

**LENIN ON
THE NATIONAL AND
COLONIAL QUESTIONS**

Three Articles

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The notes at the end of the book are mainly based on those given in the Chinese edition published under the same title by the People's Publishing House, Peking, in August 1964. A few notes from the English editions mentioned above also have been used.

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THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION AND THE RIGHT OF NATIONS TO SELF-DETERMINATION (THESES)

1. IMPERIALISM, SOCIALISM, AND THE LIBERATION OF OPPRESSED NATIONS

Imperialism is the highest stage of development of capitalism. Capital in the advanced countries has outgrown the boundaries of national states. It has established monopoly in place of competition, thus creating all the objective prerequisites for the achievement of socialism. Hence, in Western Europe and in the United States of America, the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat for the overthrow of the capitalist governments, for the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, is on the order of the day. Imperialism is forcing the masses into this struggle by sharpening class antagonisms to an immense degree, by worsening the conditions of the masses both economically – trusts and high cost of living, and politically – growth of militarism, frequent wars, increase of reaction, strengthening and extension of national oppression and colonial plunder. Victorious socialism must achieve complete democracy and, consequently, not only bring about the complete equality of nations, but also give effect to the right of oppressed nations to self-determination, *i.e.*, the right to free political secession. Socialist Parties which fail to prove by all their activities now, as well as during the revolution and after its victory, that they will free the enslaved nations and establish relations with them on the basis of a free union – and a free union is a lying phrase without right to secession – such parties would be committing treachery to socialism.

Of course, democracy is also a form of state which must disappear when the state disappears, but this will take place only in the process of transition from completely victorious and consolidated socialism to complete communism.

2. THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

The socialist revolution is not one single act, not one single battle on a single front; but a whole epoch of intensified class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts, *i.e.*, battles around all the problems of economics and politics, which can culminate only in the expropria-

tion of the bourgeoisie. It would be a fundamental mistake to suppose that the struggle for democracy can divert the proletariat from the socialist revolution, or obscure, or overshadow it, etc. On the contrary, just as socialism cannot be victorious unless it introduces complete democracy, so the proletariat will be unable to prepare for victory over the bourgeoisie unless it wages a many-sided, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy.

It would be no less mistaken to delete any of the points of the democratic programme, for example, the point of self-determination of nations, on the ground that it is “infeasible,” or that it is “illusory” under imperialism. The assertion that the right of nations to self-determination cannot be achieved within the framework of capitalism may be understood either in its absolute, economic sense, or in the conventional, political sense.

In the first case, the assertion is fundamentally wrong in theory. First, in this sense, it is impossible to achieve such things as labour money, or the abolition of crises, etc., under capitalism. But it is entirely incorrect to argue that the self-determination of nations is *likewise* infeasible. Secondly, even the one example of the secession of Norway from Sweden in 1905 is sufficient to refute the argument that it is “infeasible” in this sense. Thirdly, it would be ridiculous to deny that, with a slight change in political and strategical relationships, for example, between Germany and England, the formation of new states, Polish, Indian, etc, would be quite “feasible” very soon. Fourthly, finance capital, in its striving towards expansion, will “freely” buy and bribe the freest, most democratic and republican government and the elected officials of any country, however “independent” it may be. The domination of finance capital, as of capital in general, cannot be abolished by *any* kind of reforms in the realm of political democracy, and self-determination belongs wholly and exclusively to this realm. The domination of finance capital, however, does not in the least destroy the significance of political democracy as the freer, wider and more distinct *form* of class oppression and class struggle. Hence, all arguments about the “impossibility of achieving” economically one of the demands of political democracy under capitalism reduce themselves to a theoretically incorrect definition of the general and fundamental relations of capitalism and of political democracy in general.

In the second case, this assertion is incomplete and inaccurate, for not only the right of nations to self-determination, but *all* the fundamental demands of political democracy are “possible of achievement”

under imperialism, only in an incomplete, in a mutilated form and as a rare exception (for example, the secession of Norway from Sweden in 1905). The demand for the immediate liberation of the colonies, as advanced by all revolutionary Social-Democrats, is also “impossible of achievement” under capitalism without a series of revolutions. This does not imply, however, that Social Democracy must refrain from conducting an immediate and most determined struggle for *all* these demands – to refrain would merely be to the advantage of the bourgeoisie and reaction. On the contrary, it implies that it is necessary to formulate and put forward all these demands, not in a reformist, but in a revolutionary way; not by keeping within the framework of bourgeois legality, but by breaking through it; not by confining oneself to parliamentary speeches and verbal protests, but by drawing the masses into real action, by widening and fomenting the struggle for every kind of fundamental, democratic demand, right up to and including the direct onslaught of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, *i.e.*, to the socialist revolution, which will expropriate the bourgeoisie. The socialist revolution may break out not only in consequence of a great strike, a street demonstration, a hunger riot, a mutiny in the forces, or a colonial rebellion, but also in consequence of any political crisis, like the Dreyfus affair,¹ the Zabern incident,² or in connection with a referendum on the secession of an oppressed nation, etc.

The intensification of national oppression under imperialism makes it necessary for Social-Democracy not to renounce what the bourgeoisie describes as the “utopian” struggle for the freedom of nations to secede, but, on the contrary, to take more advantage than ever before of conflicts arising *also* on this ground for the purpose of rousing mass action and revolutionary attacks upon the bourgeoisie.

3. THE MEANING OF THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND ITS RELATION TO FEDERATION

The right of nations to self-determination means only the right to independence in a political sense, the right to free, political secession from the oppressing nation. Concretely, this political, democratic demand implies complete freedom to carry on agitation in favour of secession, and freedom to settle the question of secession by means of a referendum of the nation that desires to secede. Consequently, this demand is by no means identical with the demand for secession, for partition, for the formation of small states. It is merely the logical expression of the struggle against national oppression in every form.

The more closely the democratic system of state approximates to complete freedom of secession, the rarer and weaker will the striving for secession be in practice; for the advantages of large states, both from the point of view of economic progress and from the point of view of the interests of the masses, are beyond doubt, and these advantages increase with the growth of capitalism. The recognition of self-determination is not the same as making federation a principle. One may be a determined opponent of this principle and a partisan of democratic centralism and yet prefer federation to national inequality as the only path towards complete democratic centralism. It was precisely from this point of view that Marx, although a centralist, preferred even the federation of Ireland with England to the forcible subjection of Ireland to the English.³

The aim of socialism is not only to abolish the present division of mankind into small states and all national isolation; not only to bring the nations closer to each other, but also to merge them. And in order to achieve this aim, we must, on the one hand, explain to the masses the reactionary nature of the ideas of Renner and Otto Bauer concerning so-called “cultural national autonomy”⁴ and, on the other hand, demand the liberation of the oppressed nations, not only in general, nebulous phrases, not in empty declamations, not by “postponing” the question until socialism is established, but in a clearly and precisely formulated political programme which shall particularly take into account the hypocrisy and cowardice of the Socialists in the oppressing nations. Just as mankind can achieve the abolition of classes only by passing through the transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, so mankind can achieve the inevitable merging of nations only by passing through the transition period of complete liberation of all the oppressed nations, *i.e.*, their freedom to secede.

4. THE PROLETARIAN-REVOLUTIONARY PRESENTATION OF THE QUESTION OF THE SELF-DETERMINATION OF NATIONS

Not only the demand for the self-determination of nations but *all* the items of our democratic minimum programme were advanced *before us*, as far back as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by the petty bourgeoisie. And the petty bourgeoisie, believing in “peaceful” capitalism, continues to this day to advance *all* these demands in a utopian way, without seeing the class struggle and the fact that it

has become intensified under democracy. The idea of a peaceful union of equal nations under imperialism, which deceives the people, and which the Kautskyists advocate, is precisely of this nature. As against this philistine, opportunist utopia, the programme of Social-Democracy must point out that under imperialism the division of nations into oppressing and oppressed ones is a fundamental, most important and inevitable fact.

The proletariat of the oppressing nations cannot confine itself to the general hackneyed phrases against annexations and for the equal rights of nations in general, that may be repeated by any pacifist bourgeois. The proletariat cannot evade the question that is particularly “unpleasant” for the imperialist bourgeoisie, namely, the question of the *frontiers* of a state that is based on national oppression. The proletariat cannot but fight against the forcible retention of the oppressed nations within the boundaries of a given state, and this is exactly what the struggle for the right of self-determination means. The proletariat must demand the right of political secession for the colonies and for the nations that “its own” nation oppresses. Unless it does this, proletarian internationalism will remain a meaningless phrase; mutual confidence and class solidarity between the workers of the oppressing and oppressed nations will be impossible; the hypocrisy of the reformist and Kautskyan advocates of self-determination who maintain silence about the nations which are oppressed by “their” nation and forcibly retained within “their” state will remain unexposed.

The Socialists of the oppressed nations, on the other hand, must particularly fight for and maintain complete, absolute unity (also organizational) between the workers of the oppressed nation and the workers of the oppressing nation. Without such unity it will be impossible to maintain an independent proletarian policy and class solidarity with the proletariat of other countries in the face of all the subterfuge, treachery and trickery of the bourgeoisie; for the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations always converts the slogan of national liberation into a means for deceiving the workers; in internal politics it utilizes these slogans as a means for concluding reactionary agreements with the bourgeoisie of the ruling nation (for instance, the Poles in Austria and Russia, who entered into pacts with reaction in order to oppress the Jews and the Ukrainians); in the realm of foreign politics it strives to enter into pacts with one of the rival imperialist powers

for the purpose of achieving its own predatory aims (the policies of the small states in the Balkans, etc.).

The fact that the struggle for national liberation against one imperialist power may, under certain circumstances, be utilized by another “Great” Power in its equally imperialist interests should have no more weight in inducing Social Democracy to renounce its recognition of the right of nations to self-determination than the numerous cases of the bourgeoisie utilizing republican slogans for the purpose of political deception and financial robbery, for example, in the Latin countries, have had in inducing them to renounce republicanism.*

5. MARXISM AND PROUDHONISM ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION

In contrast to the petty-bourgeois democrats, Marx regarded all democratic demands without exception not as an absolute, but as a historical expression of the struggle of the masses of the people, led by the bourgeoisie, against feudalism. There is not a single democratic demand which could not serve, and has not served, under certain conditions, as an instrument of the bourgeoisie for deceiving the workers. To single out one of the demands of political democracy, namely, the self-determination of nations, and to oppose it to all the rest, is fundamentally wrong in theory. In practice, the proletariat will be able to retain its independence only if it subordinates its struggle for all the democratic demands, not excluding the demand for a republic, to its revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

* Needless to say, to repudiate the right to self-determination on the ground that logically it means “defence of the fatherland” would be quite ridiculous. With equal logic, *i.e.*, with equal shallowness, the social-chauvinists of 1914-16 apply this argument to every one of the demands of democracy (for instance to republicanism), and to every formulation of the struggle against national oppression, in order to justify “defence of the fatherland”. Marxism arrives at the recognition of defence of the fatherland, for example, in the wars of the Great French Revolution and the Garibaldi wars⁵ in Europe, and at the repudiation of defence of the fatherland in the imperialist war of 1914-16, from the analysis of the specific historical circumstances of each separate war, and not from some “general principle,” or some separate item of a programme.

On the other hand, in contrast to the Proudhonists, who “repudiated” the national problem “in the name of the social revolution,” Marx, having in mind mainly the interests of the proletarian class struggle in the advanced countries, put into the forefront the fundamental principle of internationalism and socialism, *viz.*, that no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations.⁶ It was precisely from the standpoint of the interests of the revolutionary movement of the German workers that Marx in 1848 demanded that victorious democracy in Germany should proclaim and grant freedom to the nations that the Germans were oppressing.⁷ It was precisely from the standpoint of the revolutionary struggle of the English workers that Marx in 1869 demanded the separation of Ireland from England, and added: “...although after the separation there may come federation.”⁸ Only by putting forward this demand did Marx really educate the English workers in the spirit of internationalism. Only in this way was he able to oppose the revolutionary solution of a given historical problem to the opportunists and bourgeois reformism, which even now, half a century later, has failed to achieve the Irish “reform.” Only in this way was Marx able – unlike the apologists of capital who shout about the right of small nations to secession being utopian and impossible, and about the progressive nature not only of economic but also of political concentration – to urge the progressive nature of this concentration in a non-imperialist manner, to urge the bringing together of the nations, not by force, but on the basis of a free union of the proletarians of all countries. Only in this way was Marx able, *also* in the sphere of the solution of national problems, to oppose the revolutionary action of the masses to verbal and often hypocritical recognition of the equality and the self-determination of nations. The imperialist war of 1914-16 and the Augean stables⁹ of hypocrisy of the opportunists and Kautskyists it exposed have strikingly confirmed the correctness of Marx’s policy, which must serve as the model for all the advanced countries; for all of them now oppress other nations.*

* Reference is often made – recently, for instance, by the German chauvinist Lensch in *Die Glocke*,¹⁰ Nos. 8-9 to the fact that Marx’s adverse attitude to the national movement of certain peoples, for example, the Czechs in 1848, refutes the necessity of recognizing the self-determination of nations from the point of view of Marxism. This is incorrect, for in 1848 there were historical and political grounds for drawing a distinction between “reactionary” and revolutionary democratic

6. THREE TYPES OF COUNTRIES IN RELATION TO SELF-DETERMINATION OF NATIONS

In this respect, countries must be divided into three main types:

First, the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe and the United States of America. In these countries the bourgeois, progressive, national movements came to an end long ago. Every one of these “great” nations oppresses other nations in the colonies and within its own country. The tasks of the proletariat of these ruling nations are the same as those of the proletariat in England in the nineteenth century in relation to Ireland.*

Secondly, Eastern Europe: Austria, the Balkans and particularly Russia. Here it was the twentieth century that particularly developed the bourgeois-democratic national movements and intensified the national struggle. The tasks of the proletariat in these countries – in regard to the consummation of their bourgeois-democratic reformation, as well as in regard to assisting the socialist revolution in other countries – cannot be achieved unless it champions the right of na-

nations. Marx was right when he condemned the former and defended the latter.¹¹ The right to self-determination is one of the demands of democracy which must naturally be subordinated to the general interests of democracy. In 1848 and subsequent years, those general interests were concentrated primarily in the struggle against tsarism.

* In some small states which have remained out of the war of 1914-16 – for example, Holland and Switzerland – the bourgeoisie strongly urges the slogan “self-determination of nations” to justify participation in the imperialist war. This is one of the motives that induces the Social-Democrats in such countries to repudiate self-determination. In this case the correct proletarian policy, namely, the repudiation of “defence of the fatherland” in an *imperialist* war is defended by wrong arguments. What results is a distortion of Marxian theory, while in practice we have a peculiar small-nation narrow-mindedness, which forgets about the *hundreds of millions* of the population in nations that are enslaved by the “Great Power” nations. Comrade Horter, in his excellent pamphlet *Imperialism, War and Social-Democracy*, wrongly rejects the principle of self-determination of nations, but correctly *applies* it when he demands the *immediate* granting of “political and *national* independence” to the Dutch Indies and exposes the Dutch opportunists who refuse to put forward this demand and to fight for it.

tions to self-determination. In this connection the most difficult but most important task is to merge the class struggle of the workers in the oppressing nations with the class struggle of the workers in the oppressed nations.

Thirdly, the semi-colonial countries, like China, Persia, Turkey, and all the colonies, which have a combined population amounting to a billion. In these countries the bourgeois-democratic movements have either hardly begun, or are far from having been completed. Socialists must not only demand the unconditional and immediate liberation of the colonies without compensation – and this demand in its political expression signifies nothing more nor less than the recognition of the right to self-determination – but must render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their rebellion – and if need be, their revolutionary war – *against* the imperialist powers that oppress them.

7. SOCIAL-CHAUVINISM AND SELF-DETERMINATION OF NATIONS

The imperialist epoch and the war of 1914-16 have particularly brought to the forefront the task of fighting against chauvinism and nationalism in the advanced countries. On the question of the self-determination of nations, there are two main shades of opinion among the social-chauvinists, i.e., the opportunists and the Kautskyists, who embellish the reactionary, imperialist war by declaring it to be a war in “defence of the fatherland.”

On the one hand, we see the rather avowed servants of the bourgeoisie who defend annexations on the ground that imperialism and political concentration are progressive and who repudiate the right to self-determination on the ground that it is utopian, illusory, petty-bourgeois, etc. Among these may be included Cunow, Parvus and the extreme opportunists in Germany, a section of the Fabians and the trade union leaders in England, and the opportunists, Semkovsky, Liebman, Yurkevich, etc., in Russia.

On the other hand, we see the Kautskyists, including Vandervelde, Renaudel, and many of the pacifists in England, France, etc. These stand for unity with the first-mentioned group, and in practice their conduct is the same in that they advocate the right to self-determination in a purely verbal and hypocritical way. They regard the demand for the freedom of political secession as being “excessive” (“*zu viel ver-*

langt' – Kautsky, in the *Neue Zeit*, May 21, 1915); they do not advocate the need for revolutionary tactics, especially for the Socialists in the oppressing nations, but, on the contrary, they gloss over their revolutionary duties, they justify their opportunism, they make it easier to deceive the people, they evade precisely the question of the *frontiers* of a state which forcibly retains subject nations, etc.

Both groups are opportunists who prostitute Marxism and who have lost all capacity to understand the theoretical significance and the practical urgency of Marx's tactics, an example of which he gave in relation to Ireland.

The specific question of annexations has become a particularly urgent one owing to the war. But what is annexation! Clearly, to protest against annexations implies either the recognition of the right of self-determination of nations, or that the protest is based on a pacifist phrase which defends the *status quo* and opposes *all* violence including revolutionary violence. Such a phrase is radically wrong, and incompatible with Marxism.

8. THE CONCRETE TASKS OF THE PROLETARIAT IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

The socialist revolution may begin in the very near future. In that event the proletariat will be faced with the immediate task of capturing power, of expropriating the banks and of introducing other dictatorial measures. In such a situation, the bourgeoisie, and particularly intellectuals like the Fabians and the Kautskyists, will strive to disrupt and to hinder the revolution, to restrict it to limited democratic aims. While all purely democratic demands may – at a time when the proletarians have already begun to storm the bulwarks of bourgeois power – serve, in a certain sense, as a hindrance to the revolution, nevertheless, the necessity of proclaiming and granting freedom to *all* oppressed nations (*i.e.*, their right to self-determination) will be as urgent in the socialist revolution as it was urgent for the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, for example, in Germany in 1848, or in Russia in 1905.

However, five, ten and even more years may pass before the socialist revolution begins. In that case, the task will be to educate the masses in a revolutionary spirit so as to make it impossible for Socialist chauvinists and opportunists to belong to the workers' party and to achieve a victory similar to that of 1914-16. It will be the duty of the Socialists to explain to the masses that English Socialists who fail to

demand the freedom of secession for the colonies and for Ireland; that German Socialists who fail to demand the freedom of secession for the colonies, for the Alsatians, for the Danes and for the Poles, and who fail to carry direct revolutionary propaganda and revolutionary mass action to the field of struggle against national oppression, who fail to take advantage of cases like the Zabern incident to conduct widespread underground propaganda among the proletariat of the oppressing nation, to organize street demonstrations and revolutionary mass actions; that Russian Socialists who fail to demand freedom of secession for Finland, Poland, the Ukraine, etc., etc. – are behaving like chauvinists, like lackeys of the blood-and-mud-stained imperialist monarchies and the imperialist bourgeoisie.

9. THE ATTITUDE OF RUSSIAN AND POLISH SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY AND OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL TO SELF-DETERMINATION

The difference between the revolutionary Social-Democrats of Russia and the Polish Social-Democrats on the question of self-determination came to the surface as early as 1903 at the congress which adopted the programme of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and which, despite the protest of the Polish Social-Democratic delegation, inserted in that programme point 9, which recognizes the right of nations to self-determination. Since then the Polish Social Democrats have never repeated, in the name of their Party, the proposal to delete point 9 from our programme, or to substitute some other formulation for it.

In Russia – where no less than 57 per cent, *i.e.*, over 100,000,000 of the population, belong to oppressed nations, where those nations mainly inhabit the border provinces, where some of those nations are more cultured than the Great Russians, where the political system is distinguished by its particularly barbarous and mediaeval character, where the bourgeois-democratic revolution has not yet been completed – the recognition of the right of the nations oppressed by tsarism to free secession from Russia is absolutely obligatory for Social-Democracy in the interests of its democratic and socialist tasks. Our Party, which was re-established in January 1912, adopted a resolution in 1913¹² reiterating the right to self-determination and explaining it in the concrete sense outlined above. The orgy of Great-Russian chauvinism raging in 1914-16 among the bourgeoisie and the oppor-

tunist Socialists (Rubanovich, Plekhanov, *Nashe Dyelo*, etc.) prompts us to insist on this demand more strongly than ever and to declare that those who reject it serve, in practice, as a bulwark of Great-Russian chauvinism and tsarism. Our party declares that it emphatically repudiates all responsibility for such opposition to the right of self-determination.

The latest formulation of the position of Polish Social-Democracy on the national question (the declaration made by Polish Social-Democracy at the Zimmerwald Conference) contains the following ideas:

This declaration condemns the German and other governments which regard the "Polish provinces" as a hostage in the forthcoming game of compensations and thus "*deprive the Polish people of the opportunity to decide its own fate.*" The declaration says: "Polish Social-Democracy emphatically and solemnly protests against the *re-carving and partition of a whole country....*" It condemns the Socialists who left to the Hohenzollerns "the task of *liberating the oppressed nations.*" It expresses the conviction that only participation in the impending struggle of the revolutionary international proletariat, in the struggle for socialism, "*will break the fetters of national oppression and abolish all forms of foreign domination, and secure for the Polish people the possibility of all-sided, free development as an equal member in a League of Nations.*" The declaration also recognizes the present war to be "*doubly fratricidal*" "*for the Poles.*" (Bulletin of the International Socialist Committee, No. 2, September 27, 1915, p. 15.)

There is no difference in substance between these postulates and the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination except that their political formulation is still more diffuse and vague than the majority of the programmes and resolutions of the Second International. Any attempt to express these ideas in precise political formulae and to determine whether they apply to the capitalist system or only to the socialist system will prove still more strikingly the error committed by the Polish Social-Democrats in repudiating the self-determination of nations.

The decision of the International Socialist Congress held in London in 1896, which recognized the self-determination of nations, must, on the basis of the above-mentioned postulates, be supplemented by references to: (1) the particular urgency of this demand under imperialism; (2) the politically conditional nature and the class

content of all the demands of political democracy, including this demand; (3) the necessity of drawing a distinction between the concrete tasks of the Social-Democrats in the oppressing nations and those in oppressed nations; (4) the inconsistent, purely verbal, and, therefore, as far as its political significance is concerned, hypocritical recognition of self-determination by the opportunists and Kautskyists; (5) the actual identity of the chauvinists and those Social-Democrats, particularly the Social-Democrats of the Great Powers (Great Russians, Anglo-Americans, Germans, French, Italians, Japanese, etc.) who fail to champion the freedom of secession for the colonies and nations oppressed by “their own” nations; (6) the necessity of subordinating the struggle for this demand, as well as for all the fundamental demands of political democracy, to the immediate revolutionary mass struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeois governments and for the achievement of socialism.

To transplant to the International the point of view of some of the small nations – particularly the point of view of the Polish Social-Democrats, who, in their struggle against the Polish bourgeoisie which is deceiving the people with nationalist slogans, were misled into repudiating self-determination – would be a theoretical error. It would be the substitution of Proudhonism for Marxism and, in practice, would result in rendering involuntary support to the most dangerous chauvinism and opportunism of the Great Power nations.

Editorial Board of *Sotsial-Democrat*,
Central Organ of the R.S.D.L.P.

Postscript. In the latest issue of the *Neue Zeit*, dated March 3, 1916, Kautsky openly extends a Christian hand of reconciliation to the representative of the filthiest German chauvinism, Austerlitz. He rejects the freedom of secession for the nations oppressed by the Austria of the Hapsburgs, but accepts it for *Russian* Poland, thus rendering lackey’s service to Hindenburg and Wilhelm II. A better self-exposure of Kautskyism could not be desired!

Written in January-February 1916

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**PRELIMINARY DRAFT OF THESES ON THE
NATIONAL AND COLONIAL QUESTIONS
(FOR THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST
INTERNATIONAL)¹³**

In submitting for discussion by the comrades the following draft theses on the national and colonial questions for the Second Congress of the Communist International, I would request all comrades, especially those who possess concrete information on any of these complex problems, to let me have their opinions, amendments, addenda and concrete remarks *in the most concise form (no more than 2 or 3 pages)*, particularly on the following points:

- Austrian experience.
- Polish-Jewish and Ukrainian experience.
- Alsace-Lorraine and Belgium.
- Ireland.
- Danish-German relations. Italo-French and Italo-Slav.
- Balkan experience.
- Eastern peoples.
- Struggle against Pan-Islamism.¹⁴
- Relations in the Caucasus.
- The Bashkir and Tatar republics.
- Kirghizia.
- Turkestan, its experience.
- Negroes in America.
- Colonies.
- China-Korea-Japan.

N. Lenin

June 5, 1920

1. It is in the very nature of bourgeois democracy to treat the question of equality in general and national equality in particular in an abstract or formal way. Under the guise of the equality of persons in general, bourgeois democracy proclaims a formal or legal equality between the property owner and the proletarian, between the exploiter and the exploited, and thereby grossly deceives the oppressed classes. The bourgeoisie transforms the idea of equality, which is itself a reflection of the relations of commodity production, into a weapon in its

struggle against the abolition of classes, pretending that all men are absolutely equal. The demand for equality has real meaning only as a demand for the abolition of classes.

2. In conformity with its fundamental purpose of combating bourgeois democracy and exposing its falsity and hypocrisy, the Communist Party, as the conscious champion of the struggle of the proletariat for the overthrow of the bourgeois yoke, must base its policy in the national question too, not on abstract and formal principles, but, firstly, on an exact estimate of the specific historical situation and, primarily, of the economic conditions; secondly, on a clear distinction between the interests of the oppressed classes, of the toilers and exploited, and the general concept of national interests as a whole, which implies the interests of the ruling class; thirdly, on an equally clear distinction between the oppressed, dependent and subject nations and the oppressing, exploiting and sovereign nations, in order to counter the bourgeois-democratic lies which obscure the colonial and financial enslavement – characteristic of the era of finance capital and imperialism – of the vast majority of the world's population by an insignificant minority of the richest and advanced capitalist countries.

3. The imperialist war of 1914-18 very clearly revealed the falsity of the bourgeois-democratic phrase-mongering to all nations and to the oppressed classes of the whole world by practically demonstrating that the Versailles Treaty of the famous “Western democracies” is an even more brutal and despicable act of violence against weak nations than was the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of the German Junkers and the Kaiser. The League of Nations and the whole post-war policy of the Entente reveal this truth more clearly and distinctly than ever; they are everywhere intensifying the revolutionary struggle both of the proletariat in the advanced countries and of the masses of the working people in the colonial and dependent countries, and are hastening the collapse of the petty-bourgeois national illusion that nations can live together in peace and equality under capitalism.

4. It follows from the above-mentioned fundamental premises that the cornerstone of the whole policy of the Communist International on the national and colonial questions must be closer union of the proletarians and working masses generally of all nations and countries for a joint revolutionary struggle to overthrow the landlords and the bourgeoisie; for this alone will guarantee victory over capitalism, without which the abolition of national oppression and inequality is impossible.

5. The world political situation has now placed the dictatorship of the proletariat on the order of the day, and all events in world politics are inevitably revolving around one central point, *viz.*, the struggle of the world bourgeoisie against the Soviet Russian Republic, around which are inevitably grouping, on the one hand, the movement for Soviets among the advanced workers of all countries, and, on the other, all the national liberation movements in the colonies and among the oppressed nationalities, whom bitter experience is teaching that there can be no salvation for them except in the victory of the Soviet system over world imperialism.

6. Consequently, one cannot confine oneself at the present time to the bare recognition or proclamation of the need for closer union between the working people of the various nations; it is necessary to pursue a policy that will achieve the closest alliance of all the national and colonial liberation movements with Soviet Russia, the form of this alliance to be determined by the degree of development of the communist movement among the proletariat of each country, or of the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement of the workers and peasants in backward countries or among backward nationalities.

7. Federation is a transitional form to the complete unity of the working people of the various nations. The expedience of federation has already been demonstrated in practice both by the relations between the R.S.F.S.R. and other Soviet republics (the Hungarian, Finnish and Latvian in the past, and the Azerbaijan and the Ukrainian in the present), and by the relations within the R.S.F.S.R. with regard to the nationalities which formerly enjoyed neither state sovereignty nor autonomy (e.g., the Bashkir and Tatar autonomous republics in the R.S.F.S.R., founded in 1919 and 1920).

8. The task of the Communist International in this respect is to further develop and also to study and to test by experience these new federations which have arisen on the basis of the Soviet system and of the Soviet movement. In recognizing that federation is a transitional form to complete union, it is necessary to strive for ever closer federal union, bearing in mind, firstly, that without the closest alliance between the Soviet republics it will be impossible to preserve their existence, surrounded as they are by the imperialist powers of the whole world – which from the military standpoint are immeasurably stronger than they; secondly, that a close economic alliance between the Soviet republics is necessary, for without this it will be impossible to restore the productive forces that have been shattered by imperial-

ism and to ensure the well-being of the working people; and thirdly, that there is a tendency towards the creation of a single world economy, regulated by the proletariat of all nations as one whole and according to a common plan, which tendency is already quite clearly revealed under capitalism and should certainly be further developed and fully consummated under Socialism.

9. In the sphere of internal state relations, the national policy of the Communist International cannot be limited to the bare, formal, purely declaratory and in reality noncommittal recognition of the equality of nations to which the bourgeois democrats confine themselves – no matter whether they frankly admit themselves to be such or whether they assume the name of Socialists, as, for example, the Socialists of the Second International.

Not only must the constant violation of the equality of nations and of the guaranteed rights of national minorities that takes place in all capitalist countries, despite their “democratic” constitutions, be consistently exposed in the whole propaganda and agitation of the Communist Parties – in parliament and out of parliament – but it is necessary also, firstly, constantly to explain that only the Soviet system is capable of granting real equality of nations, by uniting at first the proletarians and then the whole mass of the working population in the struggle against the bourgeoisie; and, secondly, it is necessary that all Communist Parties render direct aid to the revolutionary movements among the dependent and subject nations (for example, in Ireland, among the Negroes of America, etc.) and in the colonies.

Without the latter condition, which is particularly important, the struggle against the oppression of the dependent nations and colonies, as well as the recognition of their rights to state separation are but a mendacious signboard, as we see in the case of the parties of the Second International.

10. The recognition of internationalism in word, and the substitution of petty-bourgeois nationalism and pacifism for it in deed, in all propaganda, agitation and practical work, is a very common thing not only among the parties of the Second International, but also among those which have withdrawn from that International, and often even among those which now call themselves Communist Parties. The struggle against this evil, against the most deeply rooted petty-bourgeois national prejudices, comes the more to the forefront, the more the task of transforming the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national one (*i.e.*, existing in one country and incapable of determin-

ing world politics) into an international one (*i.e.*, a dictatorship of the proletariat covering at least several advanced countries and capable of exercising decisive influence upon the whole of world politics) becomes a pressing question of the day. Petty-bourgeois nationalism proclaims as internationalism the bare recognition of the equality of nations, and nothing more, while (quite apart from the fact that this recognition is purely verbal) preserving national egoism intact; whereas proletarian internationalism demands, firstly, that the interests of the proletarian struggle in one country be subordinated to the interests of that struggle on a world scale, and, secondly, that a nation which is achieving victory over the bourgeoisie be able and willing to make the greatest national sacrifices for the sake of overthrowing international capital.

Thus, in states which are already fully capitalistic, and which have workers' parties that really act as the vanguard of the proletariat, the struggle against the opportunist and petty-bourgeois pacifist distortions of the concept and policy of internationalism is a primary and most important task.

11. With regard to the more backward states and nations, in which feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant relations predominate, it is particularly important to bear in mind:

First, that all Communist Parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries, and that the duty of rendering the most active assistance rests primarily upon the workers of the country upon which the backward nation is dependent colonially or financially;

Second, the need for struggle against the clergy and other influential reactionary and medieval elements in backward countries;

Third, the need to combat Pan-Islamism and similar trends which strive to combine the liberation movement against European and American imperialism with an attempt to strengthen the positions of the khans, landowners, mullahs, etc.;

Fourth, the need, in backward countries, to give special support to the peasant movement against the landlords, against large landownership, and against all manifestations or survivals of feudalism, and to strive to lend the peasant movement the most revolutionary character and establish the closest possible alliance between the West-European communist proletariat and the revolutionary peasant movement in the East, in the colonies, and in the backward countries generally; it is particularly necessary to direct every effort to apply

the basic principles of the Soviet system in countries where pre-capitalist relations predominate – by setting up “Working People’s Soviets,” etc.;

Fifth, the need for determined struggle against the attempt to paint the bourgeois-democratic liberation trends in the backward countries in communist colours; the Communist International must support the bourgeois-democratic national movements in colonial and backward countries only on condition that, in all backward countries, the elements of future proletarian parties, parties communist not only in name, shall be grouped together and educated to appreciate their special tasks, *viz.*, to fight the bourgeois-democratic movements within their own nations; the Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in colonial and backward countries, but must not merge with it and must under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even if in its most rudimentary form;

Sixth, the need constantly to explain and expose among the broadest masses of the toilers of all countries, and particularly of the backward countries, the deception systematically practised by the imperialist powers in creating, under the guise of politically independent states, states which are wholly dependent upon them economically, financially and militarily; under modern international conditions there is no salvation for dependent and weak nations except in a union of Soviet republics.

12. The age-old oppression of colonial and weak nationalities by the imperialist powers has not only filled the working masses of the oppressed countries with animosity towards the oppressing nations, but also with distrust of them in general, even of the proletariat of these nations. The despicable betrayal of Socialism by the majority of the official leaders of the proletariat of the oppressing nations in 1914-19, when “defence of the fatherland” was used as a social-chauvinist cloak to conceal the defence of the “right” of “their own” bourgeoisie to oppress colonies and rob financially dependent countries, could not but enhance this perfectly legitimate distrust. On the other hand, the more backward a country is, the stronger is the hold within it of small agricultural production, patriarchalism and ignorance, which inevitably lend particular strength and tenacity to the deepest of petty-bourgeois prejudices, *viz.*, national egoism and national narrowness. These prejudices cannot but die out very slowly, for they can disappear only after imperialism and capitalism have

disappeared in the advanced countries, and after the whole foundation of the economic life of the backward countries has radically changed. It is therefore the duty of the class-conscious communist proletariat of all countries to treat with particular caution and attention the survivals of national sentiments among the countries and nationalities which have been longest oppressed, and it is equally necessary to make certain concessions with a view to hastening the extinction of the aforementioned distrust and these prejudices. Unless the proletariat and, following it, all the toiling masses, of all countries and nations all over the world voluntarily strive for alliance and unity, the victory over capitalism cannot be successfully accomplished.

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THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE NATIONAL AND COLONIAL QUESTIONS¹⁵

July 26, 1920

Comrades, I shall confine myself to a brief introduction, after which Comrade Maring, who was secretary of our commission, will give you a detailed account of the changes we have made in the theses. He will be followed by Comrade Roy, who formulated the supplementary theses. Our commission unanimously adopted both the preliminary theses, as amended, and the supplementary theses. We have thus reached complete unanimity on all major issues. I shall now make a few brief remarks.

First, what is the most important, the fundamental idea of our theses? The distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations. We emphasize this distinction – in diametric contrast to the Second International and bourgeois democracy. In the epoch of imperialism, it is particularly important for the proletariat and the Communist International to establish the concrete economic facts and in the solution of all colonial and national questions, to proceed not from abstract postulates but from concrete realities.

The characteristic feature of imperialism is that the whole world, as we see, is now divided into a large number of oppressed nations and an insignificant number of oppressor nations, which command colossal wealth and powerful armed forces. The overwhelming majority of the world's population, more than a thousand million people, and very probably 1,250 million – if we take the world's total population at 1,710 million – or about seventy per cent of the world's population, belong to the oppressed nations, which are either in a state of direct colonial dependence or are semi-colonies such as Persia, Turkey and China, or else, having been defeated by the armies of a big imperialist power, have become greatly dependent on that power by virtue of peace treaties. This idea of distinction, of dividing the nations into oppressor and oppressed, runs through all the theses, not only the first theses published earlier over my signature, but also Comrade Roy's theses. The latter were framed chiefly from the standpoint of the situation in India and other big Asian peoples oppressed by Britain. That is what makes them very important for us.

The second guiding idea of our theses is that in the present world situation, after the imperialist war, the mutual relations between the

nations, the whole world system of states, are determined by the struggle of a small group of imperialist nations against the Soviet movement and the Soviet states headed by Soviet Russia. If we let this escape us, we shall not be able correctly to pose a single national or colonial question, even if it concerns a most remote corner of the world. Only by proceeding from this point of view can the communist parties, whether in civilized or in backward countries, correctly pose and solve political questions.

Third, I should like especially to emphasize question of the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. It was this question that gave rise to some differences. We argued about whether it would be correct, in principle and in theory, to state that the Communist International and the communist parties must support the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. As a result of this discussion, we arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the national-revolutionary movement rather than of the “bourgeois-democratic” movement. There is not the slightest doubt that every national movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, for the overwhelming mass of the population in backward countries consists of peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relations. It would be utopian to believe that proletarian parties, if indeed they can emerge in these backward countries, could pursue communist tactics and a communist policy without establishing definite relations with the peasant movement and without giving it effective support. But here objections were raised that if we speak of the bourgeois-democratic movement, all distinction between the reformist and the revolutionary movements will be obliterated. Yet that distinction has been very clearly revealed of late in the backward and colonial countries, for the imperialist bourgeoisie is doing everything within its power to implant the reformist movement among the oppressed nations too. There has been a certain rapprochement between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonial countries, so that very often – even in most cases, perhaps – while the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries does support the national movement, it is at the same time in accord with the imperialist bourgeoisie, that is, together with the latter it fights against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes. This was irrefutably demonstrated in the commission, and we decided that the only correct thing was to take this distinction into account and in nearly all cases substitute the term “national-revolutionary” for the term “bourgeois-democratic”. The

meaning of this change is that we, as Communists, should and will support bourgeois liberation movements in the colonies only when they are genuinely revolutionary, and when their exponents do not hinder our work of educating and organizing the peasantry and the broad mass of the exploited in a revolutionary spirit. If these conditions do not exist, the Communists in these countries must combat the reformist bourgeoisie, to which belong also the heroes of the Second International. Reformist parties already exist in the colonial countries, and in some cases their spokesmen call themselves Social-Democrats and Socialists. The above-mentioned distinction has now been made in all the theses with the result, I think, that our viewpoint has been formulated much more precisely.

Next, I would like to make a few remarks on peasants' Soviets. The practical activities of the Russian Communists in the former tsarist colonies, in such backward countries as Turkestan, etc., confronted us with the question of how to apply communist tactics and policy in pre-capitalist conditions, because the chief characteristic feature of these countries is that pre-capitalist relationships still predominate, and there can therefore be no question of a purely proletarian movement. There is practically no industrial proletariat in these countries. Nevertheless, even there we have assumed, as we must assume, the role of leaders. Our work has demonstrated that colossal difficulties have to be overcome in these countries; but the practical results of our work have also shown that, despite these difficulties and even where there is practically no proletariat, it is possible to inspire in the masses the urge for independent political thought and independent political action. For us this work has been more difficult than it will be for comrades from the West-European countries, because in Russia the proletariat is overwhelmed with the work of state administration. It is quite understandable that peasants living in semi-feudal dependence can assimilate excellently the idea of Soviet organization and put it into practice. It is also clear that the oppressed masses, exploited not only by merchant capital but also by the feudalists, and by a state based on feudalism, can apply this weapon, this type of organization, in their own conditions too. The idea of Soviet organization is a simple one, and is applicable not only to proletarian, but also to peasant feudal and semi-feudal relations. Our experience in this respect is not very considerable as yet, but the debates in the commission, in which several representatives from colonial countries participated, irrefutably demonstrated that the Communist International's theses should

indicate that peasants' Soviets, Soviets of the exploited, are a means that can be employed not only in capitalist countries, but also in countries with pre-capitalist relations, and that it is the absolute duty of communist parties, and of those persons that are prepared to found communist parties, to conduct propaganda in favour of the idea of peasants' Soviets, or toilers' Soviets, everywhere, backward countries and colonies included. And wherever conditions permit, they must make immediate attempts to set up Soviets of the toiling people.

This opens up a very interesting and very important field of practical work for us. So far our general experience in this respect is not particularly extensive, but gradually more and more data will accumulate. There can be no question but that the proletariat of the advanced countries can and should assist the toiling masses of the backward countries, and that the backward countries can emerge from their present stage when the victorious proletariat of the Soviet republics extends a helping hand to these masses and is in a position to render them support.

There were rather lively debates on this question in the commission, not only in connection with the theses signed by me, but still more in connection with Comrade Roy's theses, which he will defend here, and to which certain amendments were adopted unanimously.

The question was posed as follows: Are we to accept as correct the assertion that the capitalist stage of development of the national economy is inevitable for those backward nations which are now winning liberation and in which a movement along the road of progress is to be observed since the war? We replied in the negative. If the victorious revolutionary proletariat conducts systematic propaganda among them, and the Soviet governments come to their assistance with all the means at their disposal – in that event, it would be wrong to assume that the capitalist stage of development is inevitable for the backward peoples. In all the colonies and backward countries, not only should we build independent contingents of fighters, party organizations, not only should we launch immediate propaganda for the organization of peasants' Soviets and strive to adapt them to pre-capitalist conditions, but the Communist International should advance and theoretically substantiate the proposition that with the aid of the proletariat of the advanced countries, the backward countries can pass over to the Soviet system and, through definite stages of development, to communism, without going through the capitalist stage.

What means are necessary for this cannot be indicated beforehand. Practical experience will suggest this. But it has been definitely established that the idea of Soviets is close to the hearts of the mass of working people even of the most remote nations, that these organizations, the Soviets, should be adapted to the conditions of the pre-capitalist social system, and that the communist parties should immediately begin work in this direction in all parts of the world.

I wish also to mention the importance of revolutionary work by the communist parties not only in their own countries, but also in the colonial countries, and particularly among the troops which the exploiting nations employ to keep the peoples in their colonies in subjection.

Comrade Quelch of the British Socialist Party spoke of this in our commission. He said that the rank-and-file English worker would consider it treachery to help the enslaved nations in their revolts against British rule. True, the jingoist and chauvinist-minded labour aristocracy of England and America represents a very great danger to socialism, and is the strongest support of the Second International, and here we have to deal with the greatest treachery by the leaders and workers belonging to this bourgeois International. The colonial question was discussed in the Second International too. The Basle Manifesto also spoke of this quite clearly. The parties of the Second International pledged themselves to act in a revolutionary way, but they have given no sign of genuine revolutionary work or assistance to the exploited and dependent nations in their revolts against the oppressing nations. And this, I think, applies also to most of the parties that have withdrawn from the Second International and wish to join the Third International. This we must declare publicly, for all to hear, and it cannot be refuted. We shall see if any attempt is made to refute it.

All these considerations lay at the basis of our resolutions which, undoubtedly, are too long, but which, I trust, will nevertheless prove useful and will help the development and organization of genuine revolutionary work in connection with the colonial and national questions. And that is our principal task.

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NOTES

¹ *The Dreyfus affair* – a trial provocatively organized in 1894 by the reactionary-royalist military clique in France against Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer of the General Staff, who was falsely accused of espionage and high treason. A court martial sentenced him to life imprisonment. The public campaign in France for a review of the case led to a bitter struggle between the republicans and royalists and resulted in Dreyfus' acquittal in 1906.

Lenin described the Dreyfus affair as “one of the many thousands of fraudulent tricks of the reactionary military caste”.

² *The Zabern incident* occurred in the town of Zabern, Alsace, in November 1913. Caused by a Prussian officer's insult to Alsatians, it resulted in a burst of indignation among the local population, mainly French, against the oppression by the Prussian militarists. For this incident, see Lenin's article “Zabern”, *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Moscow, 1948, Vol. XIX, pp. 464-66.

³ See Marx's letters to Engels of November 2, 1867 and November 30, 1867 (Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, International Publishers, New York, 1942, pp. 228-31).

⁴ For a critique of Renner and Bauer's reactionary idea of “cultural and national autonomy” see Lenin's “On ‘Cultural and National’ Autonomy” (*Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Moscow, 1948, Vol. XIX, pp. 435-58), and “Critical Remarks on the National Question” (*Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Moscow, 1950, Vol. XX, pp. 1-34), and Stalin's “Marxism and the National Question” (*Works*, Eng. ed., FLPH, Moscow, 1953, Vol. II, pp. 300-81).

⁵ The Garibaldi wars were the wars of national liberation waged by the people of Italy under Garibaldi's leadership in 1848-50 and 1859-67 against Austria, France and the Pope.

⁶ See Frederick Engels, “Flüchtlingsliteratur, I. A Polish Proclamation” (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Ger. ed., Vol. XVIII, p. 327).

⁷ This remark was actually made by Engels in “The Prague Uprising” (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Ger. ed., Vol. V, p. 81). Lenin attributed it to Marx as the author of the article was not named in the book he used at that time – *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass*

von Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels und Ferdinand Lassalle, hrsg. von Franz Mehring, Stuttgart, 1902, Bd. III, S. 108-14.

⁸ Marx's letter to Engels of November 2, 1867 (Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, International Publishers, New York, 1942, p. 228).

⁹ *Augean stable* means a place marked by a staggering accumulation of corruption and filth. According to a Greek legend the stable of Augeas was left unclean for thirty years until Hercules cleaned it in one day.

¹⁰ *Die Glocke (The Bell)* – a magazine published in Munich and later in Berlin from 1915 to 1925 by the social-chauvinist Parvus (A. L. Helfand), a member of the German Social-Democratic Party and agent of German imperialism.

¹¹ It was Engels who, in fact, said this in "The Democratic Pan-Slavism" (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Ger. ed., Vol. VI, pp. 270-86). Lenin attributed the remark to Marx for the same reason given in Note 7. The remark appears in *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels und Ferdinand Lassalle*, hrsg. von Franz Mehring, Stuttgart, 1902, Bd. III, S. 246-64.

¹² This resolution on the national question was written by Lenin and adopted by the meeting of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. and Party functionaries which was held at Poronin, near Cracow, on October 6-14, 1913. For reasons of secrecy it was known as the "Summer" or "August" Meeting. For the text of the resolution, see V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Moscow, 1948, Vol. XIX, pp. 384-86.

¹³ *The Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions* was sent by Lenin to J. V. Stalin, who at that time was at the southwestern front. Stalin set forth his remarks to the theses in a letter to Lenin dated June 12, 1920. The theses were published in June 1920 for the forthcoming Second Congress of the Communist International.

¹⁴ *Pan-Islamism* – a religious and political ideology advocating the unity of all Moslem peoples. At the close of the 19th century, Pan-Islamism was widespread among the exploiting classes of the East and was used by Turkey in an attempt to bring the Moslems of the world under the sovereignty of the Sultan, as the "Caliph of all the faithful".

¹⁵ This report was delivered by Lenin at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920.

The Commission on the National and Colonial Questions was formed by the Second Congress of the Communist International and

composed of representatives of the Communist Parties of Russia, Bulgaria, France, Holland, Germany, Hungary, the U.S.A., British India, Persia, China, Korea, Britain and others. The commission carried out its work under the guidance of Lenin, whose theses on the national and colonial questions were adopted by the congress on July 28 after being discussed at its fourth and fifth sessions.