CHAPTER V

COMINTERN POLICY TOWARDS NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT IN INDIA, 1935-1943
The mid 1930's was a very important period in the history of anti-colonial movement in India. At the same time, this period was marked by many turning points in the history of Soviet Union as well as, the Communist International. The first half of the 1930's was marked by a series of mistakes committed by the Communist International regarding anti-colonial movement throughout the World, as a result of which these mistakes were reflected in the policies of different communist parties in the colonies. Indian communist party was one of the biggest victims of such mistakes particularly, while dealing with the national bourgeoisie.¹

So far as, the Comintern's policy in India is concerned, holding its Seventh and the last Congress in 1935 was a landmark event, which changed the entire course of communist movement throughout the World. Initially, this Congress was to be held in 1934, however, it had to be postponed for a year due to different reasons. At the outset of the Seventh Congress many historical developments took place in India as well as in Soviet Union. In India, under the pressure of Gandhiji, Indian National Congress withdrew the anti-British movement in 1934. On the other hand, leftist within the Congress formed the Congress Socialist Party. The main aim of this party was to influence the Congress Party towards left. At this juncture, the Communist Party of India was badly isolated, so it tried to find out a new platform in order to expand its activities throughout the country.

In this regard, M. R. Masani says: "The most important

¹See for the details, Chapter IV of this Thisis
channel of infiltration was through the Congress Socialist Party, which was still young. R. Palme Dutt had already instructed the Communist Party to concentrate on the left-wing parties. He had advised that in order to realise the Anti-Imperialist People's Front and carry through changes in the organisation policy and work of the National Congress, it was essential that all left-wing elements in the Congress should be consolidated.²

At the same time, Soviet Union joined League of Nations in 1934 itself. Considering already developed fascism in Italy and Germany, this events proved to be of far-reaching impact on close cooperation between Soviet Union and other Allied nations against the menace of fascism and incoming world war. This year also marked the beginning of radical changes in Comintern policies which were reflected in the resolutions of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International. The impact of the prevailing international situation could also be seen on changing perception of British colonialism in India. The Government of India act was passed in 1935 and a process of self-rule was getting momentum. Under these circumstances the Communist International had to re-examine its policies throughout the world.

In this regard, the Seventh Congress of the Communist International played a crucial role, whose impact became visible in the policies of every communist parties all over the globe. The Seventh Congress was held in Moscow from July 25 to August 21, 1935. The Congress was attended by 513 delegates from 65

Communist Parties. However, no delegate from India was present at the Congress while seven delegates were present at the Sixth Congress which had been held seven years ago in 1928. In fact, two delegates, S. V. Deshpande and S. S. Mirajkar from India were deputed to attend the Seventh Congress, however, they were arrested in Singapore en route to Moscow.

The Communist leader, G. Adhikari writes that the Congress worked out the strategic and tactical line of building the broad antifascist people's front and of building the anti-imperialist front to fight the forces of fascist aggression, intensifying oppression and of war which were raising their head in the context of the great economic crisis of the early thirties. Actually the Seventh Congress did much more. It initiated a new orientation in the policy and the general line, in the strategy and tactics and in the organisational set-up of the Communist International. This new orientation and its determined implementation by the Communist Parties of the world in the succeeding years made the international Communist movement a world force fighting against imperialism and capitalism and war, for socialism and for the independence of nations, for world peace and brotherhood of nations.3

He has further pointed out that the new orientation enabled the Communist Parties to become a progressive national force in their respective countries. This new orientation initiated a new organisational pattern for world body, according to which the task of the leadership at the world level was restricted to

collectively working out the common tasks and line, which all the parties have to carry out in the struggle for the freedom of the peoples, for world peace, for democracy and socialism; while each party is independent and autonomous, working out the line and tasks of revolutionary advance in its own country applying the common ideology and the common general line in terms of the specific concrete situation there.4

In a significant remark, a resolution on "Fascism, Working Class Unity, and the Tasks of the Comintern", mentioned: "In India Communists had been guilty of sectarian errors, failing to participate in all the mass demonstrations organised by the National Congress and its affiliated organisations. Since they were not strong enough to organize a mass anti-imperialist movement of their own, this had led to their isolation. In December 1934 they had proposed a united anti-imperialist front with the National Congress, but had made it a condition that it should work for a workers' and peasants Soviet Government in India, confiscation of land without compensation, etc. This error had been corrected and in April 1935 the reformist and revolutionary unions had amalgamated, and the C P now had a working agreement with Congress Socialist Party."5

A Soviet Scholar, O. V. Martyshin has pointed out that in 1933 the Indian Communists decided to broaden their cooperation with other parties in the trade unions. Later on attempts were made to establish contacts with the Socialist

4 Ibid., p. 56.

Party of the Indian National Congress. These new trends were developed and approved at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern which emphatically reiterated the necessity for all anti-imperialist forces to unite. It designated the formation of a united anti-imperialist front as the main task for the Communist parties in the colonies and semi-colonial countries. This called for a serious revision of the propositions of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern and implied co-operation with the bourgeois-democratic movement and the need to come to an agreement with its leaders.\(^6\)

He further explains that the experience of the Communist movement in India was criticised at the Seventh Congress in a report by G. Dimitrov and in the main report on the colonial question delivered by Wang Ming which reflected the Comintern's point of view. Wang Ming said that there were leftist errors in the preceding activity of the Communist Party of India and noted that the work of the Indian Communists was an example of how not to carry on the tactics of the united national front. The programme for joint action with other anti-imperialist forces proposed by the Indian Communists demanded among other things the establishment of an Indian Soviet Republic, confiscation of all lends belonging to the landowners without compensation and a general strike. Such demands, Wang Ming said, went far beyond the limits of the bourgeois-democratic programme. What could

---

serve as a realistic basis for joint action was a struggle against the drop in wages, the lengthening of the working day, etc. He added that sectarianism and dogmatism merely strengthened the influence of Gandhism and reformism.7

Referring to this situation David N. Druhe writes that in the year 1935 Soviet foreign policy and the policy of the Communist parties throughout the world definitely changed. In Soviet foreign policy a definite seeming orientation towards the democracies was observed and the various Communist parties spoke of joining with various radical and liberal forces in "popular fronts" and "united fronts". This change in Soviet policy was not occasioned by a renunciation of the ultimate goal of that policy-world revolution-but rather by the rise of Fascism. In addition, Nazi Germany and militarist Japan threatened the Soviet Union as a nation and Fascist or pro-Fascist parties threatened the existence of the Communists in democratic countries. Hence arose the basis of the Soviet change in policy.8

He further says that India and other colonial countries were included in the scope of the Soviet change in policy. Its application to India was clearly evidenced in the Seventh Congress of the Communist International which took place in Moscow from July 25 to August 20, 1935.9

Analysing more on the above change, Druhe wrote: "This, than, represented a return to the line first propounded by Lenin

7 Ibid., p. 448-9 (Quoted).


9 Ibid.
and opposed by M. N. Roy, which was enunciated in the pronouncement of the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 and it was also the line which Roy himself had come to favour in 1928 and 1929, but which the Comintern then spurned in favour of the view that colonial Communist parties should stand boldly alone as candidly insurrectionally bodies hostile to the colonial imperialists and the national bourgeoisie alike."

In this context advising to the Indian Communists, W. Ming, reported at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, "The Indian Communists should in no case disregard work with in the National Congress and the national revolutionary and national reformist organisations affiliated with it, maintaining at the same time their complete political and organisational independence. Both within and without National Congress, the Indian Communists must consolidate all the genuine anti-imperialist forces of the Country..."

Commenting on the same issue, a Soviet Scholar, Y. M. Ivanov wrote: "In 1935, the Seventh Congress of the Communist International outlined a new course of rejecting the former leftist guide-lines and creating a united anti-imperialist front. The Congress urged all Communists to cooperate with anti-imperialist organisations, including those headed by the national bourgeoisie and composed of the broad masses. The Seventh Congress rejected the leftists' assertion that the proletariat should be the sole leader of the national liberation movement and the recognition of this as an indispensable condition for a given..."

\[10\] Ibid., p. 145.

\[11\] Masani, n. 2, pp. 57-58 (Quoted).
organisation to be accepted for membership in the anti-imperialist front. "Communist International", the press organ of the Executive Committees of the Comintern, noted that at the time the Communist parties were not to insist on the confiscation of landowners' land without compensation as a condition of an anti-imperialist agreement with the national-revolutionaries and the national reformists, taking into account the fact that the majority of the national bourgeoisie were connected with feudal landownership."\textsuperscript{12}

He further elaborated that the policy of the Comintern, directed towards forming a united anti-imperialist front and establishing relations of cooperation with the patriotic strata of the bourgeoisie, provided new opportunities for the developing the Communist movement, for increasing the influence of the Communists in mass organisations and for consolidating the political role of the proletariat in the national liberation movement. Organisations of the united anti-imperialist movement appeared in many countries of the East, including China, India, Indochina and the Philippines, as proof that the Communist parties were evolving into a politically influential force in the national liberation movement.\textsuperscript{13}

The most important outcome of the Seventh Congress was the task of establishing united front against fascism. In a resolution "The Anti-Imperialist People's Front in the Colonial


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 88
countries", it was said: "In the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the most important task facing the Communist consists in working to establish an anti-imperialist people's front. For this purpose it is necessary to draw the widest masses into the national liberation movement against growing imperialist exploitation, against cruel enslavement, for the driving out of the imperialists, for the independence of the country, to take an active part in the mass anti-imperialist movements headed by the national reformists and strive to bring about joint action with the national-revolutionary and national-reformist organisations on the basis of a definite anti-imperialist platform.... In the interests of its own struggle for emancipation, the proletariat of the imperialist countries must give its unstinted support to the liberation struggle of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples against the imperialist pirates."14

Main hypothesis behind the slogan of united front was the possible coming danger of the world war II. Though Comintern had long back drawn the attention of the people towards the world war II, The Seventh Congress come out with the concrete proposal to face the coming war whose main target was the destruction of the Soviet Union followed by the world Communist movement. It was of course a correct analysis of the prevailing situation which proved a real forecast. This is why, a Italian Communist leader. Togliatti in his report on the question of war, elaborated the following lines.15

14 Degras, n. 5, p. 367.

(1) The united working class front against fascism, to include agreements between social-democratic and Communist parties and trade unions, and also all workers’ organisations, Catholic, Syndicalist, anarchist or other;
(2) the united anti-fascist people’s front, including the working peasants, urban petty bourgeoisie, intelligentsia and office employees;
(3) the united anti-imperialist people’s front in Colonial Countries;
(4) the perspective, in conditions of political crisis and upsurge of the mass movement, of establishing a working, class united front government or an anti-fascist people’s front government, which would not yet be a government of working class dictatorship, but would be prepared to put into effect decisive measures against fascism and reactions.
(5) the further perspective of advancing to a single united mass political party of the working class in every country on the basis of five indispensable conditions:
(a) Complete independence from the bourgeoisie; (b) prior achievement of united action of working class; (c) recognition of the aim of overthrow of the rule of the bourgeoisie and establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat; (d) rejection of support of one’s own bourgeoisie in imperialist war; (e) democratic centralism,
(6) the united people’s front in the struggle for peace and against the instigator of war, with the specific naming of the main instigators of war at the given time as the fascist powers headed by Nazi Germany and Japan; for the defence of the U.S.S.R.; and for
the support of national liberation struggles and wars of the national liberation, including wars of peoples in a weak state attacked by a big imperialist power against such attack and for national independence.

However, the main here of Seventh Congress was Georgi Dimitrov. In his main speech delivered at the Congress he said: "In connection with the changed-international and internal situation, exceptional importance attaches in all colonial and semi-colonial countries to the question of the anti-imperialist united front. In forming a wide anti-imperialist united front of struggle in the colonies and semi-colonies, it is necessary above all to recognize the variety of conditions in which the anti-imperialist struggle of the masses is proceeding, the varying degree of maturity of the national liberation movement, the role of the proletariat within it and the influence of the Communist Party over the broad masses."\textsuperscript{16}

He further said: "In Brazil the problem is different from that in India, China etc. In Brazil the Communist Party, having laid a correct foundation for the development of the united anti-imperialist front by the establishment of the National liberation Alliance, has to make every effort to extent further this front by drawing into it first and foremost the many millions of the peasantry, leading up to the formation of units of a people's revolutionary army, completely devoted to the revolution, and to

the establishment of the rule of the National Liberation Alliance.

"In India the Communists have to support, extend and participate in anti-imperialist mass activities, not excluding those which are under national reformist leadership. While maintaining their political and organisational independence, they must carry on active work inside the organizations which take part in the Indian National Congress, facilitating the process of crystallization of a national revolutionary wing among them, for the purpose of further developing the national liberation movement of the Indian peoples against British imperialism."17

"Regarding the changing perception of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, Spanish author Fernando Claudin wrote that the Congress had focused its attention on the problems of struggle against Fascism and war. The policies of "workers united front" and "people's front" clearly tended towards an alliance with the Socialist parties (described not long before as 'Socialist Fascists') and the democratic and liberal section of the bourgeoisies. Form a formal standpoint, this strategy seemed to be subordinated to an overall prospect of struggle against capitalism, but the emphasis was laid on immediate aims: defence (or recovery) of bourgeois-democratic freedoms, in face of the Fascist threat, fight against the danger of war, support for the collective security policy of the USSR. It is noteworthy that even the very words 'world revolution' made not a single appearance in Dimitron's lengthy report.18

17 Ibid., pp. 1211-12.

He further said that this final Congress of the Comintern revealed certain tendencies to renovation there appearing among the Communist parties, which were seeking to rid themselves of meaningless schemas and sectarian traditions; at the same time, however, it was the least theoretical Congress ever held by the Comintern—the transition to what Dimitrov called a new tactical orientation was effected without any critical analysis of the past. Thus, the crisis of the Marxist theory of world revolution was 'resolved' by renouncing, in practice, any explicit theory of world revolution.19

As, it is well known fact that the Seventh Congress totally moved against fascism and war, Soviet Union tried to get uncompromising and monolithic support from the world Communist movement. Commenting on this phenomenon Claudin said that after Hitler's accession to power, the threat of Fascism and war, the danger of aggression against the Soviet Union, furnished powerful arguments in support of the metaphysics of 'monolithicity'.20 Practically the Comintern treated every Communist party as a part of its own body. It is obvious from the concluding speech of Georgi Dimitrov delivered at the Seventh Congress in which he said:

"Today there is the World Communist Party, the Communist International. Today the bulk of the Social-Democratic workers are turning to the Soviet Union, to its policy of peace, to a united front with the Communists. Today the peoples of the colonial and semi-colonial countries do not regard their liberation as a

19 Ibid., p. 91.

20 Ibid., p.122.
hopeless cause. On the contrary, they are passing on more and more to determined struggle against the imperialist enslavers. The best evidence of this is the Soviet revolution in China and the heroic exploits of the Red Army of the Chinese people."^{21}

Regarding the implementation on the decisions of the Seventh Congress he said: "The Congress has taken a firm decision that the united front tactics must be applied in a new way. The Congress is emphatic in its demands that Communists do not content themselves with the mere propaganda of general slogans about proletarian dictatorship and Soviet power, but that they pursue a definite, active, Bolshevik policy with regard to all internal and foreign political questions arising in their country, with regard to all urgent problems that affect the vital interests of the working class, of their own people and of the international labour movement. The Congress insists most emphatically that all tactical steps taken by the Communist parties be based on a sober analysis of actual conditions, on a consideration of the relation of class forces, and of the political level of the broadest masses. The Congress demands the complete eradication of every vestige of sectarianism from the practice of the Communist movement, as this represents at present the greatest obstacle in the way of the Communist parties carrying out a really mass, really Bolshevik policy."^{22}

There was a typical open threat to those Communists or

---


^{22} Ibid., p. 1164.
parties who dared to differ or question the Comintern's Bolshevik policies. For example, Dimitrov said: "Championing as we do working class unity, we shall with so much the more energy and irreconcilability fight for unity within our parties. There can be no room in our parties for factions or for attempts at factionalism. Whoever will try to break up the iron unity of our ranks by any kind of factionalism will get to feel what is meant by the Bolshevik discipline that Lenin and Stalin have always taught us. Let this be a warning to those few elements individual parties who think that they can take advantage of the difficulties of their party, the wounds of defeat or the blows of the raging enemy, to carry out their factional plans, to further their own group interests."23

As pointed out earlier that the phrase like 'world revolution' was not mentioned at all in Dimitrov's main report. In this context in concluding speech he said: "Comrades, we intentionally expunged from the report as well as from the decisions of the Congress high-sounding phrases on the revolutionary perspective. We did this not because we have any ground for appraising the tempo of revolutionary development less optimistically than before, but because we want to rid our parties of any inclination to replace Bolshevik activity by revolutionary phrase mongering or futile disputes about the appraisal of the perspective. Waging a decisive struggle against any reliance on spontaneity, we see and take account of the process of development of the revolution, not as passive observers, but as active participants in this process.24

23 Ibid., p. 1165.

24 Ibid., p. 1166.
So far as, post Seventh Congress period is concerned, it proved to be historic for the anti-colonial movement in our country as M. R. Masani points out that in India the year from 1935 to the outbreak of world war II in 1939 were years of comparative peace and some constructive advance. It is true that the Government of India act of 1935 enacted by the British Parliament drew a lot of fire for retaining the Central Government in British hands while transferring power to cabinets responsible to elected legislatures in the provinces or states. Nonetheless, when elections under the new constitution were called for there was no boycott and in 1937 the Congress, which had emerged as the almost unchallenged victors of the elections, agreed to form cabinets in the States it had carried, while the Moslem League did so in the rest.25

Analysing the historical background, Sumit Sarkar writes that from 1934 onwards, there were clear signs both of renewed labour militancy and of tendency towards reunion of communist and trade union factions. Communists and Royists tried to organise a general strike in textiles in 1934, and there were big strikes in Sholapur (February-May), Nagpur (May-July), and above all, a Bombay general strike from April. The alarm caused in government circles by this renewed labour and communist militancy is indicated by the flood of official papers dealing with the subject in 1934, and the CPI was formally banned on 23 July under the old 1908 Act against seditious associations.26 He further says that unlike in 1929, however, repression failed to

25 Masani, n. 2, pp. 59-60.

26 Sumit Sarkar, Modern India, 1885-1947 (Delhi, 1983), p. 335.
seriously weakened the Communist movement, for the 1930's would be marked rather by consolidation and advanced through a new 'United Front' strategy, with communists progressively developing contacts with Left-nationalist elements by work within the C.S.P and the Congress. The formal shift in party line was clearly associated with the United Front perspective worked out in Dimitrov's report to the Seventh Comintern Congress in 1935 in the context of the menace of fascism.27

It is well known fact that after withdrawal of Second Civil Disobedience movement in 1934, a large number of freedom fighters got disillusioned with Gandhian method, as Sumit Sarkar remarks: "...aftermath of Civil Disobedience brought into the communist movement a new generation of disillusioned Gandhian nationalists and revolutionary terrorists with much wider contacts and prestige among the nationalist mainstream than the Bombay and Calcutta sects of 1920's could have possibly enjoyed....In Bengal, the real spread of communism into the districts came with the large scale conversion of terrorists to Marxism in detention camps and in the Andmans during the mid-1930's through intense ideological debates and heroic self-searching. From terrorism came Bengal communist leaders of the stature of Bhowani Sen and Harekrishna Konar, and the party eventually was able to recruit a big majority of the most prestigious revolutionary groups of all-the heroes of the Chittagong Armoury Raid. The stage had thus been set for a major confrontation between Right and Left within the national

27 Ibid.
movement, and increasingly from 1935 a touchstone was provided by the opportunities and snares offered by new constitutional structure being imposed by the British.²⁸

Amid these developments, on February 11, 1936 the Comintern secretariat adopted a resolution "Proposals on the Indian questions", which was a further elaboration and concrete expression of the Seventh Congress decisions. It was preceded by a profound study of the Socio-political situation in India and of the experience of the Communist Party of India.²⁹ The Comintern secretariat's resolution recommended Indian Communists to take immediate step to establish abroad popular anti-imperialist front. It also recommended that this front should be set up through the struggle against the colonialist-imposed "Servile Constitution."³⁰

The Indian Communists were further recommended to join the Indian National Congress, fight for the strengthening within it of the left wing, establish a united front with the Congress Socialist Party, support those of its proposals which met the people's vital interests. The resolution emphasises that that policy did not mean neglecting or weakening the ideological struggle and did not preclude a business-like, specific criticism of reformism. In the opinion of the Secretariat, the main objective of Indian Communists was to get the Indian National Congress to pursue a consistent struggle against British

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 335-6.


³⁰ Ibid.
Imperialism and do all to hamper any alliance between the Indian National Congress and reactionary groups.31 In this process, the Communists were again recommended to advocate the calling of an All-India Constituent Assembly by universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot to oppose it to the draft "Servile Constitution" and to explain that a genuine Constituent Assembly could only result from a broad popular movement.32

The Soviet historian A. Reznikov writes that the Executive Committee of the Communist International Secretariat, in drawing up this document of exceptional importance for the Communist Party of India, felt that the Party "had to be reshaped so as all its members could conduct daily persistent work in existing mass organisations and energetically take part in the popular struggle for the people's concrete needs and political rights." The secretariat based itself on the notion that recognition of proletarian hegemony by a particular anti-imperialist Contingent was certainly not a condition of "accepting" that Contingent into the national anti-imperialist front; on the contrary, that recognition resulted from the persistent, dogged, consistent struggle of the Communist Party for the working people's everyday political and economic needs, for national liberation—a struggle being conducted within the framework of a united front. That conclusion fully accorded with Lenin's propositions on the national Colonial issue.33

---

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., p. 158.
33 Ibid.
According to him the Secreariate drew the attention of Indian Communists to the need for every possible combination of legal and illegal forms of struggle. It advised them to follow the example of the heroic struggle of the people of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) against Italian fascism and to show the widest possible section of the working people how they could and should fight and defend themselves. The Comintern tried to focus the efforts of Indian Communists on the anti-imperialist struggle, on setting up and consolidating a united national front. The document "Proposals on the Indian Question" played an important part not only in strengthening the positions of relatively small Communist Party of India, but also in promoting the mass liberation movement of the Indian people.34

In this regard, two most important articles were written by the two British Communist theoreticians, R. Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley, obviously on the instruction of Communist International. The first article, "The Anti-Imperialist People's Front" was published in International Press correspondence on February 29, 1936 and Second, "Towards Trade Union Unity in India", published in the same organ on March 7, 1936. These are also known as Dutt and Bradley thesis.

These two articles proved to be a mandatory instruction for the Communist Party of India which had to change its line of actions accordingly. In the beginning of the article, "The Anti-Imperialist People's Front," Dutt and Bradley write: "The Indian National struggle is today at a critical point. British imperialism has succeeded in imposing its constitution of open subjection in

34 Ibid.
the face of the opposition of the entire Indian Nation. The first stage of the struggle against it has met with defeat. For the moment there is Confusion in the national camp as to the path forward. At the same time the ever worsenng situation and sharpening struggle of the masses of workers and peasants calls ever more loudly for organisation and leadership."35 Talking about "Unity" as the first need, they wrote: "Every Indian patriot will recognise that the first need for the successful advance of the Indian National struggle, the key need of the present situation, is unity of all the anti-imperialist forces in the Common struggle. This is the indispensable condition for the successful fight against the existing and ever-sharpening reaction and oppression...."36

In relation to the role of the Indian National Congress, in realising unity, Dutt and Bradley thesis said: "The National Congress had undoubtedly achieved a gigantic task in uniting forces of the Indian people for the national struggle, and remains to-day the principal existing mass organisation of many divers elements seeking national liberation. Nothing should be allowed to weaken the degree of unity that has been achieved through the National Congress, and The proposals that are here put forward are only intended to endeavour to find means to assist and extend that unity to a still wider front.... But it is necessary to recognise that the National Congress, as it exists at present, is not yet the


36 Ibid.
united front of the Indian people in the national struggle. Its constitution still leaves out the broadest sections of the masses. Its programme does not yet express with fully clearness the programme of the national struggle. Its leadership can not yet be recognised as the leadership of the national struggle. It does not at present draw out and guide mass activity but rather acts as a break upon it. What is needed is, without impairing the degree of unity that has been achieved through the National Congress, to strengthen and extend this unity to a broader front, and to develop to a new stage the organisation and leadership of the mass struggle against imperialism.\(^\text{37}\)

Dutt and Bradley thesis dealt in detail with the nature and character of Indian National Congress. In an interesting analysis it said that the National Congress was based, not on the union of all elements supporting the national struggle, but on a restrictive individual membership, with certain limitations of franchise and of a special ideology of "creed" which prevented it from embracing the broadest front of all who supported the national struggle.\(^\text{38}\) It further said:" The mass organisations of the workers and peasants, the Trade Unions and peasants unions and all similar collective mass organisations, constituting the most important forces of the national struggle, are at present outside the National Congress. Only when all these forces are combined, the mass organisations of the workers and peasants, together with the National Congress, whether in a united front agreement or by collective affiliation of these organisations to the

\(^{37}\)Ibid., p. 298.

\(^{38}\)Ibid.
Congress, will we have achieved a broad united national front, capable of developing as a real Anti-Imperialist People's Front and drawing behind it the overwhelming majority of the population, the workers and peasants and the middle classes, in a single army of the national struggle. Within such a bloc the working class can increasingly realise its role vanguard, to lead to victory the Indian revolution."^39

Recommending the first aim to establish a united front of the Congress with all the existing mass organisations, the trade unions, peasants unions forth organisations, in a broad Anti-imperialist Peoples front on the basis of the struggle against imperialism, the thesis added that they (Indian Communists) should seek to amend the constitution of National Congress in such a way that trade unions, peasants' unions, youth organisations, etc., could be collectively affiliated. This collective affiliation should be carried out not only on an all-India scale but equally in the provinces and on a district and local scale....^40

Referring to a clear programme of anti-imperialist struggle, Dutt and Bradley recommended following points:^41
1. The aim of complete independence for India;
2. freedom of speech, press, organisation, assembly, strikes and picketing;
3. repeal of all exceptional and repressive laws, ordinances

---

^39 Ibid.

^40 Ibid.

^41 Ibid., p. 299.
and anti-labour laws (Criminal Amendment Act, Press Act, etc.);
4. release of all political prisoners, detenus and internees;
5. against reduction of wages and dismissals of workers; for an adequate minimum wage and 8-hour day; for 50 percent reduction in rents and against the seizure of peasant land for debt by imperialists, native princes, zamindars and moneylenders.

About anti-imperialist front in the elections (which were going to be held under the provision of Government of India Act 1935), Dutt and Bradley wrote that the question of elections was of cardinal importance for the anti-imperialist front. On the one had, it was essential that the clear line of the anti-imperialist front, the line of consistent struggle for complete independence, against all cooperation with imperialism and its constitution, and for the demands of the masses, should be challengingly voiced at the elections and that the outlook of these vast sections of the national movement must not be stifled. On the other hand, it is essential that unity of the national front should be maintained against the imperialists and their allies, and there should be no splitting of the vote for the benefit of the reactionary right wing elements outside the Congress who stand for co-operation with imperialism.42 They further wrote: "We would suggest that the anti-imperialist bloc, constituted on its programme of complete independence, no co-operation with imperialism, and active struggle for the demands of the masses, seek agreement with the existing leadership of the Congress (Within which the Congress Socialists, grouping the radical elements, represent

42 Ibid., p. 300.
already a substantial minority of roughly one-third of the forces and a potential majority) to run its candidates directly on this programme in a certain number of seats (or to be able to include them as a group with their specific programme within the Congress panel), as recognised candidates of the united national front, co-operating with the congress candidates in other constituencies who run on the official programme. The details of this arrangement will need careful working out, but with goodwill on both sides, such an arrangement should be possible. Every effort requires to be made to prevent a splitting of the national front in the elections; but such unity should not be utilised to stifle the Left-wing forces of the anti-imperialist bloc."43

The concluding part of the Dutt-Bradley thesis dealt with the 'Constituent Assembly as the central slogan of the struggle', It said: "In order to concentrate the struggle against the slave constitution imposed by the British government, we cannot rest satisfied with the negative programme of rejection of the constitution and refusal of co-operation, but must counterpose our positive slogan. Corresponding to the existing stages of the movement, the time is now undoubtedly favourable to launch as our central slogan the demand for the convening of a Constituent Assembly, based up on a universal and equal franchise and direct and secret ballot.... In conclusion, it should be stated that these proposals are put forward for the consideration of all supporters of the struggle for national liberation in India, as an attempt to trace the main outline of the path of advance in the present immediate situation and with the given relations of forces. The

43 Ibid.
realisation of this next stage of advance, the realisation of a broad based, all-embracing and powerful anti-imperialist people's front, should rapidly open the way to new perspective for the Indian National movement."\(^4\)

The second article, "Towards Trade Union Unity in India", written by Ben Bradley and R. Palme Dutt was completely devoted to the problem of working class unity in India. Bradley and Dutt made a thorough survey of working class struggle in different parts of the Country.\(^5\) Writing about trade union unity Bradley and Dutt pointed out: "The intense desire of the workers for unity manifested itself at Nagpur towards the end of last year when the All-India Trade Union Congress and the National Trades Union Federation met simultaneously. Yet, despite the efforts made, particularly by the militant section, to bring the Trade Union movement under one head, this was not achieved. The executive Committee of the A.I.T.U.C. formulated certain proposals for unity, and it appears that the most important of there were: (1) The name of the organisation shall be the All India Trade Union Congress: (2) the Constitution shall be that of the National Trade Union Federation, with modifications of necessary; and (3) that the first working committee shall consist of an equal number of officials from both organisations. To which a couple of sub-points were added; ((a) No affiliation to any foreign organisation (b) The amalgamated central working class organisation to accept

\(^4\) Ibid.

the principle of sending delegates to Geneva."\textsuperscript{46}

Keeping in view the Comintern's understanding, in the past it appears quite unique to find no objection to a particular proposal, made above, in which All India Trade Union Congress clearly mentioned not to affiliate to any foreign organisation. It was a major shift in Comintern's policy in India. Regarding trade union and National Congress they suggested "While developing-in conjunction with all anti-imperialist minded organisations, Congress Socialists, etc.-the broadest possible campaign for the affiliation of the trade union, peasant and other mass organisations to the National Congress, this must supported by the passing of resolutions by trade unions and at meeting, etc., calling upon the National Congress to change its constitution and admit to affiliation of these bodies, and at the same time it is also necessary to send fraternal delegates from the amalgamated Trade Union Congress, the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union and other organisations to the next session of the National Congress of Lucknow.

"Such fraternal delegates should endeavour to present and defend the demand for collective affiliation of the Trade Unions, peasant and other organisations of the toiling masses to the National Congress. At the same time the representatives of the militant organisations should utilise in every way the platform of the National Congress in order to expound and popularise before broad masses the viewpoint of the Left-wing Labour movement on such burning issues as the struggle against the new slave constitution, the demand for the convening of a Constituent

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., p. 325.
Assembly based upon universal, equal franchise, direct and secret ballot, the struggle against imperialist war on Abyssinia and China, for the full independence of the Colonial peoples, etc.\textsuperscript{47}

In the concluding part of the article, regarding strengthening militant trade unionism, they further suggested: "To strengthen and broaden the whole of our work in the trade Union movement the adherent of the militant trade union movement should consider in the nearest future the possibilities of issuing a militant labour press, carrying propaganda through such a press from the viewpoint of the militant labour movement, publishing material on all the questions of current life in India and abroad, developing a determined struggle against the reformist ideology and policy as well as the practice of class collaboration, concretely criticising the opponents of the united front and trade union unity on the basis of class struggle and trade union democracy, and rallying and organising the masses for the struggle against capitalism and imperialism."\textsuperscript{48}

After fraternal advices given to Indian Communists by R. Ralme Dutt and Ben Bradley on behalf of the Communist International, Communist Party of India began to implement its policies by infiltrating into Indian National Congress and the Congress Socialist Party. One of the founders of Congress Socialist Party Mr. M.R. Masani wrote: ".... The opportunity was, however, avidly seized by the Communists and by 1937-38 the Congress Socialist Party had two Communists as joint Secretaries and two others in the Executive Committee. Through

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 327.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p.327-8.
the channel thus opened, the Communists started infiltrating not only into the Congress Socialist Party but also in its parent body, the Indian National Congress, and the All-India Kisan Sabha (Peasants' Union). Both open and concealed members of the Communist Party were thus given an opportunity to infiltrating into positions of importance in the national forces.\footnote{Masani, n. 2, p. 68.}

It was further pointed out that very soon, even in the very first year of the working of the united front, complaints began pouring into socialist headquarters from all parts of India against the Communists. The reports said that Communist were claiming that they would not permit any other Party to entrench itself in the trade union movement.\footnote{Ibid., p. 69.}

M. R. Masani reveals that uneasy relations continued till the National Executive of the Socialist Party met in Patna in 1937, when the relations deteriorated still further. At this meeting, a statement of the Communist Party was read which caused great indignation. The statement said that the Congress Socialist Party was no Socialist Party and that it was to be used only as a platform. At this time the Socialist Executive Committee included four Communist "Trojan Horses" who denied their communist allegiance and also shammed shock and indignation at the 'discovery' of such a statement. After this, it was widely felt that there was no alternative but to expel the Communists. In point of fact, however, nothing was done. On the other hand, by way of "recognition", the Andhra Party was handed over to the Communist by the General Secretary, Jaya Prakash, and the Tamil...
Nadu and Kerala Socialist Parties were allowed to be run by the Communists. The comparative strength of the Communist Party of India in the South of India today owes not a little to the socialist naivete of those years.51

After some time another secret circular titled, "Communist plot against Congress Socialist Party", was published by M. R. Masani himself in September 1938. The circular was dated 9th May 1938, and marked "Plan of work".52 In the circular, there was detailed analysis of the success of infiltration in various provinces, the number of persons own over to Communism and who would vote Communist on specific issues. Specific tasks were detailed for Communists in all provinces, depending on whether the Communists were now in a majority or minority, whether they held responsible position in the executive or constituted the rank and file.53

In the mean time Second world war broke out on September 1, 1939. It brought dramatic changes in the whole world. Anti-war demonstration in India organised by Communists and Congress Socialists had started as early as September 1939. The largest of these was organised in Madras. In October and November of that year anti-war strike took place in Kanpur, Patna, Jharia and a number of other industrial centres. In late 1939 a total of 110 strikes was organised, in which 170 thousand

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid., p. 70.
210 people took part.54

According to N. E. Balaram, soon after the outbreak of war, the Government of India began the offensive against the Communists. It banned all the Party papers; thousands of Party workers and leaders were detained without trial. In spite of the growing hardships of the people and the repressive policy of the Government, the Indian National Congress was satisfied with issuing a protest against the war. Finally they decided to organise only individual Satyagraha against the war efforts of the British Government. The entire anti-imperialist movement got frustrated.55 He further points out that it was during this period that a good number of Congressmen and Congress Socialists joined the Communist Party. A large chunk of anti-imperialist youth drawn to revolutionary ideas of socialism saw in the Communist Party the most revolutionary party capable of leading them:56

The beginning of the World war II whose main target was the ultimate attack on the Soviet Union posed a big question before the Communists throughout the world, whether they would implement already Comintern's decided policies, particularly in relation to forming anti-fascist front or not. In this regard M. Farooqui, a political activist during the world war II, writes: "During the second world war period (1939-45), the main question


56 Ibid.
in the freedom movement was: what attitude to adopt to the war and what form should the mass movement take? The war passed through two phases: First, when it was being fought between the imperialist powers (the fascist powers on the one hand and the British and French imperialists on the other). This was between September, 1939 and June 21, 1941. Second, when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union (on June 22, 1941), with the resources of practically the whole of Europe at his command. With Japan's attack on the US Fleet in Pearl Harbour in the Pacific in November of the same year, the USA also formally entered the war. A new worldwide alliance came into being against Hitler—the anti-Hitler coalition consisting of the Soviet Union, USA, UK and France.\textsuperscript{57}

He further writes: "In the first phase there was broad agreement within the national-liberation movement that the two groups of imperialist powers were fighting for redivision of the world to serve their selfish imperialist interests and, therefore, imperialist war should be opposed. When the war entered the second phase, i.e., after the attack on the Soviet Union, our national-liberation movement got divided on its basic attitude and form of action.

"In the first phase, the left in the Congress and within the broad national-liberation movement demanded a mass struggle against the imperialist war, while the Gandhian leadership first sought a compromise with the British imperialists (demand for a national government to prosecute the war was raised by them)
and when this offer was rejected, they launched a limited struggle against imperialism in the form of individual Satyagraha. This form of action was criticised by the left forces. The CPI and his mass organisations led by it were the most active in opposition to this line. The CPI conducted a big antiwar strike of the workers in Bombay on October 2, 1939, the first antiwar political strike perhaps anywhere in the world.\(^58\)

According to Communist Party of India sources a new turn in the war came with Hitler Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941. A worldwide anti-fascist coalition came into being against the three fascist powers. The slogan of people's war given by the Communist International was a correct slogan and the developments after the defeat of the fascist powers fully justified it. The titanic struggle of the Soviet Union had a world liberationist role.\(^59\) It was further pointed out that for many months there was no change in the old party line. Many leaders were in the Deoli detention camp and other jails while the underground centre functioned outside. As late as July 1941 Politburo resolution repeated the slogan for converting the imperialist war into a revolutionary war. Then a document proposing change of line was sent by the comrades in Deoli camp in December 1941. In February 1942 the Politburo said in a resolution: "Make the Indian people play a people's role in the people's war". In July 1942 the ban on the CPI was lifted and released started. The main slogans were correct: "National

\(^{58}\) Ibid., p. 42.

government for national defence. "National unity for National
government." line elaborated in enlarged plenum of central
committee in September 1942 and later in the second plenum of
the central A to prepare for the first party Congress which was
later held in Bombay from 23 May to 1 June 1943.  

The official documents of CPI claim that characterisation
of the war in this period as a people's war was correct. It also
correctly brought out the fact that India's struggle for freedom
had to be integrated with the world-wide front of struggle
against fascism. It correctly emphasised that only the victory of
Soviet Union and other anti-fascist forces would help the
freedom struggle in our country. The victory of fascism, on the
other hand, would not only be a disaster for the world-revolutionary movement in general but throw back our freedom
struggle itself. It correctly stressed that India's freedom
struggle required world-wide allies, needed the support of the
world anti-imperialist forces. Such support could only be
adequately secured if India's freedom movement clearly ranged
itself on the side of the world wide antifascist war against the
axis powers, i.e., Germany, Italy and Japan. This was a correct
line based on proletarian internationalism and on patriotism.  

However, M. Farooqi writes: "The CPI during this period
ceaselessly campaigned for the release of the Congress leaders,
for Congress-League unity and for the formation of a national
government to prosecute the war against fascism, with popular
support. But in view of the complex factors mentioned earlier our

\[60\text{ Ibid., pp. 63-64.}\]

\[61\text{ Ibid., p. 64.}\]
party's political line of people's war isolated us from the broad national current. Our tactics on some of the current issues made sections of the freedom fighters hostile to our party. Our loss was particularly great among the students, who had been attracted in large numbers towards the party in the earlier years."

The above reference is obviously related to the "Quit India" movement which was launched by the Indian National Congress on August 9, 1942. Thus, we see that during the period 1935 to 1943 Indian Communists faithfully implemented Comintern's policies in the struggle against fascism, even on the cost of their own, in the Indian freedom struggle. Since then, the Indian Communists have been continuously accused of being agent not only of the Soviet Union but also of the Great Britain. However, the facts justify that they were acting on the basis of their ideological commitment to the proletarian internationalism. The whole problems against Indian Communists arose due to Great Britain alliance with Soviet Union against fascist Germany.

In the mean time, tremendous pressure was mounted against the continuation of the activities of the Communist International during the war period. This pressure came not only from fascist alliance but also from allied forces, particularly the Great Britain and United States. According to Soviet Sources: "Under the conditions of the war the existence of the Communist International was used by the reactionaries to slander the Soviet Union and the Communist parties of the different countries. Nazi propaganda made the most of this by frightening the bourgeoisie

---

62 Farooqi, n. 57, p. 45.
of the anti-fascist coalition with the "threat of Communism." It was an attempt to create a split within the anti-Hitler coalition and smash the residence fronts in the occupied countries. Reactionary propaganda persistently spread lies alleging that Moscow was out "to interfere in other countries affairs", that the Communist parties in the different countries were acting on orders from outside that they represented "foreign interests" and were 'parties of foreigners". By aid of slanderous inventions the opponents of Communism tried to undermine the influence of the Communist parties and isolate them from the masses"63

The same sources have disclosed on May 13, 1943 a meeting of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International was held which was attended by presidium members, Dimitrov, Manuilsky, Pieck, Thorez, Marty, Koplenig and Kolarov and others. The meeting discussed the proposal to dissolve the Communist International. The chairman, Georgi Dimitrov gave the first of the draft proposal and stressed that a free exchange of opinions should be held on it .... On the basis of a thorough analysis of the political situation and the state of affairs in the world Communist movement, the Executive of the Communist International, prevented under war time conditions from calling a Congress of the International, submitted a proposal to the Communist parties on May 15, 1943 for the dissolution of the Comintern.64

Ultimately, the presidium of the Executive Committee of

---


64 Ibid., pp. 513-14.
the Communist International announced on June 8, 1943 that the existing sections of the Comintern which were able to communicate their decisions unanimously approved the proposal for the dissolution of the Communist International. In accordance with this a decision was adopted to abolish, as from June 10, 1943, the Communist International, the presidium and Secretariat of the ECCI and the International Control Commission.65

In an interview to the Reuter's chief Moscow correspondence Stalin said: "The dissolution of the Communist International is proper and timely because it facilitates the organisation of the common onslaught of all freedom loving nations against the common enemy-Hitlerism."66

Thus, we see that an eventful era of proletarian internationalism strictly under Soviet control during 1919-1943 ended leaving behind a great Communist legacy and nostalgia in the history of world Communist movement. Our study also ends here.

---

65 Ibid., p. 514.