Chapter I

SOVIET POLICY TOWARDS WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT:
A FRAMEWORK

The existence of a world communist movement today has become a myth, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union which used to be a guiding centre of international communism. It is important to distinguish between the present day Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) afflicted with innumerable problems of ethnicity and economy on the one hand, and the policy initiatives of Gorbachev which were then radical and revolutionary intended to restructure and reorient the Soviet society faced with corruption, stagnation, bureaucratic hurdles and the lack of political democracy on the other. Despite strong views squarely blaming Gorbachev for whatever happened in the erstwhile Soviet Union, the right assessment seems to find sense in distinguishing the strategies of socialism from the international procedures needed to survive democratically and non-imperialistically among the differing political economies of the world. At the same time, his efforts to reform the foreign policy platform is to be analysed for the purpose of our study,
though we understand that this area is organically linked to the more important domestic sphere. It is undisputed fact that Gorbachev's policy initiatives, his radical break with his predecessors, were at the root of all changes in Soviet domestic and external affairs in the eighties. And, this applies undoubtedly to Afghanistan also.

It is important to note that even from the late 70s Western thinkers saw the signs of instability and signals of decline in the Soviet society and its transformation. For example, Donald Wilhelm has pointed out: "Although Marxist regimes then ruled a large share of the world, communism carried the seeds of its own destruction". The Soviet thesis that socialism would supercede "decaying and dying capitalism" has proved erroneous with the decline of the Soviet communist system and thus with that of the world communist system too. The Soviet policy towards world communist movement was on the basis of the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and the perceptions of the Soviet leaders and decision-makers towards the international developments.

1. Donald Wilhelm, Creative Alternatives to Communism: Guidelines for Tomorrow's World (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1977), cited in Donald Wilhelm, Global Communications and Political Power (London: Transaction Publishers, 1990), p ix. This argument was based on the author's perception that "communism was already showing clear signs of its inherent instability and was giving advance signals of its inevitable decline in favour of more viable and humane systems."
It should be kept in mind that different leaders followed rigid policies with different approach during their respective regimes. These policies had contributed to the rise and decline of the world communist movement. This is not to belittle other factors like the national and international power balances.

Working on the line of 'proletarian internationalism' followed by 'Brezhnev doctrine', one of the latest Soviet adventure in the world communist movement was propping up of a communist regime in Afghanistan. The Soviet policy in this respect was almost recognized as a failure during Gorbachev's period. To understand the Soviet policy towards this specific Afghan phenomenon the Soviet policy towards world communist movement in general needs to be explored. Therefore, in this chapter we will try to give a brief account of the Soviet policy towards the world communist movement. A study of the Soviet policy, from the days of Lenin's ambition to Gorbachev's critical search for a return to reality, towards ruling and non-ruling communist parties world over helps to grasp the Soviet policy towards Afghan communist movement.

**Lenin and International Communist Movement (1917-22)**

Lenin had the idea of setting up a headquarters
for the international communism in Moscow and to help the
formation of disciplined parties throughout the world as an
instrument for a world revolution to overthrow the
'decaying' capitalism.

Lenin had in his mind the political idea of a
world communist movement even before the victory of October
revolution. It was developing since the days of the
"Zimmerwald Left". This led to an alliance of
revolutionary groups, formalised under Bolshevik leadership
and thus came up the Communist International in 1919.
World revolution and anti-imperialist struggle were among
the major concerns of Lenin's policies. For consolidating
the Russian revolution and making revolutionary parties
along the Leninist lines, a peaceful international
atmosphere and Soviet state security were necessary.
Therefore, Lenin issued "The Decree on Peace" on 8 November
1917, in which he appealed "to the class conscious workers
of England, France and Germany to help them to bring to a
successful end, the cause of peace and together with this

2. V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol 21 (Moscow: Progress
Publishers, 1964), p 479; Robert Daniels ed., A Documentary
History of Communism, Vol. 2: Communism and the World
(Hanover: University Press of New England, 1984), p 5. Also
Even in 1914 August Lenin wrote: "The Second
International is dead, overcome by opportunism. Down with
opportunism and long live the Third International."
Zimmerwald Left means the leaders including Lenin who
were a minority at the Conference in September 5-8,1915 in
the Swiss village of Zimmerwald where the anti-war
socialists split over the revolutionary implications of the
war, the World War I.
the cause of the liberation of all who labour and are
exploited from every kind of exploitation."³

Lenin believed that the imperialist motivations
of the European powers caused the World War-I and the
actions of the Second International seemed to have been in
no disagreement with the imperialist motives. Therefore,
Lenin wanted to form a Third International to fight against
imperialism through an international platform. Documents
show that Soviet state had given priority for such an
international task. "The Soviet rulers had set aside
several million roubles in order to establish the Third
(Communist) International or Comintern, with a headquarter
in Moscow, to train leaders, co-ordinate revolutionary
activities and create throughout the world discipined
communist parties along the Leninist model", says Geoffrey
stern.⁴

Third International's founding Congress held in
Moscow on 2 March 1919, resolved to implement the plans
devised by Lenin. The Third International took up "the
task of organising the forces for the revolutionary

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3. Jane Degras, Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy,

4. Geoffrey Stern, The Rise and Decline of International
Communism (Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., 1990),
p.40.

There was provision and arrangement for clandestine
financial support to even smaller and insignificant
communist parties. See A.Adappoor, "Viplava
Abhivadanangalode Panam Varikori-2", Malayala Manorama,
(Kottayam)29 May 1992 (an article in Malayalam daily).
onslaughts against the capitalist governments, for civil war against the bourgeoisie of all countries, for the capture of political power, for the triumph of socialism."  

The first Congress decided to hold sessions as an international communist conference. Fifty two delegates from different countries (34 delegates with vote and 18 with voice but not vote) participated in this Congress.  

Jane Degras has tried to characterise the international nature and aims of the Comintern, in the following words:-

The International which subordinates the so-called national interests to the interests of the international revolution, will embody the mutual aid of the proletariat of different countries for without economic and other mutual aid, the proletariat will not be in a position to organise the new Society. On the other hand, in contrast to the yellow social patriotic (i.e., the Second International) international proletarian communism will support the exploited colonial peoples in their struggle against imperialism, in order to promote the final downfall of the imperialist world system.

At the first Congress the important posts of the Comintern were held by the Bolshevik leaders. Lenin took a leading part in the proceedings of the Congress. Zinoviev, Lenin, Bukharin and Trotsky were the important members in the Executive Committee of the Comintern and Zinoviev became its first Chairman. These Executive Committee members had drawn up all the theses, resolutions and declarations passed at the Congress. 8

Both internationalism and centralism were at the core of Bolshevik thinking in 1919. Universal establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and replacement of parliamentary democracy by "self rule of the masses through their own elected organs" 9 was one of the major aims of the Comintern. A centralised organisational structure was proposed by Zinoviev. He argued that the Third International must create "a strong guiding centre..."

8. Nick Knight, "Leninism, Stalinism and the Comintern", in Colin Mackerras and Nick Knight eds., Marxism in Asia (New Delhi: Select Book Service Syndicate, 1986) p.54. From this fact, it is clear that at the first Congress itself the Soviets showed their dominance in the proceedings and personnel of the Comintern. Naturally the Comintern policies were shaped in terms of the Soviet national interests. Also see James W. Hulze, The Forming of the Communist International (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), p 20.

which will be able to lead, in ideas and organisation, the movements in all countries."  

In this context, Knight also makes a similar observation: "From the very beginning of the history of the Comintern, it is possible to discern two important features which were subsequently become of considerable importance in its history; an interest in promoting revolution in the colonial context and a tendency for the activities of the Comintern to be dominated by Bolsheviks who gradually came to perceive Comintern as an agency for pursuing practically Soviet interests." Notwithstanding the problems of organisational and political centralisation, it should be said that the establishment of the Comintern was intended to give an impetus to the world revolution.

Though the colonial question was discussed in the first Congress of the Comintern, more stress was given on the possibility of European revolutions. But after the defeat of revolutionary uprisings in Poland and Germany, Lenin realised the revolutionary potential of newly liberated nations and the national liberation movements in

10. Nick Knight, N. 8, p.54. This statement is a clear evidence of the authoritarian structure of the Comintern. This shows the Soviet interest in building communist parties abroad on Soviet model and Soviet instruction and direction.

11. Ibid., p. 55.
the colonies. He argued in the Second Congress of Comintern that the national bourgeoisie of the colonial countries should be seen as allies by the revolutionary proletariat in their assault on global capitalist system. In ideological terms, Soviet Union views co-operation with the developing nations as a powerful weapon to counter imperialist expansion.

Lenin put forward his theses on colonialism in the Second Congress of the Comintern held from 19 July to 7 August 1920. He said: "The Communist International must support the bourgeois democratic national movements in colonial and backward countries, the elements of future proletarian parties, parties communist not only in name, shall be grouped together and educated to appreciate their special tasks, viz., to fight the bourgeois democratic movements within their own nations, the Communist International enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in colonial and backward countries, but must not merge with it and must under all circumstances uphold the independence of proletarian movements even if in its mostly rudimentary form."\(^{12}\) Thus Lenin conceived two stages of revolution in colonial countries.

A conceptual basis for Lenin's support in favour of bourgeois-democratic revolution and the necessity of proletariat's participation for developing its leadership and hegemony in order to ensure its victory in the second stage and thus the completion of revolution can be found as back as in 1905 in Lenin's own writing on two tactics of social democracy. Lenin argued then that the proletariat not only could, but must, become the leader in the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Probably because of the unexpected results from the Europe, this emphasis on leadership was toned down and instead an alliance was argued for.

But, Lenin's theses were strongly criticized by M.N. Roy, an Indian communist who believed that the colonial and national bourgeoisie was unable to lead the first stage of revolution. Roy argued that it was too weak and dependent on the colonial powers and therefore the first stage must be led by the communists, and only then they would be well placed to carry on the second stage of

revolution shortly thereafter. The Comintern's solution to the Lenin-Roy debate was to adopt an amended draft of Theses on National and Colonial Question. Some authors assess that the theoretical debate was actually postponed, not resolved.  

But this assessment seems to be mistaken. Because, the problem of the strategy and tactics to be adopted by the communists in the colonial and dependent countries of the East was discussed at sessions of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions and also at some length at the sessions of the Second Congress in July 1920. Roy opposed the alliance with the bourgeois democratic national movements aimed at establishing a bourgeois order. Taking into consideration of Roy's proposals presented as 'Supplementary Theses', Lenin's views were slightly modified after thorough discussion. In the amended theses, the word 'bourgeois-democratic' was decided to be replaced by 'national-revolutionary'.


16. Ibid, p.41. However, the final draft dropped the word 'National' too.
his speech on July 26 to the Congress, Lenin clarified:

The meaning of the above change is that we, as Communists, should support the bourgeois movements of liberation in the colonies only if these are really revolutionary, ...  

The debate in the Congress on the two staged revolution in the colonial countries had also arrived at a consensual position of bypassing capitalist development, the possibility of transition from pre-capitalism to communism. 

In the second Congress, 21 conditions were also fixed for entry into Comintern. Later this process came to be known as bolshevization. The last condition added at the suggestion of Italian communist leader Amadeo Bordiga worked as a lever for unwarranted splits in the European

17. Ibid.

18. For details, refer (1) "Theses on the National and Colonial Questions", adopted at the Second Congress of the Communist International, July-August, 1920; (2) "Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Questions", presented at the Congress by M.N. Roy; and (3) Lenin's explanatory speech at the Congress on 26 July 1920 titled "The Decision to Use 'National Revolutionary' Instead of 'Bourgeois-Democratic' to Describe Liberation Movements in the Colonies. The Importance of Soviets and the Possibility of Transition from Precapitalism to Communism". For all these three documents see Xenia Joukoff Eudin and Robert C. North, N. 15.
social democratic parties leading the ultra-lefts into the new fold of Communist Parties. Eventually, the expected revolutions in the West either did not materialise or the hastily managed actions flopped. This prompted the Soviet leadership to look forward for the blossoming of revolutionary movements in the colonial East as the mainstay of world revolution.

This new understanding of the Soviet leadership of the importance of colonial liberation struggles as a catalyst for communist revolution coupled with the increased pessimism towards the European revolution led to the "Congress of the Peoples of the East" in September 1920 in Baku, immediately after the Second Comintern Congress. At this Congress Zinoviev declared that Communist International turned to the peoples of the East. He appealed to them: "Brothers we summon you to a Holy War first of all against British imperialism". Representatives from Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan and India participated in the Congress. The Congress decided the

21. Ibid.
establishment of a Council for propaganda and action to coordinate Comintern activities in the East and devotion of a journal (Norodniy Vostok) to the problems of the national liberation.\textsuperscript{22}

This policy of giving importance to the revolution in the East had far-reaching implications for the history of communist parties of Asia, especially it had significant influence on the development of Marxism in Asian countries such as Vietnam.\textsuperscript{23}

By the time the Third Congress was held in June-July 1921, the European capitalism acquired a long-term stability and therefore Lenin considered the need for a 'United Front' of all working class parties to push for workers' rights.\textsuperscript{24} During this period the domestic situation in Russia was deteriorating. They had experienced the Kronstadt Revolt and the introduction of

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\textbf{23.} Nick Knight, N.8, p.57.

\end{flushleft}
New Economic Policy. The immediate needs of the Soviet state during this period was to meet domestic pressures of Soviet Union. Therefore at the Third Congress of Comintern world revolution took a back seat. Those who protested against the decisions were expelled from the Congress.

It was in the Fourth Congress (Nov., 1922) that Lenin had appeared last. In this Congress he seemed to retreat from the disciplinary clauses which had been written into the Comintern constitution. Revolution was once again brought into the agenda. The policy shift in the Second Congress was path-breaking and was very significant for revolutionary nationalists and communists of the East including Afghanistan.

Stalin's Policy Towards World Communist Movement (1922 - 53)

After the 1922 Comintern Fourth Congress, the succession struggle began in the Soviet Union. It had a vital bearing on the Soviet foreign policy. After 1923, the Soviet Communist Party's internal struggles got visibly reflected in the Comintern. One important outcome of the struggle becoming more visible was that foreign party leaders began to feel tempted to get involved in it, and by the same token the Russian leaders kept in mind the support

25. Olga A. Narkiewicz, N.20, p.38
to be expected from foreign parties. The subjection of the leaders of the foreign communist parties to the complete and protracted process of 'shifting' connected with the crises of the Russian party could be overcome only with the removal of Trotsky's supporters within the Comintern parties.26 Trotsky's opposition to Stalin's domestic and international policies was debated and repudiated by the Comintern.

During Stalin's period, till 1941, the colonial question had got relatively little importance, because Soviet economic development and Soviet state security got top priority in Kremlin. Moreover, Stalin was busy with consolidation of his own power in the Soviet Union.

Stalin reduced Comintern to a body of minor importance and activities. He never addressed a Comintern Congress after his coming to the helm of affairs. Probably the International was kept up because Stalin could hardly have divorced himself from it officially at a time when he was consolidating total power inside Russia, since this would have helped to confirm his opponents' accusations that he was "betraying the revolution".27


The neglect of Comintern by Stalin is evident from the decrease in membership of the communist parties as shown by the following data: 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1922</th>
<th>1924</th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1931</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>779,102</td>
<td>648,090</td>
<td>445,300</td>
<td>328,716</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purges managed by Stalin in the Comintern's member parties also contributed to this steady decrease.

As Deutscher in his book *Stalin* explained, for "domestic as well as diplomatic reasons, Stalin could not but extend to the Comintern.... the methods by which he was remoulding the Russian party into a 'monolithic body'". 29 Deutscher continues:

He acted from behind the scenes, mainly through his lieutenants who sat on the executive of the International: unlike Lenin, who had addressed every Congress of the Comintern and had publicly shouldered responsibility for its policy, Stalin... never addressed any congress of the Comintern. During ceremonial meetings he sat silently on the platform...

28. Olga A. Narkiewicz, N.20, p.43

Only the initiated knew that the public debates and votes were of little significance and that no major decisions of the Comintern had any validity unless it was approved by Stalin... During the four years of Lenin's leadership four full fledged international Congresses were convened; during the twenty five years of Stalin's leadership only three: one in 1924, which endorsed the denunciation of Trotskyism, another in 1928, at the influence of Bukharin and the right Bolsheviks was eliminated, and a third in 1935, which proclaimed the policy of popular fronts.  

In December 1924 Stalin announced the doctrine of "Socialism in one Country' which implies absolute support for the Soviet Union. Contrary to Lenin's perception, he believed the Soviet communism could be achieved through the efforts of Russia's own people. 

The zig-zags in the policies of Comintern during 1920s and 1940s were ultimately designed for the defence of the Soviet Union. See the following development, for instance. Immediately after the October 1923 defeat of the uprising led by German communists (KPD), Zinoviev, speaking for Comintern and German communist leadership, declared that 'the leaders of German Social Democracy have become

30. Ibid, pp 43-44
fascist through and through'. At the Sixth Comintern Congress (17 July – 1 Sept., 1928) a policy of 'class against class' was decided. The Comintern denounced Social democracy as 'social fascism' and repudiated the united front policy. This standpoint, branding the social democrats rather than the Nazis as the main enemy, became the basis of policy in the 'third period' from 1929 to 1934. 32

At the same time by late 1920 and early 1930s Stalin could recognise the emerging threat to the Soviet Union posed by European fascism and Japanese militarism. Stalin responded to this growing threat with a series of actions intended to co-ordinate anti-Nazi forces in the West.

In September 1934, the USSR joined the League of Nations. In May 1935, the Soviet Union negotiated treaties of co-operation and assistance with France and Czechoslovakia. In 1935, in the Seventh and last Comintern Congress Soviet Union initiated a Comintern policy in support of 'popular fronts'. This policy envisaged alliance between communist and non-communist working class parties particularly in Germany, France and

32. Adom Westoby, N. 26, p.66
Spain and enlisted support for Spanish Republican battle against fascism. If all European communist parties were earlier directed by Comintern not to join in any coalition governments or work within their systems for parliamentary reforms, they were now ordered to abandon their revolutionary struggles and join with all anti-fascist "progressive" groups within their respective countries. Despite all these efforts, Stalin's priority of Soviet security interests led him to work for concrete state to state pacts and he wavered on his reliance on Western democracies. 33

The German-Soviet non-aggression pact of August 1939 was a major result of Stalin's resolve. This prompted another Comintern reversal, this time condemning both of the warring sides as reactionary and offering help to neither fascism nor its liberal-democratic enemy. But this could not last long. The German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 pushed the Comintern into the camp of Allies.

All through this tactical twists and turns, the Comintern consistently supported Stalin's purges of the Soviet communist party. The Comintern was dissolved in

June 1943, at least in part to placate Stalin's Western allies. 34

It is accused now that part of the Soviet-German agreement was a secret plan to share Poland. When Germany invaded Poland in the following week after the agreement, the USSR moved into Eastern Poland and the Baltic States, reasserting Russian control over the areas lost at Brestlitovsk and Versailles. 35

Throughout the life of Comintern till its formal dissolution in 1943, the 'ideological hegemony' of the CPSU within the international organization went unquestioned. The prestige of the CPSU coupled with its authority by reason of its possession of its state power, prevented any serious challenge to its dominance. Only after the World War II, when a few other communist parties succeeded in capturing power on their own in countries not occupied by Soviet troops or lying within the shadow of the Red Army, i.e., in Yugoslavia, China and Albania, the Soviet party faced rival alternative centres of ideological autonomy. 36

34. Robert A. Gorman, N. 24, pp 324-325.
35. Peter Zwick, N. 33, p 20
36. William Korey, N. 9, p.58
In the case of Yugoslavia, Tito's partisans refused to seek co-operation with the Yugoslav exile government in London as Stalin had urged, and set up an 'Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation' as a counter-government in Bosnian mountains -- a decision described at the time by the Comintern veteran Manuilski, as "a stab in the back of Soviet Union." In the chinese case, Mao appears to have defied Soviet pressure to negotiate not only an all-Chinese coalition government with Chiang Kaishak, but also the integration of the armed forces into a single all-Chinese army after the end of the Japanese war in August 1945. Mao's decision to pass from partisan warfare to an all-out southward offensive in the summer of 1948 was also said to have been taken against Soviet advice.\(^{37}\)

The Soviet consolidation of East Europe helped Stalin to counter the plans of the West to cut Soviet Union short of its influence. Stalin responded to the "Truman Doctrine", "Marshall Plan" and the containment strategy by consolidating further the Soviet position in Europe. On September 22, 1947 the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) was established. This organisation composed of

nine European communist parties under Soviet leadership was a modified version of the Comintern. All pretense of coalition governments in Eastern Europe was abandoned as communist parties asserted full power in Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary. 38

The major ideological split within the international communism emerged during the period of Stalin. The Soviet-Yugoslav break of 1948 provided the background for this. The Yugoslavs argued that "contemporary socialism is not, and cannot be pure and homogeneous..... Socialist development does not follow a straight line". 39 They further argued:

Men build socialism consciously, but in many countries they do so under different conditions: they come into conflict with internal contradictions of varying acuteness, they operate under different influences of spontaneity and of various social and material factors; and in solving concrete problems, they arrive at different subjective decisions.

The uneven development of socialism and the wide

38. Peter Zwick, N. 33, p.25

diversity of its paths and forms produce a number of internal contradictions on that development, but at the same time they provide a powerful incentive to its further advance, and to the efforts to achieve increasingly progressive and freer forms of socialist relations. Any attempt at fettering these laws of socialist development cannot but lead to reactionary results.  

The Yugoslavs also stressed the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism and ruled out the inevitability of war between capitalism and socialism.  

These are the tenets Khrushchev was later to incorporate into the body of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

During the same period, in Western European countries two communist ministers were dismissed from office, while in Eastern and South Eastern Europe, the non-communists were eliminated, leaving the communists and their closest allies in government. Olga argues how these developments helped the Stalinist paradigm:

The national dimension was reinforced by the regional dimension: the East was communist, the West was anti-communist. This simple paradigm was enhanced by the

40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
nationalist policy which Stalin pursued after 1945. The USSR after the war became not just a world power; it also became a national world power. The fate of communist parties within the Soviet bloc was to ape Soviet chauvinism while simultaneously to buckle under it. The non-ruling communist parties were in an even worse situation: they were forced to praise Soviet nationalism while bound by the strict anti-communism of the West. 42

The anti-communist crusade led by the USA, soon after the war, developed the Soviet-US confrontation into the 'cold war'.

In total Stalin's policy was in terms of confirming the Soviet state security than promoting world communism. The Stalinization of the Comintern and the consequent breaks of national communist parties with Soviet interests made the beginning of cracks in the world communist movement, leading to multiple centres and finally fall of world communism.

While analysing the lessons drawn by many communist parties outside Moscow's physical reach, Fernando Claudin observes about Stalin's instrumentalization of both Comintern and Cominform for Soviet state interests. He

42. Olga A. Narkiewicz, N.20, p. 319
says that the policy dictated by Moscow had the unproductive property of being neither revolutionary nor reformist, but only abstract and unworkable.\textsuperscript{43}

The death of Stalin in 1953 brought significant changes in Soviet perceptions on the world communist movement, with the policy reforms introduced by Khrushchev.

\textbf{Khrushchev's Perception of World Communist Movement (1954-'64)}

The Khrushchev's ascension to power in the Soviet Union seems to be a period of relief of tensions inherited from Stalin era. Khrushchev's policy towards world communist movement was determined by the understanding of the rise of independence of the colonial countries and their potential for the growth of communist organisations. Moreover, Khrushchev denounced frankly the Stalinist policies as crimes against party and the country.

The 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956 saw the first attempt since Lenin to systematize the experience of communism as international movement. In this Congress Khrushchev said:

\begin{quote}
  The peoples of the East are playing an active part in deciding the destinies of the whole world, are
\end{quote}

becoming a new mighty factor in international relations. In contrast to the post-war period, most Asian countries act in the world arena as sovereign states which are resolutely upholding their right to an independent foreign policy. International relations have spread beyond the bounds of relations between the countries inhabited chiefly by peoples of the white race and are beginning to acquire the character of genuinely world-wide relations. 44

Khrushchev seems to have taken the full advantage of the opportunities in the underdeveloped countries. His theory of 'peaceful co-existence', 'different roads to socialism', etc and recognition of third world as a neutral 'zone of peace' were important changes from previous positions. In the 20th Congress of CPSU Khrushchev made a statement that "each communist party must find its own road to power according to national conditions." 45

Following the dissolution of the Communist International in 1943 and Cominform in 1956, no formal mechanism has existed for the interaction between the participating communist parties in the international communist movement. Since 1957, international gatherings on


45. Ibid.
the occasion of party Congresses or anniversaries have provided opportunities for meetings. Thus Moscow meeting of 'twelve' parties in November 1957 produced a common 'Declaration' and the Moscow Conference of Representatives of 81 Communist and Workers Parties in Nov.-Dec., 1960, signed a common "statement".

Khrushchev took the help of Leninist literature to support his attack on revisionism and dogmatism, the polar extremes to which opponents are relegated in polemics. The 20th Congress decision of the CPSU were denounced by the Chinese Communist Party. The Chinese Party said:

The leadership of the CPSU has allied itself with US imperialism, the Indian reactionaries and the renegade Tito clique against Socialist China and against all the Marxist-Leninist parties in open betrayal of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism. 46

Immediately after the 'secret speech' of Khrushchev against Stalin's policies, Palmiro Togliatti, the Italian communist party leader, characterised the world communist movement as 'polycentric'. He defined polycentrism "in terms of the absence of a single center

and, therefore, in terms of emphasising the full independence of the different parties within the limits of the principles on which the party ideology and the struggle is founded, but not in terms of demanding the formations of different regional centres". 47

The Chinese Communist Party criticised the policy of peaceful co-existence in relations with the West and Soviet moderation in the approach to the question of national liberation as Soviet "revisionism". This is despite the resolution adopted at the Conference of communist parties in Moscow in November 1957 which stated that "revisionism 48 is the main danger facing the international communist movement". 49

The Chinese viewed that at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU (1961), the revisionist Khrushchev clique developed their anti-revolutionary theories of "peaceful co-existence", "peaceful competition" and "peaceful transition", wrongly understood that the dictatorship of


48. 'Revisionism' is the epithet used by a communist to describe the policies of another communist, if the latter goes beyond the limits of what the former is willing to accept as legitimate and creative Marxism.

the proletariat was no longer necessary in the Soviet Union and also advanced the absurd theories of "the state of the whole people" and "party of the entire people". 50

The Sino-Soviet split in 1963 on the ideological differences added fuel to the ideological disunity in the world communist movement. Though Khrushchev tried some steps to attain peaceful atmosphere in world politics, he could not achieve any permanent relaxation of tensions and the west continued to see the 'peaceful co-existence' in doubt.

Brezhnev's Approach (1964-82)

During the Brezhnev era the Soviet commitment to promote national liberation movements and communist movement in the world remained unchanged. He was for the unity of the world communist movement and against the forces of imperialism. In his address to the 26th Congress of the CPSU in 1981 he stated: "The great unifying principle, a powerful factor furthering the cohesion and


Also see "Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union adopted by the 22nd Congress of the CPSU, October 31, 1961", Supplement to New Times, No. 48, 29 November 1961, pp.1-56.
enhancing the prestige of world communist movement, is the communist's unremitting struggle for peace, against imperialism's aggressive policy and the arms race that carries with it the danger of a nuclear disaster." But the spirit of this address seems to be in conflict with his new theory -- Brezhne Doctrine -- formulated for dealing the Soviet relations with the other socialist states. According to this doctrine each socialist country's sovereignty is limited by the broader interests of the "World Socialist System". This theory also says if any member of the Socialist Commonwealth was threatened, the socialist internationalism, i.e., for all practical purposes, the Soviet Union has the right to intervene irrespective of the fact that it is invited or not. The Soviets used this doctrine for the first time to justify the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Socialist-internationalism of a centralised variety was the core of the Brezhnev doctrine. In many Communist Parties, the Brezhnev doctrine was decisively rejected, and this contributed much to accelerate the process of decline in the world communist movement.

52. Zwick, N. 33, p. 91
53. Timmerman, N. 31, p. 51
At the world conference in 1969, a number of important parties were missing altogether -- not only the Chinese but also the North Vietnamese, North Korean, Albanian and Yugoslav parties. The CPSU was unable to convince the remaining parties that they should support its main objective, a collective condemnation of the Chinese party. Nor could it prevent mention of the intervention in Czechoslovakia, with all its implications of the relations of communist states and parties. Soviet plans for a fourth world conference, first mooted in 1981, have also met with tremendous resistance from various parties. 54

During this period more autonomist tendencies were seen in the world communist movement. For example, Maoism in China, Castroism in Latin America, development of national communism in Eastern Europe, Eurocommunism in West Europe etc.

The meaning and limits of proletarian internationalism became more ambiguous when Brezhnev reformulated the ideological status of the Third World in the seventies. Brezhnev tried to expand the concept of proletarian internationalism to include a new class of

54. Ibid., p.52
parties, which he called "revolutionary democratic". Brezhnev argued that the emergence of parties and states in the Third World with a "socialist orientation" imposed a proletarian internationalist duty on the socialist states to support them, despite the fact that they were neither proletarian nor communist. The USSR enlisted also the support of non-ruling communist parties in the Soviet centred communist movement without challenging their right to function as independent national forces within their respective countries. 55

In the absence of a permanent political organization or regular general meetings of communist parties, the USSR has relied on limited membership, functionally based institutions, bilateral contacts and Soviet party agencies to assert leadership and promote unity. The two most important Soviet sponsored functional organizations are the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and Warsaw Treaty Organization. Bilateral contacts were maintained primarily through yearly visits by the General Secretaries of the Soviet bloc states to the USSR and vice versa. 56

55. Zwick, N. 33, p. 93
56. Ibid., p. 190
The withdrawal of British troops from east of Suez, the failure of American policy in Vietnam, the coups in Somalia, Ethiopia etc. and the Portuguese decision to quite Africa had led to the establishment of new 'countries of socialist orientation' in the Middle East, Indo-China, and Africa. By the end of Seventies, Afghanistan, Grenada and Nicaragua joined this group. 57

Though Brezhnev's policies and steps could rope in a number of parties and also some states which had diverse ideas regarding socialism and internationalism, the absence of an ideological centre of singular intent as regards proletarian internationalism, trends of 'autonomy' and 'polycentrism' gained ground and reacted against Soviet attempts to revive the old idea of 'proletarian internationalism'. The decline of the communist movement has to be seen in this light.

After the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in 1979 and the crackdown in Poland in 1981, Enrico Berlinguer's PCI moved away from the Soviet orbit. The PCI abandoned its privileged relations with the CPSU. 58

57. Goeffrey Stern, N.4, p.239.
58. Timmerman, N.34, p.55.
The decay of the world communist movement in its traditionally structured Moscovite form accelerated during the Brezhnev era. The diversity and autonomist tendencies created doubt about the existence of a 'world communist movement' in its political sense.

Post-Brezhnev Interregnum (1982-85)

The period between 1982 and 1985, between Brezhnev and Gorbachev, was of no significance as far as the policy matters related to international communist movement are concerned. Politically, the period can be aptly considered part of Brezhnev era because of the absence of any substantive break from the earlier policies. At the same time, it was a preface phase for Gorbachev.

Yuri Andropov (1982-'84) was basically a reformer, but in a limited sense. He was for economic reforms and his anti-corruption and anti-alcohol drives drew applause. His approach to economic reforms was weakened by his appeal to strict discipline, making the reform a technical problem without any political implications. At the same time, he could psychologically break the Brezhnev tradition of 'stability of cadres' and advance the career of younger members, especially, that of Gorbachev.
Konstantin Chernenko (1984-'85) was essentially an interim stop gap arrangement before the long-awaited inevitable plunge into a new era. Chernenko was definitely a conservative, and the public rehabilition and readmittance to the Party of Molotov, a survivor of the Stalin era, was symbolically an important step taken by him. Even then, Gorbachev was informally becoming the heir-apparent as he was often officially described as the deputy General Secretary and at times being deputised at Politburo meetings in the absence of Chernenko. Death of Chernenko in 1985 and his impressing at least some of the old guards led to the choice of Gorbachev as General Secretary of a Party still dominated by the conservatives.

Brezhnev's policy to pursue détente along with expansionism in the Third World could not become successful in the long-run. Because of his policies, Soviet Union was forced to support self-declared Marxist-Leninist regimes by the end of the Brezhnev era. Apart from Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea, Laos and Cambodia, Soviet Union was supporting regimes in Angola, Mozambique, Madagascar, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Benin, the People's Republic of Congo, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen), Afghanistan,

Nicaragua and Grenada. Massive military and economic support needed to support these regimes, that too without success and reliability, led to Soviet experts in rethinking about the validity of "socialism by proclamation." Many of the regimes referred above had ruling parties who declared themselves as "Marxist-Leninist Vanguard Parties." Andropov raised doubts about the validity of supporting such groups. He said at a Central Committee meeting in June 1983:

> It is one thing to proclaim socialism as one's aim and quite another to build it. For this, a certain level of productive forces, culture and consciousness are needed.

Andropov's statement denotes the beginning of a policy of 'disengagement' which became an active one later during Gorbachev. Moreover, Andropov seems to be too engaged with the East-West relations to give attention to the Third World. During Chernenko's brief period, the Brezhnevian orthodoxy re-emerged at least in ideas and stands, though nothing of significance practically materialised. For instance, there was a revival in 1984 in

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60. Ibid., pp. 289–90

61. Ibid., p. 290

academic circles of such concepts as 'revolutionary democracy' which were once criticised in the Sixties.  

Gorbachev's Policy (1985-1991)

By April 1985, when Gorbachev took over as Soviet leader, the international communist movement began to weaken beyond the possibilities of revival. The new thinking did not see the chances for revolution in the Third World. A total de-ideologisation was taking place through his policies of glasnost and perestroika. It seems that he was not much interested to take up the issue of world communist movement. Anti-imperialism was not taken as a goal or as unifier of world communist movement. He recognised the diversities and problems facing the world communist movement.

Gorbachev said in the 27th CPSU Congress report:

... the CPSU is an inalienable component of international communist movement. We the Soviet communists are well aware that every advance we make in building socialism is an advance of the entire movement.

63. Ibid., pp. 185-86

He also pointed out:

The communist movement's immense diversity and the tasks that it encounters are likewise a reality. The CPSU is not dramatising the fact that complete unanimity among communist parties exists not always and not in everything. 65

It seems that Gorbachev was interested primarily in the domestic problems of Soviet Union and that he was convinced and committed to set the home aright first because the affairs in international arena is inseparably linked to the internal limitations. He was humble enough to understand that no more sloganeering was going to help in bailing out the Soviet state from the utter economic and political crisis. His brave deviations from the ideas linked to class struggle and war, and courageous inclinations to pacifist and disarmament goals together made his approach different from his wavering predecessors and specifically distinct from that of the Brezhnev era.

Gorbachev has tried to de-ideologise his foreign policy by admitting that class conflict need not necessarily lead to violence and that war would not advance the victory of socialist forces. He did not regard the class struggle as an essential basis of foreign policy, though on this issue conservatives disagreed with him. 66

65. Ibid., p. 82
Attempt to grapple with actual problems and to keep distance from the unproductive and diversionary ideological preoccupations can be seen in his interview to Soviet TV, after his visit to Krasnoyarsk, in Sept., 1988 when he said:

There have emerged problems which we have comprehended and this comprehension has grown into a formula about the priority of universal values. This is the priority with which all should reckon, proceeding at least from common sense, excluding the ideological aspect. 67

Nuclear disarmament got priority in Gorbachev's foreign policy. He showed tremendous concern for peaceful co-existence and peace. His proposals for a "Common European Home", for peace and security in the Asia Pacific region, for a comprehensive system of international security etc are some of its kind in this direction.

His path-breaking decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan and the like were moves in the direction of promoting international peace and security. His serious realisation of Soviet domestic problems helped him to think in this direction. Another relevant factor in this regard

67. Ibid., p. 203
is the possibility of Afghanistan becoming a fundamentalist Islamic country under the influence of Iran and other Islamic countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and others. Should this happen it would pose a threat to the Soviet Central Asian Republics, Muslim areas like Sinkiang of China and Jammu & Kashmir State in India. Although the Soviet authorities played down this threat in the beginning, they were becoming increasingly aware of it and symptoms and manifestations of this threat were then reported in Soviet Azerbaijan, Tadjikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kirghizea. 68

Even though the conviction that regional conflicts should be resolved by political settlement predates the 'new political thinking' of Gorbachev, the determination with which Gorbachev's leadership pursued the cases of political settlement including that of Afghanistan suggests that there has been a substantial shift in policy. 69

Gorbachev was not biased in accepting the differences between the social democratic movements on

68. Ibid., p. 223
the one hand and the CPSU on the other. In fact, this further advanced the cause of peace and international security, and strengthened the relations between the CPSU and the social democratic movements worldwide. Naturally, this was at the cost of traditional communist movement. No time was lost in uncertainties arising in the minds of some of the communist parties over the policies of the CPSU. The downgrading of the world communist movement could be significantly read in Gorbachev's report to the 28th CPSU Congress where the movement was not even mentioned. 70

Therefore, there was no more any chance of world communist movement of the kind that existed at the time of Comintern, Cominform and World Communist Conferences. Gorbachev has changed the entire image of the Soviet Union and his desire to reform the system at last ended in the decline of the system itself. When the Soviet system which was once the undisputed vanguard of the world communist movement declined in 1991, "the myth of the world communist movement has finally evaporated", as Berlingner has said as back as in 1981. 71

70. Arvind Gupta, N.62, pp. 132
71. Timmerman, N. 31, p. 72
With the Party Plenum in 1990 relinquishing monopoly of power by CPSU and with the Soviet Union vanishing as a political entity by the end of 1991, the very question of a world communist movement entertained by Soviet Union came to an end. Gorbachev was the last General Secretary of CPSU.

**Sum up**

On the whole, one could say that there was an evolutionary change in the foreign policy frame of Soviet Union. If 'proletarian internationalism' and 'anti-imperialist' stance were the main planks during Lenin, the same had slowly converged into basically the Soviet state interests during Stalin. Even though, Soviet interests were very much there during Lenin, emphasis was given to proletarian internationalism and attempts to this direction were made and Comintern was the organisational manifestation of this approach. Stalin dissolved Comintern in 1943 and formed Cominform in 1947. The policy shifts often witnessed during Stalin can be understood to have boiled down to the single programme of defence of Soviet Union.

Stalin pursued the concept of 'socialism in one country' to its extreme limits. The concept of conflict between 'two camps' had been slowly and conveniently
converted into that of conflict within the camp of capitalism itself. The organisational multiplicity of world communist movement has aggravated during Krushchev who professed 'peaceful co-existence'. Krushchev dissolved the Cominform in 1956. Brezhnev's de'tente proved ultimately a failure as he continued propping up the 'declaratory' socialist regimes in the Third World. With Andropov's shift from this policy of supporting proclamatory socialists and Gorbachev's 'disengagement' from the earlier involvements which had already become great financial and military burdens, the Soviet support to world communist movement led to its end.