

MARXISM TODAY SERIES

EDITED BY PROFESSOR BENJAMIN FARRINGTON, M.A.

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**MARXISM
AND
NATIONALITY**

TEXT OF A MARX HOUSE LECTURE, SLIGHTLY EXPANDED

J. WINTERNITZ

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MARXISM
AND
NATIONALITY

By J. Winternitz

Based on a lecture delivered at Marx House,
March 1944

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FOREWORD

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FOREWORD

THE world struggle against fascism has brought the words Race, Nationality, Nation, to everybody's lips and revealed the intricacy of the problems and the violence of the passions associated with the reality people try to describe in these words. Out of the confusion of the struggle one great fact is beginning to emerge clearly, and that is that on the question of the rights of nations fascism and communism stand at opposite poles. From its foundation the Soviet State had denounced imperialism and the doctrine of a master race, had granted absolute freedom of development to every national group within its borders, and it finally inscribed in its constitution the basic law that discrimination against any person on racial or national grounds is treason, and punishable as such. It was in conscious and deliberate reaction against the marxist policy of the Soviet State that Hitler sought to impose on the world the doctrine of a master race which alone was the creator and bearer of civilization, attempted to solve the question of national minorities by persecution and extermination, and reduced weaker nations to the level of satellites.

The outcome of these two policies is now visible to all. When the trial came nothing could shake the allegiance of the various members of the multi-national Soviet State to their Union: Hitler's vassal states and national minorities are seizing every opportunity to revolt against his tyranny. So great was the success of the Soviet policy in liberating and advancing the oppressed peoples of the old Tsarist empire, that when the fighting power of France, Belgium, Holland and Norway had been broken, and their agricultural and industrial potential had been harnessed to Hitler's war machine and Hitler felt free to turn east, freedom and democracy found new resources and new reserves in Georgia, Armenia, Tajik, Kazakh and other Caucasian and Asiatic republics and autonomous regions. From these peoples who had so newly entered upon the stage of history came soldiers, sailors and airmen, nurses and doctors, industrial workers and collective farmers, generals and administrators who made an indispensable contribution to the allied cause. The success of the Soviet national policy was visible to all. Since Teheran the Soviet Union has officially taken its place among the democracies. But it still remains true that few people understand with what good

title it does so. Few people know that democracy was the key-word with Lenin and Stalin in their approach to the complex national problems with which they were faced. To every proposed solution of the problem the same touchstone was applied: Does it promote the interests of the people? Is it a step forward in democracy?

The military triumph of the Soviet Union in the present war means that the Soviet solution of the national question will affect the future of the whole of humanity. In every continent of the globe exist similar problems, which, if they remain unsolved, will wreck the lives and fortunes of millions of mankind. True, none of these problems can be solved except in the light of the particular historical circumstances in which it originated. But that marxism has an approach to these questions which can ensure their solution the experience of the Soviet Union shows.

In this essay Dr. Winternitz attempts to apply marxist principles to the analysis of the national question in Europe. It will be found that he has thrown a clear light on the general considerations that must govern a successful approach to such problems. Europe, however, is not the whole world; and there are also special problems outside Europe which may require from us in Great Britain a more particular attention. Problems of nationality that have a particular importance for the British people are those that affect their dependent colonial empire, those that affect the Dominions, and those that are found in the British Isles themselves. To these we hope to return in separate essays. **B. F.**

MARXISM AND NATIONALITY

Scope of the Problem

IT is certainly not an easy task to explain in a few pages the basic ideas of marxism, of scientific socialism, on the so-called national question. This is, indeed, one of the most complicated problems of sociological theory, one of the most difficult problems of political practice. We have to explain how nations arise, develop and decline. We have to find out what is the basis of their mutual relations, of their antagonisms, the part different classes play when there is national oppression and a fight for national liberation. We have to determine what is the relation of different kinds of national struggles and aspirations to the great struggle for human progress, for a higher stage of democracy, for the abolition of class oppression and exploitation. All these questions of theory are, of course, closely connected with practical questions of the utmost importance, such questions as whether the working class should oppose or support the struggle for national independence, whether the striving of smaller nations to form their own independent national states is a progressive tendency or whether it should be opposed in the interest of a higher unity of nations.

The national question is involved in the problem of India and Ireland, of the Arab States and of Palestine; it plays a great part in the discussion of the future frontiers of Poland. But—and this is the most important topical aspect—the national question is a decisive element in the problems and tasks of the great war of liberation, which is being waged now against Hitlerite Germany. Its correct solution is one of the preconditions of a lasting and just peace.

I mention all these questions, just to make it clear how impossible it is in this limited space to deal with all the aspects of this problem and to answer all the questions arising in this connection. I will only try to explain some basic ideas of marxism about this fundamental problem of modern society and give some help to a clear understanding of the attitude the marxist movement, i.e. the working-class movement, led by the theory of marxism, adopts on the national questions under the present circumstances of the world-wide fight against fascism.

The colonial question is certainly one of the most important

aspects of the national question in modern times. I shall, however, in the present essay take illustrations and examples from the national problems of Europe only, and I do not propose to enter into the complicated problems of the nations of Asia and Africa, although I am fully aware of the vital importance of a correct approach to this aspect of our problem, in the solution of which hundreds of millions, the majority of mankind, are immediately interested. It may suffice in this connection to state that exactly the same principles which should be applied to secure a just democratic solution of national problems in Europe are valid for nations and races in other parts of the world.

Let me explain first the way in which marxism, the scientific theory of the evolution of human society, approaches such a problem. We have to apply the method of materialist dialectics. That is to say, we must not regard social phenomena in an abstract, dogmatic way, beginning with such general principles as, for example, 'nationality is an absolute value' or 'mankind stands higher than nationality'. We have to make a historical analysis, we have to find out how modern nations arose, what part national movements played and are playing in modern society; we must not regard national movements as isolated things in themselves, but see them in the light of class struggles, which play an essential part in the evolution of society. To put the problem in its correct perspective, I shall try to give a brief historical outline of the development of the national question during the last century.

How Nations Arose

THE national question is, in fact, a *modern* problem. Those nations which play a prominent part in modern history—the French, British, Germans, Italians, etc.—did not exist and act as nations, i.e. as closely-knit stable communities, centuries ago. The attempt to explain the behaviour of the Hitlerite Germans of our time by the warlike and barbarous character of the Teutonic tribes, supposed to be their ancestors two thousand years ago, cannot claim any scientific truth. The barbarous virtues and vices of these tribes can be explained by the conditions of their times. Nomadic, primitive tribes living by hunting and robbing, consistently on the warpath against other tribes, have similar characteristics, whether they are Red Indians, African Negroes, Australian Bushmen or Teutons. And, by the way, these wild barbarous Teutonic tribes

are the ancestors not only of the Germans, but also of the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans who contributed essentially to the formation of the British nation, of the Scandinavian peoples; and mingling with tribes of other origin they contributed to the formation of the French and Italian peoples too. All the nations of Europe arose from the intermingling of different tribes and racial groups. Some distant common origin, a common heritage of blood, does not explain the character of modern nations.

Modern nations arose through the amalgamation of different tribes, clans or racial groups, living together on a common territory, speaking the same language and connected with one another by close economic ties. This is the sense of the definition given by Stalin in his fundamental essay, *Marxism and the National Question*, written in 1913. Stalin says here:

‘A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture.’ (J. Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, p. 7.)

This is not an arbitrary, artificial definition, but the result of a concrete historical analysis of the circumstances in which such ‘stable communities’ arose, became able to act in common, and evolved a national conscience, a desire to form a national state. Call to your mind the conditions under mediæval feudalism, and you will easily understand why a higher development of production, commerce and traffic was necessary for establishing bigger national communities. The consciousness of belonging together, of common interests, the possibility of joining forces for common action, the feeling of national solidarity, could not arise, say, between a Scotsman in the mountains of his country and a fisherman on the south coast of England, when a journey of several months was necessary to travel from one place to the other; when commerce and intercourse were closer between southern England and western France than between England and Scotland; when the community of the ‘clan’ was a living everyday reality for the Scotsman, while he hardly knew anything concerning the Englishman who lived in the same island. Similar conditions prevailed throughout Europe in the age of feudalism. Germany for instance consisted of hundreds of greater and smaller principalities with a very loose connection in the German Reich. The Prussian was as much of a foreigner to the Bavarian as the Frenchman or Italian.

The closer connection between different parts of a country, different sections of the population, arises with modern capitalism. This is the powerful integrating force breaking down the barriers of feudalism, concentrating huge masses in big industrial centres, connecting the countryside with the town, producing the middle class which becomes in the beginning the main representative of the new idea of nationality. Therefore the origin of modern nations is closely connected with the bourgeois-democratic revolutions, which destroyed feudal seclusion and dispersion, and for the first time united vast popular masses in a common struggle with common ideas. In this way the British nation arose from the revolution of the seventeenth century, the French nation from the Great Revolution of 1789.

The Communist Manifesto on the National Question

MARXISM as a political theory and a political movement entered the field in the middle of the nineteenth century. At that time there was no special national question in Western Europe, it had been solved by the bourgeois-democratic revolution in England and France. But in Central Europe, in Germany, Italy, Austria-Hungary, this was a burning question; in Eastern Europe, Tsarist Russia was the most powerful reactionary empire, oppressing dozens of peoples, which—with the exception of the Poles—had hardly begun to develop a national consciousness.

The ideas of marxism on the national question found their first expression in the Communist Manifesto written by Marx and Engels as the programme of the Communist League, the first international association of workers, which accepted marxist principles at its conference in London in November 1847. Marx and Engels were representatives of the German working class and the German progressive movement, and only a few months later became practical leaders of the extreme left wing of the democratic revolution in Germany. But when they elaborated what has been since that time the basis of the programme of the international working-class movement, they did not approach the national question from any narrow national point of view, but from the viewpoint of *proletarian internationalism*. In fact, the Communist Manifesto proclaims internationalism as a basic principle of Communism.

15228 'The Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only: (1) In the national struggles of the proletarians of different countries they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat independently of all nationality. (2) In the varied stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeois has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.' (K. Marx, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 219.)

This is the fundamental difference between the marxist approach to the national problems and the bourgeois-nationalist approach. The working class fights against every oppression and exploitation, and therefore as a rule it supports every struggle of an oppressed nation for independence. But it does not accept the nationalist principle of 'My country, right or wrong' or 'My nation, right or wrong'. It regards the fight of different nations from the point of view of the *general progress of mankind towards democracy and socialism*. Marxists understand that the fundamental interests of every nation depend on the overthrow of a reactionary system which threatens the development and existence of every single nation, great or small. Therefore the fight for national freedom is a progressive force, so far and only so far as it is connected with the international struggle for human progress against backwardness, oppression and exploitation.

Proletarian internationalism finds forceful expression in another famous, frequently quoted sentence of the Manifesto:

'The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got.' (*Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 225.)

There were bitter discussions about this principle during the first World War. It must not be understood as a general dogma valid under any circumstances, but correlated to the circumstances under which it was coined. So long as the workers are an oppressed class in a reactionary country, where state power is used for the oppression of the popular masses within and for external conquest, socialist workers must not feel any solidarity with their 'fatherland' and should not support it in a war. This was the correct attitude of class-conscious workers in Tsarist Russia, in the Kaiser's Germany and in the other imperialist countries in 1914. It is certainly the only possible attitude for socialist workers

and all progressive people in Hitlerite Germany and her vassal states today.

But when a country, a nation, wages a war for a just cause, a cause connected with the progress of humanity—as in the case of the present war against fascism—it is the duty of the working class to support their country, to go all out for its defence.

Marx and Engels, while they condemned vulgar bourgeois patriotism, were far from adopting an anti-national or anational attitude. In the same context, the Communist Manifesto goes on:

‘Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself *the* nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.’ (*Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 225.)

This is a very deep idea, the full meaning and implication of which became evident only in our time. The working class—as the most productive and progressive class—in industrially developed countries the most numerous class too—fights for supremacy, aims at leading the nation. In assuming leadership, it becomes responsible for the fate and future of the nation, the representative of the national cause, the defender of the *true* national interests, which are very different from the bourgeois idea of ‘national interests’ aiming at expansion and domination over other nations.

What this means in practice, we see in the mighty example of the U.S.S.R. Here the Russian working class, leading the whole nation, has become the true and noble representative of the greatness and power of the Russian nation, inheriting and continuing all the glorious traditions and achievements of the nation throughout the centuries.

This is one great example—others will follow. But the U.S.S.R. is a multinational state, not only the great Russian people has found its full expression in this socialist state, dozens of nations are living together in this great Union, as free and equal members, and every one of them, led by its working class, enjoys a greater and fuller development of its national life and culture than ever before.

So we see how another prophetic forecast of the Manifesto has become true in the first state built upon marxist principles. Forecasting the future development to socialism, the Manifesto states:

'In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonisms between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end.' (*Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 225.)

Oppression of one nation by another is carried out in the interest and under the leadership of the ruling, oppressing and exploiting class of the oppressor nation. Therefore national oppression will vanish when the working class rises to destroy the power of the exploiting class. This is also the reason why the issue of national liberation is closely and inseparably connected with the issue of social liberation. Therefore also the most progressive representatives of the bourgeois-democratic national movements, such as for example, Sun Yat Sen in China or T. G. Masaryk in Czechoslovakia, understood more or less clearly that weak and oppressed nations should make common cause with the working-class struggle for social emancipation.

Marx and Engels in 1848

Now let us see how the founders of marxism put into practice their ideas on the national question, which are so clearly expressed in the programmatic sentences quoted above. Marx and Engels took a very active part in the democratic revolution of Germany in 1848. The aim of this revolution, in the intention of its most progressive leaders, was to destroy the forces of feudalism and absolutism, to destroy the backward conditions of Germany which consisted at that time of dozens of petty, more or less despotic principalities, and two larger reactionary powers, Prussia and Austria, to unite all Germans in one democratic republic. This programme of the bourgeois-democratic revolution proclaimed by Marx, was a radically democratic and national programme, a programme of national unity, independence and greatness. But as far as Marx and Engels were concerned, it was far from being a nationalistic programme. Marx did not forget that there were other nations oppressed by reactionary German states, such as the Poles in Prussia, the Italians, Czechs and other nations in Austria. Marx severely criticized the cowardly, faint-hearted, unprincipled liberal leaders of German democracy who failed to support the struggle for national liberty waged by these

oppressed nations against Prussian and Austrian despotism, the common enemy of these people and of the popular masses in Germany. It was in this connection that Marx coined the famous slogan: 'A nation which oppresses other nations cannot itself be free.'

The revolution of 1848 was defeated, first in France and then in Germany, Austria and Hungary, mainly because the leaders of the upper middle class in France and in Germany were frightened by the first independent appearance of the working class, notably when the workers were provoked to insurrection in June 1848, in Paris. That is the reason why they preferred to surrender to the old forces of absolutist reaction instead of waging a bold revolutionary struggle, which would have carried the bourgeois middle class to power, but by which the working class could have emerged as a strong and independent force.

The defeat of the Paris workers in June 1848 foreshadowed the defeat of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Germany, and doomed the nations fighting for their national freedom against Prussia, Austria and Tsarist Russia to a continuation of their servitude. This was the conclusion which Marx drew from the first defeat of the revolutionary forces in Paris in 1848:

'Thus the peoples who had begun the fight for their national independence were abandoned to the superior power of Russia, Austria and Prussia, but, at the same time, the fate of these national revolutions was subordinated to the fate of the proletarian revolution, robbed of its apparent independence, its independence of the great social revolution. The Hungarian shall not be free, nor the Pole, nor the Italian, as long as the worker remains a slave!' (*Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 220.)

Prophetic words! The Hungarians, Poles, Italians in fact *won* their national freedom later on, for some time even while the workers remained slaves. But experience has proved how precarious this national freedom was while the Polish, Hungarian and Italian workers were kept in bondage. And when these nations win freedom again, they will certainly, in the first place, have to give thanks for their freedom to the great fight of the only country where the workers are really free. Nor will they try again to build national power and greatness on the slavery of the working class.

German Unity in 1870

IN the revolution of 1848 and in the following years, German bourgeois democracy proved unable to solve the national question. Nor was the working-class movement which arose in the sixties able to assume leadership. F. Lassalle, who founded the first independent workers' party in Germany in 1863, was strongly influenced by Marx. But while he clearly understood the necessity of a working-class organization, independent of the bourgeois Liberal Party, he did not assume a clear-cut uncompromising attitude against the Prussian state and its leader, Bismarck. He even tried to make a deal with Bismarck, offering support for a Prussian policy in the German question, if Bismarck would grant universal suffrage. He even dreamed of 'solving the social question' with the help of a democratically reformed Prussian monarchy. Lassalle died as early as 1864, but Lassallian influences and traditions greatly hindered the development of a truly marxist working-class party in Germany. The weakness of the bourgeois democracy and the labour movement reflected the backwardness of the industrial and political development of Germany.

So it was the most reactionary class in Germany, the Prussian junkers, the landed aristocracy, who, led by the able and unscrupulous Bismarck, effected national unity in the German Reich by his infamous method of 'blood and iron'. First of all, he threw the Austrians out of the Reich in the war of 1866, and in this way established Prussia's supremacy over Germany. Then he provoked the war with France; and France, led by the ambitious adventurer Napoleon III, stumbled unprepared into Bismarck's trap. The war of 1870-71 which ended in the defeat of France, in the foundation of modern imperial Germany and in the annexation of the two French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, was a fatal *turning point* not only in German history—but as events since that time have proved—in the history of Europe and the world.

Victorious Germany, entering the paths of rapid modern industrial and financial development, led by the triumphant Prussian militarist gentry, who formed an alliance with the representatives of heavy industry, became a hotbed of modern aggressive imperialism. While nationalism, up to the end of the nineteenth century in the time of the democratic revolution of the middle classes, was a progressive force, a driving force against the

remnants of the middle ages, feudalism and absolutism, now a new reactionary, chauvinistic nationalism developed in Germany. This German nationalism dominated not only the capitalist class, but also the lower middle class and the intelligentsia; it became the ideology of reactionary imperialism, which, having come late to the division of the world among the great powers, prepared for the redivision of the world by armed force, by a world war for world domination.

Lenin, who revealed the economic roots of imperialism in the general monopolistic trend of capitalism, who certainly did not see in German imperialism *alone* the culprit of the world war of 1914, drew attention to these special circumstances which made Germany more rapacious and aggressive than other imperialist countries. In his lecture on the war, delivered in May 1917, he said:

‘Opposed to this group, mainly Anglo-French, stands another group of capitalists, *even more predatory and more piratical*,¹ a group which came to the capitalist feasting-board when all the places had been taken, but which introduced into the struggle new methods of developing capitalist production, better technique, incomparable organization, which transformed the old capitalism, the capitalism of free competition, into the capitalism of gigantic trusts, syndicates and cartels. This group introduced the principle of State capitalist production, uniting the gigantic forces of the State into one mechanism, and amalgamating tens of millions of people in a single organization of State capitalism.’ (Lenin, *War and the Workers*, Little Lenin Library, XX, p. 10.)

This is the basis of German aggressive, chauvinistic nationalism, which degenerated in our time to the bestialism of ‘National-Socialism’.

Mr. Brailsford wrote in *The Left News*, February 1944:

‘We see in Nationalism the principle that brought us to the edge of the abyss.’

This is an example of that kind of abstract reasoning and superficial generalizing which is opposed to the spirit of marxism and prevents real understanding of historical developments and the issues of our time. Bourgeois nationalism in imperialist

¹My italics. J.W.

countries is a very dangerous ideological weapon of the most reactionary forces, as fascism and Hitlerism have proved. But the nationalism of an oppressed people uniting the popular masses in a fight against imperialist—or in our time—fascist oppression, can be and now is one of the strongest progressive forces.

The Example of the Working Class in 1870-71

WHEN I say that Germany became the hotbed of the most reactionary imperialist nationalism, and that this ideology won mass influence over the German people, I do not imply that there were no counter forces. It is a fact that the German labour movement in 1870-71 valiantly and steadfastly opposed Bismarck's war policy and especially the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. The spirit of the proletarian internationalism found splendid expression at that time in mutual proclamations of solidarity exchanged between German and French socialist workers and in the famous addresses of the First International, written by Marx, in which the common views of the class-conscious workers of all countries on the war and the following events were clearly and forcefully expressed.

After the defeat of Napoleon III, the people of Paris began to organize the defence of their glorious capital. And when the treacherous government of the reactionary Thiers tried to disarm the National Guard, the people of Paris rose and constituted the Commune, which was hailed by Marx as the first attempt at a working-class government, and later on, by Lenin, as the glorious precursor of the Soviet Republic. This first workers' government in history was a splendid illustration of the Marxist idea, that proletarian internationalism, far from preventing the workers from doing their duty to their nation, enables them to become the true leaders and representatives of the nation just in the nation's most critical times. The Paris Commune was the embodiment of working-class internationalism, and at the same time a government of heroic national defence. This cannot be explained in better words than those of Marx in his *Civil War in France*:

'If the Commune was thus the true representative of all the healthy elements of French society, and therefore the truly national government, it was, at the same time, as a workingmen's government, as the bold champion of the emancipation

of labour, emphatically international. Within sight of the Prussian army, that had annexed to Germany two French provinces, the Commune annexed to France the working people all over the world . . . The Commune admitted all foreigners to the honour of dying for an immortal cause. Between the foreign war lost by their treason, and the civil war fomented by their conspiracy with the foreign invader, the bourgeoisie had found the time to display their patriotism by organizing police hunts upon the Germans in France. The Commune made a German working man its Minister of Labour. Thiers, the bourgeoisie, the Second Empire, had continually deluded Poland by loud professions of sympathy, while in reality betraying her to, and doing the dirty work of Russia. The Commune honoured the heroic sons of Poland by placing them at the head of the defenders of Paris.' (*Selected Works*, Vol. II, p. 508.)

There is more than one topical analogy between this glorious story of the past and what we have seen happen in our days.

The National Question in the Epoch of Imperialism

THE end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century mark the transition of capitalism to a new stage. The liberal era of free competition and free trade is being replaced by the imperialist era, characterized by the domination of powerful monopolies, banks and trusts merging into finance capital, exploiting not only the working masses in their own country, but, by the methods of capital export and colonial policy, exploiting hundreds of millions of people all over the earth, mainly in the backward colonial countries.

It was Lenin, who, continuing the theoretical and practical work of Marx and Engels, gave a thorough analysis of the basic contradictions and tendencies of development of this new epoch, and outlined the task of the working class under the new conditions. It was Lenin and his greatest disciple Stalin who reviewed the national question in the light of these new developments. Most of the searching articles which Lenin wrote on this problem are contained in his *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX, and the numerous enlightening contributions of Stalin to this problem are collected in *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*.

What are the new facts of imperialism which alter the context of the national question? The bourgeois-democratic revolution has come to a definite end in the greater part of Europe. The bourgeoisie is no longer a revolutionary force fighting against feudalism for a free development of the productive forces of modern society; it has become, especially in the most powerful imperialistic countries, a thoroughly reactionary class, not interested in the issue of national liberation, but in imperialist expansion, conquest and exploitation of other nations. Even where semi-feudal despotism still survived and ruled over oppressed nations, as in Tsarist Russia, the Hapsburg monarchy and Turkey at the beginning of this century, these reactionary powers became more and more the instruments of modern imperialism and finance capital. In this way the connection which already existed between the struggle for national liberation and the struggle for social emancipation became even closer. For it was the same enemy that had to be fought by the oppressed nations and by the working class: imperialism, monopoly capitalism.

From this follows firstly that it is the duty of the working class to side with the oppressed nations, to support their struggle, to oppose their own ruling class where it is oppressing other nations, to support the struggle of their own nation for independence where it is one of the oppressed nations. This principle was applied by Lenin and Stalin both to the colonial peoples in Asia and Africa, and to the oppressed European nations who lived mainly in Tsarist Russia and in the Hapsburg monarchy. From the point of view of revolutionary struggle against imperialism, they propagated the principle of *national self-determination*, a principle which Marx had already proclaimed in his draft resolution for the Geneva Congress of the first International (1866). It is a basic idea of democracy that every nation has the right to decide its own economical, political and cultural questions; no democratic case can be made for the right of any nation to rule over other nations.

Stalin, in his splendid pamphlet on the national question, written in 1913, mainly as a criticism of the opportunist views of certain Russian and Austrian socialists, made it perfectly clear why the Austrian Social Democrats were not able to solve the national problem, while the Russian revolutionary marxists, the Bolshevik Party, found a correct solution in theory and in practice.

The Austrian Social Democrats—O. Bauer and K. Renner—defended a programme of national-cultural autonomy within the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy. In Austria, the German bourgeoisie had a dominating position. The Hapsburg empire, closely allied to Germany and dependent on her, followed an aggressive policy of conquest in the Balkans against the Southern Slav peoples. Even if the oppressed nations of this empire had got all cultural rights, as many schools and universities as they desired, which they did not get, they would not have been satisfied with living in a state whose economic and foreign policy did not serve their interests and offended deeply the Slav sympathies of the Slav nations living in the Hapsburg empire. A fight for the right of self-determination would have been a fight for the overthrow of the reactionary Hapsburg monarchy, this prison of nations. But the reformist socialists of Austria were afraid of such revolutionary struggle, they wanted to reform this state, not to overthrow it. Just because of this they were not able to find a solution to the national question. This was the reason why the working-class organizations, the Social-Democratic Party and the trade unions, which had been founded on an international basis, were split. The main responsibility for this lamentable state of affairs, of dissension between different bourgeois-nationalist parties, reflected in disputes, quarrels and splits in the labour movement, has to be attributed to the German Social Democrats in Austria, who did not wage an uncompromising revolutionary struggle against the oppressive policy of their own bourgeoisie.

The Bolshevik Solution

THE Bolshevik Party, however, worked for the revolutionary annihilation of Tsarist Russia, and therefore they defended the right of all nations of the old Russia, the Poles, the Finns, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, etc., to secede from Russia and to form their own national States. By such a policy all forces of national revolution, all democratic forces of the peasantry, combined with the revolutionary struggle of the working class of Russia, both for the overthrow of Tsarism and for the final annihilation of Russian imperialism. What Lenin and Stalin had proclaimed in the years of struggle was implemented when the revolution was victorious in 1917. As early as 16th November 1917, a 'Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia', signed by Stalin as People's Commissar of

National Affairs, and by Lenin as Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, was published proclaiming these principles of the Soviet Government with regard to the nationalities of Russia :

1. The equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia.
2. The right of the peoples of Russia to freedom of self-determination, including the right to secede and form independent states.
3. Abolition of all national and national-religious privileges and restrictions whatsoever.
4. Freedom of development for the national minorities and ethnographic groups inhabiting the territory of Russia.'

(Lenin and Stalin—*The Russian Revolution, Writings and Speeches from the February Revolution to the October Revolution* 1917, p. 255.)

The same principles are embodied in the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. of 1936.

There were even true internationalists, devoted socialists, who did not understand this bold, high-principled policy. Rosa Luxemburg, the great leader of the revolutionary Left Wing of the German working-class movement, the uncompromising fighter against German imperialism and imperialist war, criticized the Bolshevik policy on the national question, and opposed the idea of the international unity of the working class against the principle of national self-determination. Especially with regard to the Polish nation, but also to the other nations oppressed by Tsarist Russia, she declared that the recognition of the right to national independence would strengthen petty-bourgeois-nationalist tendencies, weaken the revolution and lead to the disintegration of revolutionary Russia. But just the opposite happened, as Lenin and Stalin had foreseen and predicted. On the basis of voluntary decision, clearly recognizing their common interests with the great Russian Socialist Republic, the Ukrainians, Byelo-Russians, Georgians and other peoples of the Caucasus, dozens of different nations, proclaimed their adherence to the Union of Socialist Republics, this model of a free union of free nations. And if the development in Poland was different and the most rabid, narrow-minded, anti-Russian bourgeois nationalism could win wide mass support, this was not only the responsibility of the Polish Socialist Party (P.P.S.) leadership who deserted the cause of

international proletarian solidarity, but it was partly also the fault of the truly internationalist Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania, founded by Rosa Luxemburg, because this party ignored the national aspirations of the Polish popular masses and so isolated the working class from these masses.

The latest change in the constitution of the U.S.S.R., adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. in February 1944 (separate Peoples' Commissariats for Foreign Affairs and for the Defence of every Union Republic), granting even greater rights to the Union Republics than before, and that in the midst of the most terrible war, is a shining proof of the correct solution of the national question found and practised by the greatest marxists of modern times—Lenin and Stalin.

Self-Determination no Dogma

LENIN'S and Stalin's attitude to the national question cannot be correctly understood without taking into account another aspect of the marxist approach to national movements, the principle of proletarian internationalism. Every single concrete national question should be regarded from the point of view of the general progress of human society. Therefore it would be wrong to say that marxists must support *every* national movement and that they have to apply the principle of national self-determination as a dogma in every single case. It happens that national dissatisfaction is made use of by the most reactionary oppressive forces. In this way sometimes national movements develop which serve absolutely reactionary purposes, e.g. the Axis Powers instigated a national insurrectionary movement in Irak in 1940-41. Of course, no marxist could support a national movement of this kind. Japanese fascist imperialism made and makes use of the national movements in the Far East and finds such dupes as the Indian S. C. Bose, who tries to win over the justly dissatisfied Indian masses for a policy of co-operation with, i.e. practically submission to, Japanese imperialism. Of course, marxists are absolutely opposed to national movements of this type.

Also, the right of self-determination of this or that national group has to be definitely denied if under the given conditions it would serve reactionary purposes and do a disservice to the general cause of democracy.

Therefore German and Czech anti-fascists in Czechoslovakia, in the crisis preceding the Munich agreement of 1938, strictly opposed the right of self-determination for the Sudeten-Germans which was demanded by the Hitler puppet Henlein, and supported by the Chamberlain government at that time, because they knew that granting this right under the given conditions would only serve Hitler's purpose, his war preparations, his aim for the destruction of the national existence of the Czechs, the Slovaks and dozens of other nations.

Lenin, in an article written in 1916, summing up the discussion on self-determination, explains why Marx and Engels were not in sympathy with the national aspirations of the Slav peoples of Austria in 1848-49 when the leaders of these peoples did not support the democratic revolution, but connected their cause with the Austrian monarchy and even with Tsarism, the most reactionary power in Europe of the nineteenth century. At this time Marx and Engels advocated revolutionary war against Tsarism and all its outposts in other countries. Explaining this, Lenin says:

'If the concrete situation which confronted Marx in the epoch when Tsarist influence was predominant in international politics were to repeat itself, for instance, in such a form that a number of nations were to start a socialist revolution (as a bourgeois-democratic revolution was started in Europe in 1848) while *other* nations serve as the chief bulwark of bourgeois reaction—then we would have to be in favour of a revolutionary war against the latter, in favour of "crushing" them, in favour of destroying all their outposts, no matter what small national movements arose there. Consequently, we must not discard examples of Marx's tactics—this would mean professing Marxism in words while discarding it in practice—we must analyse them concretely and draw invaluable lessons from them for the future. The various demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not absolute, but a *small* part of the general democratic (now general socialist) *world* movement. Possibly, in individual concrete cases, the part may contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected.' (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX, p. 287 f.)

An invaluable lesson indeed for our time, which has almost exactly produced the conditions Lenin gave as future possibilities!

There are the nations of the U.S.S.R. which have started the socialist revolution, there are other nations, mainly the *Germans*, which have become the chief bulwark of reaction, and there are outposts of this reaction, e.g. East Prussia or the so-called 'Sudetenland'. If it is necessary for the defence of democracy and socialism, we are all out for 'crushing' these outposts of German imperialist reaction however much it may hurt the national feelings of the Germans. In this sense Prime Minister Churchill was absolutely right when he proclaimed that the Atlantic Charter—i.e. mainly the principle of national self-determination—does not contain an inviolable right of the German people to the frontiers of 1938, precluding their change by the victorious democratic powers. Unfortunately, some representatives of the labour movement do not understand that a defence of the inviolability of the frontiers of Germany at the present time is a defence of the interests of the most aggressive and reactionary power. Granted this problem would assume a new aspect if a really democratic popular revolution smashed German fascism from within. But nobody knows yet how strong the anti-fascist forces of the German people, which have not been able to act since 1933, are, and whether and when they will be able to act again efficiently. But even then, after such a fundamental change in Germany's position, the fate of Germany's eastern formerly Polish and now Germanized provinces, should not be decided with regard only to the wishes and desires of the present population of these provinces, but from the higher point of safeguarding peace and democracy in Europe and in the world.

This higher point of view was—to give another example of the same principle—very clearly applied by Lenin to the Polish question. Against the Polish Social Democrats who, under the leadership of Rosa Luxemburg, denied as a matter of principle the right of the Polish nation to form an independent state, Lenin resolutely defended the right of the Polish nation to unrestricted self-determination. But, writing on this question in 1916, when the German and Austrian imperialists won the support of Polish nationalists for their imperialist war against Russia by promises of Polish independence, Lenin clearly stated:

'To be in favour of a general European war for the sake of restoring Polish independence, means being a nationalist of the worst brand, means putting the interests of a small number

of Poles above the interests of hundreds of millions of people who would suffer from the war.' (*Collected Works*, Vol. XIX, p. 296.)

In a similar way it could be said: To oppose the decision of the Teheran Conference on the Polish question, a solution of this vexed problem which helps not only to a lasting Russian-Polish understanding, but removes also serious obstacles from the paths of growing solidarity between the world powers on which the prospect of lasting peace depends, certainly means putting the interests of a small number of Germans above the interests of mankind.

National Oppression by Fascism

HERE we are already touching the burning problems of our time. We have to analyse now the new aspects of the national problem which arose in our time, a time in which the deepest crisis and decline of modern imperialism found its expression in fascism. Fascism, representing the most reactionary, rapacious elements of finance capital, has produced new forms of national oppression more brutal and barbarous than any national oppression previously known. And this oppression is directed not only against backward colonial peoples who also have already learned to fight back and to claim their right of independence. German fascism has attacked and subjugated the most highly developed modern nations, nations with a proud history and heritage, nations who have given the lead to mankind in the struggle for democracy, such as the great French nation. Moreover, peoples which have already begun the development to a higher stage of society, to socialism, like the Ukrainians and Byelo-Russians, fell for a time under the yoke of the most cruel oppression, and were threatened by extermination. A dozen European countries have been devastated and plundered, their political and intellectual leaders of resistance have been slaughtered by the thousand, millions of workers have been dragged away and forced to slavery in Germany. The whole economy of these cocupied countries, as also of the satellite countries, has been put into the service of the German war machine.

The exploitation and oppression of subjugated nations by German (and also Italian and Japanese) fascism surpasses everything

in the long and dismal history of imperialism so far as the scale, ruthlessness and efficiency of the methods of plunder and terrorization are concerned. Modern imperialism exploits backward countries mainly by export of capital. Railways, harbours, factories are built, capital goods are exported, certainly not in the interests of the colonial or dependent country, but in the interest of the foreign owner. While it is true that these backward countries might have had a much speedier and healthier economic development if they had acquired the methods of modern industry without foreign exploitation, nevertheless it can hardly be denied that these countries owe a certain economic progress to foreign capital. German fascism had not to resort to these old-fashioned methods. Invading countries like Austria, Czechoslovakia, Belgium and France, with highly developed modern industrial enterprises, the Germans had no need to invest their capital for the purpose of exploiting the material resources and the labour power of the countries they conquered. They just appropriated whatever seemed useful to them by various methods, from direct expropriation to financial infiltration. There was some German capital investment, e.g. in Rumanian oil wells, in Austrian iron works, in Czechoslovak plants for synthetic oils, but this is not at all the essential feature of the fascist methods of robbery.

These vary from direct simple confiscation, as applied to industry and agriculture in the temporarily occupied parts of the U.S.S.R. and to a large extent in Poland, Yugoslavia and elsewhere, to the more subtle financial infiltration used in France, Belgium and in other countries where the Nazis wanted to maintain co-operation with the representatives of big business in the occupied countries.

For this purpose exorbitant occupation costs are charged and the foreign exchange acquired in this way is used for the buying of shares, factories, etc. As the occupation authorities controlled the delivery of raw materials, transport, the labour market, as they could give abundant orders for armament deliveries and had the means to prevent, suppress or at least hinder any production in which they were not interested, they easily won the key positions in the economic life of occupied countries through blackmail and bribery. In many cases, capitalists had only to chose between closing down their factory or accepting German control, either in the form of Germans being put on the board of directors, or by merging with a German trust.

Frequently, the same purpose was achieved by what the Nazis call 'Aryanization', i.e. expelling Jews or those whom the Nazi laws denounce as 'Non-Aryans' from their position and ownership, and putting German commissars in their place. This was a favourite method in Austria and Czechoslovakia.

Furthermore, Germany's trade relations with occupied and satellite countries are barely camouflaged methods of theft. For the goods they are either forced or induced to deliver to Germany, the exporter may be paid by his government or state bank, but the Germans hardly deliver any goods in return. Trade debts accumulate, papers without value, to be paid after Germany's final victory which will never come.

According to an estimate, given by a spokesman of the Ministry for Economic Warfare, Mr. Dingle Foot, at the end of 1943, Germany extorted directly from occupied countries £1,200 million annually, while the unpaid trade balances increased by about £500 million per annum. This is exploitation on an unprecedented scale. Germany's war reparations which were generally believed to be unbearably hard, and really contributed essentially to upsetting world trade and aggravating the crisis after the first World War, did not amount to more than £230 million annually, in 1921, and were reduced to £125 million in 1924. Altogether, in those ten years when Germany paid reparations—and she paid with the help of foreign loans which were higher than her payments—she paid about as much as she is now extorting year by year from the victims of her aggression.

To give another illustrative comparison, R. P. Dutt estimates that the annual tribute from India to Britain amounts to £135-150 million, while in older days before the development of modern imperialism, in three-quarters of a century of British rule, the total tribute did not amount to more than £150 million. (R. P. Dutt, *India Today*, p. 149.)

On the continent of Europe exploited by Nazi imperialism, there is a population of about 230 millions (occupied and satellite countries) as compared with India's 350 millions. The tribute, eleven times greater, extorted by Germany, reflects not only the much higher degree of economic development of the countries which fell under German domination, but also the much more thorough and ruthless methods of exploitation. Moreover, in the estimates given above, an essential part of the exploitation of

foreign nations by German fascism is omitted: the forced labour of foreign workers deported to Germany which, prisoners of war included, amounts to many millions.

The methods of political oppression are as manifold as those of economic exploitation. They vary from the most cruel mass extermination, as applied against the Jews and millions of Soviet citizens, to the control of quisling governments which have to do the dirty work for their German overlords. But even where the German occupiers in the beginning stressed their 'correctness' and non-interference in internal affairs, as in Denmark or where German armed forces first came as allies as in Italy or Hungary, the logic of foreign domination under the conditions of total war and exercised by the most tyrannical power in history, led to ever-growing conflicts, hardening national resistance and provoked the German occupiers to measures of increasing ferocity and brutality. Deportation to Germany, imprisonment without trial, shooting of hostages, the unspeakable atrocities of Gestapo trials and Nazi concentration camps, the suppression of all democratic and especially all independent working-class organizations, the removal of all honest and courageous representatives of the oppressed peoples from influential offices, and the installation of traitors, of base and corrupt tools of foreign masters, interference even in the most intimate matters of cultural and religious life, made German domination hated and detested throughout enslaved Europe.

We should visualize the appalling conditions of this most ruthless national oppression in order to understand the formidable explosive forces of national revolution which necessarily develop in the nations oppressed by fascism. It is evident that in countries such as Greece and Norway, France and Czechoslovakia, there is *one* idea uniting the widest masses of the people in a common struggle: the idea of *national* liberation, of chasing out of the country the hateful foreign invader, of punishing the fiendish oppressors and the traitors who served them, of establishing again a free democratic life so that the nations may decide their own destiny.

The National Front

THIS is the basis of the *united national front* arising in all these countries. It is clear that marxists cannot stand outside this front. On the contrary, the fight against fascism and especially against

the most reactionary and dangerous force—Hitlerite Germany—is the over-riding task of the working class and all progressive forces in our time. For there can be no progress towards socialism, and not even any successful defence of the political and social achievements of the working class in democratic countries, nor any prospect of lasting peace, if this embodiment of the most terrible forces of reaction—Hitlerism and every other form of fascism—is not crushed for ever. Therefore there is no class more interested and more active in the struggle for national independence against fascist foreign domination than the working class, led by their marxist party. In all these occupied countries, marxists, the most resolute working-class fighters, were the first to organize the unity of the national forces and to develop the most active national struggle.

The most splendid example of this is seen in Yugoslavia, in the heroic fight of the National Army of Liberation led by Marshal Broz Tito, this noble son of the working class. It is enough to quote what Mr. Churchill, our great war leader, who certainly has no prejudice in favour of marxism, but is open minded and sincere enough to acknowledge merit where it is due, said in his report to the House of Commons on February 22nd, 1944:

‘In the autumn of 1941 Marshal Tito’s Partisans began a wild and furious war for existence against the Germans, and they wrested weapons from the German hands. They grew in numbers rapidly. No reprisals, however bloody, whether of hostages or villagers, deterred them. For them it was death or freedom. Soon they began to inflict heavy injuries on the Germans and became masters of wide regions. Led with great skill and organized on guerilla principles, they were at once elusive and deadly. They were here, they were there, they were everywhere . . . Not only Croats and Slovenes, but large numbers of Serbians joined with Marshal Tito . . . The Communist element had the honour of being the beginners, but as the movement has increased in strength and numbers, a modifying and unifying process has taken place and national conceptions have supervened. In Marshal Tito the Partisans have found an outstanding leader, glorious in the fight for freedom . . . The Partisans of Marshal Tito are the only people who are doing any fighting against the Germans now.’

This is indubitably a correct picture which more or less applies to other countries too.

Characteristic features of the national liberation movements, developing in Europe at the present time, are on the one hand their comprehensiveness, the fact that representatives of all sections, classes, creeds and political outlooks take part in them, and on the other the decisive part which the politically most conscious elements of the working class play in initiating, uniting, directing and intensifying all methods of mass struggle.

Both in the leadership of the resistance movements, and among the victims of Nazi repression, we find generals and workers, clergymen and peasants, artisans, professors and students, conservatives and communists, christians of all denominations, and freethinkers. Real marxists, far from creating dissensions within the national movement by raising the issue of socialism against capitalism in the present circumstances, do their best by keeping the tasks of the present national liberation struggle in the foreground, to overcome sectarian prejudices, recriminations of the past and dissensions of the future, in order to extend the national front as far as possible.

It was the communist leader Togliatti (Ercoli) who persuaded the other democratic parties of the united national front in Italy to postpone the issue of the Savoy dynasty and to accept a temporary compromise with the disgraced King Victor Emmanuel and with General Badoglio. French communists are co-operating without any reservations with patriotic army officers and with devout catholics. The Yugoslav National Committee of Liberation, headed by the communist metal-worker, Marshal J. Broz Tito, consists of seventeen members, of whom four are communists, six liberals or independents, three representatives of the Croat Peasant Party, two Slovene Christian Socialists, one Serbian orthodox priest and one Moslem army officer.

On the other hand, marxists do not regard national unity as an end in itself, but as a weapon of the most resolute implacable mass struggle for national liberation. They advocate a strong line against traitors and against the policy of '*attentism*'; of passive waiting for liberation and reliance on the armies of the Allies; they propagate, organize and lead all forms of mass resistance, insisting on the necessity of preparing nation-wide armed insurrection

which cannot arise suddenly on a given signal, but can only be the result of a series of smaller and bigger actions of partisan warfare.

The experience of the present national liberation struggle has definitely refuted the old reformist dogma that against the modern technique of war, an armed popular struggle, a revolutionary insurrection is impossible.

The armed resistance of heroic men and women fighting for the liberation of their people, frequently with the most primitive weapons against the best-equipped and thoroughly drilled mechanized modern army, has proved effective and successful, not only in the occupied parts of the U.S.S.R. where the partisans had the organized help of the Red Army, not only in the mountains and woods of Yugoslavia, but also in closely populated modern industrial countries like France.

Also, the specific weapon of revolutionary working-class struggle, the political mass strike, has been applied successfully. In France, Belgium and Greece mass strikes thwarted the German plans of mobilization and deportation of workers. A general strike of the workers of Luxemburg was the answer to a German decree incorporating this country into the Reich. Mass strikes in Turin and Milan paved the way to the wide anti-fascist and anti-war movement which caused the downfall of Mussolini in July 1943. A general strike of the Danish workers forced the Nazis to accept the demands of the Danish National Liberation Committee in July 1944.

Teachers in Norway who preferred imprisonment and deportation to the acceptance of the barbarous Nazi creed, students in Czechoslovakia who boldly demonstrated against the Nazis in the streets of Prague in October and November 1939, Belgian judges who steadfastly refused to bow to German interference, they all played and are playing an honourable and prominent part in the united struggle for national liberation. It is, however, the working class which emerges as the backbone, the leading and driving force within the National Front.

The revolutionary workers were the first to take the field and with their organizational and political experience were best prepared for this struggle, as they had no illusions about fascism and knew it as their implacable and deadly enemy. The widest masses of the people gathered around them, all healthy elements of society, all productive classes.

The Traitors

ONLY one element is excluded: the traitors. It is important to analyse who the traitors are, from which section of the nation the Pétains and Laval, Quislings, Hachas and Nediches are derived. It is easy to discern the face of the traitor class: big monopoly capitalists, high bureaucrats and militarists, the very people who were in the leadership before the catastrophe of their nations. They were the leaders into national catastrophe.

Here we find *the fundamental change* with regard to the national question which has taken place in the epoch of declining capitalism, of imperialism and fascism. While in the nineteenth century in Europe (and even in the beginning of the twentieth century in the more backward countries like Turkey and China) the middle class was the leader in the fight for national unity and independence, and the working class, as far as it existed, supported their fight as a just and progressive movement, in our time a perilous parasitic cancer has grown out of the ruling capitalist class—monopoly capital, finance capital and their fascist agents.

This new array of class forces was clearly revealed in the Spanish war. The Spanish people fought both for their people's republic against fascist counter-revolution and for the national independence of Spain against the German and Italian armies of intervention. The Popular Front, composed of workers, peasants and lower middle class, led by the working class, defended the right of the peoples of Spain: Castilians, Catalans, Basques, etc., to build up their national life in freedom. The big landowners and monopoly capitalists, represented by the fascist generals, marched with their Moorish soldiery and the German and Italian armies of intervention against their own people.

In France the Two Hundred Families and their political agents, among whom the Laval and Bonnets were conspicuous years before her surrender, were much more afraid of the Popular Front, of a victory of the progressive forces in Spain, of the growing influence of the U.S.S.R. in European affairs, than of German aggressive imperialism. They therefore sabotaged the alliance with the U.S.S.R., they helped German and Italian fascism to strangle Spanish democracy by 'non-intervention', they delivered Austria and Czechoslovakia to Hitler, they did what they could to suppress the most resolute anti-fascist force, the working class, and to disrupt the Popular Front, which would have been able

to organize the defence of France against the fascist enemy inside and outside the country.

Pétain and his fellow-traitors in the Vichy Government were not at all forced by military defeat to accept co-operation with the Nazis, they quite purposely and deliberately made use of military defeat, chaos and despair to impose their corrupt 'authoritarian' régime on the betrayed nation, and they utilized the backing of their German taskmaster from the beginning to suppress French democrats and patriots who did not accept surrender. The fact that in the beginning not one single bourgeois politician of influence joined de Gaulle's resistance movement was a very striking proof of the utter bankruptcy of France's traditional ruling class. Among the military leaders, de Gaulle was an exception, not Pétain. But while the defeatist marshal had the solid backing of the generals and admirals, there can be no doubt that the majority of the army officers turned to de Gaulle when they began to understand the betrayal. Whether the French bankers, the owners of mines and heavy industries, the leading men of French monopoly capital liked their position as utterly dependent junior partners of Germany's gigantic trusts which ruled the economic life of occupied Europe, or not, it is clear that they accepted their position and helped their German masters to exploit French economy for the German war of conquest.

In Poland the fascist colonels who governed the country have certainly to bear full responsibility for the national disaster. These representatives of big Polish landowners and capitalists were in the camp of the Axis adventurers up to 1938 when they shared in the spoliation of Czechoslovakia. Colonel Beck and his colleagues did their best to wreck the negotiations for a British-French-Soviet defensive alliance against Hitlerite Germany which would have saved Poland and peace. They were prepared to accept the military assistance of the Red Army only on conditions that this army would not enter Polish territory! After the indescribable suffering of their people under the German yoke, the representatives of this class are still more interested in getting back what they stole in their heyday—Ukrainian, Byelo-Russian, Lithuanian, Czechoslovak territory and their estates there—than in the liberation of their nation.

In Czechoslovakia, before the Munich catastrophe, the most powerful political party were the Agrarians, representing the

leading sections of banking, industrial and agrarian capital. The leaders of this party favoured the development of the Henlein movement, Hitler's agent amongst the so-called Sudeten Germans. They sabotaged the alliance with the U.S.S.R. and advocated unconditional surrender to Hitlerite Germany. They thought their property and their privileges would be safer under German fascist rule than in a truly democratic Czechoslovak republic bound by a close alliance to the Soviet Union. A similar gang accepted 'independence' by the grace of Hitler in Slovakia.

Hitler can still use the powerful industry of Czechoslovakia for his war purposes with the help of the Czech traitors who, headed by 'President' Hacha, endeavour to keep the bureaucratic and industrial apparatus running smoothly under the guidance of their Nazi masters. While Czech workers have to pay with their lives for their efforts to disrupt Czechoslovak armament works, there are still quite a number of Czech industrialists in high and profitable positions who do what they can to keep the wheels turning.

A similar story of the betrayal of national independence, of the very existence of the nation, can be told of those fascist countries which joined Germany's robber war to get their part of the spoils, sank from allies to vassals and ended in the unenviable position of being squeezed for Germany's purposes by their formidable ally who—more or less openly—became the overlord acting like a foreign power in occupation of the country. This happened in Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania and Finland. In this way the Italian, Hungarian, etc. fascists, representatives of the most reactionary landed aristocracy and finance capital, who had begun their career by posing as the most radical nationalists, by kindling the nationalistic instincts of the petty bourgeoisie to unbridled chauvinism, by promising the conquest of new empires, ended as the despised lackeys of a foreign power. Their betrayal of their respective countries is now completely exposed, and this provides the basis for a wide national front, able to win over even many former followers of fascist parties in Germany's satellite countries.

It would be wrong not to observe the differences in the development of various countries. In different countries treason has played a greater or lesser part. The sort of traitor for which Quisling has become a general name, found greater or lesser support in the ruling class. Norway, for instance, stands at the opposite end of

the scale from France. Quisling was and is isolated not only from the masses of the Norwegian people, but even from the capitalist class whose sympathies were from the beginning much more with Britain than with Germany.

Besides the uppermost section of capitalists, there is another section from which the Nazis recruit their followers both at home and in the occupied countries, right at the opposite end of the social scale. This is what Marx called the 'Lumpenproletariat' (*Selected Works*, vol. ii, p. 369), the dregs of society, people who have lost their social standing, have no definite profession or work, adventurers, criminals, outcasts. From this rabble the fascist terror guards and the leading personnel of the fascist mass organizations are recruited to a high degree. The existence of a numerous, declassed, desperate and venal mob is characteristic of a decaying society as is the political association of the wealthy and 'respectable' gentleman on top of society with this despised underworld.

Neither should it be forgotten that there were some renegades of the labour movement in different countries who were only too ready to sell to the highest bidder their special knowledge in the fight against 'Bolshevism'. Such are Doriot, Déat, Belin in France, Henrik de Man in Belgium, a specimen of those labour 'theoreticians' who were acclaimed for overcoming 'old-fashioned' marxism by the new ideas of the twentieth century.

Wherever the old ruling class, the top section of finance capital, have thus betrayed their nation for their narrow selfish sectional interests, they can no longer claim to be the leaders of the nation, to represent national interests, even to be a part of the nation. They have unmasked themselves as international gangsters without any loyalty to any nation, knowing only one loyalty, that of their pocket.

The Working Class as Leader

ON the other hand, the working class, faithful to the principles of marxist internationalism, becomes more and more the leading force in nations fighting for their freedom. The more the old ruling class loses its ability to secure national independence, national existence, the more the responsibility for the life and future of the nation falls upon the working class.

It is necessary to understand fully the fundamental change in class relations involved in this changed attitude of different classes. The working-class movement necessarily begins by opposing the working class to the rest of the nation. There can be no working-class movement, no struggle for social emancipation before the workers understand their specific class interests and the part they have to play in the transformation of society. At this stage of development it is essential to explain to the workers that what is generally proclaimed as the 'national interest', the greatness, power and wealth of the country, is in fact only the interest of their ruling class, which aims at expansion, domination, enrichment, and wants to make use of the exploited classes as catspaws for its ambitious adventures.

So the working class begins to act as a separate, definite, self-conscious class by forming its own organizations, trade unions, co-operative societies, political parties and cultural clubs, etc., opposing itself in this way not only to the capitalist class, but also to a certain degree to the middle section of society which usually follows the lead of the bourgeoisie.

But now a thoroughly different situation arises. It is not the class-conscious workers who are isolated as revolutionaries and internationalists from the mass of the people who believe in the existing order, but it is the old ruling section, the finance capitalists, the landed aristocracy, who have unmasked themselves as traitors to the nation, as leaders into disgrace and ruin. It is they who are isolated from the masses of the nation, hated and despised, while the revolutionary workers who have proved to be unselfish, devoted, courageous, self-sacrificing fighters for the liberty of their nation, are winning universal respect and support. Their advice is followed, they win authority and leadership.

While it is a new *fact* that powerful national liberation movements develop in Europe in which not the bourgeoisie but the working class, closely connected with the whole mass of the people, plays a leading part, the *idea* that this will and must happen is not at all new. Stalin, evaluating the international importance of the October Revolution, stressed this point more than once. (*Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, pp. 65, 87ff, 222ff.)

But we find this idea already clearly expressed by Engels with regard to Poland. In his preface to the Polish translation of the Communist Manifesto published in 1892, he wrote:

'The creation of a strong independent Poland is of importance not to the Polish people alone, but to each and every one of us . . . the Polish nobility was not able to maintain and has not been able to re-establish the independence of Poland. The bourgeoisie is becoming less and less interested in the question. Polish independence can only be won by the young proletariat of Poland, in their hands the fulfilment of this hope will be safe.'

This was written more than fifty years ago. The persistent failure of Poland's ruling class makes it still topical.

Towards a new Democracy

THE decisive part which the working class is playing in the national liberation movements is one more guarantee of the deeply progressive, truly democratic character of these movements.

Now we can already see how in the countries emerging from the nightmare of German fascist foreign domination a new type of democracy is arising. In those countries where there was either a semi-fascist or even fascist dictatorship which prepared the way for the national catastrophe—as in Poland, Yugoslavia, Greece—or an imperfect democracy which left real power to the representatives of finance capital, who proved unable and unwilling to defend national independence as in France or Czechoslovakia, liberation from the German yoke will certainly not mean a return to the old conditions, but the establishment of a true democracy in which the will of the people will prevail.

The clearest pattern of this new people's democracy is seen in Yugoslavia. In every village and town liberated by Tito's army local committees have been elected on the basis of the most universal suffrage from which only the traitors of the nation were excluded. These national liberation committees, in which naturally those who had done most in the liberation struggle held the most influential positions, assumed full administrative and political authority. On a similar basis regional committees and finally the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation as the supreme legislative and executive organ were elected. The presidium of this council appointed the National Committee of Liberation, the provisional government which is responsible to the Anti-Fascist Council.

In this way a new state apparatus arises, built upon the full decision of the popular masses which take part in the liberation struggle. Nothing will be left of the old repressive bureaucratic and militaristic dictatorial state machine, built up by King Alexander and his followers, who ended by ignominiously surrendering to Axis pressure and signing the Tripartite Pact. The remnants of this old dictatorial state machinery are used by the puppets of German imperialism—Nedich, Pavelich and Mihailovich.

Marx, writing on the lessons of the Paris Commune, said that the smashing of the old bureaucratic-military state machine and its substitution by a fundamentally new one 'is essential for every real people's revolution on the Continent.' (Letters to Dr. Kugelmann, p. 123, quoted and lucidly interpreted by Lenin in *State and Revolution, Selected Works*, vol. vii, p. 36 ff.)

In this sense the national revolutions in Europe will certainly be 'real people's revolutions'. The efforts to save as much as possible of the old repressive state machine—this is the essence of the policy of 'Darlanism'—will certainly fail in all those countries where this machine has become an instrument serving the hated foreign oppressors.

A similar development to what we already see emerging in Yugoslavia is clearly foreshadowed also for Czechoslovakia. President Benes, addressing the State Council on February 3rd, 1944, gave these directions and this forecast:

'To carry out our struggle at home in the present phase of the war and to ensure a final transition to our new, free, national fully democratic régime, it is proposed that every parish, village, town and district in the homeland shall set up a National Committee of citizens elected by all, and these shall be duly authorized to perform their task. After the fall of the Nazi dictatorship, these committees could constitute the first democratic machinery to exercise political and administrative authority, the moment German power collapses In addition to local and district national committees, there would be elected regional committees, and from these a temporary revolutionary all-national assembly for the supervision of the first home government after the war and for the united organization of national and state affairs at the time of the change-over and in the coming period.' (*Czecho-Slovak Policy for Victory and Peace*, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p. 45.)

And K. Gottwald, the leader of the very influential Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, wrote in an article published in February 1944:

'It is clear that in the liberated Republic the people will not allow that group of financial, industrial and agrarian capital which betrayed the Republic before to return to power. Power must belong to an alliance of workers, peasants, small traders and intellectuals . . . the working people of Czechoslovakia must rule in their country by their elected representatives and must not be the fifth wheel on the car as they were under the old régime of party coalition.' (Translated from *Nové Československo*, London, February 26th, 1944.)

The National Question in Germany

IT would be fundamentally wrong to identify the situation of those nations who are waging a holy war for their national liberation with the situation of the German people who in their great majority followed their fascist rulers, partly with fanatical determination, partly in meek obedience, into the most reactionary and criminal war of conquest history has ever known. Nor can the underground resistance of heroic German anti-fascists, who are still only a minority and who have not yet succeeded in organizing wide and effective mass actions, be compared with the national resistance struggle in occupied countries in which the great masses of the people take a more or less active part, and which in some countries has already reached the stage of armed mass insurrection. But the general idea, that in the present time the fascist monopolist section of the capitalist class has become a mortal danger to the very existence of the nation, and that the working class is called upon to unite the nation in the fight for its salvation, applies most emphatically to the German nation. Only people without conscience and reason, blinded by their selfish lust for power and wealth, could believe that Germany would be led to greatness by robbing dozens of countries, waging war with the most inhumane methods, against all humanity, and by an attempt to impose upon the whole world the unbridled dictatorship of the gang who had destroyed the foundations of democracy and of civilization itself in their own country.

Germany's monopoly capitalists, the kings of iron, coal and steel, the big landowners and the magnates of the Chemical Trust,

in setting up Nazi dictatorship and in hurling Germany into this war, have driven the German nation into the worst catastrophe that ever befell a great country. Their manhood killed by the million, their towns pulverized, hated and despised by all other nations, their cultural heritage in ruins, their most honest and progressive people executed, tortured, driven out of the country, their youth perverted, their economy ruined, they are now faced with a defeat the like of which the world has never seen.

This is where the once great German nation has been led by unscrupulous profiteers who made the Nazi gangsters masters of Germany. Salvation from this catastrophe is only possible if the masses of the people unite against their rulers, against the robber war, join the just cause of the United Nations and win freedom and the way back to a civilized existence in the community of nations by the complete destruction of Hitlerism and German imperialism. This is the aim of the National Committee of 'Free Germany' which was constituted in Moscow in July 1943 and consists of exiled working-class leaders and of patriotic officers and soldiers who have at last understood that the national interests of the German people demand an uncompromising fight against Hitlerism and all it stands for.

This German peace movement is in this sense also a national movement uniting the most diverse class tendencies and creeds. But it is clear that this movement would be impossible without the initiative, experience, political understanding and fighting courage of those revolutionary workers who never surrendered to fascism, who under incredible hardships and sacrifices carried on the underground struggle for eleven years and who are now the unifying and driving force in the last-hour efforts of German patriots to end the war by a nation-wide insurrection.

National Revolution and International Peace Order

WHILE we see powerful progressive and democratic forces being engendered by the national liberation movements, some people are afraid that these movements aiming at national independence may prevent an effective and stable international order. There is a powerful trend of public opinion both in Great Britain and in the United States which denounces the idea of forming again small sovereign national states as reactionary or impracticable, and proposes various schemes of federations, confederations, federal

unions, etc. All these blue prints are either illusory or reactionary or both. Their basic fault is that they do not take into account the realities of the present situation. While millions of men are fighting and dying to regain the right of their nation to decide its own future, these planners of all kinds of federations group and regroup nations according to their fancy like children playing with bricks.

Against these phantasies the resolutions of the Moscow and Teheran conferences quite correctly put the idea of a new system of collective security based on firm solidarity of the leading great democratic powers and of the principle of 'sovereign equality of all peace-loving states, large or small.' While it is hopeless to propose an artificial unity of nations which are fighting each other at present, a new solidarity arises just by the common fight against the common enemy.

The struggle for national liberation not only engenders burning hatred against the oppressors, but also firm solidarity between those who share the burdens and the sacrifices of the struggle. Old national hatreds are being overcome by the common struggle, and a new foundation for a community of nations living in peace and friendship is being laid.

The most splendid example of this—apart from the U.S.S.R.—is again Yugoslavia. The semi-fascist state of King Alexander and his followers was undermined by the oppressive policy of Serbian reactionaries who did not recognize the equal rights of the other peoples constituting the state. But in the common struggle, led by Marshal Tito, all the old controversies, rivalries, suspicions and hatreds have been swept away. A firm unity of Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Bosnians, Montenegrins has been established, based on the perfect equality of these nations which are equally represented in the military and political leaderships of the liberation movement.

In November 1943 the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation decided in its meeting at Jajce, 'On the basis of the right of all nations to self-determination, including union with or secession from other nations,' to build up the new Yugoslavia on a federal principle which will ensure full equality to all nations of Yugoslavia. All their rights will be secured also to the national minorities of Yugoslavia. (*New Yugoslavia*, published by The United South Slav Committee in London, p. 12, ff.)

This is again a splendid example of that combination of devoted struggle for the liberty of one's own nation with the truly international understanding of the equal rights of other nations, which is characteristic of the most progressive class of modern society. In the country where the national liberation struggle has been waged most resolutely, efficiently and successfully—Yugoslavia—we do not find any national narrowness, any national prejudices. On the soil of this martyred country, scene of the indescribable brutalities of national oppression by German, Italian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Croat and Serbian fascists, we see the resurrection of one of the finest embodiments of international solidarity. International units, similar to the glorious International Brigades of the Spanish War, reappear in Tito's Army of National Liberation. Italian, Hungarian, Austrian and German anti-fascists fight in the ranks of this glorious army.

Stalin on the Tendencies of Development in the National Question

So the fight for national freedom and independence is not at all in contradiction with a general tendency to closer solidarity, community, union and, finally, fusion of nations. But it is essential to understand the dialectics of the process by which a closer association of nations arises. We find a deep analysis of this process in Stalin's 'Thesis on National Factors in Party and State Development', written in 1923. (*Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, p. 137 ff.) Here Stalin argues that the tendency of modern capitalism to internationalize the means of production and gradually to merge vast territories into a single connected whole is a progressive process, in so far as it is creating the material conditions for a future world socialist economic system. But under the domination of imperialism this process is developing by means of the subjection of certain peoples by others, by means of the oppression and exploitation of less developed peoples by more developed peoples. Therefore side by side with the tendency to amalgamate there grew up a tendency to destroy the violent forms assumed by this amalgamation, a struggle for the emancipation of the oppressed colonies and dependent nationalities from the imperialist yoke.

'Inasmuch as the latter tendency implied a revolt of the oppressed masses against imperialist forms of amalgamation, inasmuch as it demanded the amalgamation of peoples on the

basis of collaboration and voluntary union, it was and is a progressive tendency, for it is creating the psychological conditions for the future world socialist economic system.'

From this it follows that all and every form of compulsion in relation to the nationalities should be repudiated and the principle should be recognized that a durable amalgamation of peoples can be accomplished only on a basis of collaboration and voluntary consent.

There you find the answer to the advocates of Federal Union and similar projects.

At the present time the most intolerable amalgamation of nations by violence has been effected in Europe by German fascism. A few big German banks and trusts like the Hermann Goering Werke, I.G. Farben, etc. dominate the economic life of a dozen European countries, while the Gestapo and Wehrmacht keep them in the framework of one political unity, the unity of the so-called 'New Order'. This unity of gangsterism has to be broken by force. The war of the United Nations and the national revolution of the oppressed nations will break this unity into pieces. Accordingly the next step is not a merger of nations in one state, but the resurrection of those national states which were annihilated by brute force. In this common struggle, however, a new solidarity of nations arises, a firm alliance, and when and where the conditions are ripe, closer unions of nations are also possible. But freedom, sovereignty of every nation, great or small, is the first precondition for its closer association and peaceful collaboration with other nations. This basic idea was already clearly pronounced by Engels when he wrote in the preface to the Polish edition of the Communist Manifesto published in 1892:

'Sincere international co-operation of European nations is only possible if each of these nations is perfectly autonomous in its own home.' (Translated from the German Edition of the Manifesto, Moscow, 1939.)

SUMMARY

CONCLUDING our short survey of some leading topical aspects of the national question, we sum up:

1. Modern nations arose with modern capitalism, chiefly by the victory of bourgeois-democratic revolutions. Marxists regarded this as a historically progressive movement and generally supported the struggle for national unity and independence.

2. In doing so they never forgot the higher principle of proletarian internationalism and subordinated every single national cause to the greater cause of international progress towards democracy and socialism.

3. With the transition of capitalism to the stage of imperialism the capitalist class ceases more and more to be the leader in the fight for national freedom. In the imperialist countries it becomes interested in imperialist expansion, conquest and exploitation while in nationally oppressed countries a part of the bourgeoisie collaborates with the foreign oppressors. The working class on the other hand maintains solidarity with the fight of oppressed nations for national liberty inasmuch as this fight is part of the struggle against imperialist reaction.

4. With the advent of fascism national oppression by imperialism reaches its peak, creating the most unbearable conditions and provoking great national movements throughout Europe. While essential parts of the old ruling class betray the cause of national independence, the working class becomes more and more the unifying, driving and leading force in the national liberation struggle.

5. The U.S.S.R. gives a splendid example of the theoretical and practical solution of the national question based on the principles of marxism.

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