadic growth of nationalist fervor in many colonial countries which confirmed the old communist belief that capitalism was in a state of decay and the inevitability of its collapse was not too far.

Thus, enthused by the congenial international scenario in favour of communism, the Fourth Comintern congress chalked out a broad anti-imperialist alliance to finally assault the imperialist powers. So strategy of “the united anti-imperialist Front” was put forward keeping in view that “the prospects of a prolonged struggle against world imperialism demands the mobilization of all revolutionary elements”.59

This “united front” will expose the betrayal of the native ruling classes who tend to side up with foreign capitalists against the fundamental interests of the general masses. This was also supposed to enthuse a kind of class consciousness amongst toiling masses and bring them to the front ranks in the struggle against imperialism and feudalism.

The strategy of ‘united front’ was designed to cope the embryonic revolutionary conditions of the colonial countries. As Zinoviev the chief speaker of the Comintern accepted that the communist parties of the East were still “very small cells”. So he chalked out a dual strategy, “first to broaden the nucleus of the proletariat movement and secondly go forward as the vanguard of the

whole anti-bourgeoisie liberation movement.” 60 M. N. Roy also supported this view, “It is only under the leadership of political party representing the workers and peasants that the national revolutionary struggles can come to final victory in these countries”.61

The special emphasis on the agrarian problem in the congress was a result of a strategy, which saw that “only the agrarian revolution aiming at the expropriation of the large land owners can rouse the vast peasant masses destined to have a decisive influence in the struggle against imperialism”.62

Thus the fourth Comintern congress tried to resolve the old revolutionary contradiction between international class struggle and cooperation with nationalist revolutionaries. As, the orthodox Marxism denies any compatibility between class struggle and nationalism, the support for nationalist movements presented a paradox before Marxist theorists, which echoed in almost all Marxist fora, convened to discuss the national colonial question. More than that the ‘partial stabilization of capitalism’ and other factors had forced them to abandon the idea of immediate Soviet type revolution

60 Protokoll, pp. 591-97, in Eudin and North no. 41, p. 386.
61 Ibid., p. 386.

37
in the colonies. Rather they shifted to an unorthodox compromise of "dialectical relativism" where revolution was seen as a gradual complicated process, which might take a long road in the colonies.

By the fifth congress of Comintern the principal Marxist theorists were convinced that the "national liberation movements in the East have taken a big step forward" as a result of increased levels of native unrest in the colonies. The enlarge plenum of E.C.C.I. admitted the importance of national liberation movements having assumed great revolutionary significance for the struggle against world imperialism where he saw 'the mighty forces of revolution marching form the East'. By that time Comintern itself was convinced that "a mass of inflammable material has been heaped up which may blow bourgeoisie rule sky high".63 Apart from that a repeated demand for revolutionary activities in the colonies by third world Communist leaders had become increasingly insistent. Furthermore, the Soviet suspicion that European Communists had hitherto been negligent in fulfilling their 'revolutionary task' provided with a immediate stimulus for the Comintern to concentrate on colonies for the impending proleterization of the globe.

---

Accordingly the Fifth Comintern congress reiterated the policy of supporting all those national movements “directed against the exploiting yoke of foreign capital and international bourgeoisie”.64 This policy was conducive to the policy of anti-imperialist alliance.

The Fifth congress continued to support the lines taken in third and fourth congress on the matter of “tactical alliance with bourgeoisie nationalists”, but added a new element of “iron discipline of revolution from above”. This strategy was adopted in accordance with the developments of capitalist world where after the ‘partial stabilization’, the capitalism had intended towards liberalism and even social reforms. Thus, in order to make the revolutionary structure more intact and disciplined enough not to fall pray in the trap of capitalist rhetorics, this strategy was adopted.

This tactical alliance between the proletariat of the oppressing countries and the working masses of the oppressed nations was conceived as the prerequisite for the final liberation of colonies. As Manuilisky argued,... “true and final liberation is possible only in close alliance and common struggle against world imperialism.”65 The peasantry was also accepted as a revolutionary agent worthy to be

---


65 Extracts from a Manifesto to the Peoples of the East issued by the Fifth Comintern congress. July 1925, in J. Degras, n. 63, p. 159.
incorporated in the broader alliance, for the first time. Justifying the inclusion of peasantry M.N. Roy opined that it was necessary for the communists to adapt their policies to the changing nature of the revolutionary support given by different social groups at different times. He believed that peasant masses of the colonies represented a powerful revolutionary factor and that in “every revolutionary liberation movement in the colonies, the peasant masses are destined to play a role of paramount importance”.

The session adopted a resolution calling upon the Comintern to:

“give support to the movements of all oppressed nationalities directed against imperialism... bearing in mind that these movements represent one of the most important phases of that great movement of liberation which alone can lead to the victory of the revolution, not only on a European but on a world scale”.

The colonies were asked to intensify their struggle further to bring down the capitalist structure down. An affinity between the objectives of colonial people and world proletariat was reemphasized – ‘our paths leading to overthrow of capitalist painful servitude and imperialist oppression, are identical’. The especial emphasis had been given to the alliance, as the appeal of the congress reads: “the real and final emancipation of the oppressed peoples of the East as well as the working classes of the west is possible only by establishing a close

---

66 Piatyi Vsemirnyi Kongress K.I., Part I, p. 593, Quoted in Eudin and North, n. 41, p. 271.

67 Ibid, pp. 46-47.
alliance and joint struggle against world capitalism". Similar line echoed in the appeal of the league to struggle against imperialism to All Oppressed Peoples of the World, (1924) - 'we can liberate ourselves from that (bourgeoisie) oppression only by a joint struggle'.

However, the Sixth Comintern congress held in Moscow, September 1928, devoted greater attention to revolutionary work in the colonies, than had any previous Comintern gathering. The Comintern is best remembered for its ideologically orthodox revolutionary strategy known as "United Front From Below". It involved a shift from relying upon bourgeoisie nationalists in favour of a "fighting front" led by proletariat with the peasantry at its side for revolutionary leadership.

By the Sixth congress the historical role for colonies and semi-colonies were crystallized in the epocal struggle between world capitalist and socialist systems. This great attention for colonies was in many ways result of a set of historical events occurred before and during the congress.

Disillusionment over the Komintang experience in China where bourgeoisie nationalists Komintang party, after having combined forces with the communist party of China, turned upon its

---

revolutionary allies, sparking the famous blood baths at Shanghai, Peking and Canton.

This Komintang betrayal had forced Marxist theorists to reassess the role of bourgeoisie nationalists in the national revolutionary movements. Moreover, the intra-party power struggles at the domestic level, where Stalin was anxious to establish his own image as foremost practitioner of revolution and more importantly his desire to eliminate left wing opposition to his bid for power—particularly Trotsky, had an instant bearing on the congress return to orthodoxy. The concern for his political position provided Stalin with an irresistible incentive to return to orthodox line—“United Front Form Below”.

The Soviet hopes for a workable ditente with the capitalist countries had already met with sever blows in the wake of rupture of diplomatic relationship with Britain and finally after the assassination of soviet ambassador in Poland.

It was hardly surprising amidst failures of Comintern in west that it was slowly but surely looking towards ‘East’ as the sole ray of their revolutionary hope. Thus the new policies for colonial revolution
appeared to have been sparked by the belief that new revolutionary opportunities were rapidly developing in colonies.  

So, both in the “Programme of the Communist International” and the “Theses on the Struggle Against the War Danger”, adopted by the congress, references were made to strategic importance of insurrectionary work in the colonies. The congress had no confusion in conceding the worth of colonial people as they were considered not merely “the most powerful auxiliary forces of the world socialist revolution”, but also the “most dangerous sector of world imperialism”. Comintern confirmed it by declaring that, “at the world level, the most important strategic tasks of the Comintern... are concerned with the revolutionary battle in the colonies, semi-colonies and dependent countries”.  

Therefore, the “Theses on the Revolutionary movement in colonial and semi-Colonial countries” made it unmistakably clear that all” Colonial peoples” should be granted “unconditionally and without reservation complete state independence and sovereignty”.  

---

69 Boersner, n. 31, p. 259.  
71 Jane (Degras(ed.), n. 63, p.521.  
Thus Comintern supported the policy of assisting ongoing anti-colonial movements in the Asian and African countries, even in the period of "building socialism in one country". Stalin found no contradiction between 'building socialism in one country' and extending full support to anti-colonial movements in the periphery as it was seen in the "general interest of the victory of the socialist revolution in all countries". And he continued to emphasize the importance of revolutionary movements in colonies as "a decisive below to imperialism".

However, the sixth congress, while assessing the importance of colonial revolution, was very precise in designing its strategy on the lines of M.N. Roy. Badly bruised in the Komintang episode, the Comintern leaders were looking at peasants as their reliable alliance partners which was clearly reflected in "From Below" strategy. The Comintern was noticing a peasant discontent throughout the third world and it accepted that opportunities were rapidly emerging for "unleashing of mass peasant agrarian revolution". So they took no time in calculating that it would not only emancipate the peasantry

---

75 J. Degras, no. 63, p. 480.
from the influence of bourgeoisie nationalists but also forge "a fighting bloc of the proletariat and the peasantry".\textsuperscript{76}

Furthermore, Sixth Comintern congress met in an environment highly vulnerable in terms of growing imperialist threat for Soviet Union. So it tried to converge the dual purpose of Soviet security concerns and world revolution in one. It was perceived by the Soviet policy makers that capitalist states are planning to wage a war against USSR in order to maneuver their own weak position — "the loss of temporary stability". In this backdrop Soviet Union sought the international proletariat to "facilitate the work of socialist construction in the USSR and defend it against attacks of imperialist powers by all the means in its powers".\textsuperscript{77}

This security dilemma continued to haunt the minds of Soviet ideologues throughout the "great economic crisis period" as well. They were unanimous in their formulations that as a result of economic crisis, the danger of imperialist aggression against Soviet Union, had entered in an extremely intensified and more serious phase, because

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, p. 543.

\textsuperscript{77} The program of the Communist International Adopted in the Sixth congress, Calcutta, 1945, p. 49.
"...imperialism sees no other way out than a imperialist war against the Soviet Union in order to overcome its own inner difficulties".78

But amidst growing security threats they could also assess the situation in terms of a brighter prospect for colonial revolution. The colonies were expected to rise against capitalism's conscious attempt to transfer the burden of depression on their shoulder, creating an unprecedented reaction in the colonies. So the Comintern was all set to exploit this capitalist crisis by aggravating it furthermore. They warned the colonial people that “imperialism will seek its way out of economic crisis... at the cost of colonies and semi-colonies”.79

Thus, the period during and after the great depression Comintern anti-colonial policies were designed to prevent the colonial soldiers, supposed to be of “critical importance” to the imperialists not only in offensive capacity but in the defensive role of “securing the colonial rear”, as well. In the subsequent years as the imperialist threat became more and more clear, the colonial question was further relegated to secondary or even tertiary importance in the Comintern discussions which was more concerned to defend the ‘fatherland of proletariat revolution’ rather than securing a colonial revolution.


With the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, and Hitler's rise in power in 1933, the imperialist threat to USSR emerged more acute than ever before. The Japanese invasion was interpreted as prelude to imperialist plan to invade Soviet Russia. After spring of 1933, KPD offices were sacked throughout Germany and Berlin headquarters of Comintern were raided and ransacked.\textsuperscript{80}

Thus, amidst hostile set of circumstances Soviet security concerns were clearly evident in the seventh Comintern congress (25 July, 1935). The congress abandoned its policy of “United Front From Below”, as immediate danger of imperialist threat preceded over the long-term goal of colonial proletarian revolution. Manuilisky made it very clear while saying that “the defense of the USSR must be made the starting point for a broad, general people’s front of classes, organizations, and political parties...”\textsuperscript{81} With a view to take support from colonial people against this Fascist threat the Comintern leaders tried to divert the entire threat in a direction where this ‘demolition sword’ was made more a danger for colonies itself rather than for the Soviet Union. Dimitrov pointed out that imperialists needed Fascism in order to “shift the entire burden of the economic crisis on the


\textsuperscript{81} J. Degras, no. 63, p. 346.
workers, to enslave the weak nations and intensify colonial exploitation".82

So, amidst growing Fascist imperialist threat to Soviet Union, the Comintern designed a broader alliance of proletariats of both imperialist countries as well colonies and semi-colonies. The communists were entrusted to establish an anti-imperialist people's front. The proletariat's of the advanced countries were urged to give its unstinted support to the liberation struggle of the colonial and semi-colonial people against the imperialist pirates, in the interest of its own struggle for emancipation. By the handing over of the baton of colonial emancipation in the hands of 'proletariats of the advanced countries' it was more than clear that Soviet Union is less than interested in the colonial question. The reason for this deviation was unpromising prospect of colonial revolution as well as the instant threat to the 'fatherland' itself.

With the dissolution of Comintern in 1943, the principal forum for colonial discourse disappeared and thereafter the colonial question had become a content of Soviet foreign policy, finding place only in the routine ritualistic diplomatic language. Thus, after the disbanding of

---

82 Extract from the Resolution of the 7th, Comintern congress on Fascism, working class unity, and the Task of the Comintern in J. Degras, no. 63, p. 355.
Comintern we see the colonial discussion appearing sporadically in the individual remarks and foreign policy documents, heavily contextualize with the exigencies of the real politik.

**Conclusion:**

The epiphenomenal status of colonial problem in the Marxist eschatology which naturally conceive it as falling outside the main dialectical etiology tend to categorize it as a subsidiary causation not directly linked to the 'global revolution'. Right from the days of Marx and Engels, colonies were not enlisted very high in their revolutionary agenda. For them, since only a small part of world was fulfilling the 'objective condition' for the proletariat revolution, the possibility of revolution was confined to a very small pocket of global space i.e., Ireland, Poland and Germany. Marx never envisaged a revolution in colonial world throughout his writings.

Before Lenin, the national and colonial questions were never perceived as one in the ideological discussions. It was only after Lenin that this synthesis of two seemingly opposed tactical movements was perceived. Lenin came out with a dual tactics of a broader alliance between proletariats of the advanced capitalist countries and the national colonial movements which was supposed to deliver the decisive blow to imperialism in the ultimate analysis.
Even during a long series of ideological discourses between 1848 to 1928, over the issue whether ‘Socialist west’ would liberate the ‘feudal east’ or national revolutionary East would aid in the liberation of their western capitalist revolutionary cousins, the Marxist theorists kept on juggling between discursive conclusions. The geo-political paradox of Soviet Union of being located on the borderline of colonial and colonizing countries continued to create a permanent alignment dilemma for Soviet Union. So the entire colonial question was oscillating between the ‘Euro-centric’ western to ‘East-oriented’ strategic poles according to the vicissitudes of their revolutionary hopes.

Even in the Comintern discussions, the existence of colonial problem was denied an independent and autonomous phenomenon and was conceived only in terms of its relative importance to socialism vis-a-vis capitalism. So the entire colonial question was swinging along the ups and downs of historical events all over the world and especially in Europe.

Thus, in the first Comintern congress the colonial question was relegated to a secondary place. Amidst optimistic anticipation of revolution sweeping the entire Europe they could hardly see colonies as pivotal in their revolutionary strategy. They could analyze East at best as an auxiliary force. But this revolutionary optimism met a premature death amidst several unsettling events in Europe.
second to Fourth Comintern congress they started shifting their attention from 'west' to 'East' which continued until the 1927. During these years the Comintern had no hesitation in assisting the bourgeoisie nationalist leadership in colonies. But the Kuomintang betrayal was indeed an eye opener for Soviet theorists. After this disillusionment they shifted their attention to organizing workers and peasants at the lower levels, to dislodge the bourgeoisie leadership.

After 1928 Comintern itself had become an auxiliary forum, acting as merely a mouthpiece of Soviet policy decisions. After defeat of Trotsky and ouster of Zinoview, the internal power struggle in Soviet Union was finally completed with the purge of Bukharin in December 1929. After Stalin succeeded in imposing a monolithic unity on Comintern, the distinction between Comintern's voice and Soviet official approach to colonial question disappeared in the subsequent years.

After 1930, Soviet Union was busy in combating the increased security threats from the imperialist powers. So it could hardly found time for colonial question independently. The only interest it could see was in terms of its role in defending the 'national incarnation of the whole essence of the world revolution'. Colonies were seen as a vast reservoir of strategic human resources which were as important in their offensive capacity of fighting against USSR as in their defensive capacity of 'securing the rear' of imperialism.
Thus a deep delving into the ideological discussions of national and colonial question in Marxist-Leninist discourse reveals that colonial problem never attracted the attention of Marxist ideologues as an independent and autonomous phenomenon. Rather what was attractive for them in the colonial problem was its "anti-imperialist" content which was the single affinity between the Soviet interest of bringing the imperialist system down and the interests of the colonial people to get themselves rid of the thralls of colonialism.