



# Only Communism Can End the Crimes of Nationalism

A series of articles from *RED FLAG* newspaper

**International Communist Workers Party**

**ICWPRedFlag.org**

## Part I

It is part of the nature of capitalism that capitalists can only be a small percentage of the population. Capitalists know very well that capitalism could not exist if the working class that it exploits were to unite against it. Each competing group of capitalists must try to make sure that the workers do not unite against them, and also try to get support from some sections of the masses. Thus capitalists must keep the working class from understanding the truth that capitalist society pits the workers against the bosses, by trying to get us to see capitalist society as divided up in some other way that cuts across class lines.

Racism, nationalism, sexism and caste are the capitalists' main organizational and propaganda tools to do this. Racism promotes inequality and hostility inside the working class, often by using a concept of "race," which is falsely presented as a biological reality, rather than a deadly social category. In its essence, nationalist hostility to immigrants and foreigners, and to people with different religions or languages is not much different from racism and often involves racism explicitly.

Communism will eliminate all these crimes created by capitalist rule. In communism race will be remembered only as a vicious and unscientific way of classifying people. Men and women will participate equally and fully in all aspects of life. Communism will eliminate nations and borders, and destroy all forms of nationalist ideology and practice. Caste discrimination and caste distinctions will be rooted out everywhere they exist. To win communism, however, the working class must organize determined struggle across the planet now to break down all these walls the capitalists build to divide us.

### **How Capitalists Use Nationalism**

Capitalists use nationalism in two ways. They try to organize support among the masses for some group of capitalist "leaders" on the grounds that they share a "national identity" and common "national interests." In fact workers and capitalists are enemies. They never have common interests. So-called "national interests" are always just the capitalists' interests, although capitalists use all their resources in schools and the media to convince the masses otherwise.

Nationalist divisions are not ancient, not given by nature and not inevitable. Nations and nationalism are products of capitalism. Kingdoms, empires, territories, tribes and communities have existed for many centuries, but nations came to be major forms of social organization only in the 19th century. National identities that are claimed to be “age old” are actually recent. The category “Hindu” as a kind of religion, not a geographical area, was created by British colonialism by lumping together many strains of religion in India, but excluding Islam and Christianity. They did this to “divide and rule” India. In the 20th century, the British and nationalists in India developed the Hindu-Muslim division further, eventually dividing South Asia into warring countries. Now Hindu nationalists are bringing fascism to India and preparing it for imperialist war.

Whether they control a government or try to gain power inside an existing state, nationalists always try to divide workers into hostile camps so the bosses in each camp can blame the miseries of capitalism on other national groups or other countries. They do this even when people from different groups have been living together peaceably. When the bosses of the former Yugoslavia organized mass killings in the 1990s, they had to use violence and intimidation on a large scale to defeat the many people who rejected nationalist murders. Serb nationalists killed some Serbs and threatened many others who refused to see Bosnian Muslims as their enemies.

### **Nationalism and Mass Violence**

Nationalists use mass violence so that their leading group can gain and keep power. Many thousands of Shias and Sunnis have been murdered in Iraq in the last decade and thousands more in Israel/Palestine since 1946. A huge mass murder of both Muslims and Hindus occurred during and after the partition of British India, and killed hundreds of thousands. An even bigger massacre took place when Bangladesh was created in 1971. Thousands have continued to be killed in South Asia since then. Hundreds of thousands died in the mass slaughter of Tutsis by Hutu nationalists in Rwanda in 1994. One of the main aims of these massacres is to destroy integrated communities, so people must side with one nationalist movement or another. The greatest death toll from nationalism, however, is from imperialist wars, where workers are mobilized to do their “patriotic duty” to kill other workers so one group of bosses can get richer.

## **Only Communism Can End the Crimes of Nationalism, Part II**

*Part I discussed how capitalists use nationalism to divide and rule workers, and the tremendous number of workers' lives that nationalism has cost.*

### **Manufacturing “National Identities”**

Nationalists make up their “national identities” differently. Some use a common language, but languages are often created or drastically modified to reinforce nationalist projects. Modern Hebrew, spoken by most Israelis, was created in the 19th and early 20th centuries by Zionism. They modified ancient Hebrew, which had fallen out of daily use. In India, Hindustani was widely spoken in northern India in the 19th century. It had much in common with Urdu, also widely used in trade and literature. In the 20th century nationalists formed the Hindi language by replacing the many Persian and Arabic words in Hindustani with words derived

from ancient Sanskrit, to make a language more distinct from Urdu.

Where distinct languages already exist, some are suppressed by nationalist movements or governments. This happens with Russian in some former Soviet republics, with Basque in Spain, Berber languages in Morocco and Spanish in the US among many others.

### **Nationalism Lies About History**

Nationalist schemes often replace the truth about history with myths and lies. The bosses celebrate “national heroes” among past politicians and generals, and sometimes artists, writers, or industrialists. School textbooks praise the country’s political institutions and military victories. They often hide past crimes like slavery, genocide, or wars of conquest. People who expose these lies are violently attacked, as recently in India by Hindu nationalists at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Some governments even make it a crime to reveal the truth, like the 1915 mass murder of ethnic Armenians in Turkey.

Some groups who have suffered from racism, colonial occupation or caste discrimination try to organize themselves based on their common oppression. Nationalists claim to lead the fight against this oppression, but nationalism can never overcome inequality and oppression since it is always tied to capitalism. It is the nature of capitalism to promote racism and oppression, never to stop it.

### **Capitalists Benefit From Racism and Nationalism**

In the US, racism against African-Americans, Latinos and Native Americans is strong and profitable for the capitalists. US nationalism gets many to accept and support imperialist wars. European capitalists have long exploited immigrants from Africa and the Middle East, although now they have more immigrants than they want. The Arab Gulf States exploit South Asians and Filipinos massively. Chinese bosses oppress Tibetans and Uighurs. South Asian bosses try to continue their oppression of Muslims, Dalits and other castes by promoting other nationalisms, especially Hindu nationalism.

### **Resistance to nationalism**

Many have resisted nationalist appeals. They fought for internationalism. There were mass movements to end apartheid in South Africa, worldwide protests against the US invasion of Vietnam, and many other brave actions. In 1919, there were troops in all fourteen armies sent to invade the new Soviet Republic in Russia that refused to fight.

In 1930 Hindu troops of the Royal Garhwali Rifles refused to take part in a British government massacre of hundreds in a non-violent protest by Muslims in Peshawar. Leaders of these troops were punished with long prison sentences. M. K. Gandhi refused to support the soldiers because “If I taught them to disobey I should be afraid that they might do the same when I am in power.” [*Monde*, 2/2/1932] In 1945 US merchant sailors protested transport of French troops to Vietnam to “re-colonize” that country.

In India today many people fighting against fascist Hindu nationalism believe in an Indian secular nationalism that tries to unite all religious groups in India. As India’s capitalists strive to catch up with China and become a major imperialist power, secular nationalism can also do great harm. For example, it can help justify a future war with China for which the Indian bosses are already preparing. Nationalism can never serve the masses, only the capitalists.

### **Ending Nationalism With Communism**

The price that the masses have had to pay for nationalism has been enormous. Imperialist wars, communal violence, and mass movements diverted into supporting new bosses have cost millions of lives. Nationalism is an integral part of capitalist rule and can only be elimi-

nated by destroying capitalism and replacing it with communism.

Communism will defeat the existing bosses and make it impossible for new bosses to arise and rule.

Communism will end the capitalist wage system, which always creates inequalities and conflicts among workers. This will enable communism to end capitalist inequalities in living conditions and in opportunities to develop and use new skills and capabilities.

In communism, the masses will create a new communist culture that completely rejects all claims that some groups of people are superior to others or must be hostile to others. Communist culture includes the philosophy of dialectical materialism, which will undermine all religion and superstition. A communist economy will be created, based on sharing the results of our common labor according to the needs of the masses. The era of nationalism, racism, sexism and imperialist wars will then be gone forever.

### **El Salvador: Nationalism Failed the Masses**

National Liberation was a banner of insurgent movements worldwide in the 1960's and 70's. In El Salvador a struggle was begun in 1930 against the military dictatorship, repression, poverty and exploitation. During the 1960's and 70's armed groups were consolidated that later formed the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN).

The FMLN united communists from the old movement, social democrats and independent Marxists to fight for national liberation — not for socialism, much less for Communism. This armed struggle lasted for twelve years. It leaves us lessons about errors and successes. The struggle for a national revolution lacks a communist ideological character. The FMLN did not politicize the working class to forge a new society and destroy capitalism. Even though they attacked the bourgeoisie, they never mobilized the masses for communism. From the first years they sought negotiations with the capitalists.

Now the FMLN has been in power in the capitalist government for seven years, but the transformations they promised are practically nonexistent. The consolidation of ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance) as a new bourgeoisie, the businesses of the traditional bourgeoisie, the forgotten base and veterans, this all shows the failure of the struggle for national liberation. As the International Communist Workers' Party, we learn from the lessons that all the historic processes of struggle leave us. Many of our members are ex-combatants of the FMLN who today fight directly for Communism as the only solution to put an end to capitalism-imperialism.

## **Communist Mistakes About Nationalism, Part I**

Unlike kingdoms, empires or tribes, nations and nationalisms are products of capitalism. Nations only became important kinds of social organization in the 19th century. Nationalism was invented by capitalism. It is essential to capitalist efforts to rule the working class and struggle

against other capitalists.

Despite its capitalist nature, nationalism has often been seen in the communist movement as something useful and positive. Communists tried to use nationalism in colonies and less developed countries. They refused to fight for communism or even for socialism. Instead they fought for "national liberation" that meant a form of capitalism.

This fundamental mistake led to costly failures and wasted struggles. This article and the next one will analyze the main errors of past communists about nationalism, so that we can avoid them.

Communist positions about nationalism during the 20th century were set by the Bolsheviks, members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). That party ruled the USSR and was the main influence on the Communist International (CI), which eventually included most of the world's communist parties.

Thus the history of mistakes about nationalism—going all the way back to Lenin—is mainly the history of the CI's policies.

### **A fundamental error: Two nationalisms**

The Bolsheviks condemned the nationalism that powerful capitalist countries used to mobilize their population for imperialism. They claimed, however, that nationalism of colonial or otherwise oppressed people can be "progressive" and ought to be supported.

The Bolsheviks were well aware that capitalists of weak or colonized nations used nationalism to oppress their own working class or to try to dominate other weak nations.<sup>1</sup> They thought, however, that the right kinds of nationalist movements should be supported as a step toward working class defeat of capitalism some time in the future.

In his early proposals for the CI, Lenin said "You [peoples of the East] will have to base yourselves on the bourgeois nationalism which is awakening, and must awaken, among those peoples, and which has its historical justification."<sup>2</sup> He said that all Communist parties must help the so-called "bourgeois-democratic liberation movement" in the "more backward states and nations.

By "bourgeois democracy," Lenin meant the way capitalists rule in the US and Europe, with voting and parliaments. He wanted the CI to form a "temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries."<sup>3</sup> What kind of reasoning could possibly lead communists to support capitalist movements like this?

The Bolshevik theory was that there is a fixed series of stages in the development of all societies. They believed that communism was only possible as the end point of this sequence: (1) the rise of capitalism, (2) a revolution to establish "bourgeois democracy," (3) a second revolution to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism, and finally (4), a gradual transition to communism.

They assumed that if a country was partly ruled by feudal lords or foreign capitalists, then developing capitalism further was good ("progressive") and communists should fight for it. This is what Lenin meant by saying that bourgeois nationalism has a "historical justification."

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<sup>1</sup> "The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations persistently utilize the slogans of national liberation to deceive the workers; in their internal policy they use these slogans for reactionary agreements with the bourgeoisie of the dominant nation..." V. I. Lenin, "The socialist revolution and the right of nations to self-determination: theses," April 1916, *Collected Works*, Moscow, 1964, vol. 22, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Address to the 2nd Congress of the Communist Organizations of the Peoples of the East," November 22, 1919, *Collected Works*, Moscow, 1965, vol. 30, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Draft theses on the national and colonial questions," June 1920, *Collected Works*, Moscow, 1966, vol. 31, pp. 149-50.

The Bolsheviks even said that if the capitalists didn't carry out their "bourgeois democratic revolution," workers and peasants should do it for them. They should set up a worker-peasant government that promoted capitalism. This became central in the CI's policy for colonies.

Today we can see that the history of the communist movement contradicts this theory of stages. Socialism never led to communism. It can't. Its wage system and hierarchies of power are actually capitalist institutions.

History also shows that it is entirely possible to fight for communism in regions that have a low level of industrialization and a small working class. These were the conditions in both Russia and China during their revolutions in 1917 and 1949.

Nevertheless the wrong analysis of the possibilities of fighting for communism within the struggle against imperialism led directly to missed opportunities and disastrous failures, as we will see in part II.

## Communist Mistakes About Nationalism, Part II

In Part I, we saw the political line of the Communist International (CI) that communists in colonial countries must ally with capitalists and fight for "bourgeois democracy". This idea was taken over from the political program that the Bolshevik party had developed long before their revolution of October 1917.

That program was based on the assumption that in countries where capitalism was less developed, the masses could not succeed in a fight for communism or even socialism. Even socialism was claimed to need a large working class and a strong industrial base. Instead of communism, the masses were supposed to put up with capitalism until the working class grew larger and the capitalist economy developed further.

Lenin said that if the capitalists of a country that did not yet have a "bourgeois-democratic" government were willing to fight for one, the workers should ally with them. They should "deal joint 'blows' at the enemy, shoulder to shoulder with the revolutionary bourgeois democrats."<sup>4</sup> While allying with capitalists, the working class was supposed to fight for the leading role in the movement, the so-called "hegemony of the proletariat."<sup>5</sup> This was to allow turning the fight for bourgeois democracy into a fight for socialism.

The CI applied this line specifically to countries dominated by imperialism. It claimed that workers had at least temporary common interests with "their" capitalists, one of the central ideas of nationalism. Applying this wrong analysis, the CI often made it worse by underestimating potential political activism of the worker and peasant masses in colonized countries like India and China.

In India, for example, there were quite a few industrial workers even before WWI, in textiles, jute mills, coal mining, etc.<sup>6</sup> These workers organized strikes, including a big political strike in 1908 and a series of big strikes in 1920 and 1921. Although the majority of Indians were peasants, about a quarter of the agricultural population were workers by the 1920s.<sup>7</sup> Peas-

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<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Social Democracy and the Provisional Revolutionary Government," (1904) *Collected Works*, Moscow, 1965, vol. 8, p. 289.

<sup>5</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Revolution and Counter-Revolution," (1907) *Collected Works*, Moscow, 1965, vol. 13, p. 115.

<sup>6</sup> V. I. Pavlov, *The Indian Capitalist Class: A Historical Study*, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 176-186.

<sup>7</sup> Irfan Habib, *The Indian Economy 1858 – 1914*, New Delhi, 2006, p. 71.

ants fought violent battles against landlords and British rule. The revolt in Malabar against landlords and the British army in 1921, for example, led to about 60,000 arrests and 10,000 casualties.<sup>8</sup> A large section of the Indian masses was capable of fighting against capitalism if a communist party led them.

Although the Bolshevik's nationalistic position on allying with capitalists remained the dominant one, it was often challenged by communist activists. Indian communist M. N. Roy argued against Lenin at the 2nd CI Congress in 1920. He said that the CI should not support the "bourgeois-democratic movement in Eastern countries," and in India it should "assist exclusively the formation of the communist movement in India" and "concentrate on organizing the broad masses for the struggle" for their interests.<sup>9</sup>

Comrades from Italy and Iran said that national movements that included capitalists were simply not revolutionary.<sup>10</sup> Serrati of Italy argued that alliances with capitalists undermined working class consciousness. In fact allying with capitalists always means suppressing or watering down communist politics and promoting nationalism.

The CI continued to support capitalist movements, however, especially in China. When M. M. Borodin was sent to China as a CI representative, his orders said that he was to "act in the interests of the national liberation movement in China and not to concentrate on implanting communism in China."<sup>11</sup> Borodin developed a close relationship with Sun Yat-Sen, leader of the nationalist Guomindang (GMD). Borodin supplied CI money, arms and organizational advice to the GMD and urged communists to join it. In April 1927, Chang Kai-shek led the GMD against the communists, massacring communist supporters in Shanghai and other cities. About 300,000 communists and their supporters were murdered over the next year,<sup>12</sup> and the communist movement has nearly wiped out by the GMD attacks.

This enormous defeat should have led to the rejection of worker alliances with capitalists in colonies, but it didn't. Why not? The Bolsheviks were convinced that their own revolution had succeeded by following the line they wanted to apply in China and India. This was in fact a very distorted analysis of their own history. They also bought into the idea that industry must be much better developed in India or China for the dictatorship of the proletariat to succeed there. This was contradicted by the Bolsheviks own experience of revolution in relatively backward Russia. The clearest evidence of the impossibility of a nationalist strategy to destroy capitalism-imperialism and establish communism was to come later, however, with the failure of all of the "national liberation" movements of the 1950s, '60s and '70s. We will discuss these movements later in this series.

## Communist Mistakes About Nationalism, Part III

In Part II, we discussed the Communist International (CI) policy for colonies, urging coopera-

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<sup>8</sup> K. N. Panikkar, "Peasant Resistance and Revolts in Malibar," in *Colonialism, Culture and Resistance: Collected Essays*, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 227 – 250.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in A. B. Reznikov, "The strategy and tactics of the Communist International in the national and colonial questions," in R. A. Ulyanovsky, *The Comintern and the East: The Struggle for the Leninist Strategy in National Liberation Movements*, Moscow, 1979, p. 147.

<sup>10</sup> A. I. Sobolev, et. al., *Outline History of the Communist International*, Moscow, 1971, p. 87.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Reznikov, p. 162.

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Barnouin and Changgen Yu, *Zhou Enlai: A Political Life*, Hong Kong, 2006, p. 38.

tion of communists with local capitalists against foreign imperialists. The working class was supposed to fight a “bourgeois democratic revolution,” but not fight for socialism or communism.

In China in the 1920s this line included a close alliance with the nationalist Guomindang (GMD). In April 1927 GMD leader Chang Kai-shek attacked communists and their supporters, murdering many thousands.

This disaster should have triggered a rethinking by the CI of its whole policy of alliance with capitalists, but it did not. At the Sixth Congress of the CI in 1928 the basic platform for colonies stayed the same, promoting a “bourgeois-democratic revolution” led by the working class.<sup>13</sup> A temporary alliance with “the national-revolutionary movement” was allowed “in certain circumstances.”<sup>14</sup>

Part of the explanation of why this wrong line was not changed was mentioned in Part II: the Bolsheviks were convinced that they had won power by following a similar policy. Probably the more important reason, however, was the intense struggle inside the Bolshevik party that was going on in the late 1920s. That struggle included key issues about nationalism and alliances with capitalists.

From the early 1920s, Zinoviev, Radek and Trotsky headed factions within the Bolshevik party, factions that opposed the leadership of Stalin (and Bukharin). The China disaster was an opportunity for the factions to attack that leadership.

The factionalists said that the alliance that the Chinese communists had made with the GMD gave away too much. It restricted the political message that the Communists could give to workers and peasants, and undermined the independence of the communist party. Alliances with capitalists always have as a price rejecting or keeping quiet about the revolution leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is something capitalists will always insist on.

In fact, Zinoviev did not refuse to make deals with national capitalists, he just wanted better ones. He said the Chinese communists should recruit millions of workers and peasants to the “national movement,” and not be “afraid of scaring away the bourgeoisie.” This national movement was not against capitalism, but only for various reforms and to “halt” the imperialists in China.<sup>15</sup>

Trotsky would later claim that he had opposed the communists’ uniting with the GMD years earlier, in 1923.<sup>16</sup> This was simply a lie. As late as September 1926, Trotsky thought it was “perfectly correct” for communists to form an alliance with the GMD.<sup>17</sup> Later he said he wanted an alliance only with the Left wing of the GMD. In the heat of his factional fight against the party leadership, he went beyond this and hypocritically rejected all deals with capitalists in China. But this does not mean that his line about what alliances the working class movement should make was anywhere near being correct.

### **Trotsky Against “Socialism in one Country”**

The Bolsheviks’ idea of workers’ power in the USSR was an alliance of the urban industrial

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<sup>13</sup> “Programme of the Communist International adopted at its sixth congress,” in *The Communist International: 1919-1943 Documents*, vol. II, 1923-1928, Jane Degras, editor, Oxford, 1959, p. 507

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p. 542

<sup>15</sup> G. Zinoviev, “Theses on the Chinese Revolution,” in L. Trotsky, *Problems of the Chinese Revolution*, University of Michigan Press, 1967, p. 369.

<sup>16</sup> L. Trotsky, Letter to Max Shachtman, 12/10/1930:

<http://www.oocities.org/capitolhill/congress/1602/textosmarxistas/trotext/china/ch40.htm>

<sup>17</sup> See the review of Trotsky’s speeches and personal papers in C. Brandt, *Stalin’s Failure in China*, Harvard University Press, 1958, pp. 154 – 165.



working class and the rural poor (the poor and middle peasants). Trotsky could not accept this Bolshevik position. He said that socialism is against the interests of the peasantry (not just the rich peasants). Since Russia was a country with a peasant majority, Trotsky argued that socialism could not be built there. He claimed that ruling the USSR by an alliance of the working class with the rural poor was impossible. Only the working class minority could actually rule, hoping to hang on and wait for revolutions in other countries.

This defeatism about trying to create an economy to serve the masses—workers and peasants—in the USSR was firmly rejected by the Bolsheviks. In 1927 the factionalists organized public demonstrations against the party leadership, and were expelled from the party. Trotsky was eventually expelled from the country. Abroad, his propaganda claimed that the USSR had “degenerated” and its leaders had “betrayed” the revolution, taking sides with the imperialist powers that wanted to destroy the USSR.

In the early 1930s, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek, Bukharin and others whose policies had been defeated began to engage in conspiracies to kill Stalin and other top Bolshevik leaders.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> In the late 1930s there was a tangle of plots to assassinate the Soviet party leaders. The most important groups were those headed by Zinoviev and Kamanev, Trotsky, Marshall Tukhachevsky, and the "Rights" (Bukharin, Tomsy, Rykov). These groups overlapped and, when they were arrested and tried, they implicated each other. Two heads of the NKVD (Yagoda and Yezhov), the organization which gathered evidence on these terrorists, were also in on the conspiracies.

The main evidence of the crimes of these conspirators is the transcripts of the public trials and the interrogations that have been made public since the end of the USSR. These are supplemented by additional material from outside the USSR. The main limitation of the evidence is refusal of the Russian government to disclose some of the most important archive materials, except to a few selected historians, who have strict limits about what they are allowed to reveal. Thus there is no public "smoking gun" for many of the cases, but there is still enough evidence to draw conclusions about many of them.

In October 1933, Trotsky publically called for the violent overthrow of the leaders of the USSR. He wrote: "No normal 'constitutional' ways remain to remove the ruling clique. The bureaucracy can be compelled to yield power into the hands of the proletariat only by *force*." [A] J. Arch Getty, "Trotsky in Exile: The Founding of the Fourth International," *Soviet Studies*, vol. XXXVIII, no. 1, January 1986, pp. 24-35.

In the 1930s Trotskyists joined with Zinovievists, Rightists, and other oppositionists to form an opposition alliance ("bloc"). See [B] Pierre Broue (a pro-Trotsky historian), "Trotsky et le bloc des oppositions de 1932," *Cahiers de Leon Trotsky*, No. 5 (1980) pp. 3 – 38. Also see [A]

In July 1936 Zinoviev was confronted in an interrogation by one his followers, the philosopher N. Karev, who directly accused him. Zinoviev began to admit his involvement in terrorist activities. He wrote that "Whoever plays with the idea of 'opposition' to the socialist state plays with the idea of counterrevolutionary terror.... for myself ... [I decided:] Finish your human days conscious of your guilt before the party!" [C] J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *Yezhov: Stalin's "Iron Fist,"* Yale University Press, 2008, pp. 177, 191.

For the confessions of terrorist organizing by Trotskyists and Zinovievists, see [D] Report of Court Proceedings, *The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre, Heard Before the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R.*, August 19-24, 1936 (Moscow), <https://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/law/1936/moscow-trials/20/zinoviev.htm>

For the military conspiracy against the Soviet leaders, including Trotskyists, see [E] Iurii Zhukov, "Zagovor protiv Stalina byl. Tukhachevskomu v nem otvodilas' rol' voennogo diktatora" ["There was a plot against Stalin. Tukhachevsky was to play the role of military dictator"] <http://vm.ru/news/2014/02/17/istorik-yurij-zhukov-zagovor-protiv-stalina-bil-tuhachevskomu-v-nem-otvodilas-rol-voennogo-diktatora-235811.html> and [F] Alvin D. Coox (1998) "The lesser of two hells: NKVD general G.S. Lyushkov's defection to Japan, 1938–1945, part II," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 11:4, 72-110.

Overall, they made absolutely no positive contribution to the theory or practice of the communist movement, including the issue of nationalism.

In 1935 at the 7th Congress of CI responded to the rise of Nazism by adopting a line on nationalism and alliances with capitalists that was even more wrong. This will be discussed in Part IV.

## Communist Mistakes About Nationalism, Part IV

**Today ICWP knows that all nationalism is wrong and that we need to build one international party to mobilize for communism everywhere.**

This was not the line of the old Communist International.

Part III of this series described the debate in the Communist International (CI) after the nationalist Guomindang had turned on China's communists and murdered many thousands in 1927. This debate did not change the CI's basic line for colonial countries, that workers and peasants in colonies cannot fight directly for communism or even socialism. They must go through a "bourgeois-democratic revolution" against feudalism and foreign domination, and some capitalists were expected to play a supporting role in that revolution.

In the early 1930s Chinese communists applied this idea by creating rural "soviet" areas where land was confiscated from landlords and distributed to peasants. In 1930 party leader Li Lisan proposed a policy of also confiscating the capitalists' factories, businesses and banks but this idea was defeated.<sup>19</sup>

Allying with bigger Chinese capitalists would have been impossible for communists in the early 1930s since they were fighting a desperate armed struggle against the Nationalist Guomindang that was trying to destroy the rural soviets. The party only survived by moving to a remote area of northwest China.

The Communist Party of India (CPI) was younger and smaller than China's, but active in large, hard-fought strikes and in organizing peasants. The CPI denounced the National Congress, led by Gandhi and Nehru. They charged the Congress with siding with the manufacturers, landlords and moneylenders, and "doing all in their power to restrain the masses" in the fight against British imperialism.<sup>20</sup> Some CPI leaders correctly understood that what kept the Indian working class "from turning into an independent leading class force" was the "widespread illusions of an all national united front, which actually meant the subordination of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie."<sup>21</sup> Thus the CPI pledged a "ruthless war" on the "Left" na-

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For the conspiracy including the head of Kremlin security to kill the top leadership, see [G] Iurii Zhukov, "Tainy 'Kremlevskogo dela' 1935 goda i sud'ba Avelia Enukidze," ["Secrets of the 'Kremlin affair' of 1935 and the fate of Avelia Yenukidze"], in Iurii Zhukov, *Nastol'naia Kniga Stalinstsa [Handbook of Stalinism]*, Eksmo, Moscow, 2010, pp. 100-170 and [H] G. Furr and V. L. Bobrov, "Marshal S. M. Budennyi o sude nad M. N. Tukhachevski, Vpechatleniia ochevidtza" ["Marshall S. M. Budenny on the trial of M. N. Tuckachevsky. The impressions of an eyewitness"], *Klio*, no. 2 (2012) pp. 8-24.

For translations and analysis of some of this material, see [I] G. Furr, *Trotsky's Amalgam: Trotsky's Lies, The Moscow Trials As Evidence, The Dewey Commission. Trotsky's Conspiracies of the 1930s, Volume I*, Erythros Press, corrected edition, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Ho Kan-Chih, *A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution*, Beijing, Foreign Language Publishing House, 1959, reprinted by Manika Barua Books and Periodicals, Calcutta, 1977, p. 106.

<sup>20</sup> "Draft Platform of Action of the C. P. of India," *International Press Correspondence*, vol. 10, #58, Dec. 18, 1930, p. 1218.

<sup>21</sup> Speech by S. P. Bhise to Bombay Textile Workers' Conference, June 20, 1931. Quoted in Shashi

tional reformists” to “isolate them from the workers and the mass of the peasantry.”<sup>22</sup> Although they rejected the “national reformists” of the National Congress, the CPI’s own program clearly had a nationalist side, to “abolish national slavery, sweeping aside the fetters which check national development, confiscating the land and effecting far-reaching democratic construction of a revolutionary character.” This was to be accomplished by the organization of worker and peasant “soviets,” councils “elected directly from the factories, works and villages.”<sup>23</sup> This worker-peasant government would still allow capitalism, but fight for socialism at some later time after British rule had been overthrown.<sup>24</sup>

In the early 1930s the Indian and Chinese communists refused to fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasants, and continued to defend the idea of “revolutionary nationalism.”

In practice, however, they actually did fight domestic and foreign capitalists and organized the masses for revolutionary struggle against them. This was soon to change.

In 1931 Japan seized Manchuria and prepared for more conquests in China. In 1933 Hitler’s Nazi party won power in Germany. Hitler’s invasion of Austria in 1934 was briefly opposed by a failed uprising. In 1934 the Chinese communist soviet areas were destroyed by the Guomindang. The USSR reacted to these alarming events by turning sharply to the Right, beginning by joining the League of Nations, an imperialist organization. The Communist International (CI) called a VIIth Congress for the summer of 1935. The congress called for a broad united front against fascism that was to include the anti-revolutionary socialist parties of Europe. Hence it could not aim at the dictatorship of the proletariat, which was postponed indefinitely for developed countries,<sup>25</sup> as it already had been in colonies.

In the colonies the united front was described as an anti-imperialist front, and it was to include the very capitalists that communists had been fighting before 1935. In February 1937 the Communist Party of India said that the united front must include the National Congress and organizations of Indian merchants and industrialists.<sup>26</sup> The Communist Party of China made an alliance against Japan with the nationalist Guomindang. This required a long corrupt negotiation that included kidnapping and then releasing murderous Guomindang leader Chang Kai-shek.<sup>27</sup>

The VIIth Congress tied the CI to nationalism much more completely than anything it had done before. The united front was supposed to be temporary but in fact it marked the end of the old communist movements’ fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat and communism. Only a new communist movement, begun in the 1960s, was able to learn from the various “national liberation” struggles and the Cultural Revolution in China that nationalism always misleads the masses and derails communist revolution. The next article in this series will discuss that crucial step forward.

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Joshi, *Struggle for Hegemony in India, 1920-1947*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1992, vol. 1, p. 305.

<sup>22</sup> Draft Platform, p. 1219.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*, p. 1218.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, p. 1219.

<sup>25</sup> Georgi Dimitrov, "The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fascism, Main Report delivered at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International,"

[https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/08\\_02.htm#s6](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/08_02.htm#s6)

<sup>26</sup> Kiran Maitra, *Marxism in India: From Decline to Debacle*, Roli Books, New Delhi, 2012, p. 227.

<sup>27</sup> "Xi'an Incident," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xi%27an\\_Incident](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xi%27an_Incident)

# Communist Mistakes about Nationalism, Part V

*Previous articles described the internal struggles of the communist movement about nationalism and alliances with “national” capitalists. This final article in the series describes how ICWP came to recognize that nationalism is always wrong for the working class, and that workers always lose when they try to ally with capitalists.*

*In part IV, we saw that until the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist International (CI) in 1935, communists in China, India and other undeveloped or colonial countries fought the bourgeoisie. After that Congress, the world communist movement turned sharply to the right. It allied with capitalists and gave up on the goal of the dictatorship of the working class and rural masses.*

In 1943 the CI was dissolved. After the 2nd World War, French and Italian communists joined capitalist governments until they were kicked out. In the 1950s, Soviet leaders rejected the dictatorship of the working class. They claimed that revolution was no longer necessary and that socialism could get along peacefully with imperialism.

Despite this complete betrayal of the communist movement by the USSR, there were two very important developments in the decades after 1950s: the surge of “national liberation” movements in former colonies and a deep ideological split between the USSR and Communist Party of China (CPC). From the ‘50s on, dozens

of wars against imperialist domination took place in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Communists took part in these struggles, and sometimes led them. All of them amounted to alliances with local capitalists of colonies or semi-colonies. Some of these struggles gained world-wide support and inspired millions, as was the case with Vietnam.

In all of these movements, however, capitalists eventually triumphed in one way or another. In India, which did not have an armed struggle, the British divided their colony and handed over the pieces to local capitalists. In Indonesia, communists allied with capitalist leader Sukarno, but the Indonesian capitalists resorted to fascism and murdered hundreds of thousands of communists and their supporters. Long bloody struggles in many African countries only brought capitalists to power there. Civil wars in Central America left capitalists in charge. The only apparent exception to this pattern was China, where the communist-led movement defeated and drove out the nationalist Guomindang and declared the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. This movement was an alliance of classes, justified by nationalism. It included workers, peasants, small businesses and the “national bourgeoisie,” Chinese capitalists who were said to be independent of foreign capitalists. These capitalists played a major role in production in the early years of the PRC. Eventually the government bought them out. However, they still received profits from their old businesses. By the late 1950s, these

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capitalists, joined by rich peasants, highly paid party leaders and technical experts, and even some former landlords were the top dogs in new China. Far from communism, new China actually realized the capitalist program of Sun Yatsen, the founder of the Guomindang: national independence, land reform, and beginnings of industrial development.

By 1962 Mao warned that pro-capitalist forces in the party were fighting to prevent any advance beyond capitalism: "We have inherited the national bourgeoisie and their intellectuals, as well as the sons and daughters of the landlord class... They remain concealed until opportunities become ripe, which they then seize."<sup>28</sup> He warned that "revisionists," pro-capitalist forces pretending to be communists, "wanted to overthrow us. If we paid no attention and conducted no struggle, China would become a fascist dictatorship in either a few or a few dozen years."<sup>29</sup>

Throughout the 1960s, the Communist Party of China (CPC) fought the class struggle against Soviet and Chinese revisionism. This fight inspired many new communist parties across the world. These parties rejected Soviet revisionism but borrowed a nationalist approach from the CPC. When Mao finally launched the Cultural Revolution, the wrong lines that the CPC had followed for years took their toll. These mistakes included promoting nationalism and a socialist wage system that pitted workers against each other. The divided Chinese working class was defeated and the capitalist forces were fully in charge by 1980, as Mao had predicted.

The capitalist victories in all the "national liberation" struggles, and the mass struggles against revisionism in China made it possible for us to learn two critical lessons. The first is that nationalism is always an enemy of the communist movement, and capitalists always win in nationalist movements. The second is that communists must reject socialism and its wage system and fight directly for communism.

ICWP makes the fight for communism and against all forms of nationalism, racism and sexism our daily struggle. Join us! We have a world to win.

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<sup>28</sup> Mao Zedong, May 5, 1966, quoted in Yiching Wu, *The Cultural Revolution on the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis*, Harvard University Press, 2014, p. 255n67.

<sup>29</sup> Mao Zedong, February 3, 1967, quoted in Qiang Zhai, "Mao Zedong and Dulles' "Peaceful Evolution" Strategy: Revelations from Bo Yibo's Memoirs," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Winter 1995-96, pp. 228 – 230.