

Emergence of a New World Ideology of Communism



Dr. Sanjeev Kumar

Research Scholar, Department of History

B.R.A. Bihar University, Muzaffarpur

The formation of revolutionary parties and their amalgamation in a revolutionary Communist International were a historical necessity conditioned by the requirements of the proletarian struggle in the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolution. The very question of founding a new, truly revolutionary communist International was first and foremost raised by Lenin, at the very beginning of the First World War, immediately after the collapse of the second International.

The First World War, which began in the summer of 1914, was out and out, a predatory, imperialist war on both sides. It, however, served as a severe historical test for all existing trends in the International Labour Movement. It ruthlessly laid bare the ideology and political bankruptcy of the second communist International and revealed, in every way, the full depth of the opportunistic ideological political trends, ideological degradation, which the majority of the Social Democratic Parties in the second International had undergone. The German Social Democratic M.P.s-members of the strongest and most influential party in the second International, joined, on 4 August, 1914, the bourgeoisie and junkers in voting for war loans in the Reichstag. The Socialist Parties of Austro Hungary, France, Britain, Belgium and a member of other countries came out also to support their respective governments in the unjust imperialist war. This was an act of sheer opportunism, under which the opportunist leaders, thus openly sided their national bourgeoisie, an act of gross betrayal of the interest of the working class at their home and abroad alike. By

flouting the anti-war decision of the second International the opportunist leaders dealt a crushing blow to the unity of International Labour Movement, for the unity with their bourgeoisie, which tantamount to disunity and splitting of the working class on both a national and International Scales.

Furthermore, the imperialist war, in reality, brought to a head the crisis within the labour movement and laid bare the canker, which had long been festering in the comparatively peaceful growth of capitalism. The objective condition had contributed much positively to nourish the opportunist tendency among the leaders of the several of the Second International. The monopoly bourgeoisie had used their super profits to buy some of the workers and their leader, thus creating a whole social stratum in the form of a labour aristocracy and labour bureaucracy. Together with the petty bourgeoisie fellow travellers of the proletariat these bourgeoisified workers, full-fledged middle class in earning, way of life and mentality, became the mainstay of the bourgeoisie in the working class and chief source of opportunism in the labour movement. Under the struggling influence of the left elements in the second International, the latter, in the years preceding the war, had adopted a correct line, but the practice of its right wing leaders accommodated more and more to the interests of the bourgeois policy. The crisis in the labour movement demonstrated opportunism in its true colour, as an ally of the bourgeoisie. At that juncture Lenin wrote, “unity of the proletarian struggle for the socialist revolution demands that the workers’ parties separate themselves completely from the parties of the opportunists.”¹

During the First World War three main currents were visibly expressed in the International labour and Socialist Movements viz. : (i) the Social Chauvinist, (ii) the Centrist, and (iii) the Revolutionary Internationalist.

The social chauvinist or undisguised opportunists, proclaimed the need for “civil peace” between the classes and “defence of fatherland” in the predatory war, and thus openly assisting the ruling class to drive workers into the imperialists laughter for

the sake of bourgeoisie's profit. Most of the social Democratic leaders took the stand of the social chauvinistic. Important among them being Ebert and Scheidemann from Germany, Adler from Austria, Renaudel, Guesde and Sembat from France, Hyndman from Britain, Plekhanov from Russia, Bissolati from Italy, Vandervelde from Belgium, Branting from Sweden etc. The highest degradation and Ideological bankruptcy of the social chauvinists were demonstrated in the fact that in France, Belgium and Britain they became members of the bourgeois governments. In most of the countries they sided with their national bourgeoisie and became the class enemy of the proletariat.

Centrist, as a political phenomenon, was a secret agent of the social chauvinist's trend in the labour movement. Centrists or secret opportunists, were opposed to war in their words, but in actual practice and deeds they stood for unity with the social chauvinism, upheld their influences among the masses and saved the right wing leaders from moral and political bankruptcy in the eyes of the workers. At a time when the social chauvinists were dragging the labour movement to the right, the centrists, whose ideologue was Karl Kautsky, the second International's most outstanding theoretician, came to the fore, during the war, as the main obstacle that prevented the exposure of the social chauvinists and the adoption by the proletarian masses of a truly revolutionary stand. "Undisguised opportunism which immediately repels the working masses, "wrote Lenin, "is not so frightful and injurious as this theory of the golden mean, which uses Marxist catchwords to justify opportunist practice, and tries to prove, with a series of sophisms, that revolutionary action is premature."² Typical exponents of this centrist ideology were: Kautsky, Haase and Ledebour in Germany, Adler in Austria, Longuet and Pressemane in France, MacDonald and Snowden in Britain, Martov and Trotsky in Russia, Turati and Modigliani in Italy, Hillquit in the U.S.A. and Grimm in Switzerland.

Now, the condition for creation of a new, revolutionary proletarian organization was ripe. These profound objective and subjective conditions arose, as the sharpening of the inter-imperialist contradictions and the development of the proletarian class struggle. Here, the determining factor for a revolutionary upheaval was the advent of

a period of general crisis of capitalism, and a possibility of proletarian revolution. At this juncture Lenin proved incontrovertibly that capitalism was prelude to socialist revolution. The uneven, leap-like development of the imperialist countries has sharpened and intensified the basic capitalism's antagonisms. Hence, "the inevitability of profound revolutionary movements of the masses, the appearance of weak links in the world chain of imperialism, and the possibility of their severance by proletarian revolution."³ Analysing all these subjective and objective conditions Lenin came to the conclusion that world was drawing close towards pitched class battles and revolutionary upheavals.

Once the world political situation was analysed as leading towards revolutionary class battles, the coming socialist revolution and the pressing needs for leadership of the revolutionary battles imperatively made it necessary that the forces of revolutionary proletariat be organised into a militant organization on both, a national and international scales. But to accomplish this organizational task there was existed no proletarian party except the Russian Bolshevik party to lead in this lofty task of organising the world proletariat in a single International organization. "The Third International", wrote Lenin, "falls the task of organising the proletarian forces for a revolutionary onslaught against the capitalist governments, for civil war against the bourgeoisie of all countries for the capture of political power, for the capture of political power, for the triumph of socialism."⁴

Lenin's slogan to "convert the imperialist war into a "Civil War" was taken with much hostility by the chauvinists in Russia and abroad too. "To turn the World War into a civil war would be madness,"⁵ was the comment made by the German Social chauvinist, Eduard David "practically there is only one issue- the victory or defeat of our own country."⁶ was the remark Kautsky's chauvinism echoed. "Indeed, if one were to forget socialism and the class struggle, that would be the truth." However, if one does not lose sight of socialism, that is untrue. Then there is another practical issue: should we perish as blind and helpless slaves, in a war between slave holders,

or should we fall in attempts at fraternization' between the slaves, with the aim of casting of slavery?

"Such, in reality, is the practical issue."⁷ Kausky's dictum "In war time struggle for peace, in peace time- the class struggle,"⁸ was vehemently criticized by the German Left and the Bolsheviks. Rosa-Luxemburg ironically commented that the Communist Manifesto received an important amendment and took the following shape" working men if all countries unite in peacetime and cut each other's throat in war times."⁹ From the slogan about 'turning the imperialist war into a civil war' there emanated an another political slogan- 'to defeat one's own government in the imperialist war, 'a slogan which was opposed to the social chauvinist's slogan for defence of the fatherland, applicable to all belligerent countries.

The centrists put forward the slogan of "neither victory, not defeat", a slogan which outwardly differed from the chauvinists' slogan of 'defence of fatherland' but it was merely a variant of it. The slogan holders of neither victory not defeat' actually sided with the social chauvinists, and their bourgeoisie in their disbelief in the possibility of revolutionary action of the proletarian masses against their governments and in their unwillingness to promote such action. "Whoever is in favour of the slogan of neither victory nor defeat' is consciously or unconsciously a chauvinists; at best he is a conciliatory petty bourgeois but in any case he is an enemy to proletarian policy, a partisan of the existing governments, of the present day ruling classes."¹⁰ was the assessment by Lenin. Besides that Lenin and his Bolshevik Party took great trouble to expose the pacifist call for peace, proclaimed by the Centralists in all countries.

Although the ideology of scientific communism and revolutionary action of the working class had not arrived India in the era before the First World War, yet a consensus among a section of youth had grown up for revolutionary action against the British Raj. Being divorced from a revolutionary theory of mass action, as Lenin and the Bolshevik Party had developed in Russia, the Indian revolutionaries converted the concept of class struggle and revolutionary actions into individual terrorism, killing of unpopular British officials and bureaucrats. As early as 1897,

while the second communist International was fighting a polemical battle against its ideological and political degradation, the two brothers Damodar and Balkrishna Chapekar of Poona, had assassinated two unpopular British officers. Later Aurbindo Ghose had planned the revolutionary activities. The events following the partition of Bengal accentuated the revolutionary impulses of some young people who took bomb and pistols and committed individual act of terrorism. However, some literary works with revolutionary creed, were organized in India and the Jugantar was one of them. On 22 April, 1906 it expressed its credo in an editorial, after the Barisal Conference was broken up by the police; "The remedy lies with the people themselves. The 30 crores of people inhabiting India must raise their 60 crores of hands to stop this curse of oppression. Force must be stopped by force."¹¹ However, thus political trend in the Indian national movement, did not try to organise a revolution based on violence and involving the whole country with the revolutionary masses participating. Rather they followed the Irish terrorists and the Russian Nihilist whom Lenin had criticized them as petty bourgeois and enemy of the proletariat. Their main political line was to assassinate individual officials who, either because of their anti-Indian attitude or because of their repressive actions, had become unpopular among the masses. By its very nature, the planning and organization, the recruitment and training had to assume secret underground activities. Many Many secret organizations in the name of physical cultural clubs etc. came into existence in Bengal and Maharashtra of these the Anusilan Samitis of Bengal and Dacca, the Jugantar of Calcutta and the Mitramela, started by the Savarkar brothers in Maharashtra were the commonly known organizations.

Along with these terrorist activities there was started side by side attempts to contact revolutionary organizations run by the revolutionaries abroad. It was a clear evidence of the fact that the impact of the revolutionary ideology, propagated by the Communist International in its ideological polemic against the Right leaders' ideology of the Second International had, however, attracted the Indian terrorists. One of them like V.D.Savarkar, went abroad with a political mission of setting up contacts with revolutionary leaders and organization simultaneously, there was also going on

the act of individual killings and assassination, which was exemplified in the attempts by the two young men Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki, who attempted on the life of Kingsford at Muzaffarpur. A conspiracy case was started at Alipur against Aurbindo Ghose and his brother Barin and others, which was interrupted by the killing of the approver by the revolutionary terrorists in the jail compound. The officer incharge and the prosecution were also assassinated one by one. Aurbindo Ghose was acquitted in the Alipur Conspiracy case, but four others, including his brother Barin, were departed to Andmans, Khudiram Bose was hanged and Satyen Basu and Kanai Dutta, who had killed the approver, met the same fate.

References:

1. V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol.- 21, p. 111
2. Ibid, p. 257
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4. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 21, pp. 40-41
5. E. David, Die Socialdemokratie in Weltkrieg, Berlin, 1915, p. 172
6. V. I. Lenin, op.cit., p. 182
7. Ibid
8. K. Kautsky, Die Internationalist and der Krieg, Berlin, 1915, p. 40
9. Die Internationale, Heft I, April, 1915, p. 8
10. V. I. Lenin, op. Cit., p. 279
11. Jugantar, 22 April, 1906 (Editorial).