

LENIN IN

CONTEMPORARY
INDIAN PRESS

BY
P.C. JOSHI
GAUTAM CHATTOPADHYAY
DEVENDRA KAUSHIK

PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE

The great October Revolution of 1917 and the first wave of post-war national awakening in India were contemporary historical events. Naturally the Russian revolution and Lenin's ideas had a great impact on the fighters of our freedom movement. Of course the information about the revolution had to negotiate the blinding din and the thick smoke-screen of the British-imperialist propaganda barrage. Imperialist propaganda concentrated upon painting Soviet Russia as an aggressive power like tsarist Russia. Indian national opinion from the experience of Soviet policy and practice easily saw in the rise of the Soviet Russia the emergence of a new principled anti-imperialist power the like of which the world had never seen. New Russia was seen as a power hostile to imperialism and an ally in the anti-imperialist struggle, a friend of the Indian freedom.

No wonder that Lenin's ideas gripped the mind of Indian patriotic circles. Disillusioned with Gandhiji's failure to bring swaraj within a year and at his withdrawal of the movement after the Chauri-Chaura incident, they were looking for a path forward for India. Leninist revolutionary strategy and tactics for

Continued on back flap

LENIN IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN PRESS

**LENIN
IN
CONTEMPORARY
INDIAN PRESS**

By
P. C. Joshi
Gautam Chattopadhyay
Devendra Kaushik



PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE
New Delhi Ahmedabad Bombay

July 1970 (P 90)

Copyright © 1970 by People's Publishing House
Private Limited, New Delhi

Price: Rs. 15.00

Printed by D. P. Sinha at New Age Printing Press, Rani Jhansi Road,
New Delhi 55, and published by him for People's Publishing House,
Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 55.

Jacket Design: Grafika, New Delhi.

Introduction

The recently held Lenin centenary celebrations in our country gave rise to two kinds of reactions: (1) great and overwhelming enthusiasm for Lenin and his immortal cause; and (2) howls from all reactionaries that India was being "surrendered to international communism".

The first reaction was legitimate, natural and in the finest traditions of our anti-imperialist struggle which culminated in our independence in 1947. Progressive elements had always looked to socialism as the way to rejuvenate our country and the only path forward. They had intimate contacts with all socialist movements abroad and showed great sympathy and understanding towards them.

On the other hand, the second hostile trend took up the cry of British imperialism that socialism and communism are alien to our country, that behind it all was the "hand of Moscow", that it was all an un-Indian conspiracy to bring our country under international communism.

No doubt the most powerful answer to all these canards was given by our people—especially workers, peasants and middle classes—by enthusiastically celebrating the Lenin centenary in towns and villages all over the country and by the mass sale of communist literature.

This book is a documentary that answers as well as exposes the lies spread by reactionaries. Here you will find quoted from the Minutes of the First International led by Karl Marx that somebody in Calcutta had accepted its principles and requested a branch to be established in India as far back as the middle of 1871—almost a hundred years ago.

The great Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterji and the sage Swami Vivekananda had hailed the principles of socialism and sudra-raj in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

The victory of the socialist revolution and the birth of the Soviet state were hailed by all sections of patriotic press. And if the principles of socialism were accepted by all patriotic revolutionary fighters it was not due to any "hand of Moscow".

In the following pages it is clearly shown that the ideas of socialism came and struck root in our country due to the efforts of our thinkers and fighters inspired by the great Lenin and his ideas.

The great revolutionary sun rose in November 1917 spreading its bright rays over the whole of backward tsarist Russia. Then the oppressed people of the whole world, groaning under imperialist-feudal yoke, also refused to live in darkness. They lighted their own candles—millions of times weaker than the sun, but still a part of the same revolutionary energy—to show their way forward. They were few then—now there are lakhs and the light is far more powerful. This book is a candlestick where we have collected some of the early candles and shown how the people refused to allow them to be snuffed out by the imperialist rulers.

Contents

Lenin—Contemporary Indian Image by P. C. Joshi	1
Lenin in the Eyes of Contemporary Bengalis (1917-24) by Gautam Chattopadhyay	105
Lenin in Hindi Literature and Press by Devendra Kaushik	125

Lenin—Contemporary Indian Image

A DOCUMENTARY

P. C. Joshi

THE BACKGROUND AND MEETING POINT

Lenin appeared before Indian eyes like a meteor from the Russian horizon after the October revolution. The soil had already been prepared through Indian experience and India's political sight turned Russiawards.

Strange and ironical as it may now appear Indian interest in remote Russia was aroused by the British imperialists themselves. By the middle of the last century, after the failure of 1857 national revolt, British imperialist rule began consolidating itself. About the same time tsarist aggression against Central Asian countries took place and the same process was repeated on that side too. That was the era of Anglo-Russian rivalry. The British rulers adopted that "forward policy" on our northwest borders, which involved heavy military expenditure and was paid for from the Indian exchequer. Indian public opinion had to be reckoned with and tackled. Thus was invented the British propaganda gimmick of "the threat of tsarist autocracy" entrenched just across our nothwest borders and a constant menace to India's security and aspirations of democratic advance. The appeal was to the educated middle class intelligentsia which then constituted the backbone of the national movement and looked forward to constitutional reforms growing towards self-government and swaraj under the dispensation of a liberal

and democratic Britain. When the antitsarist February revolution successfully developed into the socialist October revolution under Lenin's leadership, the British colonialists did their desperate best to substitute Bolshevism for tsarism as a continuing threat and worse. But it did not work. Indian national opinion had become maturer and wiser.

Russia was not all tsarism. There was a democratic revolutionary movement of the Russian people. And despite all the British propaganda efforts it was towards it that Indian national attention was drawn. During 1905 Gandhiji fighting anti-Indian racial oppression in South Africa through satyagraha wrote about Russian revolutionary developments in his *Indian Opinion* and considered them as examples at once inspiring and instructive for the liberation struggle.

In *Indian Opinion*, 1 July 1905, Gandhiji wrote "of the resemblance up to a point" between Russia and India. He emphasised two facts: the poverty of the people and the autocratic, oppressive rule in both the countries—the tsar there and the "British raj" here. It is no accident that this resemblance was also noted by Lenin who repeatedly wrote of the "Russian style British regime in India".

Gandhiji's comparison was not that of an academic historian but of a rising leader of the people. His purpose was to show that oppression could and should be fought and that was what the Russians were doing. This is how the bonds of Indo-Russian fighting solidarity were forged, much before Lenin and the revolution he led, which was only a link, though decisive in the long chain.

Gandhiji went much further. He was very happy when the countrywide political strike took place in Russia in October 1905 and regarded it as a good example of organised mass action and wrote this "was a great lesson to us... We too can resort to the Russian remedy against tyranny". He instinctively sensed the historic significance of the rising Russian revolution and wrote, "If the Russian people succeed, this revolution in Russia will be regarded as the greatest victory, the greatest event in the present century" (Quoted by E. Komarov in his article "Mahatma Gandhi and the

Russian Revolution of 1905", *Soviet Land*, No. 6, March 1969).

The Indian national press from 1905 onwards is full of references to the similarity of the autocratic regimes in Russia and India, in glorifying the Russian struggle, stressing the need to learn from its example. The "extremist" left language press and popular journals published glowing biographical sketches of the death-defying courage and martyrdom of the Russian revolutionaries.

Lenin heard with his own ears the voice of Indian revolution at the Stuttgart Congress (August 1907) of the Second International. The "Mother of Indian revolution", the legendary Madame Cama, led the fraternal Indian delegation, proudly unfurled the Indian flag on the rostrum and passionately demanded support to Indian self-determination. There is no evidence available yet whether Lenin met the Indians present at the congress. This delegation also contained V. Chattopadhyaya who later became secretary of the World League against Imperialism in whose first congress the Indian National Congress was represented in the person of Jawaharlal Nehru and it became duly affiliated to the world body and thus accepted the need for and contributing its bit in the world united front against imperialism. Chattopadhyaya was also responsible for sending the Nehrus, father and son, to Moscow on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the revolution. In the early thirties he became the spokesman of the Communist International on India and died a martyr's death in USSR under the Stalin terror.

In this Stuttgart Congress the colonial question was an important item on the agenda. The Dutch leader, Kol, on behalf of the rightwing leadership, sought to change the traditional anticolonial policy of the International by proposing "A socialist colonial policy", a demagogic device to mask colonialism with a mass of socialist jargon. Lenin doggedly opposed the move and the resolution could not be passed. The Russian delegation was the only one from the major European countries that voted against Kol's proposal. Coming events cast their shadow before.

From Tolstoy to Lenin there is no gap in Russian interest in the Indian nor Indian interest in the Russian struggle. During the days of the 1905 revolution Gandhiji wrote a moving biographical sketch of Maxim Gorky whom he called the "Stormy Petrel" of the revolution, "one of the chief participants in the rebellion in Russia". He also stressed that Gorky had himself come from the people, "brought up in extreme poverty, educating himself through his own efforts". Gandhiji graphically described Gorky's contribution and role in his own way:

"He wrote many things, all of them with a single purpose, viz to stir up the peoples against the tyrannies they were labouring under, to warn the authorities and to render public service, in so far as this was possible. Without caring to make money he writes with such vehemence and bitterness that the authorities keep a stern eye on him. He has also been to jail in the service of the people and considers imprisonment an honour. It is said that there is no other writer in Europe who is as great a champion of people's rights as Maxim Gorky."

Gorky's own interest in India was keen. He got in touch with the doyen of Indian revolutionary exiles in Europe, Shyamji Krishnavarma, editor of the *Indian Sociologist*, and beseeched him for material and articles on India. After paying his tribute to Indian philosophical heritage Gorky wrote to Krishnavarma in 1912, "We must make known one people to the other, so that everybody who thirsts for justice, who desires to live in harmony with reason, should understand their unity, the unity of their aims, their spirit and should be united in one invincible force, which will conquer finally all the evil in the world". The Russian revolution was seeking the hand of the Indian revolution long before the victory of the October revolution in Russia.

Let us take another hoary Indian name, Lokmanya Tilak who rose to become the leader of Indian "extremism", the national left, during the first decade of the century.

"The Russian Consulate General in Bombay reported to the British Foreign Office in Moscow in 1906 that Lok-

manya Tilak had made discreet inquiries whether it was possible for Indians to go to Russia for military training. A year later the Russian Consul, Klemm, reported that Tilak had called at his office to say that he wanted to send an Indian army officer for higher military training to Russia" (Girish Mathur's article "Tilak and the Russians" in the *Patriot*, 30 June 1968. This and other reports from the tsarist diplomats in India in the archives of P. C. Joshi).

Similar request was made by Raja Mahendra Pratap and other veteran revolutionary exiles who were with him only to draw a blank. The Russian imperialist tsarist government did not consider it discreet to help anti-imperialist Indian leaders despite the Anglo-Russian rivalry.

In the revolutionary centre manned by Madame Cama and Krishnavarma in Paris before the first world war, the Indian terrorist revolutionaries had built contact with their Russian counterparts and from them mastered the technique of manufacturing deadly bombs. There are files after files in the National Archives that disclose that the more sophisticated and effective bombs used by the Indian revolutionaries had their origin in the Russian handbook on the manufacture of bombs whose copies were seized during some searches.

Tilak's mind, keen and alert as it was, could not avoid coming to the conclusion, based on the experience of developing world events, that the anti-imperialist elements in India could hopefully seek friendship and fellowship only with the anti-tsarist forward moving forces in Russia. He did not take his eye off Russia throughout his fighting life and the issues of his weekly *Kesari* bear witness to his continuing interest and maturing understanding. Only three months after the revolution, after his release from jail, he wrote an article in the *Kesari* entitled "About the Russian Leader, "Lenin".

Soon after when he went out campaigning in Madras, in the working class centre of Perambur he said, "The influence of the workers' organisations will increase in the course of time. And it is the workers who will become the masters of

the country". It was the same vision which Lenin had realised in Russia that was finding an echo inside India's Lokmanya. The new wind that had started blowing from Russia was warmly welcomed by the most revered among the forward-looking leaders of India. More, Tilak clearly foresaw the new class alignment that will emerge within the broad national movement of India as the result of the world transforming impact of the Russian revolution led by Lenin.

Lenin came to India riding a hitherto unknown steed, the Russian revolution, over the stormy wave from the vast Russian land mass and sweeping not only towards Europe but also advancing towards Asia, to our very borders. Indian attention was naturally drawn to the new rising revolutionary wave, the steed that raced galloping forward and lastly on the skilful rider who guided it. (There is a useful and informative paper on the subject by Zafar Imam, entitled "The Effect of the Russian Revolution on India", St Anthony Paper No. 18, South Asian Affairs, edited by S. N. Mukerji, Oxford University Press.)

The February revolution was warmly hailed in India by all sections of Indian national opinion. The Home Rule League headquarters in Madras even brought out a campaign pamphlet characterising it as the herald of a new era, end of autocracy and dawn of liberty—not only in Russia but only begun there.

The transition from the February to the October revolution was too swift and the picture too confused, made worse by ruthless war censorship, to be really understood in India.

Indian national opinion however rightly understood it as a continuation of the historic Russian struggle for liberation and the interest remained enthusiastic and warm in continuation of the earlier attitude. The impact was uplifting and energising. The official Indian Constitutional Reform Report, published in 1918 was forced to admit it:

"The revolution in Russia and its beginning was regarded in India as a triumph over despotism, notwithstanding the fact that it has involved that unhappy country in anarchy and dismemberment, it has given an impetus to

Indian political aspirations" (Report on the Indian Constitutional Reform, HMSO, Cmd 9109, p. 14).

British policy towards India during the war was relentless, standing no nonsense like the demand for home rule during the war but promising reforms, a greater share to Indians in the administration of the country only after the victorious conclusion of the war. Even as late as July 1917 the Viceroy characterised the "Nineteen Memorandum" on reforms submitted by the Indian nationalist leaders, moderates and extremists alike, as demanding "catastrophic changes".

Not only Indian public but official opinion as well was taken completely by surprise by the August 1917 Montagu Declaration promising early reforms, leading to the ultimate establishment of selfgovernment in India, the proposals to be discussed in person not only with the Viceroy and his official advisers but with Indian public leaders as well.

India lay still, depressed and enchained by the draconian Defence of India Act and other repressive measures. The push towards Indian reforms, the change in British policy came initially not from developments within India but abroad and primarily due to the Russian revolution, its consequences and prospects of development. The February revolution had already deepened the crisis in the eastern front and the further development of the revolution towards the October events was visible in the rapid disintegration of the Russian army. The earlier British policy was cast aside and initiative taken for Indian reforms, even while the grim world war was on, to win Indian confidence, to help intensely the war efforts, get more and more Indian men and resources to help restore the precarious war balance in favour of Britain and its allies, and in the bargain take the Indian gaze off revolution abroad and concentrate it upon the safety and security of India itself.

It is worth while unravelling who was the real initiator, inside the British ruling circles, of this devastatingly clever and timely diversionary move. Lord Curzon himself wrote to the Viceroy, "It was, I think, mainly due to me that you got from the Home Government the pronouncement which you

repeated in your Council—indeed the actual words are mine” (Quoted in Earl of Ronaldshay’s *The Life of Lord Curzon*, London, 1923, Vol. III, p. 168).

The British trick succeeded for the time being. India remained politically paralysed, a victim of the illusion of expecting home rule or at least a big forward step towards it as a result of the visit to India of Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, who moreover knew his real job and did it thoroughly well. He came rushing to India after his August 1917 declaration and subsequently wrote with deep satisfaction “My work these six months has helped because it has kept India quiet” (E. Montagu, *An Indian Diary*, London, 1930, p. 338).

However quiet India may have become politically and co-operative with the British Secretary of State, it did not take its eyes off the Russian horizon where events marched relentlessly towards the October socialist revolution. For about five days the news of the October revolution was blacked out from the Indian press under the ruthless censorship imposed by the war cabinet sitting all shaking and dithering in London (*The Bombay Chronicle*, 14 November 1917).

The educated and the politically interested people living in towns and cities got the news of the victory of the October revolution through the newspapers serviced by Reuter which in turn was duly censored and politically orientated by the war and foreign offices, from Whitehall, London. Looking back it is amazing how much sense the Indian editorial staff and the newspaper readers could make out of such doctored and vitiated news. The mass of Indian humanity living in India’s villages got the news of Russian developments from their soldier sons or brothers on their return from the war. The delay was made up by graphic descriptions of personal experience. Those returning from the western front had tales to fill volumes, how Indian effort proved decisive in allied war victory and thus national selfconfidence was generated and the aim and the mystique of “the saheb” became a thing of the past. Those who returned from the eastern and southern fronts, Transcaspia, Persia, Central Asia had still more

exciting stories to tell, of a revolution the like of which had never been imagined possible before it broke out in Russia, of an actual workers’ and peasants’ raj being established across our own frontiers and of the raising of the Red Army fighting, and victoriously, for the new mission, and above all of some Indian soldiers, their comrades-in-arms, getting inspired to risk their all and deserting to fight in the ranks of the Red Army.

Long before Soviet and Indian historical researchers collected decisive evidence proving the above glorious record of Indian revolutionary solidarity widely popularised in India during the fiftieth anniversary of the October revolution, 1967, Havildar Kazi Nazrul Islam of the Bengali Paltan, wrote out and published the good news, based on personal experience and knowledge, in the form of two short stories, while he was still a serving soldier and before he won adoration in the early twenties as the “Bard of Indian Revolution” in Bengali.

It is worth while to recall the initial response of the most influential and authoritative organs of Indian national opinion. The anti-Bolshevik propaganda drive of British imperialism began before the Bolsheviks had won, their triumph in capturing and successfully retaining power only made it wilder and more venomous. The British line was faithfully and widely broadcast in India through the columns of the Anglo-Indian press which then held a dominant position in the publicity media. However, in less than a month after the victory of October revolution on 2 December 1917, one of the leading nationalist dailies of the day, *The Bombay Chronicle* wrote editorially:

“Our ideas of Bolsheviks are vague... We recognise the fact that they could never have met with the present success had there not been something in their programme that was attractive and of promise... The Bolsheviks came with a definite scheme which took into consideration the necessities of the peasants and promised immediate confiscation of lands for the people.”

On 11 July 1918 *The Bombay Chronicle* carried a still

more positively significant article, "Lenin, the Man and His Aims", which said:

"If Lenin is successful the February revolution will sink into insignificance before the November revolution, for its success is nothing less than the end of the upper middle class and the final triumph of the common people."

The Modern Review was the most popular and influential monthly of the times and it commanded great respect because of the active collaboration of Rabindranath Tagore. It published a series of articles on the newly established Soviet institutions started to stabilise the revolution and serve and activate the working people. In its 3 June 1918 issue it wrote:

"It is refreshing to turn from the chaos of abuses and misrepresentation directed against the Russian soviets by the capitalist press to the illuminating sketch of the framework of the Soviet state... We are at last given an insight into the mighty efforts of revolutionary Russia to organise herself and work out her communistic ideals. In fact (the Bolshevik) is striving to make Russia better and nobler than anything she has ever been."

The Montagu declaration brought the Indian reforms on the agenda of the day in Indian politics while the Russian revolution went marching on influencing world politics and the two became inevitably intertwined.

The spokesmen of diehard British opinion saw doom ahead. They argued that the Indian intelligentsia, like its Russian counterpart would fail to carry out its responsibility in running the government of the country if such responsibility was thrust too soon and without adequate training and experience (Sir Valentine Chirol, "Reform in India: The Russian Example", *The Times*, London, 10 June 1918). Lord Sydenham, formerly governor of Bombay and president of the influential Indo-British Association, declared: "Russia has given us a striking illustration of what happened when authority was destroyed and eighty per cent of the people were illiterate. The result in India will be more disastrous still" (*The Morning Post*, London, 30 July 1918).

In India the powerfully entrenched Anglo-Indian newspaper chain broadcast the same line as above.

Covering the northern provinces, *The Pioneer*, Lucknow, of 19 November 1917 wrote, what it thought was self-evident enough:

"Verily Russia at present provides the world an object lesson of the dangers attending the premature acquisition of representative institutions before a country is fitted for them. Home rule in Russia has virtually been synonymous with no rule... The moral is obvious and should be taken to heart by all impatient politicians in this country. Selfgovernment as in Russia, is a plant of slow growth and any attempt to force it prematurely can only result in misrule, turmoil and anarchy."

The Calcutta based *The Englishman*, popularly considered a semiofficial daily, bluntly characterised the home rulers as "Bolsheviks".

The Indian nationalist opinion, itself caged within the ideological framework of British liberal democracy, was thrown on the defensive but did not give up. It had become mature and ambitious enough to turn the British line of argument in favour of its own demand. It tenaciously and boldly argued back that the grant of home rule to India would not usher anarchy and chaos but that delay in the long awaited reforms would inevitably lead to a revolution.

For example the then much respected Surendranath Banerji's *Bengalee*, Calcutta, 25 November 1917 wrote:

"It is not the home rule that brought about troubles in Russia. It is the revolution that is the parent of this chaos. Had the erstwhile rulers of Russia had the wisdom to make a timely concession of home rule, there would have been no revolution and no outbreak of lawlessness and disorder... Reforms indefinitely postponed are inadequate in their scope and comprehension, and prepare the ground for revolt."

The no less important and influential nationalist daily of western India wrote:

"The challenge (of comparing India with Russia) may be accepted and the analogy is particularly true because in the bulk of illiteracy and fervency of intelligentsia there is a strong resemblance between India and Russia... India is at an infinite advantage when it presses for the initiation of Congress-League scheme, in as much as we have British connections. Neither vested interests nor the tranquillity of progress can reasonably suffer" (*The Bombay Chronicle*, Bombay, 21 December 1917).

Accepting the British imperial connection and promising the retention of the economic status quo were considered enough to reassure British fears and doubts but it did not work. The Russian revolution and its consolidation gripped British imperialism like a nightmare while the unprecedented policy pronouncements and forward-looking activities of the newly established Soviet regime uplifted the Indian national movement to a new, hitherto untrodden stage. The Soviet Union emerged as a permanent landmark over the changing Indian scene, its example and activities became the moving inspiration of national side and scared stiff the colonialist side.

The Indian demand for democratic advance had acquired wings with the declaration of the allied war aims and the oft repeated speeches of the British and still more so of US President Wilson. It however acquired teeth after the Soviet statement of 24 November 1917 renouncing secret treaties, annulling the partition of Turkey and Persia, and proclaiming the rights of all peoples and nations to selfdetermination. Its impact became decisive when the Indian people realised for themselves the sharp difference between the allied and Soviet attitudes. The principle of selfdetermination was loudly proclaimed by allied statesmen but not applied to India while the Soviet government not only promised but implemented it in all its neighbouring states and much more, in the case of the former tsarist colonies as well ("Defensive or Bolshevism". *The Bombay Chronicle*, 20 October 1920).

The impact of the official Soviet statement on selfdetermination, and not only on India, was thus assessed by an

eminent Indian historian and statesman: "The Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia was indeed an explosive statement and all the natives of Asia working for freedom heard it with a new hope" (K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance*, London, 1953, p. 254).

To understand specifically the contemporary impact on India the best source would be the official historian of the Congress who has recorded how Gandhiji on hearing the news reacted by seeking a clarification from the British Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, in the authenticity of the report! (B. P. Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Madras, 1935, p. 254). The Mahatma was obviously staggered by the unprecedented promises held out in the Soviet policy statement.

The very next session of the Indian National Congress after the October revolution in Russia was held in Calcutta, in December 1917 presided over by Mrs Annie Besant. In her presidential address she contrasted the despotic character of the British rule in India with that of her "free and self-ruling neighbours across the frontier" and emphatically declared that "in future unless India wins selfgovernment, she will enviously look at her selfgoverning neighbours and the contrast will intensify her interest" (*Indian National Congress Report*, Delhi, 1917, p. 22). The "Bolshevik bogey" was being cleverly used the other way round, to frighten the bogymakers and that by its intended victims themselves and this ding-dong went on.

The next session, in 1918, was presided over by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. He was not only a veteran leader but widely respected for his sense of responsibility, tact and soft words. In his presidential address he explained how selfdetermination would apply to India and stated that a congress of the people will be called which will determine and declare what in its opinion should be the measure of reforms which should be introduced in the country. "Let the British government give effect to the principle of selfgovernment in India by accepting the proposal so put forward."

The question of the "representatives of the people" decid-

ing the political future of India is for the first time brought to the fore instead of the "will and pleasure" of the British Crown deciding the issue, as expressed through the British Parliament sitting in session in remote London.

Mrs Annie Besant moved the resolution on selfdetermination which naturally became the main resolution of the session. In her speech she ridiculed the alien government's attitude to selfdetermination:

"We say this in answer to the government of Great Britain declaring that it cannot govern without these powers (refusal to transfer all the departments of the government to Indian hands and keeping the right to introduce repressive measures of extrajudicial nature in its own hands etc.)... But the tsar of Russia could only govern with coercion. Are you then no better ruler than the tsar of Russia!" (*Indian National Congress Report, 1918 session, p. 18*).

The resolution was unanimously carried and this session became popularly known as the "Selfdetermination Congress".

The newly established Soviet government not only by openly and repeatedly advocating and supporting in all the international forums, and above all implementing in practice the principle of selfdetermination projected this liberationist slogan on the world scale. Indian spokesmen, political leaders and also the national press asked: if one country, Soviet Russia, can successfully and safely do it and earn merit why not the others, and above all Britain? The British side failed to give the right answer and had inevitably to face the righteous struggle of the Indian people. Such was the point of departure, in principle and practice, in Indo-British relations brought about by the Russian revolution under the leadership of Lenin.

On the British side a major shift in their policy towards India was in the making. As soon as the war was over the British government showed no signs of fulfilling any of the promises of reforms given during the war and stressed and confirmed with much ado in the Montagu declaration of August 1917. The legislation based on the Montagu-Chelms-

ford report was not enacted until the end of 1919 and it came into operation only in 1920.

The Indian side promptly noticed the treacherous change. The All India Congress Committee, the highest body of the National Congress between two congresses, opined:

"Since the signing of the armistice, the people, however, feel that there has been a notable change in the attitude of the European community, official and nonofficial, towards Indian aspirations generally and reforms in particular" (reported in *The Indian Annual Register, 1920, p. 18*).

After the end of the war instead of implementing its pledges on Indian reform the British government appointed the Rowlatt commission to inquire into "the criminal conspiracies, connected with the revolutionary movement" and to suggest new laws to deal with what was characterised "sedition" and "conspiracy" in the postwar situation.

The publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford report early in 1918 caused dismay in Indian national circles. It fell far short of Indian expectations in terms of British promises already made. A vocal section began thinking in terms of their boycott.

The delay in enacting the Reforms Bill based even on such an unsatisfactory report, stood in glaring contrast to the indecent haste in enacting the repressive legislation the Rowlatt Bill, based on the commission's recommendations and arming the alien bureaucracy with such arbitrary powers as had never been known in peace time. This bill was passed in March 1918 against the united opposition of all the Indian members of the Legislative Council.

As before the Russian shadow loomed large over this switch in British policy towards India. After the pressure of war needs was over the British imperialist government concentrated its efforts on consolidating its hold over India against what it called the new "menace of Bolshevism" which was really only a new challenge of anti-imperialism. A hitherto unknown determination, vigour and clarity exuding from the Indian national movement, and despite ideological ignorance

and differences its spontaneously sympathetic attitude towards the new unequivocally and consistently anti-imperialist power right across India's borders made the change in British policy inevitable and urgent. The "Bolshevik bogey" was very convenient and useful to justify British inability to gracefully move forward to meet the Indian national demand.

In September 1918 Lord Chelmsford, the British Viceroy in India, stated in the Imperial Legislative Council:

"The Russian revolution was seized upon as a pretext on which to base claims to sweeping changes. I think those who sang a paean of the Russian events have since repented. Russia indeed has hinted a moral which would do us all good to take to heart" (*The Times of India*, 7 September 1918).

In the budget session of the council Lord Chelmsford came back to the same theme, of "menace of Bolshevism" to India. He also informed the council of the establishment of a special staff to deal with the danger of "Bolshevik agents and propaganda".

It became clear enough to Indian public opinion that the end of the war had made no difference to the attitude of the British. The German military danger had been replaced by the new and greater menace of Bolshevism to India. The official report for the year 1919 had underlined the above British understanding which they sought to palm off on India to keep it quiet and remain grateful to the British raj. It stated:

"With the termination of hostilities, it might naturally be supposed that the menace on India's northwest frontier, of which mention had been made in the last year's report, would disappear. But, in point of fact, the very completeness of Germany's collapse hindered the restoration of these regions of Central Asia, which had been disturbed by the pioneers of intrigues and agents of disintegration... To the German arms there succeeded the more formidable menace of Bolshevik ideas."

The British of course did not want to yield power but after the war they gave up all plans of even seriously sharing

power in honourable cooperation with the yet friendly Indian leaders. They sought the moral, political justification for their greed and recalcitrance by adopting the posture of defenders of India against the myth they had themselves manufactured, of the menace of Bolshevism to India. Inevitably enough they began seeing the hand of Bolshevism in every expression of militant mass movement in India.

In 1918-19 the Indian National Congress decided to launch a protest movement against the Rowlatt Bills. Indian discontent began assuming the aspect of a vast prairie fire. The whole country was astir under the impact of anti-Rowlatt-Bill agitation, with mass meetings and demonstrations everywhere and protest hartals and strikes breaking out in growing numbers. The purblind power-drugged British bureaucracy that ruled the country for its imperialist mentors was neither able to understand the march of events nor cope with them. They were too sudden and sweeping for its comprehension. They were totally unexpected in terms of its own understanding of India. The easiest and simplest thing to do was to broadcast their suspicion that the new militant movement was being engineered by the Bolshevik agents.

The Hunter Committee which was appointed to inquire into "the Punjab disturbances", reported:

"It was stated before us by some officials that these disorders were in their view the result of an organised conspiracy throughout the country to turn out the British government, one witness even stated that it was connected with, if not financed by, the Russo-German Bolshevik organisation" (*Report of the Committee Appointed by the Government of India to Investigate Disturbances in the Punjab*, Cmd 681, 1920, p. 93).

The London *Times* published on 20 March 1919 a despatch from its Helsingfors correspondent on the Bolsheviks financing, organising and arming the Bolshevik movement in India. There is no evidence in the British intelligence files or in the confidential weekly reports of the Director

Central Intelligence Bureau, all now available in the National Archives of India, to substantiate the London *Times* story above.

It was obviously a sheer accident that soon after the publication of the above in March in *The Times*, largescale disturbances broke out in the Punjab as part of the anti-Rowlatt agitation. The authoritative organ of British imperialism proudly claimed the credit for discovering and publicising the Bolshevik plan for India before its execution and pontifically asked "whether this organised work on communication has any connection with the Bolshevik plans to raise revolution in India" (*The Times*, 20 March 1919).

This propaganda line from above was taken up by the semiofficial, pro-government Anglo-Indian press in India. For example, a Bombay daily suggested that "an external organisation was fomenting these troubles through an Indian revolutionary party" (*The Times of India*, 17 April 1919).

After a few months it again asserted, "our view has always been... that the tentacles of conspiracy extended far beyond India and that the secret leaders were in touch with Russian Bolshevik movement" (16 December 1919).

The success of the Russian revolution and the policy followed by the Soviet government it set up served as an inspiration and an example so far as the Indian national movement was concerned. Russian developments moved Indian patriots emotionally and stirred their thoughts as no other external development had done before. Indian self-confidence was strengthened and the hope appeared practically realisable. A new militancy and momentum was acquired by the Indian freedom movement. The impact was political and psychological. The atmosphere in India, the mind of Indian patriots, the nature and tempo of the movement, all stood changed. This was revealed during first countrywide anti-imperialist mass upsurge that became famous as the first noncooperation movement. There is no evidence whatsoever to substantiate the fantastic British allegation that the movement was organised and financed by the Bolsheviks. It was only made to isolate and discredit the movement.

The reasoned demands and factual contradictions of the Indian nationalist leaders went unheeded. The president of the Bombay Provincial Political Conference correctly stated that "the people's acts do not represent Bolshevism; they denote the deep disappointments and intemperate antagonism to government's stubbornness breaking into lawlessness" (*Indian Annual Register*, 1920, p. 294).

This was an objective statement of the situation as it began unfolding itself. And such statements can be multiplied from the Indian side. They show besides that the British attempt to panic the Indian patriots did not work, the scarecrow of Bolshevism within India did not keep them off the course of the anti-imperialist struggle.

During 1919-20 the British propaganda was riding two horses at the same time, the first was "Bolshevism from abroad" and the second "Bolshevism within India". After Chauri Chaura and the withdrawal of the active resistance movement the one, "Bolshevism within India", was given some rest but "the Bolshevik menace from across the frontier" was kept going nonstop. This crude and lying propaganda stirred the Mahatma and in his simple but devastating manner he stated: "I have never believed in a Bolshevik menace and why any Indian government fear Russian, Bolshevik or any menace" (*Young India*, 1919-20, Madras, 1924, p. 717).

The logical corollary of the above was, meet the Indian national demand and the alleged menace will cease. In fact this served as an effective one to the the propaganda line of the Indian press and did help to isolate and negate the imperialist propaganda. The British rulers in practice adopted the opposite course which in turn helped to destroy all remnants of Indian liberalism, faith in the moral bona fides of British statesmen or in their political wisdom. And more, the intensely humiliating negative experience of British attitude led Indian patriots, and at least the more advanced and sensitive ones, like Nehru and the pioneers of socialism and communism in India to give sustained thought to the teachings of Lenin which had made the Russian revolution suc-

cessful, towards which they had already adopted a positive and sympathetic attitude. In fact the final outcome of the anti-Bolshevik propaganda drive of the British rulers was to inspire and enhance Indian patriotic interest in the principles of Bolshevism itself.

LENIN IMAGE

In India perhaps the first study on Lenin published in English is by S. A. Dange (*Gandhi vs Lenin*, Liberty Literature Co., Bombay-2, April 1921). It was the time when Gandhiji had already assumed the leadership of the Indian national movement which was gathering unprecedented momentum, the masses coming in ever larger numbers, the political atmosphere electric and the question before Indian patriotic life was: which way forward to Indian freedom? It was also the time when the Russian revolution led by Lenin had already triumphed in neighbouring Russia and was consolidating itself by beating back the armed counter-revolutionary offensive of reactionary elements massively aided and constantly abetted by British imperialism, the same power that held us in thralldom. The Russian revolution had evoked Indian sympathy and admiration. Its success, against all odds, inspired amazed wonder. And this inevitably led to a study of the life and teachings of its leader, Lenin. In the early twenties Gandhi and Lenin had found their way into every Indian patriotic heart and thus began a churning of the minds. Dange's pioneer effort was symbolic of this historic process. It was of topical interest then and is of historic value now.

As the name indicates it is a comparative study of the two masters who moulded the destiny of our nation and the world of which it is a part. Dange was in his early twenties when he wrote the booklet and it would be wrong to look into it for anything else except the mental exercise on paper of an ardent and inquisitive but immature Indian patriot. Its historical value lies in the fact that it is evidence of

impact that the emergence of Lenin and his ideas on the world scene had made on the youthful forward-looking generation of active Indian patriots in Lenin's own lifetime. It is evidence of intellectual quest from the position of bourgeois nationalism to that of scientific socialism. On balance young Dange sticks to Gandhism but strengthens it with some of the obviously irresistible ideas from the armoury of Leninism. But such is the appeal and worth of the ideas of Lenin that the same Dange is the Chairman of the Communist Party of India.

The problem that faced Dange's generation and his own approach is outlined by him thus:

"We have to think of two things. How to throw off the foreign yoke? With what methods? And then how to destroy the evil of capitalism amongst us, which is making fast progress, and will double its speed when we are politically free. Mahatma Gandhi has put forth his methods of working out the destruction of these two monster diseases. Gandhism aims to cure society of modern industrialisation and civilisation. At the same time, Bolshevism is working with the same view in Russia and in European society. Since both the systems are working with a view to find a solution for a common evil, common to all nations and since both, fortunately or unfortunately, are born practically in the same era, we propose to compare and contrast these two systems of philosophy and action and try to see their efficiency to arrive at the desired results."

This was followed by an abstract and schematic exercise. Its limitations are now a part of history but the very fact that it was made and sustained led Dange to where he is now, to the ideological position of Leninism, to lifelong activity in the service of the Indian working class which made him its foremost leader and also of the party pledged to creatively apply Lenin's ideas for the successful carrying forward of the Indian revolution and the creation of a socialist society in our country, according to the specific features of our own historical development and our national genius.

Dange correctly tackles the problem of the anti-Bolshevik crusade that had been started by the other side.

"Since Bolshevism became master of Russia, governments of all countries have been trying to discredit it in the minds of their people, by painting it as devilish, atrocious and despotic. Every move bearing the least resemblance to communist activity is being repressed and the Bolsheviks are cut off from communicating with the people of any nation. . . . The reason lies in the avowed international policy of the Bolsheviks."

Here Dange quotes from the Draft of Lenin's Thesis on the National and Colonial Question submitted to the Second Congress of the Communist International held in Moscow in 1920, where Lenin pledged Soviet support to the national liberation struggle of all the enslaved colonial peoples and stressed the necessity of every communist party of the imperialist countries to do the same as part of its international duty. Dange was among the first few Indians familiar with the Lenin thesis on the need to forge an international united front against imperialism.

To describe Lenin Dange quoted Bertrand Russell who had met him as a member of the early British Labour Delegation that had gone to Russia and concluded, "There is no wonder, if such a man, ere long, hunted from place to place and compelled to live an underground life, should become the sovereign, dictator of Russia!" It is clear enough that the nonstop largescale hostile bourgeois propaganda had its effect even on the budding communist S. A. Dange. His ideological immaturity led him to accept the dictator idea. There is evidence in other places in the pamphlet that he confused the dictatorship of the proletariat with "dictatorship of the Bolsheviks or rather of Lenin".

Dange raised the question which the whole world and not only India was asking "Has the Russian revolution any significance in the history of mankind? Or is it simply a spectacle of mean scrambling for power on the part of ambitious parties, wending their way to the throne through bloodshed of man? . . . Does the Russian revolution belong to

the same category or has it something new to announce to the world, as the French revolution had?"

Dange had that early seized upon the correct answer. "The Russian revolution is the beginning of the destruction of this 'bourgeois period' and heralds a new day of the 'labour period'. This is the significance of the Bolshevik revolution."

In the chapter on "The Indian Revolution" Dange stated: "Our constitutional agitation has accomplished almost nothing, beyond arousing the nation. We now want a revolution" and immediately added "surely not with an 'armed blow'." Those were the days when Mahatma Gandhi was vigorously preparing the country for noncooperation with the British government, Dange approvingly quotes at length, from the *Young India*, Mahatma Gandhi's plan of growing and many-sided noncooperation including nonpayment of taxes, land revenue, etc. Dange, however, was realist enough to realise that noncooperation, even when launched on a mass scale, because of its passive character could not effectively stand up to the British police and military terror. He thought out an effective course.

"There is one remedy . . . And it lies in the hands of Indian labour. The army movements in terrorism and their success will depend mainly upon the speedy transport of the soldiers from one centre to another, and of transport of foodstuffs and ammunition for the army. All this is done by Indian labour. If at the extreme moment the Indian labour refuses to work in a solid mass, if the railwaymen, telegraphmen, coolies and all sorts of labourers refuse to cooperate with the government, i.e. arrange what is called a sabotage, our success will be assured. The whole movement of government terrorism will be paralysed and it will have to yield."

It was certainly a distinctive contribution to strengthen the Gandhian technique of noncooperation with the weapon of the workers' general strike, based on the railway strike, and this was straight from the experience of the Russian revolution. The Gandhian armoury was being supplemented from the Leninist, on strategy and tactics.

Living in Bombay it was not difficult for Dange to visualise the contribution the working class could make to the national movement. The need to draw in the peasantry had already been accepted. Dange stressed:

“So side by side with the education of the peasantry must be done the work of organising our labour and educating it. The labour organisation and education is a more hopeful task because the labourers are always found in large town areas and in enormous units, a fermenting political atmosphere prevails in such large cities which makes them susceptible to rapid changes, while the nature of their work makes them habituated to concerted action. This characteristic makes us confident to say that an organised Indian labour will not fail us at the time of action. It is our dire necessity. If we win we will win only by the help of the proletariat, i.e. labourers and peasantry. They are our main support.”

This fullthroated acceptance of the consistently revolutionary role of the working class and the peasantry in our liberation struggle was a new uplifting idea from the teachings of Lenin, and had already been tried with success in the Russian revolution.

Dange's work was typical of the times, and suffered from its limitations. Its real value was that it sought to use the teachings of Gandhi as well as Lenin for advancing the cause of Indian liberation.

The first biography of Lenin in Marathi was published in 1922. The author was Ramkrishna Gopal Bhide who worked for thirty long years on the editorial staff of Tilak's Marathi weekly, *Kesari*. It was entitled *Nikolai Lenin: Biography of the Founder of Russian Democracy*. The manuscript was ready by 1920 and hence it dealt with events only up to 1919. The delay was due to the troubles of the press.

The author recently recalling the days when he wrote this, his first out of thirty books, mostly historical, biographical, travelogues etc. stated:

“Those were the heydays of British imperialism and we, Indians, had to gather inspiration in our struggle for free-

dom from every known source—and what source could be better than Lenin and his Bolshevik Russia? But, these sources were in those days unknown to the general public, hence somewhat mysterious and for that reason even more attractive to us. Lenin's we felt was an entirely new experiment in revolution, with unique ideology which had a great appeal to our mind imbued with our ancient philosophy.

“But the materials for writing a book at that time were absolutely scanty; no authentic document could come from Russia, nor any informative book would be allowed to enter India, and whatever foreign newspapers and periodicals were available in the *Kesari* office and library were British and American.

“I was greatly helped and encouraged in this task by the late Senapati Bapat, who was my colleague working in the *Maratha*, Lokmanya Tilak's English weekly. Senapati gave me valuable information, and even some documents, mostly about the programme, policy and ideology of the Bolsheviks which, as you have seen, I have profusely utilised in the book” (From the Interview of Manohar Patel with Ramkrishna Gopal Bhide, *Soviet Land*, No. 4, February 1970).

Thus the guiding spirit behind this Marathi biography written in Lenin's own life time was one of Lokmanya Tilak's chief lieutenants, the leader of famous anti-Tata Mulshi Petha satyagraha, the guide and friend of countless Maharashtrian lefts, socialist and communists, of last three generations the esteemed veteran, Senapati Bapat.

Senapati Bapat had also the distinction to celebrate the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia as he got the news in 1917, by distributing roasted rice and gram (*chana-murmura*—the poor Maharashtrian's snacks).

Senapati Bapat recalled how he had learnt the formula of making bombs from a Russian lady while in England. He deeply regretted missing the chance to meet Lenin. When he was in London Lenin also happened to be there for some days living in the same building.

Senapati had also contributed monograms on Lenin, the October revolution and Soviet Russia to the *Marathi Encyclopaedia*, a monumental scholarly work, the first of its kind published in the early twenties.

We have already referred to the first article written by Tilak himself on Lenin, soon after the revolution. The *Kesari* of 17 August 1920 carried an article entitled "Moral Victory of Lenin", in the course of which it stated:

"Bolshevism is an economic principle, but as by force of circumstances its promoters were connected with the Russian revolution and as, even more, they were counted as the enemies of England, it was so long a very daring and dangerous task to get information regarding the principle and discuss it.

"As in England itself the Bolsheviks were considered dangerous, Bolshevik literature was naturally prohibited, and as we depend on the English for such literature it was also denied to us. But as fortunately Russia and England are to be at peace no one need now hesitate while pronouncing the name of Bolshevik...

"Till but lately, Lenin if found in London would have been hanged. Perhaps if he visits England for the purpose of peace he may be given a reception now! Lenin did not depend upon his wisdom or on the strength of Russia; he depended upon a new principle, communism.

"The idea is a new one and Russia was very eager to experiment with it. As his opponents had spread terrible rumours regarding Lenin and his associates, people have come to form very perverted ideas about him and some look upon him as a *rakshasa*, as if he wore the garland of skulls and blood was poured over his head. But the facts are otherwise.

"Lenin is a plain, unarmed and innocent philosopher; only his philosophy is practical. He wants to take advantage of the revolution and bring into practice his idea. Lenin is not bloodthirsty; nay, he is a pureminded person

loving mankind. The 6th and 7th of November 1917 will be historically memorable dates, for during these two days the Russian revolution took place without shedding a drop of blood. Of course the efforts of thousands of persons for years were instrumental in bringing it about, but every big idea requires someone as its embodiment. "Lenin's name will live for ever in the history of communism."

It is of course naive and ill informed but that is because of the circumstances. What matters is its sympathetic orientation and attempt to counter imperialist propaganda.

The first Hindi biography of Lenin appeared in 1921. It was entitled *Bolshevik Jadugar* (The Bolshevik Magician) and published from Calcutta. The author was Ramashankar Awasthi, editor of the Hindi daily, the *Vartman*, of Kanpur. The front page had a portrait of Lenin with these lines below:

Ye hai Lenin vishamata harane wala
(This is Lenin, destroyer of inequality)

Samyavad ka sinhanada karane wala
(For socialism, he roars like a lion)

Its rare copies have been found in the public libraries of farflung places, Delhi and Kanpur, Almora and Deoband (Saharanpur, UP), and the last place perhaps—a remnant of the library at the Hindustan Socialist Republic Army's bomb factory in Bhagat Singh's days.

It is full of loud words, hyperbolic outbursts, and crooked twists introduced to outwit the British intelligence. Imagination is crudely used to make up for lack of authentic information.

The following is a good example:

"He (Lenin) wants to make all the countries independent through the victory of the world revolution. He wants the proletariat to seize the seat of power. In his opinion the capitalists of the world after expropriation should be made into workers or peasants. The expropriated wealth should

be used for the good of common men. The palaces of the rich after seizure should be given to the workers to live in, their motorcars used to transport the peasants to the fields. Those who do not work should be disfranchised. Not a man should be left who gets his bread without contributing any labour."

Despite all the drawbacks it seems to have played a positive role judging from the political intelligence reports of those days.

In 1921 another book in Hindi much more balanced and informative appeared. It was entitled: *Bolshevism*. The author was Vinayak Sitaram Sarvate and the publisher Jeetmal Lunia, Hindi Sahitya Mandir, Agra. This publication had the distinction of carrying a foreword by Dr Bhagwandass. The author had read *The State and Revolution* and this enabled him to make objective statement on the dictatorship of the proletariat. In his chapter on "Bolshevism and India" he ruled out the relevance of Bolshevism to India because there was no industrial society here and this was a common misunderstanding in those days which the experience of life duly corrected.

The author is yet alive, and stays at Indore. In the book he sketches events in Lenin's life and activities that led him from exile to Petrograd and finally placed him at the head of the new Soviet state. "Lenin held economic transformation of society as the primary and seizure of state power as the effective method to achieve the same."

A popular biography of Lenin appeared later, in 1934, entitled *Mahatma Lenin*. The author was Shuddhanand Bharati and the publisher S. S. Mehta and Brothers, 63 Soot Tola, Kashi. The now aged author has donned the yellow robes. His work has been judged important enough to be awarded the *Soviet Land* prize.

He recounts a rumour allegedly current in Soviet Russia soon after Lenin's death. "For many days the simple Russian folk refused to believe that Lenin was dead. They thought that Lenin had feigned death to let his successors master the job of government leadership on their own." Out of

many such rumours one was that Lenin summoned his doctor and asked for his help to do something so that he be taken as dead. The doctor suggested the glass box for him to stay in. Lenin pledged the doctor that no one except his wife should know of the secret.

One day Lenin got out of the glasscase and through the back door reached the Kremlin. The guards did not stop him for he had the card and no one recognised him for he had pulled his hat down. A session of the Soviet was on and Lenin quietly watched the proceedings and found the work going on normally. He came back to his glasscase satisfied.

On the second day he went to a factory. During the night not many workers were at work. Lenin asked them about the condition of their life and about the Soviet administration.

On the third day Lenin reached a railway station and took the train for a remote village where he had a thorough look and felt satisfied that the condition of the peasants was all right and he came back to his mausoleum in time.

The author ends up by expressing the Soviet folk-belief: "One day Lenin will rejoin his colleagues in work" (pp. 149-150).

The style of Lenin's speech and writing and his ideas of an effective popular Soviet press are described in some detail. Lenin preferred the simple, common spoken language. He himself used such language in his articles. He liked using newly current words and idioms. Lenin's similes and metaphors were from the common stock, simple and penetratingly used and he resorted to these when he wanted to make a clear enough issue clearer still, beyond any doubt. Lenin used statistics profusely to prove his argument and negate the opponent.

Lenin's guiding line for a popular communist paper is recorded. Instead of writing 200-400 lines, 10-20 lines would be enough, every article to be shortest and simplest possible, the explanation of a principle to be in terms of the conditions of daily life of the common people (pp. 17-19).

The author also recorded that Lenin's followers considered his article on electrification as typical of him and ever-

memorable. It was written in 1921 when Moscow stood encircled by the counterrevolutionary forces but Lenin was planning massive electrification of Soviet Russia to lay the foundations of a new order and electricity to be reached immediately to the village of Gorki etc. He could dream, engage in drawing up the blueprint for a new life for the people in face of the gravest dangers staring him and his people (p. 28).

The author enthusiastically described Lenin's view that without eradicating illiteracy a socialist order cannot be built up; the Bolshevik regime set out to eliminate illiteracy and ensure that the illiteracy column recorded blank under the Soviet raj; Lenin called the struggle against illiteracy as important as the struggle against counterrevolution, in his speeches he repeatedly said that an illiterate person could not be made politically conscious, the illiterate are outside the pale of politics. Lenin also held the view that without making the people literate, evoking in them the love for culture, culture cannot flower, hence it was necessary to educate the entire people to ensure the birth of a new culture under socialism (pp. 52-53).

The author quoted from Gorky about an incident when he was strolling with Lenin, when Lenin noticed little children playing happily by the road side and commented:

"These children will have a happier life than us. They will not undergo the bitter experiences we had. They do not have cruel days ahead. I am not jealous of them. What we have done will live in history. We had to be cruel under the pressure of circumstances but future will not hold us guilty. The world will one day understand us aright" (retranslated from the Hindi text).

Then Gorky made some criticism of the repressive measures taken under the Soviet regime. At this Lenin became excited and angry and burst out with

"What do you want? Is there any room for softness in this terrible struggle? Can we afford to be liberal at this critical juncture? European powers have encircled us and

within the country counterrevolutionary elements are actively rising... We cannot sit like one paralysed..." (pp. 58-59).

This cogent and realistic explanation of the so-called red terror became commonly accepted by contemporary Indian national opinion.

Next year in 1935 there appeared another major popular work *Lenin aur Gandhi* (Lenin and Gandhi) by Rajbahadur Singh and published from Delhi, 1935 (?). The title is misleading. Unlike Dange's it is not a comparative study. Except formally there is no comparison done of the two placed together in the title. In fact it is really two biographies in one, even the number of pages devoted to each are about the same.

It is informative enough for those days when all Leninist literature stood banned and it was risky to try get it, and still more, study and write about the subject. It is also fairly objective and this was a reflection of the greater maturity acquired by the broad national movement as compared to the twenties. Lenin-Gorky correspondence of the god-building days of Gorky at Capri was available to the writer. He quotes copiously from it. The accent in this book is on the materialist philosophy on which Leninism was based and which Lenin had enriched, e.g. through his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. The book is illustrated.

The author lays stress on the newness of Leninist ideas and uniqueness of his revolutionary role. For example he writes:

"This embodiment of revolution, this young philosopher, was once the object of ridicule of his colleagues. He spent thirty years of his life disputing in the smoky coffee houses, tirelessly working while living in exile in London, Paris and Geneva. Whoever imagined that he will appear before the world as a successful statesman and his political rivals and opponents will have to bow their head before his ideas and personality. The famous English philosopher and writer Bertrand Russell writing on Lenin had stated that the present century will be recorded in

the history as the Lenin century. In the course of history we come across many great man but Lenin is different from them all. His worth and greatness is distinctive. It has a newness, uniqueness and originality of its own. In trying to understand him we have to discard the old concepts about the great."

Lenin also figured widely in the daily, weekly and monthly Hindi press. Below are typical samples.

Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi ran the weekly *Pratap* as a political campaigner and when the need of the movement demanded and the resources could be raised, as a daily. The same concern also published the monthly *Prabha*, again edited by Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, with the *Vartman* editor Ramashankar Awasthi as assistant editor. Its contents had the serious analytical approach to serve the needs of political education and discussion. In 1920 Ramashankar Awasthi wrote a series of articles under "Roos ki Rajykranti" (The Russian Revolution) which was later also published as a separate book.

In the April 1920 issue of the *Prabha* Ramashankar Awasthi dealt with the second, the socialist revolution in Russia, with Kerensky the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government running away to England and "the most popular Russian leader" Lenin heading the new Soviet government.

In the May 1920 issue of the *Prabha*, he wrote:

"As Lenin began to implement the Bolshevik programme calamitous clouds burst over Russia. The capitalists of Europe became panicky. They indentified Lenin's principles as poison and feared its spread. They decided to destroy Bolshevism in its very infancy. Admiral Kolchak and General Denikin were propped up in the east and the west" (to start the counterrevolutionary offensive —PCJ).

In the course of a leading article entitled "Lenin Comes into the Field" the daily *Vartaman* wrote:

"The end of those dishonest and selfish men who rule the world is near. Like robbers they have robbed the poor

and like satan they have ruined honest men. From Moscow, Lenin, the helper of crores of people, has outwitted satan. The world, oppressed by slavery and groaning under tyranny, is rejoicing that Lenin having conquered Europe is advancing towards Asia." ("Confidential Notes on the Press in UP for the week ending 4 November 1922". It was a weekly feature from political intelligence to the provincial government, with copies duly forwarded to the central government.)

For the week ending 11 November 1922 the above confidential report states:

"The *Vartman* continues to hold up Bolsheviks as the deliverers of oppressed nationalities and says: 'Englishmen tried to destroy the power of Muslim states by dismembering Turkey, but by continually helping those states Lenin frustrated all the attempts of the 'Whites'. The star of the Bolsheviks is on the ascendant from Europe to Asia?'"

Shiv Narayan Tandon, leading cloth merchant of Kanpur and influential congress leader, wrote on Lenin:

"Lenin was the greatest politician of his age. He was active, wise and selfless. He was devoid of ego, and identified himself completely with his countrymen. He sacrificed all personal interests for the welfare of his country and people. Lenin is really incomparable... Lenin was great.

"Lenin was the khalifa of Bolshevism. He was the proponent of the new religion which he himself first preached and spread in Russia. Today Bolshevism has spread over the world and the Bolshevik world acclaims him as its guide and mentor. In Russia Lenin is revered like the god" (Popular Hindi monthly, *Madhuri*, Lucknow, 8th Year, Part 2, No. 3, Samvat 1989, Chaitra).

In 1924 the *Vartman* published a letter from Raja Mahendra Pratap recounting his interviews with Lenin and other Soviet leaders in Moscow in 1918 and 1919, how these leaders pledged Soviet support for the freedom of the oppress-

ed East and how Lenin had expressed not only keen interest but also great sympathy for Indian emancipation ("Confidential note on UP Press for week ending 23 February 1924").

The first major work on the Russian revolution, in the Bengali language appeared early in 1924. It was entitled *The Transformation of Russia through Revolution*. The author was the scholar-patriot Professor Atul Chandra Sen of Dacca National College. It was published by the wellknown Saraswati Library, Calcutta and Dacca, in February 1924. It was widely read and made a big impact.

In Chapter I under "7 November 1917" he wrote:

"On 15 March 1917 Tsar Nicholas abdicated the throne. The same year on 7 November a unique thing happened in the history of Russia, nay in the history of the world. The working peoples of Russia took over the reins of the state on that day. A stunned world saw how the oppressed and enslaved toilers, once they are united and determined, can achieve emancipation. The latest history of Russia is spreading this message to the whole world."

He goes on to describe how Lenin, the leader of this revolution and the head of the new Soviet state, carried out the tasks of the socialist revolution and visualised its further historic destiny:

"Mere overthrow of an existing government shall not automatically lead to a communist society. The chaos that shall inevitably come after revolution shall have to be controlled and to pave the way for communism the dictatorship of the proletariat will have to be set up for a temporary period. This state will not be everlasting. Under its aegis when everyone in society will be a worker of some kind and when there will be no capitalists to exploit surplus value—i.e. when communism can become the way of life, this dictatorship of the proletariat shall no longer be necessary."

The memory of the first world war was green and the author described the attitude of Lenin to imperialist wars and what he did to insure the world against the calamity.

"Lenin wanted to drive away imperialist war from the earth and to establish lasting peace. The workers today serve as blind cannon fodder for the aristocrats and supply arms to the soldiers. But if they can unite and turn round against war—then greedy imperialist wars shall come to an end on earth.

"With this aim in view Lenin called a conference. . . This is how the Third International of Lenin's dream was born in embryo. The message of Marx echoed round the world like a mighty clarion call.

"Workers of the world, unite!"

The author duly noted Lenin's concentration of fire against British imperialism and the important role of India:

"The British were alarmed at Lenin's speech at the session of the Third International at Moscow in 1920. Lenin declared: 'There is no greater enemy of ours. British imperialism has spread everywhere like an epidemic. The imperialist dream of the British shall be shattered in Asia—whether in Turkey or in Persia. The British will be harassed in India'" (Translated from Bengali).

In his concluding chapter "Bolshevism" the author is amazingly correct both in terms of historic tradition and perspective:

"Bolshevism means Lenin; Lenin means Bolshevism. Bolshevism is not a utopian dream of Lenin—it is the actual realisation of the ideals of his mentor Karl Marx. The scripture of Bolshevism is Karl Marx's world famous book *Das Kapital*. In this book Marx, the friend of the poor, has dreamt of a society free from poverty and based on equality. Lenin, by his genius, has translated Marx's dream into reality. Lenin's Soviet Russia is the dream child of Karl Marx."

Such a book deserved to be properly introduced to patriotic Bengal and this too was done by the best son of Bengal. Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das in his "Forward" wrote:

"Our countrymen know next to nothing about the world at large. There is hardly any means to know the world. Up to now Russia was a puzzle to the common man. *Transformation of Russia* has analysed the past and the present in Russia in a simple, lucid and attractive manner and will enable our people to know the truth about Russia...thereby widening the intellectual horizon of our countrymen."

A whole crop of left weeklies came up in Bengal in the early twenties under the impact of Gandhi-led campaign for countrywide noncooperation within the country and from abroad the electrifying influence of the Russian revolution and the ideas of Lenin. They were associated with the names of the two leading revolutionary groups the Anushilan and Yugantar parties, and a few were unattached and sought to operate as an open forum on a broad united front basis. The established leadership of the leading terrorist, revolutionary organisations did not quite approve of this new thinking but there was no containing the thinking elements who were getting deeply stirred. As a budding Bengali writer and active revolutionary, Gopal Haldar was associated with one such popular journal, *Deshar Bani*. In a reminiscent article he has described its character which was true of the whole lot of these left journals

"The founders (who were members of the Congress) knew little about communism but they were not opposed to it. In fact, the more they witnessed the anticommunist propaganda of the British the more they drew closer to this party because it was anti-British. They themselves stood for Indian independence, Hindu-Muslim unity and social progress in general. Within this framework sometimes through news columns or through editorial comments we occasionally expressed our support to communist Russia, supported the exploited peasants against the landlords and the demands of the working class, and in general all revolutionary ideas and activities (Article in the Bengali communist weekly *Kalantar*, 31 May 1967).

The *Atmashakti* had the longest life of all these left papers and hence exercised a sustained influence as a left united front paper to which everybody contributed and sometimes not only the left. The director of the Central Intelligence Bureau under the British had characterised it as "communist" while it was only discussing communist policy and activities with passionate interest. It belonged to the congress leader Amarendranath Chattopadhyaya and the editorial side was looked after by the famous revolutionary, now writer and journalist Upendranath Banerji.

It ran a serial on Lenin by Amulya Charan Adhikari who was an ardent and active congress worker. The biographical details are amazingly correct and Lenin's many-sided activities are objectively evaluated. Referring to his early work among the Petrograd workers it states: "Lenin had become a friend of the workers—they knew him and regarded him as their real friend and leader." Lenin's attitude to the first world war, "amidst boundless despair and utter gloom on all sides" is characterised as one of "Himalayan selfconfidence".

Lenin's close link with the Russian revolution is thus described:

"Even when he was abroad his heart was always in Russia like the hands of the compass. Then in 1917 Lenin all of a sudden heard the news that led him to the conclusion that if he could cross into Russia his dreams would be realised. So overcoming all difficulties he rushed to Russia... Revolution had begun in Russia. It seemed that an electric current was passing through the country... At long last the capitalists were bewildered by the roar of the mighty sleeping lion... The Soviet government came into existence under the leadership of the Bolsheviks.

"Reactionaries all over the world hoisted the banner of anti-Bolshevism. With great resoluteness Lenin forged ahead. It was because of Lenin's firmness that Russia had a strong and stable Bolshevik government.

"The Bolsheviks are, to the very core, anti-imperialists. It was for this reason that the imperialists like the British and the French left no stone unturned to kill the newborn

power. But...the Bolsheviks guided by Lenin came out triumphant... The imperialists overpowered with fear by the red eyes of Lenin had to vacate Crimea and other occupied Russian territories and retire to safer places. The Bolsheviks stood before the world with their head held high and made the world listen to the message of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. The oppressed of the world expectantly turn their eyes to the Bolshevism of Lenin, with the hope of liberation" (*Atmashakti*, "Leniner Jiban Katha" 18 April to 20 May 1923).

Dhumketu edited by Kazi Nazrul Islam was an equally influential paper during 1921-22 but it had to close down soon due to the arrest of the irrepressible editor. It contained articles on Lenin and his ideas and in every issue news of or notes on events in and progress of Soviet Russia. Like the *Atmashakti*, the *Dhumketu* too was classed as "communist" by the British intelligence.

The British while they were trying to humiliate and dismember Turkey, and this was causing concern not only to the Indian Muslims but to Indian national opinion as a whole, spread the news that Lenin, the new anti-imperialist crusader and helper of Turkey under Kemal Pasha, was dead. Seizing upon the vile rumour and playing up Lenin's latest statement Kazi Nazrul Islam editorially commented:

"Lenin is keeping fairly well. He insisted that it was necessary for Russia to be present at the meeting (negotiating peace with Turkey—PCJ)... He further stated that it was Russia's aim to fulfil the national aspirations of Turkey and close the (Dardenellas) Straits forever. How is it that the enemy already dead has come back to life!" (*Dhumketu*, No. 19, 1921).

Bijalee was the weekly of Barindra Kumar Ghosh (Aurobindo Ghosh's younger brother) and Abinash Bhattacharya (M. N. Roy's first cousin, maternal) and they were the Yugantar elders. It was far more cautious than the *Dhumketu*.

It recounted Lenin's call to end illiteracy and comments on its success:

"The deathless efforts of the past few years have succeeded in breaking the rut and rousing the nation into the new world of knowledge in a manner hitherto unknown in the annals of mankind. What Europe has been able to achieve in the course of centuries, Russia has done in 3-4 years" ("The Russian Nation Too Comes of Age", 4 March 1921).

Samhati (Unity) was perhaps the first working class monthly journal in Bengal started by a poor press worker, Jiten Gupta in 1923, who kept it alive till he died of poverty and want. It was edited by Jnananjan Pal, son of Bipin Chandra Pal. He was a sub-editor in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and the one day strike in this press brought the two in touch with each other. The paper carried the blessings not only of Bipin Chandra Pal and the great savant Brojendra Nath Seal, but more: Its second issue had the privilege of carrying a special article by Rabindranath Tagore which deserves to be more known, not only for the sake of the poet's early sympathy with the Indian working class but also with Soviet Russia and the significance of the new world it has begun building:

"I pray that this paper may live up to its name—*Samhati*. Insularity is the vice of man, welfare lies through genuine efforts to unite... If the toilers of the world can unite then one day a mighty force will emerge in the world. It is this awakening that has led to the emergence of Soviet power...

'Anyway the upper classes have dominated the world for a pretty long time. Now the lower classes are awake and nobody can stop them... Today the oppressed masses, whom the demons had kept enslaved, have gathered power. The new happiness will come through much suffering. Creation needs such suffering...

"India shall be left in the lurch, if she keeps herself isolated from this process. India too must take upon herself the responsibility of erecting a portal in the new temple that is being constructed on earth. That such an effort has begun here too, is clearly proven by the birth of such a journal as the *Samhati*" (7 June 1923).

The poet-philosopher with his deep insight instinctively understood the epochal significance of the emergence of Soviet Russia, headed by Lenin, and called upon his countrymen to fulfil their "responsibility" and build "a portal in the new temple". And this was long before his visit to the Soviet Union in the early thirties.

The attitude of the fervent nationalist Muslims who knew Lenin as the selfless friend of the Muslim world and guarantor of Turkish and Afghan independence etc. is typified in the article in the *Muhammadi*, 30 January 1925:

"It will be minimising the truth to say that Lenin was the liberator only of Russia. If anyone has stirred the passive humanity with the song of freedom, if anyone has opened the door of the future kingdom of happiness to millions of men, if anyone has distributed the soothing elixir in this world of misery and poverty—it is Lenin. All glory to him. We cannot, of course, agree with all that Lenin thought but nevertheless we have to class him as the liberator of the millions. Blessed art thou, O Lenin; and blessed also this earth because of your advent here."

Such was the image of Lenin as he became known in India in his own life time. Like lightning he hovered over India as the successful leader against tsarist autocracy. He commanded attention as the creative builder of a new just social order. He won spontaneous respect as the selfless statesman who undid the wrongs of his own Russian imperialism, emancipated the nations held under tsarism and got within its empire or those in the neighbourhood, and who forged instead a fraternal union with the former and came to terms of equality with the latter. They could not take their eyes off him because he championed and supported struggle against all imperialism and above all British imperialism. This led anti-imperialist Indians to know Lenin better, i.e. to study Leninism.

The approach then was romantic and utopian. But such was India of those days. It was sincere and hence became the precursor of a more realistic and scientific approach later on.

The attitude is reverential, almost worshipful but that is

the way that came naturally to India when paying its heartfelt respects.

The words are exuberant and characterisations traditional—all authentically Indian straight from the heart bursting to seek expression. There was no other way in which India of his time could build the closest kinship with him who was himself not an Indian but whom anti-imperialist national India considered its own.

INDIA MOURNS

The news of the demise of Lenin was received in India with deep shock, as the premature passing away of a great and powerful friend to whom the debt of gratitude had remained unpaid and from whom so much more was expected. This feeling of loss pervaded all patriotic Indian circles and was duly reflected in the Indian press. Excerpts given below help to recreate the atmosphere of national mourning and recall the sentiments then expressed.

The newly started fortnightly journal of Indian communism had the following as its "In Memoriam":

"Lenin the great has passed away and joined the choir invisible. The world, the workers' world, is today poorer by the passing away of its great Teacher and Redeemer..."

"To him who has done so much and who has given the worker a clear vision of his glorious realm in which every human being shall have the right to labour and to live like his other fellows, we lift up our hands in love, devotion and reverence" (*The Labour Kishan Gazette*, Madras, Vol. I, No. 4, 31 January 1924).

The journal also carried a page of biographical sketch under "His Life and Work" and concluded that his "numerous works" written before and after he became the head of the Soviet government was his legacy "the beacon light for the workers of the world".

The infant Labour Kishan Party of Hindustan, of which

this journal was the organ, sent the following telegram to the Indian press which was widely publicised:

"Labour Kishan Central Committee requests all provincial workers' organisations to observe week ending 31 January as days of mourning for the death of Comrade Nikolai Lenin, Chairman, Federated Soviet Republic of Russian workers. By his death world workers lost their great Teacher and Redeemer. Headquarters flying black flag half mast."

The appeal evoked wide response. For example it was supported in the obituary editorial of the Kanpur Hindi nationalist daily, the *Vartman* and referred to with feeling by Professor Atul Chandra Sen who was on the point of completing his manuscript "The Transformation of Russia Through Revolution" when he heard the news of Lenin's death and added an "Introduction" to the book "Lenin Passes Away".

The leading English-medium nationalist daily of Lahore in its editorial entitled "Passing of a World Figure" and while reiterating the traditional criticism wrote:

"It is inevitable that the passing away of such a man should inspire different feelings in different minds. One feeling is however common to all... M. Lenin was a veritable giant among men. One of the two or three greatest world figures of contemporary history."

Comparing Lenin with Gandhi it wrote:

"There have been no men in our history for centuries who had anything like the commanding influence over so many millions of men that either of these two men exercised, and that one of them continues to exercise. The death of a man of such authority and such influence is bound to leave a void, which will remain unfilled for many a long day, not only in the country that is immediately affected but in the world generally.

"No one can, no one dare, deny that the world today is distinctly the poorer for the death of one who has made

revolutionary Russia a thing to reckon with instead of being the plaything of European diplomats, statesmen and soldiers, as it would in all probability have been but for his advent at the psychological moment when his country needed him most" (*The Tribune*, 29 January 1924).

The British press in India could not, even after the death of the "enemy", rise above imperialist snobbery. Typical of the lot is the following:

"Judged by Soviet standards M. Lenin probably achieved greatness; in the eyes of the civilised world he achieved his personal aim in the attainment of almost despotic powers, but at an appalling cost in lives and misery to the Russian people" (*The Pioneer*, Lucknow, from the "Confidential Notes on UP Press").

The same Political Intelligence Report quoted the weekly *Independence* which truly portrayed the Indian patriotic attitude,

"The news of Lenin's death will cast a gloom not only in Russia but throughout the liberty-loving and auto-cruacy-hating world. Lenin was a modern rishi, and his message, however cruelly misunderstood or selfishly misinterpreted, was not only for Russia but for mankind. Lenin's life work and ideals will live as long as humanity endures. Lenin was a hero who had striven and greatly succeeded in bringing peace and happiness to an old country which had cruelly suppressed."

The English daily *Leader*, was more realistic and refused to toe the line of the Anglo-Indian press though it was the chief organ of liberal opinion, those who advocated and pursued the line of cooperation with the British to make a success of the Montford reforms. It wrote:

"Lenin was the heart and soul of the new movement in Russia. But there is no doubt that he came in for a good deal of unmerited criticism in the capitalistic press of England, who had much to fear from the Bolshevik pro-

paganda in the Middle East" ("Confidential Notes on UP Press" for the week ending 2 February 1924).

The language press avidly read by the common people and reflecting their aspirations was more fulsome and correctly echoed prevailing popular sentiment:

The oldest Hindi journal, the *Abhyudaya*, started by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, carried the following moving obituary:

"From this earth, the greatest man of our world has departed. It is a very painful experience to publish the news of Lenin's demise. He was the man who by himself shook the world. The united strength of England, the USA, France and Japan could not check his increasing power. He gave practical form, life, to the principle of equality. He demonstrated to the world how happy can be the toilers' social order and the leadership of the common working folk. In its selfish interest the capitalists were inimically hostile to him and this was shown when the news of Lenin's death was published several times long before his death. Lenin raised the banner of revolution, and in seven days, not only within Russia, but before the whole wide world he effectively proved the truth behind his revolutionary principles. He moved the world, the great powers, despite their united strength, had to bend before him, and today he is lying upon the earth motionless, immortal. All we can say is: May his principles triumph throughout the world, the creator give place to his soul in his own" (26 January 1924).

The *Aj*, leading Hindi daily of Banaras, wrote:

"Humanity has suffered an irreparable loss by his death. May God give his followers strength to fulfil his mission of the emancipation of the world" ("Confidential Report on UP Press" for week ending 2 February 1924).

The *Deshbhakta* wrote:

"The death of Lenin means a serious loss not only to labourers but to all nations groaning under the burden of

subjection. Lenin was the saviour of not only of Europe but of the whole world. Capitalists can have no peace even now, for although Lenin is no more on earth, he has planted his principles deep in the minds of the people" ("Confidential Note on UP Press" for week ending 9 February 1924).

The *Utash* published an article "highly eulogistic" and wrote that

"Lenin's policy was to serve his country and not become its master for his personal gratification. He was an enemy of despotism and territorial aggrandisement. Those alone were his enemies who support despotism. The principles of Lenin will continue to flourish in the world as long as those people live who want to take advantage of helpless people... What Mahatma Gandhi could not achieve by words and threats, Lenin achieved by dint of strength... The propaganda against Lenin in India is nothing but an attempt to take advantage of the ignorance of Indians and prevent them from breaking their chains... India also had a place in Lenin's heart. Indians do not exactly know as to who are their real foes and friends. The truth, however, will soon be out since Lenin's disciples will surely carry out his principles of helping the distressed people of the whole world" ("Confidential Report on UP Press" for the week ending 23 February 1924).

The *Saraswati*, the popular Hindi monthly, in its February 1924 issue, carried an article by Brijnath Ramanath Shastri on the life and work of Lenin:

"Lenin is dead. As long as he lived his strength was irresistible...

"Lenin was a disciple of the famous German socialist Karl Marx. He wrote on the basis of Marxist principles... He wrote on the workers' problems in simple and straight language for the common readers... He was active organising the workers and peasants. In every way he urged the workers towards the revolution. Hence in

1880 he was punished with exile and sent to Siberia. After getting out from there he went abroad. He brought out a paper called the *Spark*. Through this paper he placed before the people the whole programme to carry forward the workers' movement and the Russian revolution, and he simultaneously stepped up practical activities..."

The very influential Muslim Urdu organ, the *Medina*, mourned the death of Lenin and remarked "Russian communism was the only weapon which could be successfully wielded against capitalism" ("Confidential Report on UP Press" for week ending 9 February 1924).

The English daily *Forward*, founded by C. R. Das, wrote on 26 January 1924:

"Lenin stands before humanity a puzzle, a nightmare and a scare. Prejudice and passion twit our study. A relentless blockade screened him from outside view. Propaganda pictured him as eminently detestable. But half of Europe could not be deleted from its map. One hundred eighty millions of the Russian people bear testimony to him and hold him on to history. A defeated Germany, on the admission of General Hoffman, the father of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, defeated by the 'morale' of Lenin and the Bolsheviks has forced him on our attention. He lives in the unrest in the workers' breast, and will shine in their triumph."

The English daily the *Bengalee*, made famous by Surendranath Banerjee's long association with it, wrote on 26 January 1924:

"The death of Lenin has removed from this world one of the most striking and masterful personalities of modern times—a man who had a large hand in shaping a new heaven and a new earth in our days. Exception has truly been taken to the principle of government established and to the economic heresy preached and practised by this great Bolshevik leader but admiration and appreciation are due to the memory of the man to whose orga-

nising capacity and administrative ability Russia owes her present position among the modern democracies of the world."

The Bengali congress daily, the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, on 30 January 1924, wrote:

"The noble minded Lenin, the friend of humanity, is dead. He was one of those noble-minded men who tried to find out the means of deliverance of humanity and entered the field of action at the risk of their lives.

"Immediately after the Great War we find that in the field of politics there arose simultaneously in different countries leaders of unbounded power and vast influence De Valera rose in Ireland, Kemal Pasha in Turkey, Zaghul Pasha in Egypt, Lenin in Russia and Mahatma Gandhi in India.

"The history of the wonderful life and of the success of the noble-minded Lenin has been painted in black by his enemies and spread in the world in a perverted form. It is a heinous sin to paint as a blood-thirsty robber a person, at the moving of whose finger, hundreds and thousands of persons, oppressed by the heartless misrule of an autocratic monarch, have established a new empire of the unimpeded freedom of humanity.

"We are a conquered people of the Orient. Even our eyes are filled with tears at the news of his death. Though there is a great difference between our ideals, we feel proud in showing our respect to the idealist, whose heart always ached for others."

The widely read *Bangabasi* (Calcutta), 2 February 1924, referring to Lenin's death, wrote:

"There may exist differences of opinion regarding the creed of Bolshevism but there is no denying the fact that Lenin was a great man, and that the whole of Russia, influenced by his personality accepted the creed of Bolsheviks from him."

The illustrated Bengali weekly, *Sachitra Sisir* (Calcutta), 2 February 1924, wrote:

"Lenin has passed away but the spirit of equality, which this Bolshevnik leader has infused in the hearts of the general public, is today evident all over the world. In fact, none can say for certain that in future every country will not have to accept Bolshevism."

The *Hindustan* (Calcutta) of 29 January 1924 expressed the wonder-eyed idealist attitude which was not exceptional, "If manhood can ever be called religion, Lenin was an intensely religious man. He was of fearless heart. The object of his life was to render service to humanity".

The *Jyoti* (Chittagong) of 7 February wrote: "Lenin was no crooked politician. He was never in the habit of using words conveying two meanings. The chief aim of his life was to see the well being of humanity. In his private life he was a sanyasi, free from all desire for enjoyment."

The then popular Bengali Muslim paper, the *Soltan* (Calcutta) wrote on 1 February 1924: "There are expressions of sympathy all the world over at the premature death of Lenin, who was a great enemy of monarchs, the aristocracy and capitalists and a great statesman and sincere well-wisher of humanity. The world rarely sees a man of marvellous achievements like him". In its next issue, of 8 February 1924, it again wrote: "Lenin's heart was full of human qualities and the object of his life was to serve humanity. His enemies have described him as the captain of robber hordes. He was nothing of the kind. In fact he lived the life of a sincere sanyasi."

Abroad, in the USA the Indian emigrants and revolutionary exiles ran an Urdu journal *Yade Watan*, published from New York and edited by Syed Husain, one-time editor of the congress English daily, the *Independent*, Allahabad, and later India's ambassador in UAR. It also carried a thoughtful obituary article on Lenin whose authorship is attributed to Maulvi Barkatullah, famed revolutionary exile who had made fraternal visits to Soviet Russia, met Lenin and other Soviet leaders.

It contained a brief but informative biographical sketch and that the 1905 revolution made Lenin famous within Russia, and throughout the world by his leadership of the 1917 revolution.

"Lenin's death was a matter of grief for both the Russian and non-Russian supporters of Bolshevism. Even his opponents admitted that he was one of the two or three greatest personalities of the modern epoch."

In the headline Lenin was hailed as the *Qaide Azim*, *Daur Jadid ka Qaid-i-Azam*, the Great Leader of the New Era (*Yade Watan*, 1 June 1924).

On the first anniversary of Lenin's death *Vartman*, Hindi nationalist daily of Kanpur, wrote that:

"...it was he who broke the brutal authority of money and religion and laid the foundation of the destruction of those who on the strength of money were making the people of such a big world dance at their bidding. His gospel to the poor is being more honoured in the world than the vedas, the quran or the bible. The working folk, the cultivators and the labourers regard him as their god. The sinful and the selfish fear him as much as murderers and dacoits fear a judge" ("Confidential Note on UP Press" for week ending 31 January 1925).

Lenin did not become a memory to the patriotic Indian people with his death. The memory remained green and continued to stir. When Jawaharlal Nehru along with his father first visited the USSR on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Russian revolution he made it a point to visit the Lenin Mausoleum and wrote:

"In life they say he was not beautiful to look at. He had too much of common clay in him and about him was the 'smell of the Russian soil'. But in death there is a strange beauty and his brow is peaceful and unclouded, on his lips there hovers a smile and there is a suggestion of pugnacity, of work done and success achieved."

With Nehru's visit to Lenin's land and study of his ideas a new dimension was added to the Indian national move-

ment but that is another story. And Nehru was not alone in the quest.

INDIAN RESPONSE

It is useful to have a bird's eye view of India during 1917-18 to understand the conditions and the climate in which the news of the revolution in Russia and Lenin's ideas were received. For the typical news of the times described below, the sources relied upon are exclusively the weekly reports of the Director, Central Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, and the confidential fortnightly reports prepared by the Political Intelligence of each provincial government.

During the second half of November 1917 itself the Bihar and Orissa government was upset over the "home rule agitation in villages". Printed propaganda leaflets were being distributed and the agitators toured the countryside and told the villagers that "they should fear nothing; they would be independent and all powers and authority will be taken away from the hands of the English officials. . . You can very well understand what sort of bad effect and suspicion against the government these writings would produce upon the villagers and the ignorant in such a crisis and how they (home rulers) are arranging to make the people fearless and unruly" . . .

The reason for the official upset was acute food scarcity and rocketing price spiral. The fortnightly report for November 1918 admitted "The position of a government official moving among the people is anything but enviable".

The situation was unbearable enough to galvanise the stagnant Indian countryside and make the proverbially passive Indian peasantry lose its patience. Bazar looting and appropriating the foodgrains began taking place everywhere.

Bengal reported, for the week ending 19 December 1917, such bazar looting in eight districts, 99 cases up to 2 January 1918 and 21 cases in the following week. During January 1918 Bihar reported such looting from Purnia. In Bengal it continued non-stop and in December 1918 four fresh cases of

haat looting were reported from Mymensingh. During September 1918 Madras presidency reported food riots in twentyfour districts. In Madras city the situation became so serious that 400 British troops had to be employed "to quell the disturbances".

Chronically halfstarved rural India had suffered intensified and long drawn starvation when the Mahatma's message of "swaraj within a year" stirred them into action. About the same time news trickled to Indian villages that in remote "Roos", kisans and majdoors like them had established their own raj.

A glance at the workers' movement in India in about the time the revolution triumphed in Russia is necessary to complete the picture. The O.R. Railway workers were on strike at Lucknow and appealing to the president of the Provincial Congress Conference being held at Sitapur said: "8000 men loco, carriage, running-shed struck, help us for country's cause".

In January 1918 the police commissioner, Bombay, reported that "the European subordinate staff on all the railways in India", after receiving the refusal to their demand for a 25 per cent wage increase were thinking of a "general strike", and that a similar move was afoot among the millhands.

Early in 1918 the situation on the western front went on deteriorating and the British desperately appealed for Indian help. Tilak gave the reply: "The German guns have opened your deaf ears; give us home rule and we will give you men. If you do not, the empire will be in danger." He gave point to his argument in his address to the Bombay millhands, "No one would endanger his life for Rs 11. If you were treated as part and parcel of the empire you would be willing to endanger your lives for the empire."

Weekly labour meetings and a drive to organise labour on behalf of the home-rulers were started in Madras. Their organ the *Commonweal*, 21 June 1918, under "The Awakening of the Masses" welcomed labour organisations as adding to the ranks of "soldiers for freedom, and for home rule". Next week the same paper, under "The New Spirit", expressed satisfac-

tion at the disappearance of "the awe and respect felt in the years gone by for a saheb".

Throughout 1918 Madras textiles, tram and other labour were swept by a strike wave.

In the second half of 1918 BNR workers of Kharagpur went through a longdrawn strike and sought settlement through C. R. Das.

By December 1918 student participation in workers' strike struggles began causing concern to the British authorities.

With the end of the war and the signing of the armistice the victory celebrations began. The Madras Labour Union under home rule leadership took the initiative to organise the celebrations on its own, with a distinctly new character, which upset the British official world. Placards carried slogans like: "Down with Prussianism everywhere!" "Liberty for all and Liberty for India!", "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity", "India Wants Selfdetermination too!"

Veteran home-ruler and pioneer labour leader Wadia in his speech said,

"Now we have all to remember that there are people in this country who in their way of thinking and habits, though not exactly like Germans, come near their character and life... Before the war there existed in the world a few great autocracies where tyranny was rampant and human liberty was curtailed. Of these few countries Russia was the first to wipe out that autocracy. But there are still some countries in the world where forms of tyranny exist and our country is one of them."

The intelligence reporter dutifully added "Labour has been unsettled by such speeches. The suggestion that autocracy in India must fall like those of Russia, Germany, Austria and Turkey has been made the text of more than one speech".

In the background of spontaneous food riots in rural areas and workers' strike struggles growingly aided and led by national cadres, Mahatma Gandhi clothed the demand for home rule with the easily understood garb of swaraj, as he took the national demand to the Indian masses. The histori-

cal context itself linked Indian swaraj with the Leninist principle of selfdetermination and the Indian struggle was made part of the world struggle. Contemporary Indian opinion and leadership was quite conscious of this new development.

The director of the Central Intelligence Bureau, in his weekly report, 5 January 1918, pointed to "the view of Ramanand Chatterji in the *Calcutta Modern Review* backing the Russian revolution and adding that political independence which is a right of the people must belong to India as well as to Russia".

Before the year was out, on 28 December 1918 Mrs Beasant's *New India*, Madras, under "Selfdetermination for India" wrote:

"The Congress is the most representative institution of India, preeminently so this year, because it is attended by many peasant delegates, and the proposals put forward by it are to be deemed as the result of selfdetermination of the Indian nation."

Indian revolutionaries in exile, though isolated from India, were right in the midst of the world struggle and therefore in a better position to respond to new realities.

They were in some ways the most advanced detachment of the Indian anti-imperialist movement. Their new political orientation and the practical steps they took to build fraternal contact with the Lenin-led Russian revolution indicated the new direction the Indian movement was destined to take.

After the Bolsheviks seized power the Indian revolutionaries abroad, aware of the Bolshevik reputation as the most heroic principled anti-imperialist force in Europe, gravitated towards them and were in turn welcomed by the Russian Bolsheviks. One of the earliest personal contacts thus built was by Raja Mahendra Pratap, the head of the Kabul-based Provisional Government of India. He sought and readily got the permission to move out from Kabul to Europe via Soviet Russia. He was given a special train from Tashkent to journey to Petrograd where the Soviet leaders expressed sympathy with the Indian struggle and he also participated in a "monster meeting at Petrograd on 12 March to celebrate the

first anniversary of the Russian revolution" (Weekly Report of the Director, Central Intelligence Bureau, 1 June 1918).

In the middle of November the two Khairi Brothers, Sattar and Jabbar, went to Soviet Russia from among the representatives of Indian revolutionaries in exile, addressed the Supreme Soviet in session, roundly exposed the nature of British imperialist rule and pleaded:

"... The Russian revolution has largely influenced Indians. They are holding meetings to fight against the onesided acts of the English. The English were so hard pressed in 1917 that on 20 August they were obliged to call a special session of Parliament; they sent the Secretary of State and others to India to ascertain on what lines responsible government could be granted to India. What these people have recommended is insufficient for responsible government. By this measure they surrender nothing to Indians. The entire power of governing the country remains with the British... We pray that Russia will lend us a helping hand in obtaining liberty for India. It is the Russian duty to help the whole world in gaining what they wish in the way of freedom and liberty. A glance at the map of the world will show that one-fifth of the population of the world, i.e. Indians, are slaves to a foreign nation. We trust that assistance will be given to us to rid ourselves of the tyrants."

The Soviet president Sverdlov spoke warmly in reply.

A radio telegram from the People's Commissars, Moscow, to the People's Commissars for Home and Foreign Affairs, Tashkent, January 1919, stated "In the middle of November 1918 two representatives of the Indian Musalmans, residents of Delhi, and men of learned professions, named Sattar and Jabbar, came here and interviewed our leader Lenin. They explained to him many things concerning India and the East" (Foreign and Political Department, Secret F, February 1920, No. 77-171).

The response of the leading Indian revolutionaries in the USA is indicated by the appeal they addressed to "the Workingmen's and Soldiers' Council of Russia, through

M. Leon Trotsky, Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Petrograd, Russia". It was addressed on behalf of the "Indian Nationalist Party", from "Tagore Castle, Calcutta, 12 December 1917".

"Revolutionary India rejoices at the rise of free Russia with the true ideal of government of the people, by the people and for the benefit of the people. We appreciate the fact that it is the first time in the history of the organised state that a government has been attempted to be established for the benefit of the people. Revolutionary Russia's contribution to the cause of civilisation and humanity is so great that it staggers that autocracies and imperialisms of the world which are in league against the success of the principles advocated by revolutionary Russia... Revolutionary Russia because of its own principles should make India's struggle as her own cause. Revolutionary Russia should demand that India should be free and that the Indian people have an opportunity of self-determination" (Weekly Report of the Director, Central Intelligence Bureau, 22 June 1918).

Taraknath Das, Sailendra Nath Ghosh and others were arrested as being responsible for the above.

One of the eminent Indians abroad was Maulvi Barkatullah who spent his long life in exile in active service of the revolutionary cause and rose to become the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of India, established at Kabul, during the first world war. He was naturally attracted by the Russian revolution and went there. The Soviet government organ, the *Izvestia*, introduced him as a "Hindu (as all Indians were then known as Hindus—PCJ), member of the Muslim League in Delhi, member of the National Hindu Congress, Professor of Philosophy and Literature", while publishing an interview with him in its issue of 9 May 1919. In the interview Barkatullah is reported to have said:

"I am neither a communist nor socialist but my political programme so far is the expulsion of the English from Asia. I am an irreconcilable enemy of European capital-

ism in Asia, the chief representative of which are the English. On this point I coincide with the communists, and in this respect, we are your natural allies. . .

"I know that the famous appeal of the Soviet government to all nations with its appeal to them to combat the capitalists (and for us the word capitalist is synonymous with the word foreigner, or to be more exact, an Englishman) had an enormous effect on us. A still greater effect was produced by Russia's annulment of all the secret treaties enforced by the imperialistic governments and by the proclamation of the right of all nations, no matter how small they may be, to determine their own destiny. This act rallied around Soviet Russia all the exploited nationalities of Asia, and all parties, even those very remote from socialism. These acts decided and hastened the Asiatic revolution. . .

"The English at once foresaw the consequences of the new Russian slogans and took all measures to isolate all the roads from Russia to India."

Earlier while staying in Tashkent Maulvi Barkatullah wrote a booklet *Bolshevism and the Islamic Body Politic* (March 1919). It stressed the egalitarian principles of Islam to seek moral ideological sympathy for the cause of Bolshevism. It was freely used by the Soviet authorities to combat the then very active counterrevolutionaries who, to cover up the massive imperialist aid and leadership, were seeking to stir and rely upon Muslim fanaticism, which dubbed the Bolsheviks "atheists, infidels, etc."

"Not a single independent Moslem state remains today. A calamitous stage is this in the history of mankind. . .

"There is no cause for despair. Following on the long dark nights of tsarist autocracy, the dawn of human freedom has appeared on the Russian horizon, with Lenin as the shining sun giving light and splendour to this day of human happiness. . .

"The administration of the extensive territories of Russia and Turkistan has been placed in the hands of labourers,

cultivators and soldiers. Equal rights to life and freedom are given to all classes of the nation. But the enemy of this spotless unique republic is British imperialism which hopes to keep Asiatic nations in a state of eternal thralldom. It has moved troops into Turkistan with a view to destroy this young sapling of real human liberty just as it is beginning to take root and strength.

"Time has come for the Mohammedans of the world and Asiatic nations to understand the noble principles of Russian socialism and to embrace it seriously and enthusiastically. They should understand and realise the cardinal virtues taught by this new system and in defence of freedom they should join Bolshevik troops in repelling the attacks of usurpers and despots, the British. . .

"O Brethren! Know that you should not recoil from the Russian nation and the present government of Russia. You should rather shun those savage wolves of Europe who stand ready to conquer territories and enslave peoples. . .

"Therefore, O Mohammedans of Russia, and O Mohammedans residing in eastern countries, we expect everyone of you sincerely to follow this righteous path and give active assistance in the realisation of your object."

This publication, in clandestine manner, was widely circulated in India too, especially among the Khilafat workers and exercised a positive influence.

The Indian revolutionaries in exile were in some ways the vanguard of the Indian liberation movement. During the war they were aligned with Germany, on the traditional basis that the enemy of our enemy (British imperialism) is our natural ally. After the end of the war and the defeat of Germany they instinctively turned towards the Russian revolution which was born out of the holocaust of the world imperialist war and the ashes of tsarist imperialism. An early, perhaps the first documentary evidence of the Indian initiative to seek the alliance of the new revolutionary Russia that

was emerging on the world scene, even before the October 1917 revolution is the following.

The doyen of Indian revolutionaries abroad Virendranath Chattopadhyaya had taken the initiative of removing the headquarters of the Indian National Committee from Berlin to Stockholm well before the end of the war. He also assembled there the bulk of the leading Indian revolutionaries to attend the socialist conference where the issues of peace and selfdetermination were hotly discussed. The Indian representatives present at the Stockholm Conference sent to the "Central All-Russian Committee of the Musalmans of Russia" the message, which was printed in the *Kaspy*, a Baku paper, in its issue of 14-27 September 1917.

"The 315 millions of Hindustan, enslaved and mercilessly oppressed in cruel bondage to the British before the eyes of the new world and the old and exploited by them like cattle to further their mercantile and material gains, realise now that they can only shatter the strongest support of imperialism in the world by the acquisition and consolidation of their freedom and by the application of all their efforts and intellectual powers to the accomplishment of national independence.

"The unity of all eastern peoples in general, and in particular their support from free Russia, which has renounced tsarist imperialism, will hasten the political success and progress of the east.

"We Indians express our sincere gratitude to the Musalmans of Russia, the first to take steps towards the accomplishment of our aims" (From the Weekly Report, 2 February 1918, of the Director, Central Intelligence Bureau).

It was a clear enough realisation of the need to struggle on their own, and also seek solidarity. It was a fraternal pledge to fight together.

Within India the main battle was fought on the propaganda front. As noted above the British colonialists went into jitters over India's spontaneous sympathy with the

Russian revolution and meaningful interest in the ideas of Lenin, the wise leader who had succeeded against all odds. The British imperialists launched and subsidised a terrific nonstop propaganda barrage about the threat of "Bolshevik invasion" hovering over India and the manysided "Bolshevik menace" facing India. It was a campaign based on distortion, falsification and slander. The Indian patriotic press, despite the sources of information being poisoned, despite all authoritative literature being banned, despite lack of direct contacts, did a remarkably good job effectively countering imperialist propaganda all along the line. It was a historic service rendered to the cause of Indian freedom and world progress. It was a battle for India's mind and soul. India mattered not only for her own sake but for shaping the world's future.

The bolder journals frontally assaulted and effectively exposed the propaganda of the Bolshevik menace:

We need not have any fears that they will conquer India or use force for the establishment of their principles in India. The Bolsheviks are the advocates of selfdetermination and there is a great deal of exaggeration in the stories of oppression current about them. These stories are spread by the plutocracy with a view to keeping the labourers and the agriculturists under their sway" (*Praja Bandem*, Anglo-Gujarati weekly, 25 July 1920).

The influential Urdu journal, the *Hamdam*, roundly discredited as British propaganda the general rumour that the Bolsheviks were on the look out for an opportunity to launch an attack upon India.

The Khilafat organ was categorical:

"The bugbear of the 'red peril' is placed (before the Indians) in season and out of season with a view to perpetuate India's poverty and to prove the importance of British domination" (*Roznama-e-Khilafat*, Urdu daily Bombay, 2 July 1923).

To keep the Indians off the track of the Russian revolution and thinking elements from studying Lenin's ideas, the Anglo-Indian press which had the largest circulation

among the English medium dailies in the country, ran a systematic campaign after the revolution about "Bolshevik barbarism" running rampant and "Lenin's dictatorship" having replaced the tsarist autocracy. And when the revolution began consolidating itself the Bolshevik propaganda line switched over to drumming the slogan of "the Bolshevik menace" to all the neighbouring countries and above all to India.

After the Bolsheviks triumphed in Bokhara the British propaganda was stepped up in India. It was however not easy to beguile, as is evident from the editorial comments of the Indian nationalist papers.

The *Bengalee* was not an extremist organ of the noncooperation movement. Its patron was Surendranath Banerji who was carrying out the line of cooperating with the British to make a success of the Montford reforms. Even this organ did not panic and hug the British closer. Instead it pressed them to other way. It wrote:

"The Government of India and the British nation must now adopt a generous and conciliatory policy. Should Indians be not trusted in these days of noncooperation, they will not of their own accord sacrifice everything voluntarily and wholeheartedly to maintain the supremacy of the British nation" (14 September 1920).

The procongress papers were more vigorously demanding. For example:

"A danger, which need never have existed, has been created, and we have the Bolshevik bogy robbing English statesmen of their sleep at nights. . . We merely wish to state our fixed opinion that it is a danger entirely of England's making, a danger which she could avert at any moment by an act of justice towards Asia. . . Revise the Turkish Treaty in accordance with Lloyd George's pledges; allow the Arab provinces their right of selfdetermination; give India full selfgovernment immediately and Lenin's words will become an empty boast" (*The Bombay Chronicle*, 10 November 1920).

"If the bureaucracy of India were to repent of its past actions and to change its ways, the danger from the Bolsheviks would be a thing of the past" (*Bharatvasi*, Hyderabad, Sindhi daily, 19 August 1920).

The influential organ of the Indian ulemas, the *Medina*, threatened that "if the intoxicated bureaucracy persists in its present attitude every child in India will soon become a Bolshevik to the terror of the Anglo-Indians" ("Confidential Note on the UP Press" for the week ending 23 May 1923).

The Hindi nationalist daily *Vartman* wrote:

"By depriving India of her right for equality of treatment England is laying the axe at her own feet. The world is witness to the fact that it is on account of England's folly that a red revolution which threatens to engulf the whole world is coming nearer. England cannot avert this red revolution without the help of Mahatma Gandhi, the votary of peace, whom it has confined behind the iron bars" ("Confidential Note on UP Press" for week ending 27 October 1923).

An influential Muslim paper, the *Medina*, asserted and pleaded as follows:

"The eastern nations have now realised the sad plight and oppression to which they have been subjected by imperialist Europe. The time is not far when the paralysed and oppressed people of the east will revolt against European tyranny and domination and readily respond to the Bolshevik propaganda. The British statesmen should attend to the just demands and rights of Indians otherwise it will be impossible to overcome the irresistible Bolshevik influence" ("Confidential Note on UP Press" for the week ending 12 July 1924).

As the phrase "Bolshevik menace" through overuse became stale it was replaced by the more colourful "red peril" but the Indian anti-imperialist elements refused to bite the bait. Since the British propaganda persisted in its diversionary efforts the Indian side gave it back hot and strong. For

example the official organ of the Indian Khilafat movement wrote:

"The statesmen of Europe are in the habit of warning the world against the yellow, black and red perils in order to strengthen the bonds of economic and political slavery of Asia and show that their oppression is meant for the benefit of India, so that the attention of India may be diverted from the real white peril. Nowadays the awakening to the white peril is becoming common in Asia and its peoples are also slowly girding up their loins with a view to cope with it. On all sides the cry is being raised that the whites have placed the collar of economic and political slavery around the necks of the peoples of Asia. Europe is not only trying by the force of the sword to keep alive this awakening but the attention of India is being diverted to unessentials by creating new imaginary dangers.

"We cannot help saying to our western friends that India will not go after the mirage of imaginary dangers, that everyone knows full well that his interests are being sacrificed at the altar of western territorial aggrandisement and capitalism, and that his duty consists in ignoring the imaginary red and yellow perils and in destroying the existing white peril of Europe" (Urdu daily, *Roznam-e-Khilafat*, 25 May 1923).

The British usurpers playing up the Bolshevik bogy produced another unpleasant result for their future in India. This was duly noted by a contemporary Muslim journal.

"Mr Churchill recently referred to Bolshevik help in Indian political agitation (i.e. the first noncooperation movement). We do believe that Bolshevism is being preached in India. The reports of this menace make Indians eager to know all about the Bolshevik creed. Thus new mental disquiet is created in this already upset country" (*Mohammadi*, Calcutta, 12 November 1920).

The Bolshevik menace, the product of fertile British imperialist imagination, did not naturally fructify. Instead Indian

interest in the "Bolshevik creed" grew and matured. In historical retrospect the British imperialists will have to be given their share of credit in making patriotic India friendly to Soviet Union and for the birth of communism within India.

The advanced revolutionary elements in India, for example, Kazi Nazrul Islam's organ welcomed Bolshevism, in typically Indian idiom, as the advent of the long awaited Kalki, the incarnation of the benign emancipator Vishnu in the present ugly and oppressive *kali* age:

"It is not a matter of the future. He 'who brandishes the sword for killing hordes of infidels' has already come. He has appeared in the western sky in the terrifying form of a nor'wester.

"The Bolshevik over there is not a political revolutionary of Europe alone; perhaps he is the god Kalki himself holding the whetted sabre—the awakened image of the god of the long oppressed demos. This time he will destroy and reduce everything to dust. It will not be possible to check him in any way—with the machinegun, with the aeroplane, with the terrifying warship, or with the dagger of diamond. So long as there will remain a trace of injustice he will be invincible. Who has the power of checking him?

"Come, Bengalis, let us welcome him who, though terrible, is beautiful... who though a god of destruction is yet the foundation of immortality and is coming to destroy simply in order to create. Come, Bengalis, let us pray to him with a united voice" (*Dhumketu*, 18 August 1922).

Even the respectable and sedate *Bengalee* (Calcutta), 16 December 1922, published an article by Professor N. C. Gupta, Dacca, countering the anti-Bolshevik campaign of the Anglo-Indian press:

"Bolshevism is not a term of reproach, but is believed to represent the social and political programme of the majority of a great people. Nobody has ever said that as an

ideal the programme of Bolshevism was anything but respectable, if not admirable."

A contemporary Gujarati weekly recounted the "Blessings of Bolshevism", thus:

"Bolshevism is a high ideal of a man's duty. It is a practical ideal. Bolshevism is the ideal of driving out all miseries from the world..." (Swarajya, 2 February 1922, Viramgaum).

A Bombay Urdu daily visualised the world scene in terms of the final triumph of Bolshevism:

"The Russian revolution did away with imperialism on the one hand and on the other freed the human brotherhood from geographical limitations. It also strangled John Bull, the favourite son of the European powers and the embodiment of grab and selfishness.

"The European powers got alarmed at the revolution. The standard-bearer of the advocates of imperialism, Mr Lloyd George, caused the civil war to begin in Russia, with the help of his money so that the revolution might be killed before the world knew anything about it. He also organised publicity to stories of barbarous deeds in order to give a bad name to the revolutionaries. But today the whole world has seen how Mr Lloyd George is flattering the same Russian revolutionaries..."

"But whether there is any war or not the world will see that the whole of Europe will raise the banner of Bolshevism and that all those nations, who are on the point of death from Europe's sword of oppression, will also become free. This series of revolutions will go on..." (Nusrat, 30 May 1922).

Such was the prevalent atmosphere and similar ideas and hopes were expressed by several organs of Indian patriotic opinion.

The Hindi nationalist daily, the *Vartman*, noted

"with satisfaction that Bolshevism is spreading very rapidly both in Asia and Europe. It is noteworthy that

unlike the imperialists the Bolsheviks are nowhere sowing the seeds of discontent and anarchy. They are steadily demonstrating to the world their usefulness and the superiority and progressiveness of their rule as compared with that of the imperialists ("Confidential Note on the UP Press" for the week ending 28 April 1923).

The vileness and tenacity of the British imperialist propaganda compelled even the most respectable organs of Indian nationalism to speak up:

"We find it difficult to accept as gospel truth all the evil things that have been spoken of the Bolshevik movement by its enemy press. It proposes to be fighting for the establishment of a new economic and social order..."

"Bolshevism is not a thing that can either be dismissed or even damned with faint praise. It has a soul-stirring compulsion in it. As long as there is this idealism at the back of it no amount of narrow and interested opposition will be able to wean away the sympathies of a large section of idealists, in any country, from it" (*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 27 December 1922).

The Marxist-Leninist concept that in the long march of history capitalism was but a stage which prepared the pre-conditions for the emergence of socialism had also percolated into India.

"Why does Bolshevism come into existence? Surely it could not have come into existence for nothing and out of nothing. It came into existence because the elements of peace and order were missing—because these were the elements of Bolshevism..."

"Bolshevism is the natural fruit of the tree of the existing social order. It is inevitable—it is unavoidable."

"It is to produce Bolshevism that the social order of the world has all along been working. As has been sown, so will be reaped. All the while the world has been preparing the ground for it, feeding and nourishing, watering

and tending it" (*The World Peace*, Calcutta, 22 February 1923).

The Indian nationalist circles followed the European reformist criticism of Bolshevism and as their forecasts got belied in life the Indian press was not slow to comment. For example, the Hindi daily the *Vartman* remarked that "the rapid spread of the Bolshevik movement from Europe to Asia has falsified the prophesies of the French and English socialist leaders that being unsuited to the present times Bolshevism would die a natural death" ("Confidential Note on UP Press" for the week ending 19 April 1924).

The Bengali monthly the *Pravartak* published from Chandernagar, (Bhadra 1924) while reviewing a pioneer work on Bolshevism by Sailesh Nath Bishi wrote: "It is gradually being revealed that Bolshevism is not a thing to strike terror but is merely a great effort towards emancipation of humanity."

The Bengali women's journal the *Mahila* (30 May 1924, Calcutta) also carried an article by Dr Naresh Chandra Sen Gupta who had just written a Bengali book *Transformation of Russia Through Revolution* commending to the public the new book by Sailesh Nath Bishi.

The British rulers also tried to use the Bolshevik bogey to excite the class fears of the rich and panic them from aiding the national struggle. The Commissioner of Sind in his Press Note No. 2 of 1920 announced: "In the country districts the peasants are grumbling to pay rent to the zamindar and land revenue to government, and in the cities the labourers are complaining that while rich have lives of comfort and ease, they are condemned to toil early and late, to live in miserable hovels and to go clad in rags."

The official note admitted that it was the inevitable result of high prices but it stressed the fear of Bolshevik propaganda spreading in the country in the wake of the above and that it was impossible, however much the government may try, entirely to exclude this propaganda from a country of this size. It appealed to the rich and educated sections not to join the swaraj movement and bring troubles to them-

selves and Bolshevism into the country: "The choice is in the hands of the rich and the educated. India is their country and it is for them to see that there is no Bolshevism in the country."

The caustic comment of the leading Sindhi daily was "The Sind government has now taken to quoting the scriptures" (*Bharatvasi*, Hyderabad, 30 October 1920).

As the national campaign for inauguration mass civil disobedience campaign to get rid of the satanic British government gathered momentum, imperialist propaganda raised its sights, from Bolshevism operating among the lowly, the workers and peasants, to Bolshevism having taken Mahatma Gandhi himself in its lap. The Indian nationalist counter-offensive was the neatest possible. For example:

"There are reports spread everywhere about Bolshevik designs on India and Mr Gandhi's connections with the Bolsheviks. But, as a matter of fact, all these reports are false. Discontent is prevailing in India without any Bolshevik propaganda. It is the financial bankruptcy of the country and the repression of the rulers that gives birth to Bolshevism. The British politicians are hankering after worldwide power. Why should then Bolshevism be blamed unnecessarily. Imperialist oppression itself is the mother of Bolshevism.

"What else then Bolshevism should be the result of the administrative system that has been responsible for the deficit of no less than ninety crores of rupees within the space of four years? . . . It is introducing Bolshevism not only among the common people but even among the level headed members of the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. Among several other things the Bolsheviks are said to have refused to recognise the foreign loans of tsarist Russia. The moderate members of the assembly and council are showing a similar tendency. They refuse to consent to additional taxation, i.e. indirectly to pay for the debts incurred by the government" (*Swarajya*, Poona, Marathi weekly, 30 March 1920).

The Urdu journal, *Al Khalil* challenged "the veracity of Reuters reports regarding the Bolshevik menace to India" and damned them as "manufactured for propaganda purposes. The object is to deal a severe blow to the Indian national movement" ("Confidential Note on UP Press" for week ending 6 October 1923).

The anti-Bolshevik campaign of the British did not go down in India and was effectively challenged. It produced instead the opposite result, sympathetic interest in the newly established Soviet state and a serious consideration of the new ideas that inspired it.

SELF-CRITICAL EVALUATION

The first noncooperation movement began after the Russian revolution. It was prematurely withdrawn to the dismay of its participants and organisers. In those very years the Russian revolution successfully consolidated itself against all odds.

The comparison between the Russian success and Indian failure was inescapable. This inevitably led to a critical re-evaluation of the programme, strategy and tactics of the Gandhian leadership, in terms of Leninist ideas on these topics, whose effectiveness had been demonstrated before the very eyes of that generation of Indian anti-imperialist fighters. Leninist literature had begun trickling into India despite the British bans and proscriptions. Its influence is clearly visible in the critical comments of the left journals of the period.

"Since the Bardoli resolutions (withdrawing the civil disobedience call—PCJ) the swaraj movement has been gradually developing into a swadeshi movement (concentrating exclusively on the charkha and khaddar—PCJ)... but what will you do with the stone which is lying heavy over your chest?

"Civil disobedience was postponed for fear of bloodshed. We do not think there is a strong reason for think-

ing that it will be possible to render the country totally nonviolent by giving it education and making it wear khaddar... those who want to win independence by adopting it (nonviolence) had better give up the profession of politics and go to the forest and practice devotional austerities" (*Atmashakti*, 5 July 1922).

The Bardoli withdrawal of civil disobedience by the congress leadership smashed up the national upsurge while it was on the upswing, temporarily isolated the Congress from the masses, broke the hearts of the working folks who had pinned all their faith on the congress struggle for swaraj and scattered to the winds the organisations they had thrown up. In terms of the new Leninist light that had been switched on the Indian left press spoke out boldly.

"We shall never be able to do anything unless we can draw the peasants, cultivators, coolies and day labourers to our side. At most we may shout about a little and exact another instalment of reforms but the independence of the country will never come that way.

"Peasant associations were formed all over Hindustan (Hindi-speaking regions) and Rajputana, the people began to fight against the oppression of the zamindars with all their might. But the Congress finished its duty by advising them to bear all sufferings calmly and quietly, and look out for better next life. An attempt to relieve their sufferings did not come within the work of the Congress.

"Today the greatest work of the Congress is to organise these helpless peasants, coolies and day labourers and make them stand upright. The attempt to remove their wants and grievances must be made part of the programme of the Congress" (*Atmashakti*, 17 July 1922).

Again next week on 26 July 1922 the *Atmashakti* wrote:

"Those who have just returned from the villages are asking why there is no enthusiasm, no hope—why the

charkha is lying idle. The oppression of the police may be one cause but not the sole cause.

"The peasants have not been enthused by our ideal of swaraj. One of our friends lectured on swaraj to an old namasudra for half an hour. At the end the old man asked what people like him would gain by swaraj. The zamindars and darogas belong to the bhadrak class, the members of which are preaching swaraj, and so these men cannot be expected to treat the lower classes better than now when swaraj will come. These words deserve careful consideration.

"So long the question of the poor had no place in the Congress. The Congress was in the hands of middle class men, and they hoped power will come into their hands when the British leave. The members of the Congress were mostly lawyers and merchants. The merchants wanted to gain something by taxing foreign goods when swaraj would come and the lawyers thought they would then get high posts. So the ordinary people did not care much for the Congress.

"But times have changed and the peasants and coolies have come to understand that it will not do if this state of affairs is not changed, so they joined the Congress with the hope of getting their burden of taxes lightened and to get protected from various forms of injustice and oppression.

"Our spiritual swaraj must be brought down to the level of the earth and no more experiments on spiritual swaraj should be made with the poor coolies and day labourers."

The following week the *Atmashakti* pursued the issue and raised the alarm that the Government of India had already understood better the role of the workers and peasants and had become active, that it was exerting "some pressure" on the talukdars to improve raiyat conditions and thus emerge as rural leaders and that pro-government per-

sons had taken to organising trade unions and play the labour leader.

"The real object is to see that there is no union between the masses and the middle classes...

"The first duty of the Congress now is to stultify this move... The Congress must form trade unions and see that the labourers are not made to work more than eight hours a day and that there are good housing arrangements for them. The raiyats will never have any real sympathy for the Congress unless the Congress can ensure saving them from the clutches of the moneylender and the oppressions of the police and the zamindars.

"The charkha will not turn if you simply say: 'Turn the charkha' and sit idle. If the workers of the Congress attend to these matters from now then civil disobedience can be restarted within a short time."

The movement continued to sag and the left became more outspoken.

"When you proposed to stop the chowkidari and the salt taxes the people listened to you readily. But the day the Chauri Chaura incident unnerved you, the people understood that you were simply tall-talkers but very poor workers. The truth is that you are not so great as you think yourself to be...

"It is a lie to say that the country is not prepared. It is you who are unprepared, in as much as you have not yet been able to forego attachment to your belongings" (*Atmashakti*, 15 November 1922).

Kazi Nazrul Islam put the new realisation in plain and simple enough words:

"The great truth that the independence of a country cannot be achieved by a few educated men unassisted by the masses did not dawn upon the leaders of the movement. Today we have found out the mistake we made at the beginning. It has been carried home to us today

that the possession of all power by a few educated leading men is not independence; that if we wish to make our country strong enough for selfdefence we must associate ourselves heart and soul with the masses.

"If we cannot accept their interests as ours, rouse their faith in their own powers by persuading them to struggle against antagonistic forces, in that case our national institutions, our khaddar centres, our panchayat courts, will disappear like a mirage in the deserts" (*Dhumketu*, 15 December 1922).

S. A. Dange, then a young noncooperating congress militant, had already come to understand, and was boldly advocating the utilisation of the workers' strike weapon to make the civil disobedience struggle effective:

"If you start civil disobedience on a mass scale in all provinces at once and the same time the military will be set in motion to collect taxes and keep 'order'. Then? If all the transport workers, i.e. railwaymen, drivers, etc. sit peacefully at home, not a single military unit can move from one centre to another. The modern centralised system of government rests more on the railroad and means of communications than the noncooperators are disposed to believe. If this is so what should you do before you start civil disobedience?"

"Many people are blamed for not carrying out the congress resolutions. But the congress leaders have altogether forgotten the resolution at Amritsar and Nagpur congresses urging upon congressmen to take to organising the workers" (*Socialist*, 26 August 1922).

After the withdrawal of the mass satyagraha movement widespread frustration followed. It however did not lead to defeatism, despair and passivity. The national left started the programmatic battle which served as an unbreakable ever-active lever, and which step by step, uplifted the political situation.

The foremost item in the programmatic battle was to clearly define the national, the yet vague and undefined

swaraj as the achievement of complete national independence. The UP Congress in its annual session in 1923 passed the resolution for independence. Hopes ran high that the all-India session of the National Congress at Delhi will do the same. But it did not. The widely respected Hindi weekly, *Pratap* was "indignant" and remarked,

"It is the duty of the Indian people to declare in clear and unequivocal terms that complete independence is their goal. They may not be able to translate into action their feelings but if they fail to change their angle of vision the world will laugh at them."

C. S. Ranga Iyer had successfully edited the daily *Independent* and after its closure took to editing the English weekly *Independence* where he expressed the new understanding that prevailed among the advanced elements:

"The Congress has failed to fix so far complete independence as the goal of India because it is dominated by the educated classes, consisting for the most part of halting apes of Europe... The Congress has to be purged and purified of politicians, diplomats and statesmen if it is to represent the genius of a simple hearted people of ancient descent who are not afraid of calling a spade a spade.

"Without a definite goal, civil disobedience will prove as hitherto a mere phantom of the wilderness. Those who long to see the motherland crowned with independence must not be afraid to say so" ("Confidential Note on UP Press", 25 August 1923).

The discussion on the direction of the noncooperation movement continued right up to 1924. For example the leading Bengali left weekly which we have quoted at some length above stated:

"Those who have thought about the course of the movement of 1921 must have been aware of the fact that such a large number of men disobeyed minor laws, disobeyed Sec. 144 and proclaimed hartal, that if the enthusiasm and eagerness had been roused towards disobeying differ-

ent laws nobody could say what would have happened. It is certain that the foundations of the whole of India would have been shaken if promises had been given that under swaraj the rents for lands, cultivated by tenants, would be decreased and the working hours of the labourers would be reduced and their wages enhanced" (*Atmashakti*, 9 April 1924).

"The masses do not wait for any invitation to join the freedom movement, they advance with irresistible force to shape their future with their own hands; and it unavoidably ends by the whole country, for a time, passing through a wave of mass frenzy. There are historical precedents in all countries. Revolutions took place in this way only in the various countries. It did not cover them with the blood of their own people. Bloodshed and massacres depend to a large extent on the obstinacy of the rulers and not on the actions of the political agitators. Revolution and anarchism are not identical" (*Atmashakti*, 13 August 1924).

The British had seen Bolshevism when the first non-cooperation movement began assuming militant mass forms. They also shrieked about Mahatma Gandhi handing over the country to Bolshevism as he reached the final stage of preparations for starting mass civil disobedience. And after the withdrawal of the mass movement as the Indian left became critical of the Gandhian technique and began putting forward new mass strategy and tactics the British again saw among the Indian left the Bolshevik influence in operation. One of the newly started left journals countered the British campaign thus

"Certainly the awakening of the masses is not the same thing as Bolshevism... We can say for certain that Indians have not yet developed the mentality to accept that creed (Bolshevism). But if the endeavour of Indians to establish their rights in the government of the country be construed as Bolshevism, there is no help for it" (*Bijalee*, 28 March 1924).

The selfcritical new ideas did not remain confined to the left. A year after the withdrawal of the call for civil disobedience and the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi even C. R. Das's organ became eloquently selfcritical.

"The swaraj which the Congress had so long been knowingly or unknowingly wishing for is the swaraj of the rich and the middle classes. We do not always properly realise the fact that the masses of the country are still lying outside the congress arena.

"It has been clearly demonstrated that swaraj cannot be attained through the efforts of the rich or the middle classes only...

"The masses too want freedom, and with it the removal of their social and economic grievances... It is hunger which has compelled them to cry for swaraj, and they will not be satisfied until they get full swaraj" (*Banglar Katha*, 7-8 February 1923).

Similarly a leading Bengali Muslim paper wrote:

"It is a matter of great regret that the majority of the popular leaders of the country think of emancipating the country leaving out of account the peasants, labourers, blacksmiths, potters and carpenters who are our brethren and form the backbone of the country... We can be saved only if the leaders and cadres of the nation understand that the most important work to be done is to organise these peasants, and workers" (*Mohammadi*, 20 June 1924).

Again the *Servant* (Calcutta), 10 September 1924, wrote:

"The ultimate political problem for India is not to establish the political ascendancy of the classes over the masses, whether wholly or partly, i.e. whether in substitution for, or in coordinate or even in subordinate partnership with the British authorities, such rule is bound to lead to the exploitation of the masses and their consequent impoverishment and emasculation. The ultimate problem before India is therefore twofold. In one aspect

it is the problem of the security of the country against foreign invasion and foreign domination. In the other aspect it is the problem of preventing the political ascendancy of the classes over the masses. These two aspects may well be covered under one single formula—viz swaraj for the masses.”

These new ideas were regularly and repeatedly broadcast by the English and Bengali nationalist dailies of Calcutta that claimed loyalty to the Deshbandhu Das tradition. For example:

“The swaraj movement has as yet affected only the surface layers of society and if it has to acquire irresistible strength and overcome all the obstacles in its way, it must strike its roots much deeper, and reach those classes who have been from time immemorial groaning under social tyranny and oppression” (*The Forward*, Calcutta, 10 June 1926).

Similar ideas were expressed by a leading Bengali congress daily

“The Congress is described as a political institution of the people and its aim is given out as that of attaining swaraj for the people and by the people. But the present authorities of the Congress are not making any attempt to adopt that policy which will be most effective to help the people to win swaraj for themselves. The congress authorities are, we are afraid, somewhat indifferent to this matter, as a result of which the people are gradually losing all faith and hope in the Congress. The congressmen of the country, whichever part they belong to, should exert themselves to establish and maintain a bond of union between the Congress and the people” (*Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 1926).

A newly started popular Bengali journal, run by congress cadres, the *Sramik*, 19 October 1926, effectively used traditional mythological idiom and imagery to express the rising mood and the historical role of the working class:

Come, O Rudra, Come,
the Terrible One, blow thy horn!
I shall take on my head
thy stern gory blessing

Let this new moon day become red
and blood flow
What fear of death have they
who have always been dead
And who daily sacrifice their lives.

After the 1857 national revolt the masses had been brought actively into the arena of national struggle only in the early twenties, during the first noncooperation movement, led by Mahatma Gandhi. It had put the British colonialists not only on the defensive but virtually on the run. The panicky withdrawal of the movement by the Mahatma broke the back of the movement. Imperialism succeeded in influencing further development in the negative direction, above all the disruptive communal issue was pushed to the fore.

All this could not but lead to widespread heart searching and new thinking, along the lines sketched above. Living national experience of the hitherto greatest ever national upsurge was x-rayed by the national cadres, actual participants of the movement. In the then prevailing historical situation of the early twenties the only yardstick available to critically reevaluate the Indian experience was the Russian experience. Thus it is that forward-looking thoughtful Indian patriotic elements went to the treasurehouse of Leninist ideas while they fruitfully engaged themselves in the intellectual exercise of national selfcriticism.

It became a new uplifting experience because new ideas were discovered and accepted as part of the strategy and tactics of the Indian national movement with a view to avoid the mistakes of the past and carry the movement forward.

Thus a new dimension was added to the Indian movement. The programmatic battle began, complete independence versus dominion status, swaraj to remain undefined or endowed with an anti-feudal and concrete progressive democratic con-

tent. The left did not merely champion the new ideas; it broke new ground, built mass organisations, and acquired independent political influence. It sunk itself in organising the youth and the working class and lead the strike struggles.

Thus was laid the foundation of marching from the first noncooperation movement of the twenties to the second civil disobedience movement of the thirties, which was fought on a higher, politically more advanced and better organised basis. The influence of Leninist ideas gave new life and direction to this whole course of Indian historical development.

NEW IDEAS

In India, before the Russian revolution, workers and peasants were not considered as within the pale of politics, as active agents for changing the course of history. The experience of the Russian revolution demonstrated their worth and the thundering propaganda of the Leninist strategy and tactics by the newly established Communist International brought these new ideas to Indian ears. The response was spontaneous, because India was in the midst of the satyagraha campaign for swaraj. The live impact is seen in the editorial of the English daily, the *Independent*, owned and run by the Nehru family:

"If the Congress assist the Trade Union Congress to organise labour in India—and to encourage those labour unions which already exist into bearing themselves confidently and fearlessly as disciplined bodies able to insist on being awarded their god-given rights—much will have been done. Organised labour in India will then look to swaraj in alliance with the congress workers; so that pressure brought to bear upon the reformed government will be accompanied where necessary by pressure to bring upon those supporters of reaction—the capitalists and industrialists" ("Confidential Note on UP Press" for the week ending 11 November 1922).

The *Independent* repeatedly urged the importance of the organisation of workers and peasants by the congress workers to bring new strength into the swaraj struggle. It carefully followed the course of the peasant upsurge that was already on in UP.

"The kisan movement of 1920 and the aika movement of the first quarter of this year are remarkable revelations of the capacity of the agricultural labourer for effective organisation. So far as grievances go the agricultural labourer has his own share and none can say that they do not require a speedy remedying. The first thing necessary... is to bring together agricultural and industrial labourers" ("Confidential Note on UP Press" for the week ending 9 December 1922).

The Hindi daily, the *Aj* was emphatic: "National independence cannot be won without the help of labourers. Through cheap labour foreign capitalists are exploiting the natural resources of the country and enriching themselves by draining away Indian wealth."

The *Vikram* stated:

"Although the labourers are the mainstay of society they are not allowed to lead a self-respecting and peaceful life... It is time that labour took heed, realised that power lies in organisation and thought of removing their troubles by combined action. In France and Russia it was the workers who brought about revolution. The workers should realise their dominant powers and do all that is possible to safeguard their rights."

The intelligence reporter duly recorded the new development: "Extremist Hindi papers are laying great stress on the organisation of labour, both industrial and agricultural" ("Confidential Note on UP Press" for the week ending 25 November 1922).

A correspondent writing in Kazi Nazrul Islam's paper stresses the relative importance of the spread of khaddar and support to strike struggle:

"It is the height of folly to hope to achieve the salvation of the country without taking the help of those who are, as it were, its life forces. The English have come to rule India with a view to exploit her... The Congress has sanctioned seventeen lakhs of rupees for the spread of khaddar, but had half that sum been giving to the strikers at the time of the strike on the East Indian Railway much would have been achieved" (*Dhumketu*, 31 October 1922).

Welcoming the newly formed organisation of the hitherto backward Oriya workers the *Dhumketu*, 28 November 1922, wrote:

"Today the sleeping god is awake. The lifeless have stood up claiming their right. Those who have not yet stood up we look up to them as well. Chandalas, carpenters, toiling Muslims, bagdis, doms, muchis, santhals forget that you are lowly. Who has made you low? God? It is a lie, a glaring fraud. By thus deceiving you your mollahs, kazis, priests, zamindars, and rulers are rolling in luxury at your expense. They are thus deceiving you to rob you of your hard earned dues.

"How often shall we say that you are not of the fox breed but cubs of lions and tigers? Those who call themselves your superiors and suck your bones dry, stand upright before them and tell them to their face that you will no longer give them begar, abwabs, nor submit to other illegal exactions. Tell them that you are not clods of earth to suffer their persecutions."

In the course of an article dealing with the oppression of the poor by the rich, of the weak by the strong, the paper wrote under "Who Wins?":

"They frown at you, keep you down with their guns and taxation measures, with the help of their sentries and the sacred books; throw at them the skulls of your dead fathers and sons, husbands and wives. Decline once to grow the crop for one single season, say only for one day

that you are not the servants, and that the rich cannot live without you, and you will see them indulging in loud lamentations, and then it will be for you to let the fire flash out from your sunken eyes" (*Dhumketu*, 24 November 1922).

The *Dhumketu* addressed itself to the young left of Bengal and the rank and file of various revolutionary organisations who constituted its readership. These new ideas were combined with the revolutionary perspective. And this was done not only through reasoned articles but emotion packed poems. As an example below are extracts from a poem by Amar Kumar Dutta, published in the issue of 28 November 1922, entitled "The Thunder-storm of a Summer Evening".

*Wear the tilak mark of blood on your forehead,
and break the chains*

*Let the sky resound with the cry of death of one who has
conquered death.*

*Let the fire burn on all sides, the cry
is we fear nobody.*

*Let the house held by thousands of chains collapse;
let the whole world shake with your weight.*

Again, "It is the dead of night. There is no way—no light. He who has stripped my Mother naked at this time, pulling her and whipping her, is no demon, no god, but a man of flesh and blood. Thirty crores of travellers on the road of darkness are slowly following her at the back. The light goes out as often as they try to kindle it... Awake, arise the power of the people... Strike the hammer, drive the plough, hold up the flag dyed red with the blood of your heart. Those who have brought you under their feet, put them under your feet" (*Dhumketu*, 18 August 1922).

The Bombay weekly the *Hindustan*, 22 November 1922, editorially supported the appeal of Dewan Chamanlal, General Secretary of the newly started All-India Trade Union Congress, to the members of the All-India Congress Com-

mittee on behalf of Indian labour and to help labour improve their condition and make them "the pillars of the Congress" as "timely, necessary and practical". It also hoped that the coming session of the Congress at Gaya will ensure measures to help the trade union congress in its attempts to organise Indian labour. It expressed its own firm belief that "the national movement will progress to a great extent as soon as there is national awakening among the Indian labourers".

The then young Dange in his English weekly, the *Socialist*, took note of the statement of the Chairman of the East Indian Railway Co that as a consequence of the strike the company lost 1½ crores of rupees, of which the government share was 1,44,00,000 rupees. If to this be added the consequent loss suffered by the other industries "the total damage to the capitalist class which controls the government becomes considerable". As against this "the workers lost in wages the total of a little less than seven lakhs of rupees".

"So here is an instance of the ability of working class to deal severe blows. This should teach us in which direction the tactics of noncooperation can be most effectively applied.

"The idea of injuring the prestige of the government is erroneous, because the government will not cease ruling so long as it does not become impossible or unprofitable to rule."

Thus the most potent new idea that came to India from the Russian experience was the realisation of the revolutionary role of the working class and the peasantry and the need to organise them as an integral part of the anti-imperialist movement and thus acquire new life and strength.

The Russian revolution was not only an internal Russian affair but an earth shaking international event. Lenin led the Russian revolution with the understanding that it was a part of the world revolution. Along with Leninist ideas of strategy and tactics that led to the success of the revolution in his own country, his ideas on shaping the course of the

revolutionary process on a world scale also percolated into India and gave the Indian national movement a new international orientation.

Indian interest in the fate of Soviet Russia was deep and constant.

The Indian press followed with keen interest the ups and downs in British attitude towards Soviet Russia—the organiser of military intervention to snuff out the Soviet regime forced to withdraw its own expeditionary force; the crusader for total boycott of Soviet Russia ending up by starting negotiations for resuming commercial relations with the country that refused to be starved into submission and so on. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 26 June 1920, noted with satisfaction "The indications are plain that the Bolsheviks have come to stay and European powers have come to realise this fact". And the *Dainik Basumati*, 28 June 1920, added with equal satisfaction, "At the recent sitting of the Labour Conference at Scarborough the Bolsheviks were recognised as the lawful authority in Russia..."

Diplomatic recognition of Soviet Russia was seen as evidence of the capitalist powers accepting its existence, the acceptance of new Russia as a regular member of the comity of nations helped it to get stabilised and unfold its emancipatory role still more effectively.

The nations held in thralldom under tsarist rule in Turkestan were Muslim in faith. Their emancipation and upliftment under the Soviet regime made a deep impact upon Indian Muslim opinion. Among the very early acts of Soviet foreign policy were all-out diplomatic support and military and economic aid to Afghanistan and Turkey to assert and safeguard their national state independence. This led Indian Muslim opinion to regard the Soviet government as "the friend of Islam" and Bolshevism as consistent anti-imperialism. The early twenties were the heydays of united congress-khilafat mass campaign in which Indian Muslims received their mass political education. The lessons they then imbibed were never forgotten. This is one of the main reasons why Indian Muslims despite their being moved by religious senti-

ments could never be indoctrinated with anticommunism and taken in an anti-Soviet direction.

The extracts below help to recapture the ideas and sentiments of those early crucial days.

The official organ of the Indian Khilafat movement wrote a series of articles on the British designs in Asia in the course of which it stated that Britain had prepared "an ambitious scheme with a view to found a large Europe in the east" to be implemented after the conclusion of the first world war. "But various events and the general awakening in Asia have totally obstructed its fulfilment."

"We have awakened from our slumber; we have learnt to differentiate between real and false friends. And now there is only one way open for the Asians, and that is to exterminate British imperialism by entering into an alliance with Bolshevism. Although the principles underlying it are not acceptable to us, yet the Musalmans and the Bolsheviks are both oppressed peoples, this fact alone is enough to pave the way for an alliance between them.

"This alliance should not be confined to Angora and Russia only, in fact all the nations of the east should free themselves from oppression of foreign nations by strengthening this alliance with Bolshevism.

Out of the experience of the Soviet regime towards its own eastern nations, and its attitude towards the neighbouring eastern nations emerged, in the early twenties, the idea of the eastern colonial nations uniting among themselves and relying upon Soviet support to liquidate imperialist domination over their own country and the vast region around.

The Pioneer in a leading article headed "Bolshevik Aims in Asia" wrote:

"It is almost incredible indeed that any Indian should find satisfaction in the anti-British propaganda of the Soviet government, since Great Britain constitutes the main bulwark against Bolshevik aggression."

The Urdu journal, *Inqilab*, duly noted British perturbation over the rise in Bolshevik influence throughout Asia, and that "British prestige is now on the wane. A time will soon come when there will be no place left throughout the world where they will not be given an ultimatum to evacuate" ("Confidential Note on UP Press" for week ending 3 November 1923).

The recognition of the anti-imperialist role of the Soviets in Asia was not confined to the Muslim Khilafat press. The nationalist Hindi daily of Kanpur, the *Vartman*, expressed its belief that "the influence of the Bolsheviks in Asia will prove very helpful in dissolving the power of England" ("Confidential Note on the UP Press" for the week ending 12 May 1923).

After the demonstration in practice within the former Russian empire, the Leninist idea of solidarity between the proletariat of the imperialist country and liberation movement of the oppressed nations, as also the international character of the colonial revolutions, won acceptance inside the highest level of the Indian leadership. Bipin Chandra Pal writing in the *Liberty* (Calcutta) of 22 February 1921 stated:

"All freedom is one. . . In fighting for the cause of true liberty we are, therefore, fighting the cause not only of Indian democracy but of every modern democracy in the world for, is not all freedom one, and all bondage is of the same character but the forces that keep people in bondage were also substantially the same. Indian administration is run by and in the interest of the same capitalist-class that runs the administration of the United Kingdom. The British plutocracy that exploits British labour. . . exploit Indian labour also. . . Our cause is not only the cause of Indian but equally also of the British democracy. Our ideal is the same as theirs. Our opponents are the same as theirs. . ."

The newly started *Samyavadi* (Calcutta) of 11 April 1921 noted the significance of the big strike wave in England under "A Lesson from England".

"We must take a lesson from the critical situation in England. We must remember that the world is changing. The oppressed do not want to remain trodden under foot. The present situation is helping us in every way. If we at the risk of our lives resolve to decide our fate, the English will not have the power to oppose us successfully for a long time. All this requires courage. Let us therefore come forward and enlist ourselves in the cause of the country."

Lenin's internal and foreign policy led Indian national opinion to recognise Soviet Russia as a new force hostile to the imperialist powers, fearless and active champion of the cause of independence of the colonial nations, a valued new ally. The vision of the liberation of the enslaved East, became a part of the political perspective of the Indian struggle.

Lenin's ideas, in the context of the doggedly fought successful example of the Russian revolution introduced new conceptions in the national as well as the international strategy of the Indian movement. Internally it meant the acceptance of the revolutionary role of the working class and peasantry and the need to organise them to strengthen the national struggle internationally, acceptance of the anti-imperialist role of Soviet Russia, and linking the Indian movement with the worldwide alliance of all anti-imperialist forces.

These two new ideas transformed the Indian political scene, lifted the national movement to a higher plane and paved the way forward from the Gandhi to the Nehru era.

NEW IDEOLOGY AND PARTY

After the experience of the national struggle of the twenties the Indian left realised anew that anti-imperialist struggle was not only political but also ideological. The enemy offensive was manysided and its attempts at ideological poisoning could not be ignored, for they were meant to stupefy and paralyse the Indian people. For example, the influential organ of what was then something in the nature of the ideological open forum of the new Bengal left wrote:

"Our rulers know it very well that in order to keep a country like India under subjection, it will not do to rely on the bayonet alone. It must be enchanted and rendered powerless. That is why they have rendered our life, mind and body weaker by infusing their power of enchantment into the books published and by introducing their crooked policy in the various spheres of our national life. In order to free the country, this magic of theirs must be broken (*Atmashakti*, 21 June 1922).

This need for ideological struggle accepted, there began a very intense quest for India's path forward. A distinct feature of this period, unlike the earlier ones, was that this time there was no nostalgic looking back to the past, nor indulging in unscientific and fruitless revivalism, but boldly looking forward to the future, openmindedly going to the sources of inspiration and knowledge of those who had successfully made their revolution. After the victory of the Russian revolution and the emergence of Lenin in the contemporary horizon this inevitably led the Indian seekers, restless militants and conscientious intellectuals to the study of Marxism-Leninism.

"Those who seek emancipation of the country must now cease to think of Mazzini and Garibaldi and the romantic story of the *Ananda Math*. They must now take up Karl Marx and the mass movement" (*Sankha*, 20 October 1922. Article entitled "What is Our Aim" by Bhupendra Nath Dutta, revolutionary exile in Berlin, once editor of *Aurobindo Ghose's Jugantar*).

To a few, Marx had become known in India quite early. For example Lala Hardayal wrote a series of articles on him as early as 1912 and they were reprinted under the title *Mahatma Karl Marx* and published by Ganesan and Co, Madras.

Lenin became widely known as the leader of the Russian revolution and with him Karl Marx whom the great Lenin acknowledged as his teacher. The intense Indian interest in the experiences of the Russian revolution inevitably led to the study of the teachings of Marx and Lenin. Authentic

literature however was hard to get, since it was banned by the British colonialists and prevented from reaching India. Undaunted revolutionary-minded Indians arranged with their counterparts abroad and above all the helpful communists to smuggle in this banned literature into India. Thus the works of Marx and Lenin and other important communist literature became available in the early twenties from the Book Company, Calcutta, the Saraswati Library, Dacca, and with time in other places too. This however covered only the elite.

A larger section were covered by articles in the popular and well-established journals and magazines, and the contributors were well-known Indian intellectuals which speaks for itself about the seriousness of the Indian interest in the new ideology. Confidential selections from Bengal newspapers for 1924 contain the report of the publication in the Asarh issue of *Pravasi* (Calcutta), of Prof Benoy Kumar Sarkar's preface to the Bengali translation of Engels's *Origin of Family* and similarly the Bengali monthly, *Bharatvarsha* for Asarh, published an article again by Prof Benoy Kumar Sarkar entitled "The Economic Interpretation of the Growth of Civilisation" which is described "as a translation from the German socialist Engels's writing".

Interest in the teachings of the masters of socialism was not confined to professional revolutionaries and progressive intellectuals. The left Bengali weekly, *Atmashakti* of 9 July 1924 reported:

"A friend of ours has written to us about the conditions of life of the workers in two of the greatest cities of India, viz Bombay and Delhi, one helpful sign is the awakening of class consciousness among them. They have established labour unions and have learnt to get their demands by strikes and other means.

"Libraries with educational books and newspapers are appearing, works of even Marx and Engels are seen in these libraries. Most of these unions are not conducted in European style; there are no chairs and tables for meetings and business is done squatting on mats.

"Liberal spirit on the subject of untouchability finds expression here and there. Sympathetic strikes are not rare. This gives us to understand that class consciousness is becoming stronger."

Flaming pioneer socialist Kazi Nazrul Islam was arrested and jailed and his first and very useful journal *Dhumketu* was snuffed out by the British colonialists. But there was no stopping the volcanic poet-publicist. After his release he was back at the job, ready to launch the new journal *Langal* (Plough) by December 1925. The very first issue stated:

"It is certainly a daring attempt to work the *Langal* (Plough) in a town like Calcutta but it has got its need. . . Society should no longer decide the fate of the sudras (the lowly working folk) but henceforth the toilers will direct the course of society. It is the *Langal* that will bring about this revolution and solve the various problems of the country."

It was a sign of the times that *Langal* was less flamboyant than the earlier *Dhumketu* and far more soberly analytical and seeking to base itself on and popularise the new ideology. The second issue of *Langal* featured an article on Karl Marx by Debabrata Basu. Marx's famous articles on India were perhaps printed for the first time in India in *Langal* itself, and soon after their discovery. "Confidential Selection from Newspapers, Bengal", 1926, reported:

"The *Langal* (Calcutta) of 18 March gives a Bengali rendering of one of the two letters, dealing with the condition of India under British rule, which were sent by Karl Marx to the *Daily Tribune* of New York and one said to have been recently discovered in Moscow."

The same source reported next week of *Langal* publishing "a Bengali rendering of the second of the two articles of Karl Marx dealing with Indian affairs".

The popularisation of the ideas of Marx and Lenin, the principles of scientific socialism, was not confined to the Bengali press but symptomatic of the new development that

pervaded a large circle of the openminded patriotic press in the various languages of India in the twenties. In Hindi the oldest daily *Abhyudaya* and the monthly published from the same set up, *Maryada*, in Kanpur the weekly *Pratap* and the monthly run under the same auspices, *Prabha*, in Banaras the daily *Aj* and many other less known weekly and monthly journals featured articles on the life and ideas of Marx and Lenin, and popularised as best as they understood them, the principles of socialism.

The living example of the Russian revolution followed by whatever familiarisation with the scientific ideas of Marxism-Leninism was possible in the then circumstances inevitably produced a hot debate inside the national movement. An ideological-political churning took place. Two trends emerged, the one traditional and orthodox, for the status quo to the extent possible and hence reactionary nationalist, and the other openminded and forward looking and hence progressive nationalist. Bitter experience of imperialist policy and the irresistible appeal of the new ideas made the progressive trend, step by step, dominant inside the national movement, specially in so far as the accepted policy statements were concerned.

Within the framework of the above ideological-political development another development took place. From among the progressive nationalists the more venturesome advanced to the general positions of socialism and began exerting a decisive influence over the progressive nationalists as a whole. Again as a part of this very process a few went forward to adopt the standpoint of Marxism-Leninism and despite the limitation of their numbers, with experience and maturity began to set the pace.

A silent revolution took place in India, in the minds of Indian freedom fighters, in the realm of ideas. These ideas after official adoption by the National Congress and their mass popularisation gave new life and an irreversibly progressive direction to the Indian liberation movement.

The luminous example of Lenin across the border and the light of Leninist ideas dawning upon India could not but

produce Lenin's followers within India itself and in Lenin's own lifetime. It did happen. We have already noted young Dange attempting a comparison between Gandhi and Lenin as early as 1921. Small local groups of communists were being formed and the British imperialist bureaucrats on the prodding of Whitehall, decided upon what they thought would be a fatal blow at Indian communism in its very infancy. The Cawnpore Bolshevik Conspiracy Case was launched. Of those arrested four were put up for trial, S. A. Dange, Muzaffar Ahmed, Shaukat Usmani (a former Muhajarin come home after political training in Tashkent and Moscow) and Nalini Gupta, who had come to build contacts from the Communist International. They were convicted to four years' confinement in jail and hard labour.

Referring to this the newly started *Mazdur* of Kanpur wrote: "It is altogether impossible for the bureaucracy to suppress Bolshevism. If the arrogant bureaucracy does not give up its absolutist ways it shall have to shed tears of blood at its misdeeds." In another article the paper stated: "Not only in Europe but in the home of every cultivator and labourer in India children are being reared as future Lenins" ("Confidential Note on UP Press" for week ending 24 April 1924).

The influential anti-imperialist Muslim organ, *Medina*, wrote after the rejection of the appeal by the Allahabad High Court,

"Let somebody question these foolish enemies of common sense whether the Bolshevik bogy possesses any material body which can be stopped by armies, men-of-war, guns, arrests and imprisonment. Bolshevism is in fact a manifestation of popular feeling which is being created in every labourer and exploited element against the unbearable oppression and tyranny of the capitalists. Nature itself imposes changes and revolutions and hence Bolshevism will certainly manifest itself in some form or another" ("Confidential Note on UP Press" for the week ending 29 November 1924).

The Kanpur nationalist daily, *Vartman*, commented

"The charge of conspiracy appears to be quite baseless. The capitalist bureaucracy does not wish that socialism should be preached in this country but can the diffusion of knowledge and light be prevented in this manner?"

The Banaras nationalist daily, *Aj*, said, "The accused cannot be held to be conspirators or to have formed a conspiracy. The decision of the Sessions Judge is a mere example of miscarriage of justice which should be rectified" ("Confidential Report on UP Press" for week ending 31 May 1924).

The *Surya* condemned the decision in the Cawnpore Bolshevik Conspiracy Case as "a travesty of justice which has been perpetrated simply because Indians are a subject people".

The *Hindi Kesari* of Banaras, the Hindi counterpart of the *Tilakite Kesari*, in Marathi, remarked that "all the circumstances connected with the case show that it was a veritable farce of justice" ("Confidential Note on UP Press" for the week ending 21 June 1924).

The popular weekly *Pratap* expressed indignation over

"the convicts of the Bolshevik Conspiracy Case. Who were hitherto accorded special treatment are now treated as ordinary criminals and have been made to wear jail uniforms and to put on the prisoners' ring and ticket. They were provided with such bad food that they could not possibly eat it, and have been keeping hungry... It is nothing but sheer meanness on the part of the government to have made such a change in the treatment originally accorded to these political convicts" (Confidential Note on UP Press" for the week ending 19 July 1924).

After the dismissal of the appeal of the accused by the Allahabad High Court the Bengali daily, *Dainik Basumati* (Calcutta), of 12 November 1924 wrote:

"If we are to believe the evidence recorded, we cannot deny that there is a class of men in the country, no matter how small they may be, who want to free India from the hands of the English by armed rebellion.

"It was in order to check this tendency of these people

that Mahatma Gandhi started nonviolent noncooperation and as a result of his epochmaking agitation the spirit of armed revolution was banished from the country for some time. The government even tried to check the agitation started by Mahatma Gandhi by repressive measures . . .

"This accounts for the reappearance of opinion in favour of armed revolution in the land. Do the authorities now understand who is responsible for this? The desire of the people for winning freedom cannot be stifled, however great the coercion . . ."

The above representative selection of newspaper comments shows that the Indian communists were not shunned by nationalist sections but supported, in terms of anti-imperialist fraternity, as victims of imperialist repression. Their ideals and ideas were held to be irrepressible. British imperialism, with its "Indian" policy, was nailed down as being directly responsible for the emergence of this new revolutionary force on Indian soil. It is noteworthy that there is not even a faint hint about the Indian communists being "Moscow agents"!

Mahatma Gandhi's withdrawal of the first noncooperation movement, when it was irresistibly advancing, came as a nasty surprise to most of the national cadres. Disagreement was widespread but so was helplessness. Everyone acutely felt the tragedy of the situation. The lead given by the official national leadership was questioned but there was no other centre to give an alternative lead to keep up the march. Therefore in the rethinking that followed about the strategy and tactics the more farsighted left elements also stressed the need to form a new party. To popularise the new programme, implement the new strategy and tactics an independent political party, of a new type, was considered a necessity. It was not conceived as an alternative to the National Congress and operating in opposition to it. The bulk of the membership of the new party could not but be discontented congress militants and they were to function as an organised group inside and through the Congress to the extent possible, but they were to function outside the Congress as well, independently organising the masses in their class organisations and

ceaselessly campaigning for the programme and the current slogans of the party.

That in Madras Singaravelu Chettiar and his comrades had started the Labour-Kishan Party in the early twenties has already been noted. About the same time S. A. Dange was also writing in his *Socialist* about the need to form a "Congress Socialist" Party. A very popular left weekly of Bengal wrote:

"It is a matter for rejoicing that another party in the country is on the way to formation—it is the party of labour, the party of coolies, labourers and cultivators. They are now famished, helpless and illiterate but their eyes have been opened, they also are learning to talk, to recognise friend and foe and they are also organising themselves... In this struggle for freedom perhaps everyone will try to feather his own nest... But this party of coolies, labourers, etc. has no vested interest. Should these men get an ideal to fight for and acquire the power to act unitedly, they will work wonders, and it is they who will fight to the last... It is on the building up of such a party that the achievement of freedom of the country depends" (*Atmashakti*, 25 October 1922).

Dr Bhupendra Nath Dutta, the younger brother of Swami Vivekananda, was a revolutionary leader in his own right. After an active terrorist-revolutionary life in India and abroad in exile, and as a leading member of the Indian National Committee under Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, he had himself seen the bankruptcy and futility of the traditional revolutionary-terrorist outlook and tactics. He had come, like many of his comrades-in-arms, to new conclusions which he shared with the fellow fighters for freedom in India through his two articles in the *Hindustan Review* (January and April).

"For the last two decades India is in a state of political unrest. A ferment has been created in the minds of the ever sleeping dumb masses, which may burst forth at any opportune time..."

"Every revolutionary talks of revolution and independence but it seems very few are clear about its constructive

side or programme. The Indian revolutionary movement has got no definite, clearcut, constructive programme. It is still groping in the dark. For that reason it has developed no political philosophy of its own. People shout for self-government, for swaraj, or for independence but very few of them are clear as to how it should be worked out and the constructive programme after it.

"Now it is our duty to make an analysis of the forces that are working and playing a great part in our society, to investigate the social classes that are working for the cause of freedom, and to form a practical programme for the guidance of the movement..."

"It is the duty of the workers of Indian freedom to organise the masses..."

"The Indian masses are aroused... It can be clearly discerned that the brunt of the fight for freedom will fall on them..."

"In order to make the masses fulfil their great historic mission they should be organised into an independent political party. In order to guide the masses, a constructive programme dealing with the tactics and the ideal should be given to them... In order to raise the masses and to make them the heralds of New India, a new world view, embodied in a new social polity, has to be preached to them. As the masses are going to be the torch-bearers of the fight for freedom it should be our aim to work among them and to make them class conscious and thus bring about the desired change in India."

A Bengali weekly of those days, *Sramik*, run by the congress labour leader, Santosh Kumari Gupta, wrote on 26 October 1924:

"It is time for us to decide what we are going to do. We millions of peasants and labourers have no right on our land and though we raise crops on the soil, pouring out drop by drop our heart's blood, we do not get two full meals a day..."

"O Judges of the political destiny of India, we have

made contributions to the Congress, we have suffered imprisonment for swaraj, we have gone on strike at your bidding, many of us died like cats and dogs from shots fired by the police, but have we ever found you standing by our side?

"Today we want to organise a new party in the country, we want to preach the message of a new freedom from millions of throats. . . Whoever will stand in the way of our freedom will have to move away from the path. . . We proclaim loudly today that we will ourselves clear the path to our liberty. It will be complete liberty, without any fraud or artifice about it. We cannot have any real welfare without the possession of political rights. So we want to organise a new party today. Indian labourers and peasants, will you remain inactive? Will you grudge self-sacrifice to recover your lost rights?"

The disillusionment with the official congress leadership was acute and then dawned the realisation of the revolutionary role of the working class and the peasantry. The formation of the Communist Party became the logical next step, especially when the new thinking among the advanced Indian patriotic circles was taking place in the light of the experience of the Russian revolution. The Kanpur group, with Satyabhakta as its moving spirit, by the middle of 1925 took the initiative to form the Communist Party. The UP government proscribed its manifesto without banning the Party. This stirred the *Sramik*, 26 October 1924, to write:

"We call upon the people of the country, particularly the freedom-loving youngmen, to enrol themselves in large numbers as members of the Indian Communist Party to protest against this action of government. Let those who want the real freedom of the country, the freedom of millions of labourers and peasants, come forward. They should remember that the millions of communists all over the world will stand behind them."

The Kanpur Hindi daily, *Vartman*, characterised the proscription as an "example of irresponsibility. The tsardom of the provincial government in political matters is gradu-

ally crossing the limit of the endurance of the people" ("Confidential Note on UP Press" for the week ending 25 October 1924).

The Muslim Urdu press also publicised the formation of the Communist Party in India, for example the *Sada-i-Muslim* and the *Hamdam* wrote that "the party would prove very useful lever for the organisation of the peasantry provided it came under the banner of the Congress".

Satyabhakta on behalf of the new communist group also took the initiative to hold the first All-India Conference of Indian Communists alongside the annual session of the National Congress, in Kanpur during 1925 Christmas week. Since the organisers were not the trusted contacts of M. N. Roy, the Indian revolutionary exile turned communist and become the Communist International representative for work in India, a big question mark was put over this proposed communist conference. British communist MP, Saklatvala was invited to preside over the conference but it was obviously thought wise not to get directly associated with the venture. The deliberations of this conference were however followed with active interest in Moscow. M. N. Roy in a series of articles in the *Masses*, 1926, edited by him, denounced the whole affair as an attempted manufacture of "national communism" and lead the awakening cadres away from the path of genuine communism.

Many of M. N. Roy's judgments proved to be hasty and wrong. It is necessary to have a fresh look at the origin of communism in India. The subject deserves a lot of sustained research and serious discussion before the character of this first conference and its place in the development of the communist movement in India can be adequately assessed. Below are some indications and tentative ideas, based on the available documents of the conference.

The very name of the new party, "The Indian Communist Party" instead of "The Communist Party of India" was considered objectionable, reeking with nationalism. In those early days of the Communist International it was considered imperative to stress and own the ideological distinctiveness

and international brotherhood of communism and not the national origin of the party.

Again those responsible for holding the conference were against affiliating the new organisation to the Communist International. Satyabhakta in his circular letter, 12 October 1925, stated that "such a step is not possible for us owing to the fact that the government will at once try to suppress our activities on the slightest move towards this direction". Maulana Hasrat Mohani, the chairman of the reception committee, in his speech announced "our organisation is purely Indian"; referring to the other communist parties in other countries and the Communist International "we are only fellow travellers and not their subordinates". He stressed not only independence of the new party but also defined the international attitude of the new party in positive terms as "of sympathy and mental affinity", with all other communist parties and "the Communist International in particular".

Just because these early pioneers wanted to escape international organisational connection because of compulsive legal or overwhelmingly political considerations it will be wrong and unjust to characterise their standpoint as anti-internationalist. They sincerely considered themselves as a part of the international communist fraternity. In his presidential address Singaravelu referring to "our suffering comrades" stated "our first thought" went to those convicted in the Cawnpore Bolshevik Conspiracy Case, "next, our equally profound sympathy goes to those Britishers who have also suffered in the great communist hunt that is going on in Britain". He also solemnly condoled "the great dead"—Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, James and Lenin, "the Teacher, our Redeemer".

Singaravelu's statement "Indian communism is not Bolshevism" was liable to be misunderstood in the then prevailing set up inside the Communist International and was effectively used by M. N. Roy against him and the new party. He did not deny but expressed loyalty to universal principles of communism. "We are one with the world communists", by Bolshevism he meant the application of these principles

to the specific conditions of Russia. Instead of being anti-Soviet he was all for studying the Soviet experience. "In applying the theories of communism to the present conditions in India, we communists, have to watch the progress of communism in the only country where it has been completely adopted and the great transformations that are in progress in the life of the people there."

So far as practical politics was concerned the primacy of the struggle for independence was duly and correctly stressed. In his presidential address Singaravelu stated:

"In the great struggle for swaraj which is now in progress throughout the country we communists, have to take up the greatest share in the struggle. . . The motto of every Indian communist ought to be 'No life without swaraj and no swaraj without workers'."

Maulana Hasrat Mohani in explaining "our aims and objects" put the first item as "To establish swaraj or complete independence by all fair means". In the "General Rules of the Communist Party" it was "to secure the freedom of India by all practicable means". This was different from the Congress creed. Maulana Hasrat Mohani explained: "Some consider that communism necessarily stands for bloodshed and terrorism. The only basis for this wrong notion is that we sanction nonviolence only as an expedient and a necessity and do not like Mahatma Gandhi accept it as a fixed principle for all time."

Singaravelu took the issue further when he stated: "We wish that our (Indian communists—PCJ) peaceful movement will be better understood both by our countrymen and rulers."

Satyabhakta put it thus: "It should be at once admitted that we are not in a position to employ violent methods in the pursuit of our propaganda as is the case with the communist parties of the other countries. . . The question that confronts us is one of securing independence of the country above all other questions."

The Communist International in those days had raised the acceptance of armed struggle almost to the level of a

principle. This on the hand was being used by British imperialist rulers as the sword of Damocles and on the other hand scaring away from communism the Indian freedom fighters bound by Gandhian nonviolence. This early, obviously wrong, attitude of Indian communists was conditioned by two factors which loomed large before them at the moment. The first was the urge for legality under British imperialism and the second to escape isolation from the national milieu conditioned by Gandhian concepts.

In fact M. N. Roy had attacked the very idea of a legal Communist Party in Indian conditions and that after the Cawnpore Conspiracy Case. But the sponsors of the conference relied upon the judgment of this very case which had conceded that accepting and preaching communism was no crime and by starting the Communist Party they claimed to put the issue to the test.

The starting of the party played a useful role in the sense that the controversy that followed led to greater clarity of principles and a practical line of action, the Communist Party to be an illegal secret organisation but take the initiative to launch and lead a legal advanced anti-imperialist party based on the workers and peasants. Workers' and Peasants' Parties were started in the provinces soon after.

In the documents and discussions of the conference ideological confusion and immaturity inevitably prevailed. The utopian outlook and egalitarian sentiments dominated.

The problem of the path to socialism in India and its transitional forms was not tackled at all.

There was some schematic understanding of the economics of socialism but hardly any of its politics. The socialist society as being based on the nationalisation of the means of production etc. was understood but the issue of appropriate state power, and its qualitatively new distinctive character were not part of the understanding of the organisers.

Socialism and communism are two distinct stages in social development. The two words were indiscriminately used.

The very pioneers who were starting the Communist

Party were themselves in the transitional stage from anti-imperialism to Marxism-Leninism. Historically it could not be otherwise. M. N. Roy's was criticism from above and of a purely negative character. Despite all its weaknesses and failings the Communist Party that had been started became the nucleus around which those elements who had sincerely come to communism and loyally stuck together got organised and the struggle to build a Communist Party worthy of its name and based on Lenin's heritage began. Mistakes were paid for but the early effort begun at Kanpur continued and paid dividends.

Starting a Communist Party on Indian soil was something new in Indian political life. And what is more it was welcomed along with friendly criticism in authoritative Indian noncommunist nationalist circles.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta), of 28 December 1925, commenting on Singaravelu's presidential address stated:

"This is intelligible and we may even say reasonable in view of the present condition of the country. It is but equitable that the workers—both brain and manual—should demand a legitimate share in the governance of the country with capital and property. But the nation would not tolerate any party setting up a separate organisation independent of and rival to the Congress. Let the Communist Party be within the Congress, seek to assert itself by convincing the majority about the justice of its cause and modify the programme to suit the interests of the workers. But to repeat parrotlike the Soviet jargon without due regard to its applicability in India is hardly calculated to add to the strength or influence of the party."

Satyabhakta had already insured against this by stating in his 12 October 1925 Circular Letter:

"There is a section of people who imagine that we do not desire any connection with the Congress or that we are even opposed to it. This is not the truth... After all the

Congress is a well-established and influential institution and the best interests of the country require us to reform it and not go against it. We appeal to all members of the party to become also members and delegates of the Congress with the intention of changing it into an instrument of service to our people."

The leading Bengali nationalist daily, the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* of 31 December 1925 wrote:

"The Communist Party has made its appearance as the mouthpiece of the raiyats and the labourers. There is no denying the fact that the need of such a party had been felt very keenly, specially for the reason that the Congress had more or less remained indifferent to the interests of the raiyats and the labourers.

"The strength of the nation will increase to a considerable extent if the Communist Party succeeds in organising a political party composed of the raiyats and labourers and forms it into a section of the Congress. It is, nevertheless, desirable that the communists of India should not imitate the Bolsheviks of Russia. They can very well form a Communist Party suited to the social and political constitution of India, without being constrained to borrow from Russia."

The English daily, started by Deshbandhu Das, was the most clearheaded and understanding:

"The first Indian Communist Conference is a new venture in our politics and its proceedings are being watched by the public with keen interest. It cannot be gainsaid that the bourgeoisie in India as elsewhere, with their strong class instincts, have not done enough for the masses. There is therefore considerable justification for a party which seeks to organise the masses, gives the latter an idea of their true interests and is pledged to protect their interests as against the interests of the other classes. The conflict between such a party and other parties arises when the former arrogates to itself the supreme position

in the state. We are glad to find that the Communist Conference did not place before its party a separatist programme but left open the question of its cooperation with other parties. The question of questions today is that of swaraj and, in our endeavour to obtain it, there ought not to be antagonism between the Congress and the Swaraj Party on the one hand, and the Communist Party on the other" (*Forward*, Calcutta, 28 December 1925).

The Communist Party got a good and cheering start in India.

CONCLUSION

As was inevitable in the Indian circumstances the impact of the Russian revolution and Lenin's ideas came to India close together. They had to negotiate the blinding din and the thick smokescreen of the British-imperialist propaganda barrage. Soviet policy announcements were blacked out by British controlled news media. Lenin's writings were banned under the British regime. No Indian could visit Soviet Russia openly and legally. Indian response was based almost exclusively on its own living experience of the British raj and its healthy aspirations of a better future for our country and the then imperialist dominated world, in which the Russian revolution had made the first dent. The contemporary Indian understanding was amazingly penetrating, despite the imperialist efforts and the historical limitations.

Imperialist propaganda concentrated upon painting Soviet Russia as an aggressive power like tsarist Russia. Indian national opinion from the experience of Soviet policy and practice easily saw in the rise of Soviet Russia the emergence of a new principled anti-imperialist power the like of which the world had never seen before. New Russia was seen as a power hostile to imperialism and an ally in the anti-imperialist struggle, a friend of Indian freedom. Thus were laid the foundations of Indo-Soviet friendship which is witnessed so warmly displayed in our days, and which constitutes a pillar of our independent foreign policy.

Lenin's ideas ceased being foreign when Indian patriotic circles began studying Leninist revolutionary strategy and tactics for the world in general and the revolution in the enslaved colonial nations in particular, to understand the failure under Gandhian leadership to win swaraj within the year as promised and planned. The result was an upliftment of the Indian national movement. The difference was seen during the 1930 civil disobedience movement, in the level and sweep of the struggle. The working class and the peasantry began coming into their own and the Communist Party got formed and became active within the national movement. New forces were born and became active in moulding the character of the Indian struggle and the future of the country.

Soviet Russia had to pass through hard times in Lenin's days because of imperialist intervention and civil war. The imperialist propaganda image of Lenin's land was of one in the throes of anarchy and misery. The Indian patriotic side, with Poet Rabindranath Tagore in the forefront, hailed the Soviet internal struggle as a heroic effort to banish ignorance and poverty from that part of the world.

Socialism began being admired in India as an ideal in Lenin's time. It has been accepted as the national ideal in our time. The appeal of socialism is irresistible but implementing it in life is a different matter. India has yet to acquire the needed ideological wisdom, political strength and practical determination to go down to and work among our toiling people. The earlier generation of our country went to Lenin as the neta (leader) of a successful revolution. The present generation cannot do without him, he was also the guru who nursed and trained those who successfully built the first socialist state in the world. Lenin is no more but the relevance of Leninism to India remains. The national ideal calls for the Leninist understanding to discover and chart the Indian path to socialism, and fulfil the practical tasks that follow from it.

Lenin in the Eyes of Contemporary Bengalis (1917-24)

Gautam Chattopadhyay

THE BACKGROUND

As far back as the middle of the nineteenth century, the radical elements in Bengal started taking a stand on the side of the toiling masses of the country and aired utopian socialist ideas. *Bengal Spectator* (1842-43), mouthpiece of the Bengal British India Society, the organisation of the radical nationalists known as the "Young Bengal", categorically stated that "land should belong to the ryots" and issued a famous questionnaire to find out the actual condition of the toiling peasants. One of their stalwarts, Radhanath Sikdar, the man who surveyed the highest peak in the Himalayas, championed the cause of the labourers and asked them to form a kind of union. By 1858, *Somprakash*, the Bengali weekly, published from Changripota—a village near Calcutta—started exposing the oppression of tea and indigo planters. In 1860 came the Bengalwide general strike by indigo cultivators and the radical intelligentsia supported them. The *Somprakash* hailed the formation of the First International Workingmen's Association and editorially supported the call for an "8-hour working day".

The Paris Commune of 1871 stirred even distant Bengal, as is clearly evident from this small item of news, which appeared in the British journal *Eastern Post* of 19 August 1871:

"The General Council of the International Working Men's Association held its usual weekly meeting on Tuesday evening last at the council rooms, 256, High Holborn, W.C.1 (The minutes reveal that Karl Marx was also present—cc)...

"... An application was made in a letter from Calcutta for leave to start a section in India. The writer said: Great discontent exists among the people and the British government is thoroughly disliked. The taxation is excessive and the revenues are swallowed up in maintaining a costly system of officialism. As in other places, the extravagances of the ruling class contrast in a painful manner with the wretched condition of the workers, whose labours create the wealth, thus squandered. The principles of the International would bring the mass of the people into its organisation if a section was started."

Next year, in 1872, a Brahma reformer, with utopian socialist views—Sashipada Bannerji—founded an organisation called Bharat Sramajibi Sangha (Indian Workingmen's Association) and started a journal, called *Bharat Sramajibi* (Indian Workingmen). In its very first number, the famous Brahma radical, Sibnath Shastri, wrote a poem, entitled *Sramajibi* (Workingmen)—giving an inspiring call to Indian workers to follow the workers of Europe.

Another famous Brahma radical Dwarkanath Ganguly, together with Sibnath, paid secret visits to Assam tea gardens and wrote a series of factual, moving articles in the Bengali daily *Sanjivani*, under the pen name of "Son of Legri", exposing brilliantly the virtual slave trade carried on then by the white tea planters.

The great Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra, wrote at this time (1879) a sharp article called *Samya* (Equality) in which he declared:

"That you are born unto a high family is hardly your credit; just as if some one else is born unto a lowly family, it is not his discredit. The downtrodden have as much right to happiness on earth, as you have. Do not try to

take away their happiness—remember they too are your brothers, your equals."

Bankim went a step further and opposed private ownership of means of production and supported in a very general way, the ideas of socialism. In ringing words, Bankim asserted:

"When I say all these, it is rejected by most people in the world and fools even laugh at these principles. But a day shall come, when these principles shall rule the world."

Lal Behari Dey, took up the pen all his life in defence of the toiling peasantry. Adhar Chandra Das wrote a book where he pleaded the case for abolition of landlordism and distribution of land to the tillers. Towards the close of the nineteenth century, two powerful voices sounded in support of socialism—the Poet Rabindranath Tagore and the Patriot-sage Swami Vivekananda. Tagore was not very clear in his ideas about socialism, yet he said:

"The socialists seek to distribute wealth among all mankind—I do not know whether that is possible or not. If it be totally impossible, there I say, mankind is extremely unfortunate" (*Chhinnapatrabali*, 10 May 1893).

Vivekananda spoke in clearer terms. He was confident that the new India would arise from the ranks of the toiling millions and "The first glow of the dawn of this new power has already begun slowly to break upon the western world. ... Socialism and other sects are the vanguards of the social revolution that is to follow" (*Works*, IV, 410).

In 1906, Mahendranath Datta, second brother of Vivekananda, wrote a pamphlet in which he declared that free India should be a "toilers' republic".

In 1907, there took place an event of far greater significance. The twelfth session of the International Socialist Congress took place in that year at Stuttgart. Lenin was a member of the Russian delegation that came to the congress. For the first time three Indians were present there—2 dele-

gates—Madame Bhikaji Rustom Cama and Sardar Sing Rana and one observer—Virendranath Chattopadhyaya. They were well-known Indian revolutionaries staying then at Paris and London and they had edited the famous journals *Vandemataram*, *Talwar* and *Indian Freedom*. The congress took place from 18 to 22 August 1907 and 22 August was fixed as the date for discussions on questions relating to colonial freedom. On that day Madame Cama, on behalf of the Indian delegation, entered the congress hall, wearing a sari and holding aloft a flag of Indian freedom, prepared by herself—a tricolour, red, white and green. On the white portion was written in Devnagri script: *Vandemataram* and on the green portion was drawn a sickle-shaped moon and stars. She then moved a resolution which ran as follows:

“That the continuance of British rule in India is positively disastrous and extremely injurious to the best interest of India and lovers of freedom of all over the world ought to cooperate in freeing from slavery, the fifth of the whole human race inhabiting that oppressed country, since the perfect social state demands that no people should be subject to any despotic or tyrannical form of government.”

Madame Cama delivered a fiery speech in support of this resolution. She was warmly supported by such outstanding international socialist leaders such as Jaures, Liebknecht, Hyndman and Rosa Luxemburg. The opposition to this resolution was headed by the turncoat British leader, Ramsay MacDonald. Because of technical difficulties this motion was not put to vote but August Bebel, who was presiding, declared that the congress endorsed the spirit of this resolution. All these facts are recorded in the Minutes of the Socialist Congress of 1907, published in the same year by Vorwaerts publishing house of Stuttgart.

From Soviet research scholars, we have come to know that the Indian delegation met some Russian Marxists at the congress and that Madame Cama had regular correspondence with Maxim Gorky. But as yet, we have no reference to any contact between the Indian delegation and Lenin. One

point, however, deserves mention. Virendranath Chattopadhyaya who was present at Stuttgart in 1907 as an observer, was trying desperately to contact Lenin in May 1917—to this we shall come back later. By 1920, Virendranath was an ardent communist, a staunch admirer of Lenin and Soviet Russia. What role his experience at the Stuttgart Congress played, in shaping his later political convictions, we do not know as yet.

Abani Mukherji, who met Lenin as early as 1919 and who was one of the founders of the Communist Party of India at Tashkent in November 1920, also had early socialist contacts. In a letter, intercepted by the British intelligence in India in 1924, Abani wrote that, “I was a confirmed socialist from 1911, after coming into contact with the socialists in Germany” (Letter from Berlin, June 1924. Home [Pol. F]360B, 1924).

The bulk of the Bengal revolutionaries, however, as yet had no love for socialism, but in a romantic way, they felt a sneaking admiration for the Russian revolutionaries. Satish Pakrasi, the 76 year old doyen of the Bengal revolutionaries, when interviewed on 4 April 1969 told us:

“In many secret handbills brought out by the Bengal revolutionaries, tsarist Russia was strongly denounced as oppressor and we compared them with the oppressive British rule in India.”

During World War I, the Indian revolutionaries abroad formed a “Committee for Indian Freedom” with “Chatto” (Virendranath) as the chairman. This committee had its HQ at Berlin and it signed in 1915 an agreement with the Imperial Kaiser for achieving Indian independence. Article 10 of that agreement read as follows:

“After the liberation of India, India shall be proclaimed a Communistic Republic and the Austro-German empire shall have no authority to oppose such a move” (Abinash Bhattacharya, *Europe Bharatiya Biplaber Sadhana* (Bengali), Calcutta, 1958).

After the February revolution of 1917, many Indian revolutionaries were attracted towards Russia and Chatto was trying to contact Lenin. This had alarmed the British imperialists—that is clear from the following cable sent in May 1917 to London, by the British ambassador at Stockholm:

“Papers recently reported arrival from Berlin of certain Indian nationalists under the lead of V. Chattopadhyaya who stated in an interview that he was not concerned with peace propaganda but was working for self-government for India, independent of British control... Informant stated that... probably intention was to get Lenin or other anti-English Russian extremists to work for the Indian independence movement in Russia” (Home|Pol|F No. 1995—dated 24.5.1917).

Such was the background, when the guns of the Cruiser *Aurora* roared, sparking off the Great October Revolution and ushering in a new epoch in human history. Its deep rumbles reached even the distant shores of the Ganges in Bengal.

LENIN AND THE BENGALI NATIONALISTS (1917-20)

The British imperialists took very good care to see to it that news about the Russian revolution, the Bolsheviks and Lenin, did not reach nationalist opinion in India. But as we know, truth travels without visa and as early as 17 November 1917, a wellknown Bengali nationalist daily *Dainik Basumati* declared that “the downfall of tsardom has ushered in the age of destruction of alien bureaucracy in India too”. A few days later, 12 December the mouthpiece of British imperialism in India *The Statesman* wrote even more sharply: “The acts of the Russian revolution leadership in their collectivity constitute what is certainly the most rapid and bids fair to be the most comprehensive movement of subversion of which any historical state has been the subject.” Sometimes, the truth came out in little bits of news like this: “The Soviet representative defended the rights of small nationalities to independence” (*The Statesman*, 30 December 1917).

The British imperialists, however, had no doubt that the ideas of Lenin and the Russian revolution would leave a serious imprint on the freedom struggle in India. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report (1918) tersely declared: “The Bolshevik revolution in Russia has given impetus to Indian political consciousness.” The then head of British intelligence service in India, was a little more explicit:

“There is no doubt that the existence of the Bolshevik regime in Russia lends a great impetus to all forms of revolutionary unrest in other countries and it applies with special force to India, with the Bolshevik regime almost at her doors” (Cecil Kaye, *Bolshevism in India*, 1919, National Archives, New Delhi).

Kaye further elaborated his point thus:

“In UP and Bengal, the kisan sabha and ryot sabha are frankly pro-Bolshevik... The Bolshevik method on the question of distribution of land has greatly attracted the Indian masses and those among the Indian agitators who call themselves Bolsheviks, popularise this method... *Lenin certainly desires revolution in India but I think that Lenin is quite content to allow the Indian revolution to proceed along its own peculiar course*” (italics mine: GC).

Despite this alarm of imperialist circles, nationalist opinion was as yet confused. Take for example the remark of the Poet Rabindranath Tagore:

“We know very little of the present revolution in Russia and with the scanty materials in our hand, we cannot be certain, if she in her tribulations, is giving expression to man’s indomitable soul against prosperity, built upon moral nihilism” (“At the Cross Roads”, *Modern Review*, July 1918).

The extremist leader Bepin Chandra Pal, was somewhat clearer in his views, when in a public meeting on 14 December 1919, he declared:

“The ruling classes of most of the European countries sweated human labour, dehumanised the proletariat for

their own aggrandisement and profit... There has grown up all over the world a new power—the power of the peoples, determined to rescue their legitimate rights—the rights of the people to live freely and happily without being exploited and victimised by the wealthier and so-called higher classes. This is Bolshevism.”

Indian revolutionaries, including that daring son of Bengal, Abani Mukherji, had reached the Soviet Union by 1919 and some of them had already met Lenin. These contacts led to the birth of a new wave of revolutionary pamphleteering and one such booklet in Persian by Barkatullah, was seized by the British intelligence service in Bengal. Its conclusion runs thus:

“Oh brethren, know that you should not recoil from the Russian nation and the present government of Russia. You should rather shun those savage wolves of Europe, who stand ready to conquer countries and enslave peoples, who have usurped your homes and turned them into their own colonies—they should be driven out” (*Bolshevism* (Persian), 15 March 1919, Tashkent—Home|Pol|GOI|2295—28.10.1919).

Ideas were getting clearer in India too. The Calcutta daily *Nayak* declared on 16 July 1919 that Bolshevism, the herald of the new age, was knocking at our door. The moderate mouthpiece *Bangalee* wrote on 15 August 1919: “Bolshevism is but another name for the conquest of power by millions of workers, replacing the rule by a handful of capitalists.” The *Dainik Basumati* of 25 November 1919 was even more emphatic: “The patriotism, sacrifice and urge to establish equality by the Bolsheviks cannot be overpraised.”

Most of the young revolutionaries of Bengal were in jail or in detention then. The Russian revolution created a deep impression in their mind. We interviewed some of the old guards, like Bhupendra Kumar Dutta, Satish Pakrasi and Gopen Chakravarty. Here is a typical comment by Satish Pakrasi on 4 April 1969:

“We greeted the great October revolution in prison. The ideal of communism vaguely attracted us. In jail we obtained a British paper called: *19th Century and After*. This was quite critical of the Bolshevik revolution but it regularly gave excerpts from the speeches by Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev. We read these excerpts over and over again and tried to understand them.”

Or take this from Gopen Chakravarty (28 February 1969):

“In jail we got only *The Statesman*, mouthpiece of British imperialism. It viciously attacked every day Soviet Russia, particularly Lenin and this convinced us that something really progressive had taken place there. We again went on hungerstrike and secured the right to read *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. In the columns of the *Patrika*, we obtained a far clearer picture of the anti-imperialist character of Bolshevik Russia and were semiconvinced that this was the new way forward for us too. This was 1918—may be February or March.”

Some Bengali revolutionaries in exile, however, had already come close to socialism. We have already mentioned “Chatto” and Abani Mukherji. We should also pay our tributes to Naren Bhattacharya, who had escaped to the USA and there as M. N. Roy, he was to become the most outstanding socialist of them all. Let us quote from Roy’s autobiography:

“I frequented the New York Public Library to read the works of Karl Marx and discovered a new meaning in them. It was not long before I accepted socialism... Shortly thereafter America joined the war. I escaped imprisonment by fleeing to Mexico... My first socialist essay was published with... the title: ‘The Way to Durable World Peace’” (*Memoirs*, 29).

In 1920, two leading Bengali revolutionaries met Lenin—M. N. Roy and Abani Mukherji. The latter seems to have presented Lenin with a copy of his booklet on Moplah rebellion and Lenin wrote a terse comment on the fly-leaf of the book “Not Bad”. Roy actually clashed with Lenin over

the drafting of the Colonial Theses at the Second Congress of the Communist International. Roy was taking up a frankly sectarian position, while Lenin was trying to emphasise the need for the broadest united front against imperialism. A French delegate to the congress, recalling the historic controversy, wrote thus:

“Patiently Lenin replied to Roy, explaining that for a longer or shorter period of time the Indian Communist Party would be a small party with but few members, having only weak resources, incapable of reaching, on the basis of its programme and by means of its own activity, a substantial number of peasants and workers. On the other hand, on the basis of demands for national independence, it would become possible to mobilise large masses...” (Alfred Rosmer, *The New International*, 109).

What were the reactions of M. N. Roy himself? Let us quote his own words:

“Lenin’s attitude was very kind and tolerant... It was perhaps the most valuable experience of my life until then. I had the rare privilege of being treated as an equal by a great man who proved his greatness by doing so” (*Memoirs*, 380).

However, Roy did not become a convert to Lenin’s Colonial Theses and the minutes of the Second Congress of the Comintern record that Roy and quite a few other delegates from eastern countries concentrated their efforts against Lenin’s theses advocating unity of all anti-imperialist forces.

Another Bengali revolutionary, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, a leader of the Berlin Committee for Indian Freedom, however, held views much closer to Lenin and he sent his own theses to Lenin. According to Dr Bhupendra Nath Dutta, Lenin sent back a wire to “Chatto”, agreeing with his theses that British imperialism must be destroyed first. This is corroborated by the British imperialists themselves:

“In October 1920, the wellknown Indian revolutionary Virendranath Chattopadhyaya who was then in Stock-

holm put forward a proposal for the organisation of all the Indian revolutionaries in Europe. A society was to be started to...include all shades of revolutionaries, whether nationalists or communists...Chatto proposed that... he should go to Moscow to discuss it. The Soviet government agreed and Chatto went to Moscow, where he met Lenin...” (Kaye, *Communism in India*).

Lenin and the Comintern now tried to forge links with Indian revolutionaries through Roy, “Chatto”, Abani Mukherji and others.

LENIN AND THE BENGALI NATIONALISTS (1921-24)

By 1921, increasing number of Bengali patriots—moderate nationalists, revolutionaries as well as intellectuals—had started publicly admiring Soviet Russia. Lenin was now quite a hero in their eyes. Rathindranath Tagore, the son of the great Poet Rabindranath, in his memoirs about his father has an interesting observation to make about this period (1920-22). The poet had sent his son to the villages in North Bengal and Rathindranath was holding a meeting on the banks of the river Padma. A heated debate among the villagers was in progress, when an old peasant, with flowing white beard got up and said:

“Sir, to talk a lot on rural problems means to talk rubbish. The ‘swadesi’ youngsters talk tall about improving the lot of the country. But when it comes to real work, no trace of them can be found. Oh, if a man like Lenin was born here, he would have put everything straight” (*Pitri Smriti*, Calcutta, 1966, 217).

The rays of Lenin’s ideas and his name had thus reached, even the backwaters of Bengal villages. The radical younger section of the Bengal revolutionaries were then bringing out many Bengali journals like *Sankha* (The Conchshell), *Bijolee* (Lightning), *Atmashakti* (Selfstrength) and so on. The reference to Lenin and the Russian revolution became more and more frequent in these journals.

Bijlee, edited by the noted revolutionary Barindra Kumar Ghosh, wrote on 17 June 1921:

“What has the socialist revolution brought to Russia? . . . Firstly education. In tsarist days, 75 per cent of the people were illiterate—now the entire population is getting education. The second achievement: Russia has given up worshipping mammon. So long, western democracy was a hoax. The capitalists controlled the press and the political leaders. The big factory owners hypnotised millions by the power of money, kept them in wage slavery and led them by their ears to the voting booth.”

About a year later, this theme was further developed in a sharp article in the leftwing swarajist weekly *Atmashakti*:

“The democracy that exists in Europe today has very little to do with demos. Liberty, Equality and Fraternity hardly exist inside their parliaments. Those who have votes and those who have no votes—both suffer equally. This is the picture in England, France and USA. . . . Those who have no money, may have formal freedom but that does not ensure them a square meal, nor does it lessen their suffering.

“This hunger, this misery have made the common people restless. That is why in England, France, Italy, USA, the people are trying to overthrow their rulers and capture the state machinery. The crime of Russia is that she has successfully done this job before everybody else. That is why the bosses of Europe have at once started a huge hue and cry against Russia. Aping them, we too have started howling in a like manner.”

This long article was written on 22 November 1922 by one “Anantananda”—obviously a pseudonym. Our search has revealed that this was the pen-name of none else but Upendranath Banerjee, the wellknown revolutionary and then editor of *Atmashakti*.

Sachindranath Sanyal was a young revolutionary, who was the leader of a small revolutionary party, connected with Rashbehari Bose. In Bengal, Sachin was friendly with the

radical wing of the Anushilan Party, who were then bringing out a Bengali weekly called *Sankha* (The Conchshell). From March 1921, Sachin started serialising a biography of Lenin in *Sankha*. He wrote several instalments. Here is an excerpt from the issue of 29 Magh 1329 BS—February 1922:

“Lenin was never sentimental. In this book too *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* there was not a trace of sentimentalism. He collected data from a wide variety of sources and with the help of illustrations he analysed the economic condition of Russia at length. It was Lenin who for the first time pointed out with great clarity the fact that mere establishment of political democracy will not solve all problems, because the rich, by virtue of their economic power, would retain real power in their hands. Lenin translated Karl Marx’s socialist theories in Russia for the first time in practice.”

Two things are to be noted here. The author has sufficient socialist consciousness and secondly he is paying Lenin, mature political tribute, not merely idolising him. Sachin Sanyal later became famous as leader of the Kakori Conspiracy Case, but here we see him as a pioneering socialist. The Bengali patriots were then groping towards a concrete definition of swaraj and Lenin was being accepted as a pathfinder in that direction. A word more about Sachin Sanyal. S. A. Dange told me, in course of an informal chat in January 1969 in Calcutta, that when in 1924, Dange was standing his trial in the Cawnpore Bolshevik Conspiracy Case, Sachin Sanyal, who was out on parole, came to see him and offered him legal help and solidarity. This clearly shows that though Sachin Sanyal never became a fullfledged communist, he was extremely friendly towards communists and the Soviet Union.

In the same year (September 1921), Phanibhusan Ghosh, an ardent nationalist, wrote a small booklet entitled *Lenin*, published by the Indian Book Club, College Street Market, Calcutta. In the preface of the book, Phanibhusan wrote:

“Much is known today about Bolshevism but as the British government is afraid of the Bolsheviks, they do not

allow books about them to reach India... This book records certain facts about the Bolshevik leader, Lenin. Among the books whose help I have taken, S. A. Dange's *Gandhi versus Lenin* deserves special mention" (Dange's book had been published a few months earlier from Bombay, in April 1921: cc)

Phanibhusan further declared: "On the whole both Gandhi and Lenin have a common aim: to liquidate all forms of corruption from society, specially try to end poverty of the masses and uproot the domination of despots."

Phanibhusan went on to develop the theme. He said:

"According to Gandhiji, the cause of present evils of society—modern civilisation itself, particularly industrialisation and its consequent vices. According to Lenin, the causes of the present misery—all means of production as well as land are concentrated in the hands of landlords and capitalists, there is maldistribution of wealth, leading to perpetual poverty of the overwhelming majority of the population."

Finally, Phani Ghosh makes this telling comment:

"After analysing all the causes of poverty of the masses throughout the world, the Bolsheviks have summed by three crucial factors: (a) economic materialism, (b) surplus value, and (c) class war."

Commenting on Dange's book, *Gandhi vs Lenin* Muzaffar Ahmad, another founder of the CPI, recently wrote in his *The Early Period of Communist Party Building in India* (12) that it required "a lot of guts to write such a book then (in 1921)". The same remark is true about Phanibhusan Ghosh too.

Inspired by Lenin's ideas Priyo Kumar Goswami, wrote a pamphlet called *Swadhinatar Swarup* (The Real Face of Freedom). It was published from Dacca in 1923 and in it the author sharply wrote:

"We do not want one type of slavery to replace another type. We want to strike at the roots of all forms of slavery

—social, political and economic... The masses have to be truly emancipated."

Hemanta Sarkar was a stalwart of the Swaraj Party in Bengal, an intimate friend of Subhas Bose and a trusted lieutenant of C. R. Das himself. He too was profoundly influenced by the ideas of Lenin and wrote:

"Swaraj shall bring all types of freedom. The economic equality envisaged by Karl Marx's socialism and Lenin's Bolshevik concept of all men having equal rights on earth—all these shall have their proper places in our swarajist constitution" (*Dhumketu*, 13 October 1922).

Poet Tagore was as yet pained by the "cruelty and violence" of Lenin's Russia, but his nephew, the radical intellectual Surendranath Tagore, was already welcoming Lenin with open arms. In a brilliant article in Ramananda Chatterji's wellknown English monthly, *Modern Review*, Suren Tagore wrote in February 1923:

"The peoples of Europe also are fast making the discovery as to the viciousness of their presentday state systems, whether monarchical or republican in form, so far as the life of the exploited majority of them are concerned, but having no past picture of freedom of their own to look back to, they seek the solution of the problem in the commune of the future. The capitalists and their henchmen, who are ruling Europe, have nothing but abuse for communism, which threatens their vested interest, nay their very existence. For us in India, no such prejudice need stand in the way of our considering the case for communism on its merits—rather at this juncture, we should welcome whatever part of the teaching of Marx and his followers may help us to think out more clearly our own problem of national reconstruction. In order to assist in this object, I have strung together and present below extracts from the lucid exposition of the difference between state and commonwealth, by no less an authority than Lenin himself."

Suren Tagore was incidentally a remarkable man, but very little has been written of him so far. In his early youth, he was the friend of the great Japanese patriot Kakuzo Okakura, who presented him with his samurai sword. He was also the unofficial treasurer of the Bengal revolutionaries—this has been testified to us by no less an authority than Bhupendra Kumar Dutta, the 75-year-old Jugantar Party leader. In 1923, we find him writing on Lenin and communism with rare clarity and at his deathbed in 1939, Suren Tagore wrote a remarkable book on the USSR, called *Viswa Manaber Laksmilabh*.

Roughly about the same time, in March 1924, Hemanta Chattopadhyaya, nephew of the journalist Ramananda, wrote a remarkable article—"Lenin"—in *Prabasi*. We give below a few lines:

"Lenin was no worshipper of gods; his god was mankind. . . . The motto of his life was to serve mankind. That is why he has won an immortal place in the hearts of millions of Russians, who can cheerfully lay down their lives for his ideals. Lenin was for the poverty-stricken masses. He used to say: Our ideal is imperishable—it will spread all over the world".

Two of the best assessments on Lenin in this period (1923-24) came from the pens of two Bengalis—Amulya Adhikari, a prominent leader of the Anushilan Party in Mymensingh and Professor Atul Sen of Dacca. In a series of articles on Lenin, Amulya Adhikari wrote:

"Lenin was a friend of the working class—all workers considered Lenin to be their teacher. They knew that Lenin was their real friend and leader.

"In 1901, Lenin published a newspaper called *Iskra* or Spark. The very first article had the title: 'Where to Begin?' *Iskra* used to lash out mercilessly at all forms of opportunism. Lenin tried to explain the fundamental tenets of socialism to all, in simple terms.

'When the revolution broke out in Russia, the capitalists were terrified at the angry roar of the awakened lion.

Those who tried to obstruct, were crushed under the onrushing wheels of the revolutionary chariot. . . . Within a short time, a Soviet government was established under the leadership of the Bolsheviks. . . . This became possible primarily due to the firmness of Lenin's leadership.

"The Bolsheviks are opposed to imperialism. That is why the British, the French and other imperialists are trying to destroy this newborn state. But god's will is different. The Bolsheviks, led by Lenin have emerged triumphant. The imperialists are on the run. . . . The victorious Bolsheviks are spreading throughout the world the message of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Oppressed humanity today look forward with the hope of salvation towards Lenin and the Bolsheviks" ("Lenin", *Atmashakti*, 18 April 1923).

Prof Atul Sen of Dacca National College wrote in February 1924 a small book called *Biplab Pathe Russiar Rupantar* (Transformation of Russia by Means of Revolution) and in the title page, salutations have been paid to the departed Lenin. The preface of the book was written by the great nationalist leader C. R. Das, who recommended this to the Bengali readers as the best book on Bolshevik Russia. Sen had a fairly clear concept and he wrote:

"By Bolshevism, we mean Lenin and by Lenin we mean Bolshevism. Bolshevism is no mere fancy child of Lenin's whims, it is the fulfilment of the teachings of his mentor, Karl Marx. *Das Kapital*, the world famous book of Karl Marx, is the scripture of Bolshevism. Marx dreamt of a poverty-free, egalitarian society in this book and Lenin by his genius has translated that dream into reality. Lenin's Soviet Russia is the dream-child of Karl Marx."

Young Bengali intellectuals who had gone abroad for higher study, also felt the impact of Lenin and the Russian revolution deeply. Benoy Sarkar, the eminent Indian sociologist, was in Berlin in 1922. From there, he regularly wrote letters to the radical Calcutta weekly, *Sankha*. In one such letter, he wrote in September 1922:

"Whichever street I choose, I find crowd everywhere. Whatever is the matter? Every street is full of demonstrating people. Some banners read: 'Long Live Revolution', while others proclaim: 'Workers of the World, Unite!' All the flags are red..."

"If proletarian democracy becomes strong in Germany, it will lead to similar strengthening of working class movements in France and England also. Then shall the English and French imperialists and munition manufacturers be truly doomed."

In course of the letter, Sarkar gives some interesting information:

"It is reported that the two great Bolshevik leaders of Russia—Lenin and Trotsky—are confabulating with the leader of the Indian revolutionaries, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya. This information has been ferreted out by the British intelligence officers. The Russian revolutionary leaders are framing their policy on the basis of the principle that so long as the world is divided into rich and poor, based on inequality of wealth—till then there shall be no peace on earth. This ideal of young Russia is inspiring the youth of the world."

Another leading Bengali intellectual, Khitish Prasad Chattopadhyay, the eminent Indian anthropologist, was then a student in England. Through his friend, Dr Ajeya (Shanu) Banerji, he came in contact with Murphy, one of the British delegates to the Comintern. K. P. Chattopadhyay used to tell the author of this essay (K.P.C. was my father: cc) that from a London bookshop, known as the "Bombshop" in 1921-22, he purchased and avidly read such works of Lenin as *State and Revolution*, *What Is To Be Done?* and *Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. He did not stop with reading, but went ahead to build up an Indian Seamen's Union in East London, known as the Laskars' Union, with Saklatvala as its vicepresident and K. P. Chattopadhyay himself together with his friend D. R. Gadgil (now Deputy-Chairman, Planning Commission) as the joint secretaries.

K. P. C. used to regularly go to Berlin where he met Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, M. N. Roy, Abani Mukherji and Dr Bhupen Dutta. K. P. C. was an intimate friend of Subhas Bose and on coming back to India in 1923, he jumped into the national movement as a lieutenant of C. R. Das, but all his life, till the very end, he remained a firm friend of the USSR and the Indian communist movement—such was the impact of Lenin on him in his early youth.

Here is what the imperialist record has to say about this:

"Further evidence has been obtained of Roy's connections with Bannerji (Ajeya) of Leeds and Khitish Chatterji of Cambridge. They have both been distributing Roy's communist literature... An English communist named Murphy spoke to Roy about the latter at Moscow where Roy had taken a programme for submission to Comintern... Chatterji, Bannerji, Pulin Dinda and J. G. Sen had a discussion with Saklatvala and a meeting was held on 25.2.1923" (Home Pol F 103-IV, 17 May 1923, National Archives, New Delhi).

In 1922, Lenin's teaching became even more familiar to Indian nationalists when Abani Mukherji as the emissary of the Berlin Committee and Nalini Gupta as the representative of M. N. Roy reached India secretly and contacted Bengal revolutionaries. At the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress in 1922, a handbill containing the communist programme was distributed in the name of the CPI, signed jointly by Roy and Abani Mukherji. Singaravelu Chettiar spoke at the congress openly as a communist and paid eloquent tributes to Lenin.

When Lenin died in 1924, Indian nationalists mourned too. In the front rank of the Indian mourners were revolutionaries of Bengal. Quite a few of them were keen to visit Lenin's Russia and one of them succeeded in doing so in 1925. He was Gopen Chakravarty, then a young cadre of the Anushilan Party and a contact of Nalini Gupta. He became a laskar in a ship and after a perilous journey reached Leningrad via Berlin and Hamburg. Let me conclude this

essay with the reminiscences of the 70-year-old Gopenda as told in an interview on 28 February 1969:

“After a couple of days we reached the approaches of Leningrad—the glorious city of revolution and Lenin. The captain pointed his finger towards a battleship and asked: ‘Do you know its name?’ ‘No’, was my reply. He replied, ‘This is *Aurora*, whose salvoes started off the Great October Socialist Revolution.’ From that Boleshevik captain, we heard the full story of *Aurora* and the epic fight in 1917. At Leningrad, the dock workers gave us a tumultuous reception, with speeches and slogans. I was overwhelmed—here I was at long last in the land of Lenin and socialism. In my reply, among other things, I said: ‘Your path—the path of Lenin—indicates our road too.’ Thus ended one chapter of my political life—that of revolutionary apprenticeship and a new chapter was about to begin—my communist life.”

APPENDIX
BIOGRAPHIES OF LENIN IN BENGALI
(1917-1924)

1. *Lenin*—A serialised biography by anonymous author, in 5 consecutive issues of the semireligious Bengali monthly *Satsangi*, 1921, published from Calcutta.
2. *Lenin*—A serialised biography by Sachindranath Sanyal in the radical Bengali weekly *Sankha*, Calcutta, from March 1921 to February 1922.
3. *Lenin*—A serialised biography in the Swarajist Bengali weekly *Atmashakti*, Calcutta, in April-May 1923, by Amulya Adhikari.
4. *Lenin*—Obituary tributes in *Prabasi*, wellknown Bengali monthly, March 1924 by Hemanta Chattopadhyaya.
5. *Lenin*—Bengali pamphlet by Phani Bhusan Ghosh, College Street Market, Calcutta, September 1921.
6. *Lenin and Soviet*—Pamphlet in Bengali by Priyonath Ganguli, Calcutta, 1922.
7. *Swadhinatar Sapta Surya* (Seven Suns of Freedom)—included a biography of Lenin by Hemanta Sarkar, Calcutta, 1923.
8. *Rus Jatir Karmavir* (The Russian Hero)—A pamphlet in Bengali on Lenin, Calcutta, 1924 by Nripendra Krishna Chattopadhyay.
9. *Lenin*—Serialised biography in Bengali monthly, *Samhati*, Calcutta, by Keshaveswar Bose, 1923.

Lenin in Hindi Literature and Press

Devendra Kaushik

V. I. Lenin appeared on the world historical horizon in the epoch of imperialism when the objective prerequisites of a socialist revolution had matured in the capitalist countries and an intensive struggle for the national liberation had begun in the colonial countries. The October revolution, the first breach in the citadel of world imperialism, focused the attention of the working people all over the world on Lenin, its architect. Lenin's name soon became a symbol of freedom and progress, of liberation from exploitation and colonial yoke.

Breaking through the cordon sanitaire thrown round the country by its British rulers, and their virulent smear and slander campaign, books, pamphlets and articles on Lenin and the October revolution began to appear in the different national languages of India. They bear an eloquent testimony to the tremendous impact of Lenin and the Russian revolution on our national liberation movement.

Among the Indian languages Hindi takes a pride of place in disseminating objective information about the October revolution and its great leader Lenin. In fact, the interest taken in Russian history by Hindi writers dates back to a period much earlier than the 1917 revolution. The first book on Russian history appeared in Hindi in 1909 (Mishra Bandhu, *Roos ka Itihas*, Allahabad). In 1919 a booklet of 85 pages called *Samyavadi* (Communism) appeared in Hindi. It was published by Shiv Narain Mishra Vaidya from the

Pratap office (a Hindi paper from Kanpur edited by the veteran journalist Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi).

The author, who preferred to remain anonymous, described himself as "a student of contemporary politics—a graduate". This work is of great interest in so far as it is (to the best of my knowledge) the first book in any Indian language giving correct information about the general principles of communism and its great teacher, Lenin. It had a circulation of 2,000 copies, an impressive number for those times.

The author introduced his work as a primer of communism written with the object of filling up a gap that existed in Hindi literature at a time "when the tide of communism was running high all over the world". The sources tapped by the author were mostly western books on history and politics and the western press. He, however, used them critically to present correct facts about the communist movement and Lenin. The booklet devoted three pages to Lenin's life and work (82-84).

Lenin is lauded in this booklet for his "boundless self-confidence" and portrayed as a scholar-statesman proficient in several languages. "There never was such an erudite leader in the Russian revolution", writes the author about Lenin. We are told how Lenin was adored by his comrades for his "dauntless courage, irrepressible will and complete selflessness". Lenin's personal character, the author wrote, was above board and nobody doubted his integrity. He also praised Lenin for his simple living. Rejecting by implication the imperialist lies about the "cruelty" of Lenin, the author of the booklet said that though ruthless at times, Lenin was never actuated by a feeling of revenge, and that he even showed great magnanimity towards his personal enemies. Lenin's contribution in the field of giving a correct lead to his party was also highlighted by the author who described him as matchless in discussion and debate.

In 1920 a book *Rus ki Rajykranti* was published from Kanpur. Its author was Rama Shankar Awasthi, editor of a Hindi daily *Vartman* and associate editor with Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi of *Pratap*. Awasthi called Lenin a great friend

of the peasantry and mentioned the several famous works on peasants by Lenin. "No other Russian writer wrote such forceful books in defence of the interests of the peasants", remarked Awasthi. He described how Lenin won over the peasants to his side by taking over the land of the gentry and distributing it among the peasants. Awasthi also explained Lenin's attitude to the imperialist war and mentioned his proposal for peace without annexation and indemnity.

To Rama Shankar Awasthi, again, goes the honour of being the author of the first Hindi biography of Lenin. His booklet *Bolshevik Jadugar* (Bolshevik Charmer) was published from Calcutta in 1921. This small booklet of 79 pages had a portrait of Lenin on the front cover beneath which was inscribed a Hindi couplet: "This is Lenin, the triumphant proclaimer of communism, the destroyer of inequality in the world."

Not based on authentic and complete information about Lenin and the new Soviet state, which was not always easy to get on account of a strict policy of British censorship, and also encumbered with his flamboyant style of writing characteristic of many Hindi journalists of that period, Awasthi's book could not avoid certain mistakes, and even some wrong statements crept into it. The author could not make a proper appraisal of the October revolution and Lenin. He depicted Lenin as a messiah sent to usher in a world of justice and equality. The following passage from his book is typical of his naive idealistic admiration for Lenin:

"Lenin cannot bear to see the misery of the poor. When he stands up to speak about their miseries, the sky trembles, the earth begins to shudder, the air shakes, and the listeners are thrilled. When Lenin throwing his fists into the air speaks, he really looks like god..."

"A number of critics of Bolshevism have sprung up in Europe. Among these critics are famous writers and editors. What I think is that to malign Bolshevism is a sin. I am not in the least a supporter of Bolshevism. But, at the same time, I am not prejudiced against it... Bol-

shevism is a high ideal of mankind. It is a practicable ideal... The objective of Bolshevism is solely to remove suffering from the world... Bolshevism teaches us not to take away the parched and dry bread of the poor, but put some salt or butter on that bread. This is the deep meaning of Bolshevism."

Lenin was viewed by Awasthi as a true friend and liberator of the oppressed people and he wrote:

"Revolutionising all the world simultaneously, he (Lenin) wants to make all nations free. He stands for handing over of power to the working masses. He does not want a single man to eat the bread that he has not earned with the sweat of his brow."

Awasthi's books on the Russian revolution and Lenin were widely circulated in northern India. I found their copies in the public libraries of not only the big towns like Kanpur, Lucknow and Delhi but also in a small town like Deoband in district Saharanpur in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

Among the early Hindi books on Lenin and Russian revolution Vinayak Sitaram Sarvate's *Bolshevism* (1921) is a work that belongs to the category of more sober and balanced writings. Published by Jitmal Luniya of the Hindi Sahitya Mandir, Agra, and with distribution arrangements from Indore and Ajmer, this book of over 150 pages carried a foreword by the famous philosopher Dr Bhagwandas. While both, Dr Bhagwandas in his foreword and Sarvate in his conclusion, found Bolshevism and British parliamentary democracy as unsuited to Indian conditions and favoured a reformed varnashram dharma (caste system) with a spiritual orientation, they treated the principles of Bolshevism with sympathy, describing the sudra raj (socialism) as an improvement over the vaishya raj (capitalism). Sarvate strongly refuted the imperialist propaganda that Lenin was a German agent and correctly explained his attitude towards the imperialist war.

As source material for his book Sarvate used not the exaggerated anti-Bolshevik accounts in the capitalist English

press, but Lenin's own works and other publications of the Soviet government. He spelled out Lenin's views on state and his concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Referring to the hollowness of the bourgeois criticism of the denial of political rights to the capitalists by Lenin, Sarvate likened it to the suicidal demand for admitting the enemies to one's own camp during the war. To elaborate Lenin's views on state, Sarvate freely used Lenin's most important theoretical work *The State and Revolution*.

Other Hindi books of the early twenties which throw light on Lenin's great personality and ideas are Som Dutt Vidyalkar's *Rus ka Poonarjanma* (Rebirth of Russia, Kashi, 1921), Vishwambhar Nath Jijja's *Rus men Yugantar* (The Great Change in Russia, Prayag, 1923), and Prannath Vidyalkar's *Rus men Panchayati Raj* (Soviet Rule in Russia, Calcutta, 1923).

Prannath Vidyalkar's book is highly informative about the nature and functioning of the Soviet system. He wrote that, as against the other parties in Russia which wanted the "dictatorship of rich classes", the Bolsheviks led by Lenin opposed it and wanted to establish "rule of the Soviets of workers and peasants". Lenin, the author went on to say, did not consider the English to be "in any way superior to Indians", and rejected the view that their rule was due to some "immutable laws of nature."

The Hindi press did a good job of informing the Indian people about the great changes taking place in Russia and about Lenin. In this connection the efforts made by such pioneers of Hindi journalism as Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi and Krishna Kant Malaviya are worth mentioning. Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi contributed several articles about the Russian revolution and Lenin to the *Pratap* and *Prabha* (both published from Kanpur) which he himself edited. In his article "There He Sleeps—the Great Destroyer" published in *Pratap* Vidyarthi described Lenin as the "revolution personified". Lenin, he wrote, carried a sword in his hand, but his sword was raised for protection and not for murder. Krishna Kant Malaviya wrote an article condemning the im-

perialist aggression against the young Soviet state founded by Lenin (*Abhyudaya*, 1 March 1919). He published another article "Bolshevism and the Afro-Asian Peoples" in its issue of 19 September 1919.

The Hindi press deeply mourned the untimely death of Lenin on 21 January 1924. As one leafs through the files of old papers turned yellow with age, one cannot but be moved by the profound grief and sorrow expressed in their columns, and the rich tributes paid to Lenin in the innumerable obituaries which continued to appear for more than a month.

The appeal made by the *Labour Kishan Gazette* (Madras, 31 January 1924) to observe the week ending 31 January as days of mourning for the death of Lenin found a ready response from the Hindi press in the UP. The *Vartman* (Kanpur) endorsed this appeal and urged "all the labour organisations throughout India to follow the lead that has come from Madras and avail of the opportunity to give an impetus to the international labour activities!" ("Notes on the UP Press", No. 6, 1924). The *Vartman* called Lenin "god of the poor". Another Hindi paper *Utsah* noted: "India had a place in Lenin's heart and the propaganda against Lenin is nothing but an attempt to take advantage of the ignorance of Indians and prevent them from breaking their chains." The daily *Aj* (Banaras) wrote: "Humanity has suffered an irreparable loss by his death." Earlier in its issue of 5 October 1920 *Aj* had written an editorial "The Place of Lenin". It wrote:

"We think that this sudra (working people) dominated revolution will end the domination of vaishyas (capitalists). Lenin's task has not yet finished. There is still a place for Lenin—by Lenin we do not mean any particular individual. If one Lenin goes ten other Lenins will take his place."

The three leading Hindi monthlies—*Saraswati* (Allahabad), *Madhuri* (Lucknow) and *Prabha* (Kanpur) published long articles on Lenin in their issues of February 1924. The

Saraswati article paid tributes to Lenin as an able organiser of workers and peasants. It described Lenin as a great economist who further developed the teachings of Karl Marx. Lenin's simple living was also praised and he was compared to Mahatma Gandhi in this respect. The obituary on Lenin in the February issue of *Prabha* was from the pen of the famous Hindi journalist Balkrishna Sharma, who called him an avatar. Balkrishna Sharma wrote that Lenin was immortal and that his ideas would continue to transform the world for ever. The *Madhuri* of the same month gave a long biographical sketch of Lenin and called him a Yugavatar (man of the epoch) whose work would continue uninterrupted.

The thirties saw a flood of Hindi writings on Lenin and the Russian revolution. Some of the important names may be mentioned here: Dev Vrat Shastri, *Vartman Rus* (Presentday Russia), Prayag, 1930; Shiv Narain Tandon, *Bolshevik Rus* (Bolshevik Russia), Kanpur, 1932; Sadanand Bharati, *Mahatma Lenin*, Kashi, 1934; Dhani Ram Prem, *Rus ka Jagaran* (Awakening of Russia), Bombay, 1936; and a Hindi biography of Lenin by Girija Kumar Sinha (Gaya, 1939) under the pen-name of an "Indian Revolutionist". Also worth mentioning is the book *Lenin aur Gandhi* (Lenin and Gandhi) by Raj Bahadur Singh (Delhi, 1935?).

Like many early works of the twenties, a majority of these works continued, in the main, to admire Lenin from an idealistic position. He was called a mahatma, an avatar and god of the poor. Their admiration for Lenin arose from his advocacy of equality and brotherhood of man and championing of the cause of freedom of nations against imperialism. However, a more mature understanding of the scientific ideas of Lenin on society, state and revolution was also rapidly emerging during this period and it reflected itself in at least some of these later works. The rise of the communist movement in India and the appearance of a revolutionary party of the Indian proletariat helped in development of an objective and scientific literature on Lenin and the Russian revolution. A radical section of the nationalist leadership, like Jawaharlal Nehru and Acharya Narendra Deva, also contri-

buted a great deal to the education of Indian people about the ideas of Lenin and the October revolution. The influence of Jawaharlal Nehru's works, like *Soviet Russia*, can be traced over all the Hindi writings of the thirties and forties about Lenin and the Russian revolution. Acharya Narendra Deva contributed a foreword to the Hindi translation of Lenin's book *Imperialism—the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1934) by Jeewan Ram Shastri.

Like many early works of the twenties a majority of these works continued in the main to adhere to the basic ideological position. He raised a question as to the nature of the party. His explanation for the party was that it was not a party, but a group of people who were interested in the work of the party. He stated that the party was not a party, but a group of people who were interested in the work of the party. He stated that the party was not a party, but a group of people who were interested in the work of the party.

works continued in the main to adhere to the basic ideological position. He raised a question as to the nature of the party. His explanation for the party was that it was not a party, but a group of people who were interested in the work of the party. He stated that the party was not a party, but a group of people who were interested in the work of the party. He stated that the party was not a party, but a group of people who were interested in the work of the party.

From front flap

the world in general and the revolution in the enslaved nations in particular caught their imagination. The result was an upliftment of the Indian national movement.

The earlier generation of our country looked at Lenin as the leader of a successful revolution. The present generation reverts again and again to Lenin for the solution of the present-day maladies that India confronts. Lenin is no more but relevance of Leninism to India remains. The national ideal calls for the Leninist understanding to discover and chart the Indian path to socialism, and fulfil the practical tasks that follow from it.

The book written by three eminent historians of modern India and its struggle for independence is a documentary of the impact of Lenin's ideas on contemporary Indian thinkers and freedom fighters. The authors have scoured the contemporary press and narrated in detail the impact the Russian revolution and Lenin's teachings had on the freedom movement of our country. It has been clearly shown that the ideas of socialism came and struck root in our country due to efforts of our thinkers and fighters inspired by the great Lenin and his ideas.