**Manabendra Nath Roy**, better known as **M. N. Roy**; 21 March 1887 – 25 January 1954) was a 20th-century [Indian revolutionary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_revolutionary), philosopher, [radical activist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radical_politics) and [political theorist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_philosopher). Roy was the founder of the [Mexican Communist Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_Communist_Party)

He was also a delegate to the [Communist International](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_International) congresses and Russia's aide to [China](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China). In the aftermath of [World War II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II) Roy moved away from [orthodox Marxism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodox_Marxism) to espouse the philosophy of [radical humanism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radical_humanism), attempting to chart a third course between [liberalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberalism) and [communism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communism)

**Lenin, Roy and the National Colonial Theory Revisited**

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**Abstract** : The "Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Question" and "Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Question" drafted by Lenin and Roy for the Second Congress of the Communist International laid the foundation for the Marxist theory of national colonies. Although the two are not without contradictions and conflicts in specific content, they not only agree on the issue of supporting the peasant movement, but also complement each other in application. Together, they constitute the theoretical framework and strategic principles of the Communist International in dealing with national issues at different levels of development, such as capitalist countries, colonial countries and regions without industrial proletariat, and colonial countries and regions with industrial proletariat. They not only laid the cause of the contradiction between the land revolution and the united front during the Chinese Revolution, but also implied the choice.

**Keywords** : Lenin; Roy; national colonial theory;

The basic principles of the Communist International's guidance of the national revolutions in colonial and semi-colonial countries were based on Lenin's theory of national colonies. This theory has far-reaching influence and great significance, and has attracted much attention in the academic community. Regarding the specific content of this theory, whether it is based on the documents and reports of the Second Congress of the Communist International or extended to the ideological propositions of Marx, Engels and Lenin, scholars have conducted in-depth and detailed research and interpretation. The "Resolution on the National and Colonial Question" and "Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Question" adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International constitute the basic framework and main content of the theory of national colonies, and determine the overall strategic principles of the Communist International in dealing with the world's national issues. [ 1 ] The resolution and the supplementary theses were adopted on the basis of the "Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Question" and the "Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Question" drafted by Lenin and Roy (hereinafter referred to as the "Draft Theses" and the "Supplementary Theses" respectively). Interestingly, it is a fact recognized by the academic community that there are differences in the views and opinions of Lenin and Roy. In previous studies, there have been various opinions, including denying the differences between the two, emphasizing the differences between the two, supporting Lenin and denying Roy on the basis of acknowledging the differences, and even defining the scope of application of the two as "Near East" and "Far East" respectively. [ 2 ] However, these wise views have not yet touched the root of the problem. Although Lenin and Roy's views on the colonial issue are different in detail, they are generally similar and each has its own purpose. Correctly understanding and interpreting the strategies of the two on the issue of national colonies is not only the basis for understanding Marxist national colonial theory, but also the key to understanding the root cause of the contradiction between the land revolution and the united front during the Chinese Revolution.

**1. Disagreements and Doubts**

The "Draft Theses" and "Supplementary Theses" drafted by Lenin and Roy for the Second Congress of the Communist International were not entirely consistent in content and even had conflicting views. This sparked a heated debate at the conference, causing representatives with Eastern and Western tendencies to become barriers to each other. [ 3 ] 122

This also "laid the seeds for the subsequent long-lasting debate within the Communist International." [ 2 ]

The arguments in the "Supplementary Theses" drafted by Roy were very different from Lenin's policy proposals on backward countries. The principled differences were mainly reflected in the following two aspects.

First, the importance of the national revolutionary movement of Eastern colonial countries to the Western proletarian revolution. Roy believed that colonies and dependent countries were "one of the main sources of European capitalism's basic strength" and were indispensable to the European capitalist powers. To this end, Roy used Britain as an example and elaborated on the view that without its vast colonies, "Britain's capitalist system would have been crushed by its own burden long ago." At the same time, Roy pointed out that "the extra profits obtained from colonies are the main source of modern capitalist financial resources. Before this source of extra profits is exhausted, it will be difficult for the European working class to overthrow the capitalist system." [ 4 ] 119

Therefore, "it is impossible to overthrow the European capitalist system without destroying the colonial empire." [ 5 ] 76 Roy regarded the overthrow of the colonial rule of Western capitalist countries by colonial countries as a necessary prerequisite for the victory of the European proletarian revolution. This view was completely contrary to Lenin's and even the mainstream view of the Communist International. [ 6 ] 24

For a long period before and after the founding of the Communist International, the liberation of Eastern colonies was regarded as a "by-product" that would come with the victory of the Western proletarian revolution. [ 3 ] 119

**Second, should we support the bourgeois national democratic movement in backward countries?**

 Lenin explicitly advocated that we should support the national revolutionary movement in backward countries. In his Supplementary Theses, Roy pointed out that "in many countries, especially in India, the masses are not with the leaders of bourgeois nationalism", and that the bourgeois nationalist movement cannot reflect "the feelings and aspirations of the entire population".

On this basis, Roy criticized Lenin's strategy of supporting the democratic revolutionary movement in backward countries and denied the idea that "due to economic and industrial backwardness, the people of colonial countries will inevitably go through the stage of bourgeois democracy". [ 5 ] 74

 In Roy's view, the bourgeois national revolutionary movement in the colonies "has the sole purpose of driving out foreign exploiters and exploiting the working people themselves". [ 4 ] 128

Therefore, Roy regarded "the democratic movement of bourgeois nationalism" and "the mass struggle of workers and peasants to get rid of all forms of exploitation" as two "far-flung" and even "opposing forces" in colonial countries. [ 4 ] 120-121 [ 5 ] 75

Since the workers’ and peasants’ mass movement and the democratic movement were in opposition to each other, the Communist International should not support the bourgeois democratic movement, but should do its utmost to support the workers’ and peasants’ mass revolutionary movement.

According to Roy’s recollection, during the Second Congress of the Communist International, Lenin discussed the issue of the “Draft Theses” with him, and Roy expressed a different view. Lenin knew that he knew very little about the colonial situation and that the strategy he proposed was mainly “based on theory”, so he suggested that Roy should“draft an alternative theses”. [ 7 ] 393-394

According to Roy’s statement, the reason why the “Draft Theses” and the “Supplementary Theses” showed a principled difference in the strategies for backward countries or colonial countries was that Lenin knew little about colonial countries, while Roy was born in India and had a better understanding of Eastern colonial countries. Therefore, Roy was commissioned by Lenin to draft the “Supplementary Theses”, and the relationship between the two theses was “alternative”.

However, if there is a choice, one should make a choice. The Communist International knew that the "Draft Theses" and the "Supplementary Theses" had many opposing views, but they still passed both documents at the same time without any special explanation, which shows that the two were not actually in a "selective" relationship.

After all, Roy's statement was a recollection which was made many years later, so it is normal to have some deviations in his memory. Some scholars believe that the cognitive basis of Lenin and Roy's "Draft Theses" and "Supplementary Theses" was one in the Near East and the other in the Far East, so "Lenin's strategy of uniting with the bourgeoisie to carry out the national liberation movement" was aimed at "the Near East and the Middle East", while Roy's "Supplementary Theses" was mainly aimed at the Far East. [ 2 ] This view means that the relationship between the two is geographically applicable and complementary.

However, although the basis and targets of the draft theses and the supplementary theses were indeed different, neither in the discussion of the conference nor in the relevant documents did they raise the distinction between the Far East and the Near and Middle East.

If the Communist International did have such a distinction between the two regions, it would not have remained silent on such a key issue. In June 1921, Zhang Tailei pointed out in his draft theses to the Third Congress of the Communist International on the Colonial Question: “Comrade Roy’s suggestion that peasants and handicraft workers in economically backward countries in the Near and Middle East should immediately and simultaneously fight on two fronts against imperialism and the bourgeoisie is completely wrong.”[ 4 ] 181-182

The paper seeks to demonstrate that in the early 1920s Zhang Tailei served as the main liaison between the Communist International (CI) and the Chinese Bolsheviks. In March 1921, before the First CCP Congress, he moved to Soviet Russia where he became a secretary of the Chinese section of the CI’s Far Eastern Secretariat.

In June 1921, he became the first Chinese Communist with full voting rights to attend a CI congress and in July of that year a congress of the Young Communist International (YCI). He also was the first Chinese Communist to present a written report on the Chinese Communist movement to the CI and to be elected a member of both the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI) and the Executive Committee of the YCI. In addition, he also was the first Chinese Bolshevik who grasped the meaning of the Comintern’s United Front policy and one of the first who drew close attention to the peasant question in China. He did it under the direct influence of the Soviet leaders. Long before Mao, Zhang also emphasized the role of an army in the Chinese revolution, the one that is created out of bandits, the poorest peasants, paupers, and rural lumpen proletarian elements. In 1927, he led the famous Canton Commune. Thus, Zhang’s contribution to the Chinese revolution and the spread of Bolshevik ideas in China deserves detailed investigation.

This statement reflects that in the eyes of people at the time, Roy’s supplementary theses were not only not aimed at the Far Eastern colonial countries, but were even the opposite.

To answer the question of why the Communist International adopted both the "Draft Theses" and the "Supplementary Theses", we need not only to fundamentally explore the standpoints and scope of application of the two analyses, and the revisions made by Lenin and others in the Communist International to Roy's "Supplementary Theses", but also to consider the contradictory mentality of Marxist revolutionaries on the issue of the attributes of the peasant class.

II. Basis and Application

In his “First Draft Theses”, Lenin clearly pointed out that Communists should not **“regard the promulgation of abstract and formal principles as the main point”** when discussing national issues, but should discuss national issues on the basis of “accurately assessing the concrete historical situation, and primarily evaluating the economic situation”. [ 8 ] 160-161 Lenin emphasized this point again when delivering the “Report of the Committee on National and Colonial Questions” at the conference. Lenin’s remarks indicate that the propositions on national and colonial issues in his “First Draft Theses” were based on the judgment and analysis of the economic situation.

It is for this reason that Lenin first distinguished between “oppressed, dependent nations without equal rights” and “oppressed, exploited nations with full rights” based on the different economic status of various countries and nations. [ 8 ] 164

The two correspond to oppressed nations and oppressor nations respectively, and to a certain extent can also be seen as corresponding to colonial issues and national issues. Similarly, when thinking about the specific tactics of the Communist International on different national issues at that time, Lenin also divided the world at that time into “countries that are already completely capitalist and have a workers’ party that is truly the vanguard of the proletariat” and “relatively backward countries and nations where feudal relations or patriarchal relations and patriarchal peasant relations are dominant” based on different levels of economic development. [ 8 ] 167

Lenin also formulated the strategic principles of the Communist International on national issues in the two categories. The primary task of the Communist International on national issues in the former category of countries is to “fight opportunism and bourgeois pacifism that distort the concept and policy of internationalism”. [ 8 ] 167 This provision tends to fight against the Second International and is mainly aimed at national issues in Europe. The main task of the Communist International in relation to national issues in the latter countries and regions was to assist the local bourgeois democratic movement against feudalism and which fights for national liberation. This was mainly aimed at national issues in the colonies, semi-colonies and backward countries and regions outside Europe. [ 1 ]

In short, Lenin insisted on using economic conditions as the basic starting point for analyzing and solving national issues: when analyzing problems, Lenin divided nations into oppressor nations and oppressed nations based on their different economic status; when solving problems, Lenin divided the world into fully capitalist countries and relatively backward countries where feudal and patriarchal relations prevailed based on the different levels of development of the economy or productive forces.

Specifically, when Lenin made a report to the Committee on National and Colonial Questions, Lenin pointed out that the "practical work" carried out by the Russian Communist Party in backward countries such as "former colonies of the Tsarist government" such as Turkestan faced the problem of "how to apply the strategies and policies of communism under pre-capitalist conditions" and that in such countries "there is almost no industrial proletariat". [ 8 ] 234-235

This explanation well explains the basis and application of Lenin's "Draft Theses" in backward countries, namely, it is based only on and is aimed at backward countries where "pre-capitalist relations prevail" and "there is almost no industrial proletariat".

In May 1927, Stalin mentioned in a conversation with students of Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow that Lenin's "Draft Theses" were aimed at "those countries in Central Asia where 'there is no or almost no industrial proletariat'". [ 9 ] 235

Unlike Lenin’s First Draft Theses, which divided the national question into two types: the national question of capitalist countries and the national question of backward countries, Roy’s Supplementary Theses begins with the statement: “One of the most important problems facing the Second Congress of the Communist International is to define more specifically the relationship between the Communist International and the revolutionary movement in countries ruled by capitalist imperialism (such as China and India).”[ 4 ] 119 Obviously, the Supplementary Theses uses “India and China” as a sample and theses target the “colonies and dependent countries” ruled by capitalist imperialism.

It should be pointed out that although there were regional differences between Lenin and Roy in the selection of samples, they did not intend to distinguish the scope of application of strategies based on regions.

Roy pointed out in his recollections that when he discussed the "Draft Theses" with Lenin, the first thing Roy saw was that Lenin "did not understand the mutual relations among various social forces in the colonial countries." [ 7 ] 393 On this basis, Roy was commissioned by Lenin to draft the "Supplementary Theses." Judging from the content of the "Supplementary Theses" drafted by Roy, his strategy on colonial countries was based on an analysis of the "mutual relations among various social forces in the colonial countries."

In Roy's view, "real proletariat" had emerged in colonies such as India and China "not long ago",[ 4 ] 120 and "organized socialist and communist parties already existed in most colonies".[ 5 ] 76 Class contradictions had begun to intensify, and workers and peasants had risen up to oppose the attempt of bourgeois national democratic elements to establish a "free nation-state". Therefore, Roy firmly advocated that the communists of colonies should "start class struggle at the earliest possible stage",[ 5 ] 75 and denied any assistance to the democratic movements.

Judging from the content of the "Supplementary Draft ", Roy was targeting colonial countries where "real proletariat" had emerged and where the masses had formed an opposition to the "bourgeois nationalist movement".

It is not difficult to see that although Roy's "Supplementary Theses" was written in response to Lenin's "Draft Theses" regarding the strategy in the "backward countries and regions", and its basis and sampling are different.

Lenin based on the "economic conditions" of various countries and took Turkestan and other countries as samples.

Roy based on the "mutual relationship of social forces" in colonial countries and took India and China as samples. After all, the degree of differentiation of social forces depends on the degree of development of productive forces and production relations. In this sense, Lenin targeted "relatively backward countries and nations" where pre-capitalist relations dominated and there was no industrial proletariat, while Roy targeted colonies and dependent countries where industrial proletariat had emerged. This is also the reason why Roy's theses are named "Supplementary Theses", that is, they are used to supplement the countries and nations where the capitalist mode of production has developed to a certain extent that were not covered in Lenin's "Draft Theses".

It should be pointed out that although Lenin regarded Roy as an "Eastern sage" and asked him to draft the "Supplementary Theses", Roy's understanding of Eastern countries was not necessarily better than Lenin's.

In early 1915, Roy was ordered to go abroad to seek arms support for the Indian revolution, and he did not return home for 16 years. He stayed in America for a long time (mainly in Mexico) and "completely lost contact with India".

Roy was not only completely unaware of "what might happen in India", but also "did not care much about the domestic situation". [ 10 ] 220-221

Although Roy had contact with Indian revolutionaries during this period, his judgment on the relationship between various social forces in colonial countries, apart from the theories of Marx, Engels, Lenin and others on capitalist imperialism, [ 11 ] was mostly hearsay or even subjective conjecture.

Roy’s views such as "organized socialist and communist parties already exist in most colonies" and "mutual opposition" between mass movements and bourgeois national movements are all have weak factual basis.

As for India, the first attempt to establish a Communist Party was made in 1923, but it was unsuccessful. In 1925, when "Percy E. Gradin, a representative of the British Communist Party, was sent to India to investigate the party situation", he found that "the Communist Party did not exist at all." [ 12 ] 281-282 In terms of the degree of capitalist development, until 1948-1949, after independence, India's industrial output value still accounted for only 17.1% of the gross national product. [ 13 ] 645 In the early 1930s, the total number of workers in India's family handicrafts, workshops and large-scale factories accounted for only 10.26% of the total population of India. [ 14 ] This shows the development of capitalism in India around 1920 and shows the degree of differentiation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Although the Communist International lacked understanding of the situation in Eastern countries because its main focus was on Western Europe, it was not completely unaware of whether most Eastern colonial countries had "organized socialist and communist parties". Therefore, Communist International did not agree with Roy's view and eventually replaced the term "socialist and communist parties" with the vague and abstract concept of "revolutionary parties". [ 5 ] 76

3. Peasant Movement and Democratic Movement

As for the two main differences between Roy and Lenin in the revolutionary strategies of backward or colonial countries, the question of the importance of the Eastern and Western revolutions seemed self-evident at the time. Although there were many people who asked the Communist International to face up to the role of the revolutionary movement in Eastern countries, Roy was the only representative who believed that the revolutionary movement in Eastern countries was more important than that in the West, or who explicitly stated that the Western capitalist world would collapse with the liberation of Eastern colonies. For example, although the Persian representative Sultan-Zadeh agreed with Roy's opinion that he did not support the bourgeois democratic movement, Sultan-Zadeh clearly opposed Roy's view that "the future of world communism will depend on the victory of the social revolution in the East."

It can be said that the main issue that really caused the delegates to disagree and even "be confused and uneasy" was the content of "Article 11" of the "Draft Outline", namely, the question of whether to support the bourgeois democratic movement in backward countries. [ 15 ] 221

Although both the delegates and later scholars believed that Roy and Lenin clearly expressed opposite opinions on supporting the bourgeois democratic movement in backward countries, their views were actually different in form but similar in essence. The reason why they seemed to be diametrically opposed was entirely because these two persons did not agree on the use of concepts and class identification, so that the dispute over whether to support the bourgeois democratic movement in backward countries concealed the consistency of their views on supporting the peasant movement.

In Lenin's view, peasants include "landlords, rich peasants and some middle peasants, as well as the proletariat", three "classes with different immediate and ultimate aims". [ 16 ] 326

In addition to the agricultural proletariat, landlords are feudal serf owners, rich peasants are rural bourgeoisie, [ 17 ] 149-150 middle peasants are closer to the petty bourgeoisie. Precisely because the composition of peasants is complex, most of them are close to the proletariat, [ 18 ] 117 but as a whole they are affiliated with the group of private owners, and they account for the vast majority of the population in agricultural economies, so peasants have always been difficult to ignore but difficult to define.

Not only in the history of the Russian Communist Party, but also in the history of the entire international communist movement, there are often different definitions of them. "In the debate between Marxists and pure Narodnik populists and social revolutionaries," the "peasant question" has always been at the center. [ 19 ] 38

In general, the common idea of ​​being hostile to the bourgeoisie and valuing the peasants has led to a contradictory mentality among Marxists on the question of the class nature of the peasant movement: in rational cognition, the peasant movement undoubtedly belongs to the bourgeois democratic movement, but most Marxists are reluctant to classify the peasant movement in such a way due to their emotional inclination.

Due to this, Marxists were very confused in dealing with the class positioning of peasants and the class nature of peasant movements. Apart from the specific analysis of various classes and the abstract classification of peasants as a whole as the petty bourgeoisie, there were at least two main tendencies: First, peasants and workers were regarded as a whole, using super-class or unclear class concepts, or even directly classifying peasants as part of the proletariat.

For example, on the basis of class analysis, Marx combined peasants and workers and referred to them as "people". [ 20 ] 118 In January 1921, Chinese communist leader Qu Qiubai classified workers and peasants as part of the proletariat in his article "The Condition of Chinese Workers and Their Expectations of Russia". [ 21 ] 165 Zhao Shiyan simply called the "working class and peasantry" the "last class". [ 22 ] 123

When Tan Pingshan organized the Chinese Revolutionary Party, the Third Party, Tan Pingshan used the concept of "working civilian class" to refer to groups such as workers and peasants. [ 23 ] 455

From Roy's view that the workers' and peasants' mass movement and the national democratic movement are two "opposing" movements in colonial countries, it is clear that this approach was adopted, that is, the peasants and workers as a whole "mass" were regarded as the driving force of the proletarian revolutionary movement, and were completely separated from or even contradictory to the bourgeois democratic movement.

 Secondly, the peasants were regarded as a component of the bourgeoisie and the main force of the bourgeois national democratic movement. In 1913, Lenin wrote an article criticizing the view that "workers and 'laboring' peasants" are "one class" and considered this view to be a "populist/Narodnik" view. [ 24 ] 243 Therefore, Lenin did not combine workers and peasants into one, but regarded the peasant movement as an important or even the main form of the bourgeois democratic movement. It is also for this reason that Roy's statement of "bourgeois democratic national movement" in his "Supplementary Theses" is superficially consistent with Lenin's words.

In October 1905, when refuting the populists’ view that “the peasant movement is the real and direct socialist movement”, Lenin clearly pointed out: “In the eyes of Marxists, the peasant movement is not a socialist movement, but a democratic movement.” [ 19 ] 39

 In his book “Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution”, Lenin also emphasized: “Beyond the scope of democracy, there can be no talk of unity of will between the proletariat and the peasant bourgeoisie.”

In other words, the workers and peasants can only join hands in the stage of democratic revolution. Beyond this stage, class struggle is “inevitable.” [ 20 ] 67

From this, we can see that although Roy opposed supporting the bourgeois national democratic movement in colonial countries and advocated supporting the mass movement of workers and peasants in his “Supplementary Theses”, in Lenin’s view, the mass movement of workers and peasants is essentially a bourgeois democratic movement, and even the main and most important content of the bourgeois democratic movement. Therefore, although the two seem to be completely opposite in supporting the national democratic movement in backward countries, they are essentially completely consistent in supporting the peasant movement. **The only difference is that one regards the peasant movement as part of the “mass movement”, while the other directly classifies it as part of the bourgeois democratic movement.**

 If we judge from the “Draft Theses”, Lenin’s tendency to support the peasant movement in the name of supporting the bourgeois democratic movement was not obvious, but it was also reflected.

In, “Draft Theses”, Lenin demanded: “The communist proletariat of Western Europe should form the closest possible alliance with the peasant revolutionary movement in the colonies and all backward countries in the East.”[ 8 ] 164

In the East-West international alliance front, the West was based on the proletariat, the East was based on the peasants, and the bourgeoisie in the East was ignored. This was obviously not an accidental mistake.

In fact, perhaps because of the huge difference in the development levels of the East and the West, Lenin always applied a double standard to the bourgeoisie. While Lenin firmly denied the Western bourgeoisie, Lenin had a favorable impression of the bourgeoisie in Eastern countries because of the peasants. This reflected his specific analysis and differentiated treatment of the revolutionary movements in countries and regions with different economic development levels.

In July 1912, Lenin declared in his article that “the Western bourgeoisie is already decadent”, but “in Asia there is still a bourgeoisie that can represent sincere, militant and thorough democrats”. [ 25 ] 428

This reflects the basic idea that “the bourgeois democratic movement in Asia is progressive, while the bourgeoisie that controls Europe is backward”. [ 26 ] 125

However, Lenin also clearly pointed out that “the main representative or main social pillar of this Asian bourgeoisie that can still engage in historically progressive undertakings is the peasantry.” [ 25 ] 428

This theory reflects Lenin’s basic understanding of the subject of the Asian bourgeois revolution. Moreover, after the draft of the “Outline” was completed, Lenin sent it to Stalin, Chicherin, Preobrazhensky and others for comments.

In response to Chicherin’s failure to take Lenin’s view on the need to distinguish between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry into account, Lenin clearly pointed out that “my theses lay more stress on the alliance with the peasantry (which is not entirely equal to the bourgeoisie)”. [ 27 ] 108

Shortly after the Second Congress of the Communist International, a meeting of chairmen of county, township and village executive committees was held in Moscow. In his speech at the meeting, Lenin once again emphasized that “in all civilized countries and in all backward Eastern countries, the banner of Bolshevism, the Bolshevik program and the Bolshevik method of action have become the banner for the workers of all civilized countries and the peasants of all backward colonial countries in their quest for liberation.” [ 8 ] 356

Based on this, the core of the bourgeois democratic movement that Lenin called for assistance in the “Draft Theses” was undoubtedly the peasant movement. Scholar Sheng Yue even believes that this view is “the basis of the “Theses on the National and Colonial Questions” drafted by Lenin and adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920”. [ 28 ] 14

In short, Lenin's advocacy of aiding the bourgeois democratic movement in backward countries was actually aimed at aiding the peasant movement in backward countries. It was also on this point that there was little difference between Lenin's "Draft Theses" and Roy's "Supplementary Theses". Dutch representative Wijnkop seemed to have vaguely realized this point. Wijnkop pointed out at the meeting that the spirit of Lenin's and Roy's theses was "completely consistent" and "required us to support the mass national revolutionary movement." [ 15 ] 245

IV. Bridging Differences and Forming Theory

Roy's Supplementary Theses were taken seriously at the Congress, largely due to Lenin's modesty. [ 7 ] 394-395

Roy's Supplementary Theses were first revised by Lenin, then discussed and revised at the Committee on National and Colonial Questions, and finally discussed and revised and passed at the Congress. Lenin's revisions to the Supplementary Theses were mainly aimed at Roy's exposition of revolutionary theory. [ 5 ] 74

Specifically, Lenin deleted Roy's "opposition to the Communist International's support for national revolutionary movements". [ 2 ] Later, the revisions of the Committee on National and Colonial Questions were mainly aimed at Roy's absolute statement that colonial liberation was a prerequisite for the victory of the proletarian revolution in the West. For example, the phrase "It is impossible to overthrow the European capitalist system without destroying the colonial empires" was changed to "The European capitalist system can be overthrown by eliminating colonial rule and carrying out proletarian revolution in the colonial countries at the same time". [ 5 ] 76

Fundamentally speaking, the purpose of Lenin and the Committee on Nationalities and Colonial Questions’ revisions to the Roy’s Supplementary Theses was to blur the fundamental differences between the original draft theses and the Supplementary Theses and achieve “full coordination” between them. [ 5 ] 73

On the one hand, this reflected the maintenance of the strategy in the original draft theses, and on the other hand, it also showed the Comintern’s recognition of the analysis of the “mutual relations of various social forces in the colonial countries” in the Supplementary Theses of Roy. The key to this revision being recognized by the Congress and accepted by Roy was the fundamental consistency between the two in terms of assisting the bourgeois democratic movement or supporting the peasant movement.

In his First Draft Theses, Lenin called the revolutionary movement in colonial and semi-colonial countries the "bourgeois democratic liberation movement" or the "bourgeois democratic national movement." Although it did not explicitly state why the national movement belonged to the bourgeois democratic movement, it began with the following statement: "One of the characteristics of bourgeois democracy, determined by its nature, is that it raises the question of equality, including the question of national equality, in an abstract or formal manner."[ 8 ] 160

The implicit logic here is that demands such as national equality and national self-determination are important contents of political democracy[ 29 ] 260 and "the basic principles of democracy in general,"[ 30 ] 204 so the national revolutionary movement naturally belongs to the bourgeois democratic movement. However, after the discussion of the Committee on National and Colonial Questions, Lenin's logic underwent a significant change, and the peasant factor began to stand out.

In his Report of the Committee on National and Colonial Questions, Lenin pointed out that after discussion, the committee unanimously decided to "refrain from mentioning the 'bourgeois democratic' movement and instead mention the national revolutionary movement" because "the main population of backward countries is the peasantry, and the peasantry is the embodiment of bourgeois capitalist relations", so "any national movement can only be of a bourgeois democratic nature".

On this basis, Lenin further argued that the view that the proletarian party can implement communist strategies and policies in backward countries "without establishing a certain relationship with the peasant movement and without actually supporting the peasant movement" is "utopian". [ 8 ] 230-231

While emphasizing the bourgeois democratic nature of the peasant movement, Lenin’s this theory also clearly pointed out that it is necessary to establish relations with the peasants and support the peasant movement in order to implement communist policies in backward countries. In essence, it is a correction to Roy's view that the workers' and peasants' mass movement is opposed to the bourgeois democratic movement, and it is also an endorsement of Roy's support for the workers' and peasants' movement. The effect of this change is that Lenin "exchanged Roy's tactical compromise with making a concession in terminology". [ 31 ] 493

If the revision of Roy's Supplementary Theses blurred the gap between Lenin and Roy's views, then Lenin's Report of the Commission on National and Colonial Questions bridged the gap between the two in terms of their main views and reached a consensus on supporting the peasant movement or the workers' and peasants' movement on the issue of strategy for colonial and semi-colonial countries.

At the same time, although Roy's judgment on the degree of differentiation of social forces in Eastern colonial countries such as India was obviously biased, Roy even absolutized it as the general situation of Eastern countries in his Supplementary Theses. [ 15 ] 206

However, at that time, Western European and Soviet Marxists generally lacked understanding of the situation in Eastern countries. Although Roy was strongly recommended by Borodin to head the delegation to Moscow because he had established "the first Communist Party organization outside of Russia" in Mexico, [ 31 ] 212 , Roy was known to the Communist International in Moscow as "Lenin's specially invited 'Eastern wise man' from the New World" [ 31 ] 309 "representative of British India" [ 15 ] 205 .

Therefore, Roy’s understanding of the colonial issue inevitably had an impact on the Communist International. Lenin clearly pointed out that Roy’s theses were “written mainly on the basis of the situation in India and other large nations in Asia oppressed by Britain.” [ 8 ] 230 This meant that Lenin agreed with Roy’s judgment on the relationship between social forces in countries such as India and China, which was also the fundamental reason why the “Supplementary Theses” were passed.

V. Conclusion

In summary, the national colonial theory formed at the Second Congress of the Communist International has its own logical structure, which is composed of different strategies for countries with workers' parties, backward countries without industrial proletariat, and colonial countries where industrial proletariat has emerged. In short, developed capitalist countries, relatively developed colonial countries and regions, and backward colonial countries and regions constitute the basic classification of the Communist International in dealing with the world's national issues.

Apart from fully capitalist countries, Lenin advocated "special assistance" to the peasant movement against landlords, against large landownership, against all feudal phenomena or remnants of feudalism in backward countries and nations where pre-capitalist relations prevailed.

Lenin advocated "striving to make the peasant movement as revolutionary as possible and to form the closest possible alliance between the communist proletariat of Western Europe and the peasant revolutionary movement in the Eastern colonies and even in all backward countries". [ 8 ] 164

For colonial countries where the industrial proletariat had already emerged, Roy advocated "implementing a program that includes many petty-bourgeois reform projects, such as the distribution of land, etc." in the early stages of their revolution. [ 4 ] 121

In other words, no matter what kind of colonial country, the main method or primary goal of the revolution was the peasant movement. This was also the theoretical root of the rapid development of the peasant movement in the Chinese national revolutionary movement and its role as the main factor affecting the success or failure of the Great Revolution. Moreover, the bourgeois democratic movement that aided backward countries was essentially directed toward the peasant movement, implying a choice between peasants and non-peasant bourgeois democrats. It not only laid the cause of the contradiction between the peasant movement and the Kuomintang-Communist united front during the Chinese Revolution, but also hinted at a choice.

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