



“The transition from capitalism to Communism represents an entire historical epoch. Until this epoch has terminated, the exploiters will inevitably cherish the hope of restoration, and this hope will be converted into attempts at restoration. And after their first serious defeat, the overthrown exploiters—who had not expected their overthrow, never believed it possible, never conceded the thought of it—will throw themselves with tenfold energy, with furious passion and hatred grown a hundredfold, into the battle for the recovery of their lost “paradise”, ....

—LENIN: The Proletarian Revolution & the Renegade Kautsky.

## Comrade Nihar Mukherjee Condemns hike in prices : Appeals to all Left and Democratic Parties

Strongly condemning the unjust and exorbitant hike in the administered prices of coal, rice and wheat, Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI in a statement on 30.12.91 said that this was sure to make the living of the common people, groaning under the pressure of constantly rising prices of all essential commodities, much more harder and distressing resulting in further inflation and escalation of prices of other essential commodities.

Strongly denouncing this attack upon the common people, Comrade Mukherjee warned the countrymen about the growing onslaughts being perpetrated by the minority Congress(I) government under cover of so-called new economic policy, one after another, at the behest of the capitalist class, and called upon them and more particularly the Left and democratic parties to come forward to develop powerful resistance movement against this anti-people decision of the Central Government.

# Proletarian Era

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To

The General Secretary/President  
Dear Friend,

Once again the Central Government, under the pressure of IMF and World Bank, has increased the administered prices of essential commodities like kerosene, diesel, petrol, cooking gas, coal, etc.

The entire brunt of this steep price rise is to be borne by the common people of our country, who are already groaning under the anti-people fiscal policy of Congress(I) Government at the Centre.

Under the circumstances, we feel that an urgent meeting of the Left and democratic parties of our country should be convened for developing mass movement on the basis of a minimum agreed programme.

Awaiting an early reply.

Sincerely yours,

Sd/ Nihar Mukherjee

General Secretary

SUCI

Calcutta  
8.1.92

## OBSERVE LENIN MEMORIAL DAY

On 21st January in a most befitting manner

IN POST-REVOLUTION RUSSIA

### How superbly scientific methods worked in solving national questions : *A reply to falsification of history*

The USSR—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which emerged out of revolutionary struggles over decades of the working people in Russia as the model of fraternity and co-operative activities of diverse nationalities, ethnic and racial groups, is now in a state of disintegration after the counterrevolution succeeded in subverting the socialist system and restoring capitalism in its stead. Socialism being the very basis and ground of proletarian internationalist outlook having been discarded now,

serious conflicts between once united national states and separatist tendencies have burst forth with both Great Russian chauvinism and regional nationalism running high.

The counterrevolutionaries are swallowing the bitter fruits of their heinous crime. They are trying desperately to retain anyhow a semblance of coordination purely from the pragmatic economic and military considerations but their efforts flounder on the rock of bourgeois nationalist feelings and sentiments they themselves have

fanned up to flames. Gorbachev, the architect of the counterrevolutionary scheme of perestroika and glasnost, has failed in his efforts to have a Union of 12 out of 15 previous constituent republics. He has shattered the Great Socialist Soviet system and in its wake has brought about gravest disintegration amongst the nationalities. His lust for anyhow clinging to supreme power of a loose ‘confederation’ has been in vain resulting in such a situation which forced him

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to resign throwing him into the dustbin of history. The national bickerings have not only brought about disintegration of state structure but along with it has come total disarray of the economy, based as it was, over the decades through planned development, on inter-dependence and inter-reliance. The economy is in a shambles and peoples are in dire distress. The counterrevolutionary traitors are now begging for food and financial loan from the US and other imperialist powers and inviting the multinationals of these countries to take over the charge of Russian industries and farms throwing the honour and self-respect of the people as also their future to the dust.

At this sorry spectacle, the enemies of socialism, proletarian revolution and communist ideology, are naturally very jubilant. But it is the height of their hypocrisy when in serious vein they pontificate that the disintegration is natural because coercive methods including annexation were used for the Union of nationalities by Stalin. They lay blame at the door of socialist principles in order to uphold bourgeois nationalism when it is the latter that has brought about an upsurge of narrow nationalist outlook and separateness.

We propose to deal with the national problem and the Socialist solution based on Leninist teachings that made possible the Union of diverse nationalities and ethnic groups out of the ruins of Tsarist Russia as also explore the historical facts to meet squarely with the bourgeois slanders and falsifications. We appeal to all right thinking persons—men of conscience—not to be misled by false propaganda of the enemies of human progress but to grasp truth on the basis of concrete facts and historical evidences from an unbiased and dispassionate attitude.

#### NATION, NATIONALISM AND NATION STATES

The concepts of nation, nationalist and national state are all historical category related as they are to a definite historical stage of development of society. They are the products of

rising capitalism. With the break-up of feudalism and the decline of the power of the Church at Rome came the formation of peoples in nations and sovereign national states. The nation was an amalgamation of many peoples formerly divided into narrow localism during feudalism. The English nation thus emerged out of such an amalgam of peoples including the Celts and Teutons. Similar was the case with the French, German, Italian—the four old centralised nation states of West Europe. It is therefore the forces of rising capitalism led by the ideology of nationalism and fighting against feudalism and the religious sway of the Church that brought about the fusion of peoples into nations and independent nation states. So, as Stalin has defined: "A Nation is historically evolved stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture." (*Marxism and the National Question*) But capitalism because of its basic characteristic feature brought about division of the society into classes—the dominant bourgeois class and the exploited working class. Nationalism championed freedom of individual and humanist moral values which could not but serve the interests of the dominant class. It became the philosophical-ideological prop of exploitative capitalist system. The national state became the instrument of oppression of the dominant bourgeois class over other class or classes. Capitalism, at the first stage of its development, brought about national market through the intercourse of trade and commerce within the national boundary. Exploitation of capital in and through the market over the people in a nation state became the rule. And national interest, defence of the country—all became synonymous with the interest of the capitalist class and defence of its rule of exploitation. That is why Stalin so aptly said: "The market is the first school in which the bourgeoisie learns its nationalism." (*Marxism and the National Question*)

However, in Eastern Europe national state formation process was different. Here, the process of formation of nationalities and the elimination of feudal disunity did not coincide in time with the formation of centralised states as in Hungary, Austria and

Russia. In all these cases mixed states in multi-national form each made up of several nationalities not yet formed into independent national states for themselves were united into a common state. The general feature of this type of multi-national state has been its formation with one developed and dominant nation along with the less developed and dominated nations. These were therefore the birthplace of national oppression leaving in its trail national conflicts, national movements, the national problem and various methods of solution.

#### IMPERIALISM—NATIONAL PROBLEMS TAKE GLOBAL CHARACTER

In the second period of capitalist development national oppression and the rise of national movement, coincided with the appearance of imperialism as a global phenomenon. Capitalism after its development to monopoly capitalism and generation of finance capital, in its search for markets, raw materials, fuel and cheap labour power, in the competition for the export of capital as also for the possession of great rail and sea routes, broke out of the confines of national borders and extended its territory at the expense of near and distant countries. By virtue of seizure of new territories, the imperialist states ceased to be national states as before but became multi-national empires or colony-owning states. Thus in this period, the national problem transformed itself from an internal problem of a state into a global problem affecting many states—the sovereign imperialist state and the non-sovereign nationalities of the colonies—and into a problem of war between imperialist states waged for either retaining or for grabbing from other colonies and subjugating new nationalities and tribes under one's imperialist sway. Thus the struggle for liberation of the colonial people against imperialist rule was as much a national problem as was the awakening of the hitherto subject nations in Eastern Europe like the Poles, Czechs, Finns, etc.

It is a historical fact that the bourgeoisie far from solving the nation-

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( Contd. from page 2 )

nal problem has fanned up the national struggle of oppressed people either in colonies and semi-colonies or even within the bourgeois state from its prime interest of defending the rule of exploitation by capital. That is why national problem cannot be solved in a bourgeois society.

#### SOCIALISM—SOLUTION OF NATIONAL PROBLEM

It is observed therefore that capitalism in its course of development connected the world economically but this interconnection was based on exploitation and oppression resulting in advanced nations and backward nations, affluence side by side with dire poverty and ruin. It failed to accomplish the historical task of ushering in an era of unity of peoples cutting across diverse nations, nationalities and ethnic groups, of collective labour based on the productive relation of international brotherhood and thus the liberation of mankind from the narrow outlook of national shell as also exploitation and oppression of man by man.

Against this background of bourgeois failure, socialism appeared as the philosophy showing the scientific way of liberation of mankind from the bondage of the old society. The third period in human history in so far as the national problem is concerned started with the Soviet period in Russia. It was the period of overthrow of capitalism and the abolition of national oppression; a period in which the question of ruling and subject nations, of colonies and mother countries, were consigned to the archives of history; in which the different nationalities forming the Union enjoyed equality of rights and equal opportunities for all-round development. It was a period in history when the isolated struggles of the peoples of both the previously dominant and dominated nationalities fused into one combined broad struggle against capitalism-imperialism to usher in an era of human society free from exploitation and oppression.

Historically it has been proved that so long as the socialist principles were alive, it was in the Soviet system under the dictatorship of the proletariat that the national problem was solved on the scientific basis of Leninist teachings making possible the peaceful and creative coexistence

and fraternal collaboration of peoples of diverse nationalities, ethnic and racial groups having different stages of economic, social and cultural development. In solving the national problem from a proletarian world outlook, Lenin's teachings and guidance are unambiguous and clear. In 1916, he outlined the proletarian approach to national problem thus: "The right of nation to self-determination means only the right to independence in a political sense, the right to free political secession from the oppressing nation....It is the logical expression of the struggle against national oppression in every form. The more closely the democratic system of state approximates to complete freedom of secession, the rarer and weaker will, the striving for secession, be in practice....The aim of socialism is not only to abolish the present division of mankind into small states and all national isolation, not only to bring the nations closer to each other, but also to merge them." (Lenin—Collected Works, Vol. XIX)

And therefore, "The proletarian party strives to create as large a state as possible for that is to the advantage of the toilers, it strives to bring about closer ties between nations and the further fusion of nations; but it desires to achieve the aim **not by force but exclusively by a free and fraternal Union** of the workers and toiling masses of all nations." (Lenin—Selected Works, Vol II, pp. 37-38 emphasis added—Editor Proletarian Era)

So, voluntary consent of the nationalities as opposed to coercion was the watchword in the revolutionary movement for socialist construction of Russia after the revolution. Ideological and political education and concrete steps were the means adopted to convince the peoples about the superiority of aims and objects of the socialist goal. In 1922, the Union of peoples of different national republics, autonomous republics and autonomous regions came to fruition heralding the triumph of Leninist principles. A British historian has recorded this event in his celebrated book thus: "The ultimate expression of the Bolshevik doctrine of national self-determination is a Union of equal nations in a socialist federation." (E. H. Carr—the Bolshevik Revolution 1917-23)

#### CONDITION OF NATIONALITIES IN RUSSIA JUST AFTER THE REVOLUTION

To organise the peoples of different nationalities, ethnic and racial groups of a vast territory equal to the size of a continent having widely varying stage in socio-economic-political-cultural development not merely for national peace and mutual cooperation but for socialist construction also was an incomparably gigantic historical task. In order to have a glimpse on the immensity of the problems and the nature of hurdles confronted, a quick glance at the concrete conditions prevailing in Russia on the morrow of the revolution may not be out of place.

The composition of the population in Russia was like this: out of 140,000,000 total population 75,000,000 were non-Great Russians divided into many nationalities like Ukrainians, Byelorussians (Great-Russians, Ukrainians or Little Russians and Byelorussians or White Russians are closer because of their racial Slovak origin), Kirghiz, Uzbeks, Turkmenians, Tajiks, Azarbaijans, Georgians, Armenians, Tatars, Bashkirs, Bukharans, Khivans, Ossetians, Ingushes, Balkanians, etc. There were some 200 languages, and 58 nationalities had no alphabet of their own. As to the stage of socio-economic development of the non-Great Russian peoples, if Ukraine, Byelorussia, a small part of Azerbaijan and Armenia which had some industrial development were excluded, about 25,000,000 people, mainly Tyurks (Turkestan, the greater part of Azerbaijan, Daglestan, the Highlanders, Tatars, Bashkirs, Kirghiz, etc.) let alone having an industrial proletariat retained pastoral economy and patriarchal mode of life. From this last figure were to be excluded 6,000,000 mainly Tyurk population—Kirghiz, Bashkirs, Ossetians, Chechens, Ingushes, etc., for the reason that their lands were served for colonisation by the Great Russian Kulaks during the tsarist rule as a result of which they were forced to lead nomadic life.

Thus the European part mostly the Great Russian territory, had some industry and was acquainted with modern life, the rest vast area and the people remained backward by a century or more. Such was the legacy of the tsarist rule the communists inherited in Russia after the revolution.

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### THE PROCESS OF UNIFICATION— RECALLING THE HISTORY

Bourgeois spokesmen propagate that the Union of nationalities in Soviet Russia was brought about by coercion including annexation of territories against the will of the concerned peoples and that centralisation in the state structure left no freedom or autonomy for the national republics constituting the union. Do they speak the truth or falsify historical facts? We need to recall the concrete historical circumstances and gigantic struggle of the toiling masses of all the nationalities in Russia after their unification in a single state carrying the mission to rebuild the country on socialist principles.

It is to be recalled that after the February bourgeois revolution in Russia a movement headed by the national bourgeois democratic alliance sprang up among the non-Great-Russian nationalities in the border regions. It was a movement not for the liberation of the toiling people from the exploitation and oppression, be it from the Kulaks or from the dominant Great Russian chauvinism but for the 'liberty' of preserving privileges and interest of capital of the local national bourgeoisie within the boundaries of small national states.

The abolition of Tsarism and the accession to power of the bourgeoisie by the installation of Kerensky government did not however lead to the abolition of national oppression. The old and crude form was only replaced by new and more dangerous form of oppression. Nor did it lead to the end of brutal oppression and exploitation of the peasantry who were almost in the condition of serf. Thus the toiling people including the peasantry who brought about the February revolution were denied its fruits and the savage imperialist war started during the Tsarist rule continued to the peril of the people and the country.

By overthrowing the power of the landlords and of the bourgeoisie and replacing by a government of workers and peasants the October Revolution at one blow solved the contradictions of the February revolution. The revolutionary government immediately declared its policy on the national question and took some important socio-economic measures that at once revealed its distinctly different character, aims and objectives. The Seventh All Russian Confederation of the Bolsheviks held in April, 1917, had already adopted a resolution drafted by Lenin on the national question which was implemented a few months after. The resolution stated: "The right of all the nations forming part of Russia to freely secede and form independent states shall be recognized. To negate this right or fail to take measures

guaranteeing its practical realisation is equivalent to supporting a policy of seizure and annexation. The recognition by the proletariat of the right of nations to secede can alone bring about complete solidarity among the workers of various nations and help to bring the nations closer together on truly democratic lines."

It also demanded: "...regional autonomy, the abolition of tutelage from above, the abolition of a compulsory state language and the determination of boundaries of the self governing and autonomous regions by the local population itself based on economic and social conditions, the national composition of the population and so forth."

Finally it declared: "The interests of the working class demand the amalgamation of the workers of all nationalities of Russia into common proletarian organisations; political, trade union, cooperative, cultural and so forth. Only such amalgamation of the workers of various nationalities into common organisation will permit the proletariat to wage a successful struggle against international capital and bourgeois nationalism." (Marxism and the National and Colonial Question—Stalin, Lawrence & Wishart, 1942 edn.)

On the morrow of the October Revolution the emancipation of the nationalities from national oppression synchronized with adoption of certain concrete socio-economic measures by the revolutionary government. The abolition of the omnipotence of the landlords and kulaks and transfer of the use of the land to the toiling agricultural masses; the expropriation of the factories and mills and their transfer to the control of workers; the break with imperialism and the termination of the predatory war; the publication of the secret treaties and the exposure of policy of foreign, territorial annexations; finally, the proclamation of self-determination for the toiling masses of the oppressed nations and the recognition of the independence of Finland were the principal measures carried into effect in the course of the revolution.

No wonder, therefore, to maintain their class rule of exploitation, the so-called 'national governments', formed by the bourgeoisie and the Kulaks, declared war on the socialist government and became the centre of attraction for all the counter-revolutionary elements in Russia. The Red Army defended the nascent socialist state and the workers and peasants rose against their own 'national governments' which were seeking help from the West European imperialist powers. Thus began the period of foreign interference and the occupation of the border regions—a period which exposed to the hilt the utterly counterrevolutionary character of the so-called 'national

governments' isolated and defeated by the working people. In Ukraine, Don, Kuban and Siberia, in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkestan, everywhere the working peoples' revolutionary alliance saved the country from imperialist aggression and occupation and defeated the counterrevolutionary forces who were trying to restore Tsarist rule in Russia.

Commenting on the importance of the socialist policy on national question in the victory of the revolutionary government over the foreign imperialist powers and their Russian collaborators, Carr writes in his book, thus: "At a moment when the civil war was raging over those outline sectors of Russian territory which were mainly occupied by the non-Russian people, it was a means of enlisting local populations as allies against those who sought to recreate the Russian empire. Finally, when victory in the civil war was won and the time came to restore order out of chaos, Soviet nationalities policy was flexible enough to provide a basis on which Moscow could support its friends and allies among the non-Russian peoples and once more weave together the scattered territories in a framework of voluntary reunion. But to attribute the whole process to a cunning calculation by the leaders or to a deliberate manipulation of theory in the interests of policy is to misunderstand the nature of the underlying forces at work".

(Ibid.p.265)

There were old suspicions and distrusts of other nationalities against the Great Russians at first. But foreign imperialist intervention and occupation and the war of the counterrevolutionaries for restoration of Tsarist rule vis a vis the socialist outlook on the national question and the concrete socio-economic measures made them aware of the sea-change that had come in Russia. They became aware of the danger of instability in the isolated existence of individual, small republics with poor defence and resources against the imperialist beasts of prey. So the urgency felt of a combined military defence consummated in the alliance of the peoples on military, economic and political basis as the logical culmination. The Union of nationalities came into being. In the first Union there were four federating units joined by treaty—Transcaucasia (composed of three republics—Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan), Byelorussia, Ukraine and Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic with eight autonomous republics and thirteen autonomous regions (RSFSR accounted for 92% of total area and 70% of total population). 'The historic importance of the socialist nationalities policy in the victory of revolution as also the absolutely democratic character of the process of unification were explained by Stalin, thus: "The revolution would not have been victorious in Russia and Kolchak and

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Danikin would not have been crushed, had not the Russian proletariat enjoyed the sympathy and support of the oppressed peoples of the former Russian empire. But to win the sympathy and support of these peoples it had first of all to break the fetters of Russian imperialism and free these peoples from the yoke of national oppression. Without this it would have been impossible to consolidate the Soviet power, to implement true internationalism and to create that remarkable organisation for the collaboration of nations which is called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—the living prototype of the future union of nations in a single world economic system.”

(Problems of Leninism—Stalin)

### SOME OF THE BOURGEOIS ACCUSATIONS AND FACTS

Bourgeois propagandists capitalising on the present national disunity and disarray in Russia due to treachery of the counter-revolutionaries, are giving to circulation all sorts of distorted facts about the socialist nationalities policy pursued steadfastly by Stalin. For example, a bourgeois intellectual, a so-called 'Kremlinologist', in an article in a leading daily while trying to sort out the reason for the present disintegration and separatist tendency in Russia opined that had Stalin conceded autonomy to the republics such development would not have taken place. Again it is widely circulated that 'overcentralization' led to repression and the present happening is the natural reaction. Further, the Baltic states were annexed by Stalin. Have these accusations any relevance to facts or they are just the products of either ignorance or of deliberate falsification of history? Let us go by the facts.

To begin with, it must be realized that centralism by itself is not autocracy or authoritarianism. Historically speaking, centralization in structure has come about in all modern states no matter whether its constitutional form is 'federal' as in the USA or 'unitary' as in the U.K. Centralization in the political structure is the reflection of the mode of production—centralization of capital as also of trade and commerce. Centralization made a departure from feudal disunity and small national, narrow separatist outlook and in that respect it was definitely a step forward in the progress of mankind. That is why, the Marxists make no secret of their stand on centralization; without least ambiguity Lenin declared: "...as long and in so far as different nations constitute an integral state Marxists will not, under any circumstances, advocate either the federal principle or decentralization. The centralized big state makes a tremendous historical step forward from medieval disintegration...." (*Critical Remarks on National Question*)

The real question therefore is about the very purpose of centralization. Is it for the dictatorship of the capitalist class or for the proletariat? Is it to defend the rule of the capital and maximisation of profit at the cost of grinding exploitation and oppression of the common people or to ensure development of social life free from the exploitative profit motive and put down resistance of the capitalists and reactionaries? The Soviet Union was a centralized state, no doubt. Without centralization, planned economic development, socio-cultural regeneration and, above all, any coordinated and comprehensive action programme would have been impossible. The bourgeois wiseacres dare not utter these facts.

That the Soviet system was centralized does never mean that it denied autonomy and independent initiative of the nationalities. History shows it is the other way round. The nationalities mostly backward as a legacy of the tsarist rule blossomed to richness within record short time in history, due to the socialist policy defended and guarded by Stalin. Soviet autonomy was not a rigid thing fixed once and for all time to come. It had relevance to the stage of economic and socio-cultural level of development and the magnitude of composition of national grouping. It varied from administrative autonomy for the Volga-Germans, the Chuvashes and the Karelians to wide political autonomy for the Bashkirs, the Volga Tatars and the Kirghiz, from wide political autonomy to still wider form of autonomy for the Ukraine and Turkestan and finally from the Ukraine type of autonomy to the supreme form of autonomy—contractual relations as in the case of Azerbaijan. This elasticity of the Soviet autonomy was one of its prime merits nowhere to be found in bourgeois world, made it possible to embrace divergent nationalities and minority people having widely varying levels of economic and social-cultural developments.

The Twelfth Congress of the CPSU (April 1923) took particular caution to ensure sufficient freedom, equality, actual independence of initiative and necessary resources for the constituting republics. In the guideline set forth for the Soviet administration, adopted in the Congress very important decisions were taken to reinforce the formal constitutional provisions. They were: (a) in establishing the central organs of the union, equality of rights and duties of the republics both in relation to themselves as also with the central government to be ensured; (b) in constituting the special supreme organ (Soviet of Nationalities) care to be taken to ensure representation of republics and national regions including nationalities forming the republics on an equality basis; (c) the executive organs to be so constructed as to ensure real participation of the representatives of the republics and the satisfaction of the needs and requirements of people; (d) the republics to be granted

sufficiently wide financial and in particular budgetary powers to enable them to exercise their own initiative in matters of state administration, culture and economy; (e) organs of the national republics and regions to be recruited chiefly from among the local inhabitants acquainted with the language, social life, manners and customs of the peoples concerned; (f) all state organs and institutions serving non-native population and national minorities must employ their languages and any violation of national rights and in particular the rights of the national minorities to be severely dealt with; (g) educational work to be intensified in the Red Army to instil the idea of brotherhood and solidarity of the peoples of the union.

The Socialist Internationalist idea was therefore translated into practice clearly demonstrating the qualitative difference of the socialist state from a capitalist one where such principles remain in the domain of dream and not reality. No wonder therefore, that Stalin, the main architect in putting into practice the Leninist Nationalities Principles and the policies has been the target of vilest of attacks both from bourgeois hirelings as also their cohorts, the counterrevolutionary traitors.

Now, what about the so-called annexation of the Balkan states by Stalin? What are the facts?

Recalling history it would be found that working class movement in these three states was strong even at the time of October Revolution in Russia. After the revolutionary transformation in Russia workers' and peasants' governments were established in Estonia and Latvia. Soviet rule was also established in Lithuania. But the Western imperialist powers wanted to stem the tide of revolution and even to keep open the gateway for military intervention against the first socialist state in Soviet Russia. From this imperialist design both the German army and British naval force invaded Estonia and Latvia to bring about downfall of workers' governments in those countries. The Lithuanian government fell similarly at the pressure of advancing army of the Polish bourgeois government. In all these states puppet bourgeois governments were installed with the direct military backing of the imperialist powers. The Soviet government had no other go than to accord recognition to these governments in conformity with their consistent policy on right of nations. These are facts of history recorded in the Book of the British historian E. H. Carr. The Soviet Union could not defend the revolutionary governments of these states as it was itself confronted then with imperialist intervention and counterrevolutionary civil war. But those who trade charge of annexation against Stalin are silent on these imperialist deprivations.

Since then both the German and British imperialist powers had vested interests in

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the Baltic region for strategic reason. This unity of imperialists became apparent during the military negotiations between the delegations of the USSR, Great Britain and France which began in August 1937. In the negotiations deliberately dragged on by the imperialist powers the Soviet Union was insistently demanding a joint military defence for these three Baltic states as a guarantee of their freedom in view of imminence of German military advance to the East through this region. The apprehension proved correct and in the course of the negotiation Hitler imposed his treaties on Latvia and Estonia. At the end of September and early in October Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania signed mutual assistance treaties with the USSR. After the people's power was re-established in these countries, by request on the part of their highest organs, they were accepted in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the beginning of August 1940. The whole move was carried out on the basis of legal Acts. This is history quite distinct from fiction. We may quote here the evidence of noted American journalist Anna Louise Strong who was witness to this historical event.

She writes: "I had the luck of being passing through from Britain to Moscow. Learning what was happening in Lithuania, I remained and saw the amazing picture of take-over from within. When the pro-German President fled, this brought the Vice-President to power. He appointed a new premier and then resigned. This brought to power, Justas Paletski, a progressive journalist. Political prisoners were let out of jails; trade unions began to organise freely; all kinds of organisations came alive. Day and night, the singing did not cease in the streets of Kaunas, the capital. New elections were held for a people's government. There was tremendous turnout to vote. The new assembly met, declared Lithuania a Soviet Republic and applied for admission to the USSR. All this time; the jubilant workers and peasants, glad of the collapse of the pro-Nazi dictatorship thought they were only expressing their own desire.

"...On July 21, 1940, Lithuania applied for admission to the USSR. I went with their delegation by special train to Moscow; it was greeted by garlands and delegations along the way. By early August, the Supreme Soviet in Moscow received three new constituent republics—Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania. Paletski was saying: 'Our path to socialism is the easiest ever known. ...We have done it by the will of the Lithuanian people through constitutional forms. There are no boundaries any more from Kaunas to Vladivostok; from the Baltic to the Pacific Ocean'" (Anna Louise Strong—Stalin Era). This telling evidence is enough to nail the lie of the apologists of imperialism-fascism.

### VOLUNTARY CONSENT AND FREEDOM NOT COERCION— THE BASIS OF THE UNION

Another wild charge made by the bourgeois propagandists is that the Union of the nationalities in the Soviet Union was brought about not by free will and voluntary consent but by coercion. The fact, as we have shown earlier referring even to non-partisan authority, is quite different. It is a fact as we have seen that the nationalities republics had not only constitutionally guaranteed equality of status and rights including the political right of independence, that is to say freedom of secession, simply inconceivable in any bourgeois state, but also actual participation in administration besides having the second chamber (Soviet of Nationalities) to look to their specific problems and needs which is also not available in bourgeois countries.

Speaking on the basis of the Union, Stalin rightly said at the Twelfth Party Congress: "...Voluntary consent and equality—because our national programme starts out from the clause on the right of nations to exist as independent states, what was formerly called the right to self-determination. Proceeding from this, we must definitely say that no union of peoples into a single state can be durable unless it is based on absolutely voluntary consent, unless the peoples themselves wish to unite. The second basis is the juridical equality of the peoples which form the union."

Fourteen years after, a new Constitution replaced the old. Great changes had taken place in the meantime. Sixty million copies of the proposed draft were circulated among the people and it was discussed in 5,27,000 meetings—unthinkable in so-called democracies of the bourgeois world. Amendment was proposed to delete Article 17 from the Constitution which reserved to the republics the right of free secession from the USSR. Stalin opposed the amendment and held: "To delete from the Constitution the article providing for the right of free secession from the USSR would be to violate the voluntary character of the union. Can we agree to this step? I think that we cannot and should not agree to it. It is said that there is not a single republic in the USSR that would want to secede from the USSR and that therefore Article 17 is of no practical importance. It is of course, true that there is not a single republic that would want to secede from the USSR. But this does not in the least mean that we should not fix in the Constitution the right of union republics freely to secede from the USSR. In the USSR there is not a single Union Republic that would want to subjugate another Union Republic. But this does not in the least mean that we ought to delete from the Constitution of the USSR the article dealing with the

equality of rights of the Union Republics." (On Draft Constitution—Problems of Leninism)

On similar ground Stalin opposed the proposal for abolition of the Second Chamber, the Soviet of Nationalities, by holding that:

".. A single chamber system would be better than a dual chamber system in the USSR if the USSR were a single-nation state...The USSR, as we know, is a multi-national state.

"We have a supreme body in which are represented the common interests of all the working people of the USSR, irrespective of nationality. This is the Soviet of the Union. But in addition to common interests the nationalities of the USSR have their particular, specific interests, connected with their specific national characteristics. Can these specific interests be ignored? No, they cannot.... There can be no doubt that without such a body it would be impossible to administer a multi-national State like the USSR." (ibid)

The historic significance of the new Soviet Constitution under the leadership of Stalin was the concrete application of Leninist principles and policy. About its intention and character embracing thirty odd nationalities of a vast territory Stalin declared: "new Constitution of the USSR is profoundly internationalistic. It proceeds from the fact that neither difference in colour or language, cultural level, or level of political developments, nor any other difference between nations and races, can serve as grounds for justifying national inequality of rights. It proceeds from the proposition that all nations and races, irrespective of their past and present position, irrespective of their strength and weakness, should enjoy equal rights in all spheres of economic, social, political and cultural life of society." (ibid) It was no doubt a great event in history. Not only was there countrywide jubilation of Russian people but leading souls from distant countries acclaimed it. Madam Sunyat Sen called it: "Mankind's greatest achievement." And Romain Rolland, the great humanist commented: "This gives life to the great slogans that until now were but dreams of mankind—liberty, equality, fraternity" (Quoted by Anna Louise Strong in 'Stalin Era')

Before we conclude on this point we would like to refer to one more historical fact to prove conclusively that Stalin stood always four square in defence of the political right of nations to have separate independent state and never manipulated a particular situation against the will of the people which was sovereign to him. We refer to the case of Finland. In the

(Contd. on page 7)

(Contd. from Page 6)

words of Stalin : "We are at present witnessing a definite conflict between the Finnish people and the Provisional Government. The representatives of Finnish people ...are demanding that the Provisional Government should return to the people the rights they enjoyed before they were annexed to Russia. The Provisional Government refuses because it will not recognise the sovereignty of the Finnish people. On which side must we range ourselves? Obviously, on the side of the Finnish people, for it is intolerable that we should endorse the forcible retention of any people whatsoever within the bounds of one state." (Marxism And the National and Colonial Question)

#### FIGHT AGAINST BOURGEOIS NATIONALISM

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics emerged as a standing challenge to world capitalism. It was a vast multi-national state bearing the legacy of dominant colonialist outlook and chauvinism of the advanced Great Russian nationality and repressed nationalism of the smaller nationalities most of which before attaining nationhood became parts of Tsarist empire. These nationalities therefore nursed the grievances about past injuries and had doubts and suspicions against dominant nationality. The bourgeois nationalist trend expressed in opposite forms of both Great Russian chauvinism and local nationalism had to be consistently fought by the Communist Party led by Lenin and Stalin.

Tracing back to the history of the past after the revolution, it can be found that on numerous occasions, this bourgeois nationalist danger was highlighted by the party led by Lenin and Stalin. At the Tenth Congress (1921) in the document, "The Immediate Tasks of the Party on the National Question" the danger of both Great Russian chauvinism and local nationalism was sharply focussed as these were vulgarising and distorting Party's policy on national question. The cause of this deviation was "increased influx of petty-bourgeois nationalist elements into the party for the sake of career". These elements, it was said, "usually disguise them in communist colours... Carrying with them a spirit of thinly disguised chauvinism and disintegration." There was a call for "a resolute struggle against all pseudo-Communist elements that attach themselves to the party of the proletariat."

At the Twelfth Congress of the Party (1923) grave concern was expressed over the rise of a 'new force', the force of Great Russian chauvinism, as a result of the NEP which was entrenching itself in the institutions including the Party and Soviet institutions. It was warned that unless this force causing the opposite force of local

nationalism was combated, 'cut off at the root,' the danger of undermining the dictatorship of the proletariat could not be averted.

At the Sixteenth Party Congress (1930) sharp repudiation was made by Stalin of the more dangerous form of Great Russian chauvinism which misrepresenting Lenin and making a false show of internationalism was demanding fusion of nationalities into a single nation—Russian nation, conversion of national languages into a common language; renunciation of the policy of fostering development of the national culture of formerly oppressed peoples. So on and so forth.

Stalin showed that, "...to abolish the national republics and regions now would mean to deprive the vast masses of the peoples of the USSR of the opportunity of receiving education in their native language, to deprive them of the opportunity of having their schools, courts, administration, public and other organisations and institutions operating in their native language and to deprive them of the possibility of partaking in socialist construction. Therefore, this demand was reactionary and directed against the interests of proletarian dictatorship. This deviation reflected the striving of the moribund classes of the formerly dominant Great Russian nation to win back their lost privileges. Similarly, Stalin showed that the deviation towards local nationalism reflected the dissatisfaction of the moribund classes of the formerly oppressed nations with the regime of the proletarian dictatorship, their endeavour to separate themselves off into their national state and there to establish their own class supremacy. The danger of both these deviations lies in the fact that it cultivates bourgeois nationalism and weakens the unity of the toiling people.

At the Seventeenth Congress of the CPSU (B) in his Report Stalin said : "Here, in the sphere of the national problem, just as in the sphere of other problems, there is a confusion in the views of a section of the party which creates a certain danger....

"...It should be observed that the survivals of capitalism in peoples minds are much more tenacious in the sphere of the national problem than in any other sphere. They are more tenacious because they are able to disguise themselves well in national costume.

"...The deviation to nationalism is the adaptation of the internationalist policy of the working class to the nationalist policy of the bourgeoisie. **The deviation towards nationalism reflects the attempts of 'one's own' bourgeoisie to undermine the Soviet system and to restore capitalism. ...It is a departure from Leninist internationalism.** If you want to keep both these deviations under fire, then aim primarily against this source,

against those who depart from internationalism." (emphasis added—Ed., P. Era)

On another occasion Stalin said : "...nationalism is playing the same part as Menshevism played in the past in relation to the party of the Bolsheviks. Only under cover of nationalism can various kinds of bourgeois, including Menshevik influences penetrate into our organisations. ...."

(Rights And 'Lefts' In The National Republics—ibid)

#### COUNTERREVOLUTION AND AFTER

We have seen how the nationality and ethnic problems were scientifically tackled and successfully resolved during the period of Stalin who was personally entrusted with this responsibility by no less a leader than Lenin himself.

History bears witness that the Russian people cutting across different nationalities mingled into a mighty human force to create history of their own. Beating time, they took giant strides in every field—economic, social, political and cultural. A new Russia emerged out of the mess of the tsarist empire, vibrant in creative spirit. Socialist labour did the miracle. Just as they defeated century-old backwardness so also with the same indomitable spirit and heroism they could defeat the menace to world civilization—the Fascist War machine of Hitlerite Germany to save humanity from a catastrophe.

And how amazing was their feat to reconstruct the war-devastated country within so short a time. All this was possible because they had before them the socialist internationalist idea as the guiding spirit, the dictatorship of the proletariat as the shield of protection for the unfettered labour, the revolutionary leadership of the party of the proletariat and a giant Marxist leader like Stalin at the helm. The glory that was, is now overcast with darkness of treachery and subversion from within and without.

After the counterrevolution, with the eclipse of the socialist internationalism and the Soviet system pulled down, has come inevitably the disintegration of the multi-national state, the USSR. Today, both the Great Russian chauvinism and local nationalism, the danger against which Lenin and Stalin alerted again and again and fought an uncompromising battle, have burst in the open and the putrid bourgeois nationalism sweeps the whole country. The accession to power by the imperialist hireling Yeltsin signalled the victory of the Great Russian chauvinism. If Gorbachev is aptly called a capitalist roader for bringing back capitalism in Russia dismantling the socialist system there, then Yeltsin should better

( Contd on page 8 )

(Contd. from page 7)

be called an imperialist roader for going farther to the right and acting as the direct and naked stooge of US imperialism. However, coming back to our discussion it may be recalled that the vast territory that once formed a united state structure of the solidarity of the peoples now faces extreme balkanization into splintered nationality states, to the glee of imperialism and the enemies of proletarian cause.

The national and ethnic conflicts have brought in its trail total disruption in the planned economy developed on the basis of inter-dependence and inter-relation among the republics. As a result, the link of supply and exchange of raw materials and goods has been snapped. Production is under severe strain, articles of consumption become scarce because of the breakdown of the integrated economy. The bourgeois prescriptions are being made to resolve the crisis but which in fact has already denied the fruits of developments to the working people and rob them of social security of employment and minimum material needs that socialism provided.

But how could the country come to this sorry pass after so much achievements? Does it indicate the deficiency of the ideology, failure of communism as a theory as the enemies of socialism are sedulously propagating? In order to get the right answer we are to delve deep into the communist theories and the actual causes of this setback from history. Marxism-Leninism never says that with the overthrow of the capitalist class from state power the danger of capitalist restoration is eliminated for good from the society. It says on the contrary that after the overthrow of the capitalist class, bourgeois thoughts and ideas, bourgeois humanist moral values, the international link of capital as also the forces of habit of the old society still persist and the dispossessed class strives to restore its rule of exploitation-oppression and privileges. That is why in the transitional period—the period of dictatorship of the proletariat—class struggle intensifies tenfold. Lenin said: 'In reality this period inevitably is a period of an unprecedentedly violent class struggle in an unprecedentedly acute form and consequently during this period the state must inevitably be a state that is democratic in a new way (for the proletariat and propertyless in general) and dictatorial in a new way (against the bourgeoisie).— (State and Revolution)

What Lenin really meant was the inevitability of a sharp ideological-political struggle against the bourgeois thoughts and ideas as also moral values which so long persist in the society providing the socio-

political base of capitalism. Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, an eminent Marxist thinker of the era, the founder General Secretary of the SUCI, therefore, persistently underscored the importance of the task of replacing the old bourgeois moral values, attitude and outlook, thoughts and ideas which remain as hangover even among the communists through successive cultural revolutions by proletarian moral values, thoughts and ideas which must be continuously developed to meet newer and newer problems and phenomena through an all-embracing struggle covering all aspects of life. He pointedly referred to the phenomenon of growth of individualism in the socialist society coined by him as 'socialist individualism' to distinguish it from that in the bourgeois society though in content the same. This individualism is inimical to communist morals and must be rooted out by ideological-cultural movement. Comrade Ghosh warned again and again that the communist movement after socialist revolution was not free from bourgeois concept of democracy, nationalism and moral values. The danger of revival of capitalism lay in all these shortcomings. Comrade Ghosh stressed the need of upgrading the ideological-political standard of the leadership as also of the rank and file communists which was found low in the Soviet Union and other East European countries. This lowering of ideological-political-cultural standard of the leadership along with the rank and file communists was due to non-Marxist practice of mechanical centralism both within the party organisation and outside. As to the danger of bourgeois nationalism Comrade Ghosh, decades back, uttered a very important note of caution: "...even among the communists in the East European socialist countries, the sense of national humiliation of the Balkans was mingled with talks of communism. Even anti-fascist national revolution there, which was basically bourgeois-democratic revolution, failed to detect this. But this latent feeling of national humiliation of the Balkans is definitely hidden under cover of all their progressive verbiage." —(Soviet Military Intervention in Czechoslovakia and Revisionism, Selected Works—Shibdas Ghosh.)

This applied equally to different national states in the Soviet Union.

The ground work for the counterrevolution started after the Khrushchevite neorevisionist leadership usurped power in the Soviet Union. Class struggle was ceased on the pretext that the CPSU was no longer the party of the working class but of the whole people. Similarly, dictatorship of the proletariat was made inoperative by holding that the State had become a state of the whole people. Bourgeois method of incentive was brought into production; commodity circulation was increased. Bourgeois democratic views, methods and manners replaced the communist ones both in the party and the state

affairs. Sharply reacting to these neo-revisionist moves, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh warned in 1968: "Just as low standard of ideological consciousness gives birth to adventurism, it gives birth to revisionism as well. It is this low level of consciousness that has given rise to modern revisionism...it is the Soviet Union which started the process of liberalisation. As a plea they are saying that there was a ruthless regimentation during Stalin's time...."

"All these talks and activities, in fact, provided an opportunity to the suppressed individualism, which was not getting a rationale, social backing or protection of the State or the government during Stalin's time, to raise head in the post-Stalin period.

"...Their conduct is confusing the people over the distinction between the communist ideology and the bourgeois liberal humanist concept of liberty and equality. ...they are opening the floodgate to the forces of liberalism which are in reality forces of counterrevolution in the name of freedom, democracy and all that....(ibid)

Then came at the final stage, Gorbachev's perestroika and glasnost which was the blueprint of counter-revolution. As a natural culmination of the long-drawn revisionist process has come the counterrevolution. This does not negate but vindicate on the other hand the scientific basis of communism. You cannot progress towards communism with bourgeois superstructure and socialist base riddled with bourgeois methods. The reversal is inevitable. Even then, the way the nationality problem was resolved under Stalin's leadership will remain as a model, as a brilliant example of creative excellence of Marxism-Leninism in the struggle for advancement of human civilization. The fault was not there but elsewhere—in the removal of socialist internationalist outlook, in the dismantling of dictatorship of the proletariat and above all in the failure of revolutionary alertness and vigilance due to deficiency in the ideological-political standard of the rank and file members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Yet, the reversal cannot be the last word. True communists will take lessons from the reverses, and communism, the ideology of the coming advanced stage of civilization, will forge ahead.

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