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## Lenin on relations between socialist states

Milovan Djilas

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**LENIN ON RELATIONS  
BETWEEN SOCIALIST STATES**

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**BY MILOVAN DJILAS**





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BETWEEN SOCIALIST STATES**

BY NIKOLAI DOLGAN

Presented by

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# **LENIN ON RELATIONS BETWEEN SOCIALIST STATES**

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**BY MILOVAN DJILAS**

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This is an abridged translation of an article by Milovan Djilas, published in the September 1949 issue of *The Communist*, theoretical organ of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Mr. Djilas is a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and a member of the Cabinet of the Yugoslav Government.

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IN THE COURSE OF THE STRUGGLE imposed by the leadership of the All-Union Communist Party (bolshevist) and the government of the Soviet Union upon the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the working masses of Yugoslavia under the camouflage of a conflict between the Cominform and the Central Committee of the CPY<sup>1</sup>, it becomes every day more evident that the crucial issue of that conflict is the question of relations between socialist states. This issue and this conflict are among the results of the two most important developments of these times—the appearance of a group of socialist states, and the further weakening of capitalism throughout the world. This basic aspect of the conflict can neither be avoided nor ignored, because it is rooted in the social changes which have taken place since World War II. Actually, the conflict is the expression of the new phase which has been entered upon in consequence of these changes in the present period of international development. Naturally, the emergence of this new phase of international development has taken place within the specific framework of the general conditions of the contemporary epoch of imperialism, in the same way as the outbreak of the October Revolution and the appearance and growth of the Soviet Union had meant

<sup>1</sup> The conflict between the CPY and the CPSU (b) is the actual conflict—the disagreement involving points of principle—while the “conflict” between the CC of the CPY and the Cominform is nothing but a smoke screen. This assertion is based on the following facts: 1) Prior to the correspondence addressed by the CPSU (b) to the CC of the CPY and the notorious initial resolution of the Cominform, friendly relations and all-around cooperation were constantly growing between the other communist parties and our Party, as well as between the governments of the other people’s democracies and our government. This was so notwithstanding differences of opinion regarding various questions of principle and despite the obstacles which came partly from the bourgeois reaction, partly from the nationalist and opportunist elements inside



a new phase of international development within the specific framework of the general conditions prevailing in the earlier epoch of imperialism. The newest phase of international development is characterized by the spread of socialism, by the co-existence of a whole series of socialist states, and by the continued fundamental weakening of capitalism. In contrast to the world system of capitalist economy, we today have a large group of socialist economies which have come into being with many marked differences in their forms. This latest phase and its particular characteristics still have to be theoretically elaborated and explained, because Marxism-Leninism has not given and could not give in advance, ready-made recipes and patterns for every one of these differing forms.

The various "critics" of the CPY, who have assumed the role of unscrupulous slanderers of our proletarian party, of our socialist revolution and socialist construction, and even of the heroic achievements and his-

these communist parties themselves. 2) The Cominform is in no way a leading international workers' organ, but a forum created for the exchange of opinion and mutual criticism which no party was under the obligation to accept (according to the decisions taken when it was formed). This organ met only twice in the course of two years—in fact only once. The first meeting was held on the occasion of its formation, and the second—and only meeting—when it was thought necessary to condemn the CPY. The condemnation of the CPY marked both the end of the principle on which this forum was founded and an attempt to transform the Cominform by devious means into a leading international workers' organ. However, the fact that the Cominform has played a completely passive role for almost two years with regard to all important international questions shows to what extent it is really nothing but a pure formality—nothing else but a formal democracy within the workers movement—a handy instrument in the struggle against the CPY or against any other party, to be used for the mobilization of the remaining parties. The newspaper published by the Cominform, in as much as its columns are not filled with slanders against the CPY, does not play any role in the life of any party, because it simply repeats or vulgarizes textbook points of Marxism-Leninism, or else reprints news of a general character from the life of individual parties. 3) The conflict originated between the CPY and the CPSU (b), while the leaders of other parties then joined in the attacks and slanders against the CPY, partly because they were previously prepared and told to do so by the CC of the CPSU (b), partly in a spirit of "solidarity" with the CPSU (b) and the USSR, and partly on account of their internal ideological weaknesses, but without entering into the substance of the conflict and without grasping its historical significance and its real implications. 4) No party as an entity is waging this struggle against the CPY, but only certain individual leaders and apparatuses especially organized for this purpose. Evidently, there is no internal conflict between the individual leaders and the parties and party masses. Consequently, considering everything, there is no conflict between the Cominform and the CC of the CPY—the conflict between the Cominform and the CC of the CPY is indeed only a sterile and shallow attempt to make people believe that the entire workers movement and party masses, and not mainly the CC of the CPSU (b) alone, are against the CPY.



tory of the Yugoslav peoples—who have thus become the wreckers of the international solidarity of workers and the violators of the equality of peoples—are trying by all possible means to camouflage the basic issue of the conflict and to present it as a struggle against the alleged “betrayal” committed by Yugoslav leaders.

These false accusers of the CPY belong mostly to the category of “theoreticians” who profess a liking for quotations, but who nevertheless do not want to use the passages they quote from the classics of Marxism-Leninism as a guide for the understanding of the complicated international and national conditions of the class struggle. All they actually want to achieve is to provide some concocted “ideological” basis for their fictitious charges and thus to conceal the substance of the conflict, which is not to be found in any alleged errors or “betrayals” committed by the CPY, but is directly involved in the fundamental question—what are to be the relations between socialist states and workers’ parties, and on what principles are these relations to be made to rest? Practices of this kind are not at all coincidental. The quotations from the classics of Marxism-Leninism, and more particularly from the pronouncements of Lenin, who made a profound study of this very question as an integral part of the wider national question, are so clear that they cannot indeed be used by any of these “theoreticians” whose task is not to enlighten and explain but to smear and to blacken.

Nor are these attempts at concealing the substance of conflicts involving points of principle by resorting to unprincipled criticism, falsehoods and slanders a new phenomenon in the workers movement. Let us remember that anarchists and other enemies of Marxism did not openly attack Marx on account of his ideas, but because they allegedly “suspected” him of being a “Prussian spy”, and because he was “in the pay” of the “bourgeois” and “aristocrat” Engels. Various revisionists have likewise thrown much mud at Lenin. The leaders of the Second International did not attack Lenin openly on account of his ideas, but on account of his alleged “betrayal” of democracy, on account of the “anarchy” and “terrorism” he had introduced in Russia, while the Russian mensheviks, social revolutionaries, and others attacked him because he had “betrayed” the fatherland as a “German spy”.

Similarly, in the period of the struggle for the construction of socialism in the USSR, the Trotzkyites, the Bucharinites, and others accused Stalin of betraying the revolution and establishing a regime of “personal dictatorship”. But despite such falsehoods and calumnies, the real proletarian truth has always succeeded in coming to the surface. Today, very few



people remember any of these false accusations, while Marx and Engels are honored as the founders of the modern workers' movement and creators of the scientific concept of the world. Lenin has remained the leader of the greatest revolution in the history of mankind, the founder of the first state of the workers, and the proletarian theoretician of the epoch of imperialism. Stalin has remained the leader of the construction of socialism in one given state. Truth in the workers movement is a prerequisite for its future development, and its future development is a prerequisite for the future decay of capitalism.

The irresistible force of dialectical materialism, i.e., Marxism-Leninism, lies indeed in its truthfulness. The workers movement does not have to invent anything even against the bourgeoisie: the evil aspects of capitalism are so profound and widespread that nothing can be stronger and more convincing—nothing can mobilize the masses better than the disclosure of the truth. Only those who have abandoned dialectical materialism and actually stepped over to the position of idealism—only those who have come into conflict with reality and are therefore unable to grasp new developments and new phenomena—are compelled to resort to provocations, insults and fictitious arguments in the conduct of the struggle. Those who believe that the truth about conflicts in the working class movement can be concealed, that such conflicts can be carried on in a false and fictitious light—they are either the enemies of that movement or have forever lost their faith in the movement and its principles.

The false accusers of the CPY, while avoiding acknowledgment of the substance of the conflict, have not made an attempt so far, as I have already stated, to give even the slightest theoretical explanation either concerning the struggle between our party and the CPSU (b), or concerning the question of relations between socialist countries. Nor are they in the position to do this, for the simple reason that they know very well that their actions are not only contrary to Marx's and Lenin's doctrine regarding relations between socialist countries and workers' parties, but are a direct and deliberate revision of the teachings of this doctrine.

Precisely because they know that they are revising these teachings, they have even thought it necessary to invent the fiction that Yugoslavia has gone over to the camp of capitalists and imperialists. They try both to hide their real intentions and to find a moral justification for their action in the eyes of the democratic opinion of the world. For Marxism-Leninism has not given them, nor could it give them, any moral justification for resorting to such a campaign of slander against a socialist country whose real offense is that it combats the persistent endeavors of the CPSU



(b) and the government of the USSR to impose unequal relations upon other socialist countries and other workers' movements. Throughout the history of mankind, such procedures have always been an instrument of unjust policies aiming at the subjugation or exploitation of other nations.

These observations are necessary, not only because contemporary revisionism has manifested itself most crudely and openly in regard to this issue, but because a number of European countries have now taken the road of socialism, while in Asia the immense masses of the Chinese people have done likewise. Moreover millions of people have actively and consciously embarked in one way or another upon the struggle for socialism also in the advanced countries (especially France and Italy) and in colonial areas such as Indonesia, Korea, and so forth. Socialism is no longer practiced in one single country—originally a backward country, too—which has carried through its socialist construction upon the unenviable social, economic, and cultural heritage of Tzarist Russia—but by a whole series of countries, some of which, moreover, are highly developed. More than one-third of the human race is now marching towards socialism. The historical reality of our times has thus placed this problem on the agenda today and it is no longer possible either to conceal its existence by resorting to machinations and camouflages or to avoid its discussion by using disreputable subterfuges.

Today, the working class movement faces this question: Are the relations between socialist countries to develop so that at the present stage of our struggle the internal forces can grow stronger both in each socialist country and in all socialist countries as a whole, thus acting as a powerful incentive also for other peoples to take the road of socialism? Or, are these relations to be such that the imperialists can exploit them for their own propaganda and their own struggle against the triumphant development of socialism in the countries that have taken that road, and also against the march of socialism among their own peoples and their colonial subjects?

It goes without saying that Lenin could not foresee all the concrete forms, in all their minute details, which the future relations between socialist countries and workers' parties were to take, nor that the question of such relations would become of such great and indeed decisive importance for the international workers movement. Least of all could he predict that the first country where the proletariat has come to power would impose unequal relations upon other newly constituted socialist countries. (What specific forms were to be assumed by the conflicts between socialist states on the basis of these unequal relations which today are an accom-



plished fact, and where such inequalities were to lead all these various countries and the world socialist and democratic movement as a whole—that is a point concerning which Lenin could not even make a guess.) How could Lenin, for instance, ever imagine that the USSR was to extract through the medium of mixed companies and by other means excessive profits from Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, etc.; that she was to exploit the weak and backward socialist countries, under the pretense of “assistance”? How could he ever foresee that the leaders of the USSR, of all people, were to belittle and misrepresent the Yugoslav revolution and the role of the liberation movement of other peoples and other countries in the great struggle of mankind for socialism?

This is one aspect of the problem—here is the other: Lenin likewise could not know—because social experience up to that time did not and could not give him any such clue—how and by what means, in what forms and at what tempo the process of unification within the socialist world was to take place, nor whether the question of state relations between the future socialist states was to be solved in one specific manner or another. Lenin was not a prophet—he was a scientific revolutionist. But exactly because he could theoretically explain the substance of contemporary, imperialistic capitalism, while in Russia he also foresaw the form of events which would lead to its downfall, Lenin actually formulated with the farsightedness of a genius the basic principles upon which the mutual relations of the new socialist states to be brought into existence during the period of decay of capitalism must necessarily be founded, if these states were really to march forward.

Lenin did not live to see the period of co-existence of several socialist states, so he only stated—and could only state—the basic theoretical foundations upon which the relations between such states ought to be based. What were to be the concrete forms of these relations, in what ways and by what means these socialist states were to be brought into being, Lenin could not predict—nor did he indeed have anything to do with that kind of “predictions”. This does not mean, however, that he failed to set forth reasoned concepts of these relations. On the contrary—if he did not—and could not—predict the concrete forms of relations between future socialist states, or the specific paths of their progress, his concepts regarding these relations constitute a consistent and complete theory which can and must serve as the foundation for all future relations between countries where the working people come to power, the states of the working peoples.



LENIN ALWAYS APPROACHED the question of relations between socialist states from the viewpoint of the development and strengthening of the proletarian revolution and the victory of socialism. The main concern of the proletarian parties—according to Lenin—is the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of socialism. Everything else—he says—is of secondary and minor importance. Like a bright colored thread, the thought that the nature of relations between socialist states must be such as to promote the proletarian revolution, the strengthening of socialism, and the final success of the struggle against capitalism, runs through Lenin's numerous works dealing with the national question.

“The question of the people's right of self-determination (i.e., guarantee by the state constitution of the free and democratic solution of the question of secession) is being inadmissibly mixed up with the question of permissibility of the secession of one specific nation or another. The Social-Democratic Party<sup>2</sup> must solve this latter question in each individual case quite independently—from the point of view of the interests of social progress as a whole and the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat for socialism.”<sup>3 4</sup>

When, and whether, a given nation is to secede from another nation and to form its own independent state, i.e., when, how long, and to what degree it is to exist as an independent state—depends on whether this corresponds to the interests “of social progress as a whole and the interests

<sup>2</sup> At that time, as most readers will know, the name “Communist Party” did not exist yet. (My own observation)

<sup>3</sup> Lenin, vol. XVII, pp. 12-13.

<sup>4</sup> All quotations of Lenin are taken from the III Russian edition of his “Collected Works”.



of the class struggle of the proletariat for socialism". Self-determination, i.e., state secession, is the right of every nation, but the question of what specific nations may exercise this right, and in what form and to what extent, depends above all on international conditions, on the struggle for the future development of socialism, and finally on conditions in each individual country. Upon the estimate of these conditions, the proletarian party "in each individual case quite independently" is to determine also the decision whether its people, as a state, is to secede from another people and to organize its own separate state or whether it is to enter into relations of one given character or another with one given (socialist) state or another.

The people's right of self-determination is not in the least menaced by the individual proletarian parties' decision one way or the other regarding this matter. The question—according to Lenin—is not whether a given nation is to secede or not, i.e., whether it is to make use of its right or not, but whether its secession corresponds to the interests of the movement as a whole, therefore also to the interests of the people concerned, because the real interest of any given people—according to Lenin—cannot be contrary under socialism to the interests of other peoples. If the strengthening of socialism, viz., the further weakening of imperialism, demands it, nations can then be divided into independent states, while they can also join other state communities when under the given set of circumstances that course corresponds better both to the interests of the development of the movement as a whole and to the interests of the nations directly concerned in every given case.

The party in any country—according to Lenin—must in each individual case take its decision independently, on realistic grounds, in agreement with parties in other countries, on the principle of voluntary action and equality.

True to these principles, Lenin allowed the possibility of secession of individual peoples and the organization of separate socialist states precisely because he was a consistent internationalist and an irreconcilable opponent of all national isolation and all divisions of the working masses. Lenin allowed this possibility not only for the benefit of the peoples outside Tzarist Russia, but also for the benefit of the peoples of Tzarist Russia itself.

In his "Letter to the Workers and Peasants of the Ukraine on the Occasion of the Victory over Denikin", written at the end of 1919, Lenin said:

"Until the Ukraine is completely liberated from Denikin and the All-



Ukrainian Congress of Soviets is convoked, its Government is the All-Ukrainian Revolutionary Committee—the All-Ukrainian Revkom. In this Revolutionary Committee, in addition to Ukrainian communists-bolshevists there are also, as members of the Government, Ukrainian communists-borotbists. *The borotbists and the bolshevists differ from one another mainly because the former stand for unconditional independence of the Ukraine! The bolshevists do not make of this attitude a matter for disagreement and division, they do not see in it any obstacles to harmonious proletarian cooperation.*<sup>5</sup> *Let there be unity in the struggle against the yoke of capital, for the dictatorship of the proletariat, and as regards the question of the national frontiers, as regards federation or any other links between the states, there must be no disagreement amongst communists.*<sup>6</sup> Amongst the bolshevists there are supporters of full independence of the Ukraine, there are supporters of a more or less close federal association, and there are supporters of a complete integration of the Ukraine with Russia.

“Disagreements on account of these questions are inadmissible. Those questions will be decided upon by the All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets.”<sup>7</sup>

In starting from the standpoint that “unity in the struggle against the yoke of capital” is the basic task, Lenin in this “Letter” warned both the Great Russian and the Ukrainian workers against the danger of nationalist deviations which might cause serious harm to this unity. The insistence by Great Russian communists on “integration of the Ukraine with Russia” might provoke the suspicion that they were not guided “by the unity of the proletarians in the struggle against the yoke of capital” but by Great Russian imperialist motives. On the other hand, the insistence by the Ukrainian communists on “unconditional state independence of the Ukraine” might provoke the suspicion that they were guided by “small-bourgeois, small-property nationalist prejudices”. The task was therefore clear: for Great Russian communists it was—to leave it to the Ukrainians themselves to organize their relations with Russia, while for the Ukrainian communists it was—not to permit the disruption of proletarian “unity in the struggle against the yoke of capital”. That was the fundamental issue in this entire question. In regard to this issue—according to Lenin—no concessions must be made, no concessions could be made, either by the

<sup>5</sup> I am not entering here into the question of the borotbists and their subsequent stand, but am only quoting Lenin’s point of view that the bolshevists, confronted with the demand for “unconditional independence of the Ukraine” did not “make this attitude a matter for disagreement and division” and did not “see in it any obstacles for harmonious proletarian cooperation”.

<sup>6</sup> Italics are mine. In all quotations, where it is not otherwise expressly stated, the italics are Lenin’s.

<sup>7</sup> Lenin, vol. XXIV, pp. 657-658.



Ukrainian or by the Great Russian communists, while as regards the form of the state relations between the Ukraine and Russia, Great Russian communists must be conciliatory.

Concerning this point, Lenin writes:

“The best means for this<sup>8</sup> consists in working in common for the defense of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet power in the struggle against the big land owners and capitalists of all countries, against their attempts at establishing their supremacy. This common struggle will clearly demonstrate in practice that the Great Russian and Ukrainian workers, *whatever may be the solution of the question of state independence and state frontiers, indispensably need a close military and economic union.*<sup>9</sup> Because otherwise the capitalists of the ‘Entente’, the ‘Association’, i.e., the alliance of the wealthiest capitalistic countries, Great Britain, France, the United States, Japan, and Italy, will choke and strangle us one after the other . . .

“That is why we, Great Russian communists, must suppress in our midst even the slightest manifestations of Great Russian nationalism. For these manifestations, which in any case amount to a betrayal of Communism, cause us an immense harm by dividing us from our Ukrainian comrades and thus by helping Denikin and his odious Denikinism.”

To sum up: What was “indispensably needed” was close military and economic union, so that the capitalists could not “strangle them, if disunited, one after the other”. What was secondary and therefore not “indispensable” both for the Ukrainians and for the Russians was “the solution of the question of independence and the state frontiers, whatever it may be”. What this solution was to be, what in this specific case was to be the form of state relations between Great Russia and the Ukraine, depended in the final analysis on the common interests of the movement in the given situation and, more directly, on the freely expressed demands and wishes of the Ukrainian workers and peasants themselves.

<sup>8</sup> Namely, for the elimination of suspicion between the Great Russian and Ukrainian Communists. M.D.

<sup>9</sup> Italics are mine.



OUR PARTY HAS NEVER ADOPTED the thesis that socialist states should not be united into one state organism. But neither has it ever explicitly advocated such a union. As to this question it has always taken into consideration the interests of the movement as a whole. It has indeed always asked whether unification with some given socialist state or other is of the nature to strengthen or to weaken the growth of socialism and democracy. It is in this light that its attitude, for example, in regard to the question of union with Bulgaria and Albania, must be examined. Likewise, our Party has never considered the question of unification with these states as a question of first-class importance, nor as an obligation for our own people or for the peoples of these two countries. Under all conditions, and through all the various phases of development, our Party has been of the opinion that what is indispensably needed is "a close military and economic union". It has firmly and consistently stood by this obligation in regard to all other socialist states in so far as that has depended upon us. It was on the initiative of our Party that the economic and military alliance with Albania, Bulgaria, and other people's democracies was concluded. Our Party has never initiated any steps tending to weaken these relations. Moreover, even since the notorious initial resolution of the Cominform, it has done everything in its power to safeguard and develop still further the existing cooperation between Yugoslavia and other socialist states.

However, this has not been the attitude adopted by the slanderers of the CPY, especially those in the USSR. They know very well, and much better than ourselves, the classical passages from Lenin which we have quoted. They know equally well that Yugoslavia is a socialist state and that she is building socialism very rapidly. Nonetheless, they have taken



the secondary and minor questions (i.e., the questions of the form of state relations) as the questions of primary importance. The leaders of the USSR consider that Yugoslavia as a state should be subordinated and that its economic policies and its entire development in a general way should be made dependent upon the "leading" socialist state, i. e. the USSR. At the same time, they have forced other socialist states to act in a similar manner and thus to go back on what Lenin considered an obligation to be respected by Communists of all countries, if they did not wish to betray Communism, i. e., close economic union. On the other hand, by a series of violent and provocative actions, they have nullified the existing military union between Yugoslavia and the other socialist countries.

In carrying out, according to plan, such anti-Leninist, anti-socialist, and anti-democratic activities, they have, in order to conceal their revision of Leninist teachings, invented the fiction that Yugoslavia is not a socialist state and that it is not building socialism. By this falsehood they hope to justify morally in the eyes of the international proletariat and democratic public opinion the actions taken against Yugoslavia. For if Yugoslavia is a capitalistic country: if it is "being transformed into an ordinary bourgeois republic"; if an "anti-democratic and anti-communist regime" is being established there—then all measures against Yugoslavia are permissible and justifiable.

But undeniable reality reveals yet another fiction. The leaders of the USSR have not applied against any capitalistic or even any fascist state (for example, Spain or Greece) such measures as they are so ruthlessly using against "capitalistic" Yugoslavia. This fact certainly demonstrates that they are thinking more of the subordination of socialist Yugoslavia than of the victory of democracy and socialism over capitalism.

In his "First Draft Theses concerning the National and Colonial Question", written in June 1920 for the Second Congress of the Communist International, Lenin stated, on the basis of the experience of the RSFSR, that the "federation has shown its usefulness in practice" and that it is "the transitional form towards integral unification of the workers of all countries".<sup>10</sup> Lenin in this "Draft" stated that the task of the Comintern consisted "in studying and verifying, but verifying in the light of experience,"<sup>11</sup> the new federations which are coming into existence on the basis of the

<sup>10</sup> Lenin, vol. XXV, page 287.

<sup>11</sup> Checking ideas by experience was, as to all questions, considered important by Lenin. Criticizing Bucharin's "economy of the transitional period", he brilliantly pointed out that the possibility or impossibility of everything in general cannot be established theoretically but only practically.



soviet system and the soviet movement." In recognizing federation as the transitional form towards integral unification, Lenin at the same time laid stress on the necessity of a constantly closer and closer federated union; bearing in mind, first, that the existence of soviet republics, surrounded by the imperialistic countries of the entire world, has to be defended; second, the need for a closer economic union of soviet republics, without which it would be impossible to reconstruct the productive forces which imperialism had destroyed or to ensure the prosperity and welfare of the workers; third, the tendency towards the organization of a unified soviet economy regulated according to plan by the proletariat of all countries taken as an entity—which tendency was manifested quite clearly under capitalism and which will evolve still further and will eventually come to its perfection under socialism. Lenin, further on, pointed out that the struggle "against the deeply rooted small-bourgeois national prejudices tends to become all the more our primary task, and the more urgent becomes the task of transforming the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national into an international dictatorship, which can exercise a decisive influence upon world policy".<sup>12</sup>

Here is, then, the set of concrete conditions from which Lenin started when he defined federation as the transitory form (for states) towards integral unification (when there are to be no states). In dealing in this way with the question of federation, Lenin started from the concrete conditions—the possibility of realizing the dictatorship of the proletariat in at least a number of major countries, and the impossibility of defending the Soviet Republics which arose on the ruins of Tzarist Russia against the imperialists of the whole world, and of raising their economic status. But both in this case and in this situation, he at the same time introduced into his stand the greatest possible consistency with his theory and the greatest possible political flexibility: "in recognizing federation . . . to tend towards a constantly closer and closer federated union" and "a closer economic union" (on account of the impossibility of defense and reconstruction, and for the sake of the realization of the tendency towards the economic unification of the world).

"The recognition of federation as the transitory form towards integral unification" did not—according to Lenin—mean the *obligation* for all nations to enter into federation. In the above-mentioned "Draft", Lenin maintained that federation was to be recognized as the transitory form, while starting from a concrete situation. It is only natural that in the then given situation he saw federation as the most suitable form for the

<sup>12</sup> Lenin, vol. XXVI, pp. 287-288.



defense of existing soviet republics and for the further integration through the "federated union" of the workers of various countries.

He defined federation above all as the perspective for the advanced European countries, where a powerful revolutionary movement was then blazing, and was evolving towards the outbreak of revolution *at the same time and in a similar manner*, i.e. "on the basis of the soviet system and the soviet movement". This can also be seen from the meaning of his complete text taken as an entity (otherwise Lenin would not have demanded—as he did in his last thesis—concessions for backward countries). And it is not a coincidence, in this connection, that throughout his "Draft" there is not a single word about a "world soviet federated republic".<sup>13</sup>

Lenin in this "Draft" was fully consistent with the basic points of his attitude: the principle of voluntary action on the part of every nation in the matter of the form of association with other socialist states, i.e. the people's right of self-determination. That is, of course, why he demanded of all communists "particular caution", "particular attention", and concessions for the long oppressed nations. Here is how he concluded the

<sup>13</sup> Neither Lenin nor Stalin stood unconditionally even in the then given situation on the principle of federation as the only form of state association for workers of various nations. This can easily be seen from Lenin's "Letter to the Workers and Peasants of the Ukraine", also from Stalin's reply from the Southern front, wherein he sent his own addition to Point 7 of the mentioned "First Draft Theses concerning the National and Colonial Question".

In his reply, Stalin said:

"I received on June 11 your draft theses on national and colonial question for the II Congress of the Comintern.

"I am not in a position at the present moment to express any detailed and exhaustive opinion regarding these theses (I have no time), but I can briefly express my opinion as regards one deficiency.

"I am referring to the fact that the theses do not mention confederation as one of the passing forms towards the integration of workers of various nations.

"As regards nationalities which were a constituent part of Tzarist Russia, our own (Soviet) type of federation can and must be considered a suitable way towards international unification. The reasons for this are well known: These nationalities either did not have their own states in the past or they lost their own states long ago, therefore the Soviet (centralized) type of federation can easily be rooted in in their case without much friction.

"The same cannot be said as regards nationalities which have not been a constituent part of old Russia, which have existed as autonomous entities, which have developed their own states, and which will be forced through the weight of the existing circumstances, if they become sovietic, to enter into some given form or other of state relations (links) with Soviet Russia. For example, the future Soviet Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland. It will be difficult to expect that these nationalities, which have their own states, their own armies, their own finances, it will be difficult to think that they will be willing, once they become sovietic, to agree immediately to federated relations



mentioned "First Draft Theses concerning the National and Colonial Question":

"12) The centuries-long oppression of colonial and weak nations by the imperialistic states has created on the part of the working masses of the downtrodden countries not only resentment but also distrust against the oppressing nations in general, and therefore also against the proletarians of these latter nations. The foul betrayal of socialism by the majority of official leaders of this proletariat in 1914-1919, when 'the defense of the fatherland' was used in this socialist-chauvinistic manner in order to conceal the defense of the right of 'their own' bourgeoisie to oppress the colonies and to plunder the financially dependent countries, was bound to result in strengthening still further these completely justified feelings of mistrust. On the other hand, the more undeveloped a given country is, the stronger also are its small agriculturists, its patriarchal sentiments, and its backwardness—all of which inevitably give particular strength and tenacity to the most profound small-bourgeois prejudices, i.e. the prejudices of national egotism, national narrowmindedness. Since these prejudices can *only disappear after the disappearance of imperialism and capitalism in*

with the Soviet Russia following the type of the Bashkir or the Ukraine (in your theses you make a distinction between the Bashkir and the Ukrainian type of federated union, but in fact that distinction is so minor that it is equal to zero): for they would look upon federation of the Soviet type as a form diminishing their state independence—as an attack against that independence.

"I do not doubt that the form of integration most acceptable for those nationalities is confederation (union between autonomous states). To say nothing of backward nationalities, e.g. Persia, Turkey, in regard to which, or for which, the Soviet type of federation, and federation generally, would be even more unacceptable.

"Starting from these considerations, I think it absolutely necessary to add confederation (parallel with federation) to the familiar points of your theses on transitory forms of integration of workers of various countries.

"Such a correction would give your theses more flexibility, it would enrich them with yet another transitory form for the integration of workers of various countries, and would facilitate for the nationalities which earlier were not a component part of Soviet Russia, their state integration with Soviet Russia." (Letter quoted from Lenin, vol. XXV, page 624).

It is characteristic, however, that Stalin's letter, the importance of which regarding points of principle has been emphasized over and over again by Marxists, especially in the USSR, has not been incorporated into the volume of his "Complete Works" (published in Moscow) where it should appear according to its date.

Considering the very exhaustive work which has been devoted to the preparation of the "Complete Works", this omission can only be explained by the fact that Stalin no longer stands by the views he expressed in this letter. However, no other or different standpoint on his part has been made public, nor has any explanation whatever been given.



*advanced countries* and after a radical change of the entire basis of economic life in backward countries, the extinction of these prejudices cannot be but very slow. Therefore, the duty of fully conscious communist proletarians of all countries is to handle with particular caution and particular attention the remnants of these nationalist sentiments in the case of the countries and nationalities which have been oppressed longest; likewise, their duty is to make certain concessions for the sake of the quickest possible extinction of these feelings of mistrust and these prejudices. *Without the voluntary desire for union and association on the part of the proletariat, and then on the part of all working masses of all countries and all nations all the world over, the cause of the victory over capitalism cannot be brought to successful end.*"<sup>14 15</sup>

To sum up: Lenin, also under these concrete international and national conditions, approached the question of relations between socialist countries both specifically and from the point of view of the strengthening of socialism in general—the strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Therefore: Lenin's quotation from the mentioned "Draft Theses" must not be separated from his basic concepts considered as a whole (for example, from his attitude dating approximately from this same period, as explained in his "Letter to the Ukrainian Workers and Peasants" as well as in his other works). He foresaw the possibility of federation for nations which are marching towards socialism "at the same time and in the same manner" (i.e. "on the basis of the soviet system and the soviet movement"), so that they may be able in the given conditions better to defend themselves against the onslaughts of the united imperialists, but nevertheless he allowed also the possibility of secession and pointed out the need for understanding and for concessions in dealing with the downtrodden nationalities.

<sup>14</sup> Lenin, vol. XXV, page 290.

<sup>15</sup> Italics are mine.



IN MAKING THE QUESTION of state relations between socialist states dependent upon the question of the struggle against capitalism, Lenin in the course of his entire revolutionary activities and through all the periods he covered without any exception considered and unconditionally maintained that these relations—whatever may be their form—must always rest upon the principle of voluntary action, i.e. upon the observance and the guarantee of the people's right of self-determination. Lenin indeed saw that the only way to successful struggle and to victory for the proletariat lies exactly in the consistent recognition of the people's right of self-determination.

“But there is a point”—says Lenin—“when Marxists are bound, if they do not want to betray democracy and the proletariat, to defend a special thesis in the national question—namely, the people's right of self-determination (Section 9 of the Program of the RSDLP), i.e. the right of political secession.”<sup>16</sup>

The principle of *unconditional voluntary action*, which Lenin pointed out as the basis for the solution of the question of mutual relations between socialist states, is indispensable and necessary precisely because voluntary action is the *only way* to bring about real integration of peoples under socialism. Without the application of the principle of voluntary action in the matter of relations between socialist states, there isn't and there cannot be any *real* association amongst workers of these states. And the association of peoples, the broad and constantly growing close integration of the working masses of various nationalities, the elimination of differences amongst them—that is actually the ultimate aim of communism.

<sup>16</sup> Lenin, vol. XVII, page 118.



For, as is well known, unification and integration of peoples and states existed also before the epoch of socialism. But these unions have mostly had an arbitrary and forcible character and have therefore borne from the very beginning the seeds of internal weakness—the seeds of disintegration. No formalistic expressions of the people's will and no formalistic unity (this, for example, existed also in the case of the peoples of Yugoslavia in 1918) could perform any vital function in this connection if the real will of the people and real unity are tampered with.

It is clear that Lenin as a consistent internationalist did not—and could not—favour secession of peoples. After all, every division of peoples, whatever may be the apparent and passing reasons which underlie it, is always reactionary in the final analysis. Lenin was unconditionally in favour of association of peoples, even in favour of future complete integration under communism. But he saw the possibility for this association only *through voluntary association*, through the consistent and genuine recognition of the people's right of self-determination.

In approaching the question of relations between socialist states from the standpoint of the strengthening of socialism as a whole, Lenin was an uncompromising fighter against every form of national isolation. He stood resolutely for the principle of association of peoples, perceiving at the same time that this association can solely be realized through voluntary actions, through the recognition both in words and in deeds of the people's right of self-determination. Voluntary action in the matter of the choice of the forms of state relations *plus* the right of self-determination (both these elements being applied under all conditions and in the case of all peoples) *equals* association of peoples under socialism. This is, in fact, what Lenin's concept of relations between socialist states amounts to. In other words: association is possible only if it is accompanied by respect for the principle of voluntary action and self-determination.

The principle of voluntary action in the matter of relations between socialist states is—in Lenin's teachings—the reverse side of the principle of the people's right of self-determination. The application of the principle of voluntary action in the matter of relations between socialist states is actually the application of the right of self-determination, i.e. the right of every people to organize its own independent state,<sup>17</sup> or to become volun-

<sup>17</sup> "Under the people's right of self-determination, one understands their state secession from foreign national collectivities—one understands the organization of independent national states" (Lenin, vol. XIX, page 428).

"It is necessary to realize national *equality*; to proclaim, formulate, and realize equal 'rights' for all peoples. But it is exactly here that arises a question which has been usually bypassed: Doesn't the renunciation of the



tarily incorporated with some other state, or to choose voluntarily the form of state relations (federation, confederation) with other states. There is no voluntary action—nor can there be any—if there is no right of self-determination, while the right of self-determination really means, first of all, the right to possess one's own national state and, second, the right to choose voluntarily such and such specific state relations with some other state. The principle of voluntary action and the right of self-determination are, in fact, one and the same thing. The question is simply of using two different approaches to arrive at one and the same thing. The right of self-determination is the recognition of the right of peoples to arrange voluntarily their relations with other peoples, while the recognition of this right of peoples means that they can arrange these relations as they wish (i.e. they can "self-determine" themselves). The very use of the term—principle of voluntary action in the matter of relations between socialist states—merely explains the application, the method of application of the people's right of self-determination (i.e. voluntary—in contrast to forcible and arbitrary).

It goes without saying that Lenin did not approach the question of the people's right of self-determination in a formalistic manner, i.e. from the standpoint of the formal right, formal expression of the people's will, etc. The principle of self-determination and equality is recognized formally also by a bourgeois democrat, sometimes even by an outright imperialist. In Lenin's case, in harmony with his entire teaching, what he had in view was the actual right, the actual recognition of the people's right of self-determination.

Lenin, contrary to the present leaders of the USSR (particularly in relation to Yugoslavia and to the international and democratic workers movement) never said one thing, did another, and thought a third. Between his words and deeds, between his theory and practice, there never was any discrepancy. Therefore he never treated the people's right of self-determination and voluntary action in the matter of choice of the state relations with other states as the formal right which is formally subscribed to also by bourgeois democracy, but as the genuine and actual right which can only be realized in a true, a socialist democracy. Those who wish today to appropriate for themselves the monopoly of being the only (*sic*) true

right to possess one's own national state mean the renunciation of the right of equality?

"Of course—it does. So the consistent, i.e. the socialist democracy proclaims, formulates, and realizes this right, without which there can be no way to complete voluntary association and integration of nations" (Lenin, vol. XIX, page 234).



disciples and heirs of Lenin do not act according to Lenin. While publicly they still speak of the people's right of self-determination and of voluntary action in the choice of relations of individual peoples towards other peoples, in practice they apply the methods of ruthless imposition upon socialist states and grossly abuse the right of voluntary action of peoples. In their case, there is a complete discrepancy between words and deeds, between theory and practice.

How long they intend to go on in practice trampling upon the people's right of self-determination and the principle of voluntary action in the matter of relations between socialist states, is not clear. How they think they can, while following this practice, fight against imperialism and assist the workers' parties, especially today in France and Italy, to fight against American imperialism and their domestic stooges, is likewise not clear. But that thereby they are breaking the unity and weakening the strength of the workers' and democratic movement as a whole—there can be no doubt.

Lenin did not mean that the right of self-determination was to be valid only during the struggle for power—for the dictatorship of the proletariat. He never thought, as we have seen already, that the proletariat was to proclaim it as a slogan to be used only so long as it is fighting against the bourgeoisie, and that when it won the victory it was to abandon this principle in practice. No—anything like that Lenin would have considered a mere fraud perpetrated upon the peoples—undermining the unity and cooperation of the workers of various nations. It is true that some problematical characters, who pretend to be consistent Leninists and internationalists, are trying today to present things exactly in that way. But Lenin would not be Lenin, i.e. his words and deeds would not be so completely harmonious if he did not recognize the right of self-determination of peoples not only during the period of the struggle for power, but also during the period of the struggle for the construction of socialism.



ACCORDING TO LENIN: Every socialist, viz. communist, is under the obligation to fight consistently against the bourgeoisie and capitalism. He must under no circumstances abandon the position of internationalism. He must not subordinate the international interests of the proletariat to the national (actually, bourgeois) interests of his own country. On the other hand, the question: what are to be concretely the state relations between his own country and other socialist countries—is really a secondary question. In regard to that question, every socialist or communist must take his stand on the basis of his estimate of the primary tasks we have already mentioned. Which means that a given communist party, when it is in power, is to define its attitude concerning the form of relations of its own country with some other country “quite independently,” from the standpoint of the interests of social progress as a whole and the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat for socialism. The form to be thus chosen according to the concrete international and national conditions can be one of several very different forms (centralized state, federation, confederation, secession).

It is only in this way that the right of self-determination, viz. the principle of voluntary action in the matter of relations between socialist states can be realized under socialism and the way opened towards genuine association of peoples — the way towards further growth, strengthening, and victory of socialism and communism.

Lenin indeed saw with extraordinary clarity that various individual countries, in marching to the same goal—to socialism, communism—will inevitably advance towards it by following different paths, by moving forward at different rhythms and in different forms. Lenin’s conception of this phenomenon is connected directly with his teachings on revolution. Revolution does not break out all of a sudden, either throughout the world



or in individual countries. Therefore the transition from capitalism to socialism will inevitably exhibit a diversity of ways and forms in the various countries which take the road of socialist progress.

Revolution breaks out and the progress of socialism spreads at different rates in different countries—at different stages of development and having different national characteristics. Therefore, it is clear that no single revolution, no single nation, can ever provide a universal recipe, a universally applicable pattern as regards the manner in, the form of, and the tempo at which the transition from capitalism to socialism is to be effected. Precisely because Lenin had discovered this law, that revolution will not break out all of a sudden in all countries, but at different periods in different countries—accordingly, under different international conditions and within nations having different characteristics—he saw clearly that both the forms of revolution and the forms of transition to socialism must exhibit great variety. Lenin considered that “there is nothing more pitiful from the point of view of theory and more ridiculous from the point of view of practice than to paint in the name of historical materialism one’s future in this respect (i.e. in respect of the paths to be followed by various countries in their march towards socialism—M.D.) in monotonous gray colours”.

In perceiving that this diversity is historically conditioned upon the different stages of development already attained by various individual countries and upon the different international conditions expressed in the different forms of revolution and the different forms and rhythms of the construction of socialism, Lenin defended the principle of voluntary action in the matter of relations between socialist states—thus remaining true to his basic idea: the strengthening of revolution and socialism. He believed also that various individual nations enrich socialism by their differing forms of transition to socialism, in other words, that they will discover that specific, that uniquely correct and fruitful path—other than the paths followed by other countries—that will lead them to the fastest, to the easiest and the most effective destruction of capitalism—and to the fastest and the most successful construction of socialism.

Marx also perceived the inevitability of different paths leading various individual countries towards socialism. Here is what he said, for instance, at the Amsterdam meeting after the conclusion of the Hague congress, in 1872:

“The worker will inevitably have to take power into his own hands one of these days, so as to discard the old policy which defends outlived institutions. Otherwise, like early Christians who showed a complete indif-



ference in regard to this task, he will have to renounce his kingdom in this world.

“But we have never maintained *that identical methods are by all means to lead us towards this goal.*

“We know that *we must reckon with the institutions, the customs and traditions of various individual countries*<sup>18</sup> and we do not deny that there are countries, like America, England—and if I knew better your own constitution I would perhaps add also Holland—where workmen can achieve their objectives by peaceful actions. But if that is so, then we must likewise recognize that in the majority of countries on the continent, force has to serve as the main instrument of our revolution. In fact, force is what we must look forward to resorting to at the given moment, so as to establish definitely the rule of work.”<sup>19</sup>

To abolish these specific particularities and characteristics in the development of individual countries is not possible, because they are the outcome of historical evolution and of the ratio of the operating forces which never are identical, and must especially differ during the various phases marking the birth of revolutions and the growth of socialism in various countries. Their “abolishment” would be detrimental not only to socialism in these various countries where they may be “done away with”, but also to socialism as a whole, because the forces of world socialism consist precisely of the combination of the specific fractional forces (i.e. forces of various individual countries) of which they are composed. For this reason, the recognition of the right of self-determination under socialism, viz. the recognition of the principle of voluntary action in the matter of relations between socialist states, amounts indeed to the recognition of historically conditioned specific particularities and characteristics in the development of these individual countries. Moreover, the recognition of this right means: the perception and recognition of the actual, the concrete set of conditions, out of which socialist revolution and socialism are being brought into life in these various countries. In the final analysis, it means: the perception and recognition of the actual, the concrete set of conditions on the basis of which alone can socialism be victorious throughout the world.

“Even trusts, even banks under contemporary imperialism, although they are similarly inevitable phenomena under developed capitalism, are dissimilar as regards the specific forms they assume in various countries.

<sup>18</sup> Italics are mine.

<sup>19</sup> The Complete Works of Marx and Engels, Russian edition, vol. XXXI/2, page 660.



The political forms, despite all their similarity as regards the fundamentals, are therefore all the more dissimilar in developed imperialistic countries—America, England, France, and Germany. This same diversity will manifest itself also along that path which mankind will traverse from the imperialism of today to the socialist revolution of tomorrow.

“All nations will attain socialism—that is inevitable. But they will not attain it in a completely identical way. Every one of them will introduce a degree of specific characteristics into some form or other of democracy, into some particularity or other of the dictatorship of the proletariat, into some rhythm or other of socialist transformation affecting the various aspects of social life. There is nothing more pitiful from a theoretical point of view nor more ridiculous from a practical point of view than to paint ‘in the name of historical materialism’ one’s future in this respect in monotonous gray colours. That would be indeed a foggy way of painting—nothing else. And even if reality were to show that only 1/500th part of the now oppressed nations will have to be liberated and separately constituted before we are to have the first victory of the socialist proletariat—that likewise only 1/500th part of these downtrodden nations will have to be separately constituted before we are to have the ultimate victory of the socialist proletariat on the earth (i.e. in the course of the various peripeties to be gone through by the already started socialist revolution)—and that they will have to be so constituted during a minimum lapse of time—even in that event we would be right both from the theoretical standpoint and from the practical—political point of view if we were to advise the workers not at the present juncture to let onto the threshold of their social-democratic parties those socialists of the oppressing nations who do not recognize and do not advocate the freedom of secession of *all* downtrodden nations. For actually, we do not know, nor can we know, how large a number of the downtrodden nations will require secession in practice in order to be able to make their contribution to the diversity of the forms of democracy and the forms of transition to socialism. But that the negation of the freedom of secession is today theoretical illusion and a practical service to the chauvinists of the oppressing nations—that is something that we do know—something that we see and feel every day.”<sup>20</sup>

But Lenin did not make this point only theoretically—only as a generality. As usual, he also applied these theoretical premises to the direct practices of the international workers movement and the workers

<sup>20</sup> Lenin, vol. XIX, pp. 229-230.



movement in various individual countries. Thus, for instance, he wrote in connection with the Polish movement:

“The Polish proletarian movement follows the same course our own movement is following—it advances towards the dictatorship of the proletariat—but it does not do so in the same way in which it is done in Russia. And the workers there are being terrorized by the purposely maintained fear that the Muscovites, the Great Russians, who have always oppressed the Poles, want to introduce into Poland their Great Russian chauvinism camouflaged under the name of Communism. Communism does not get rooted in by means of oppression. One of our better comrades, a Polish communist, when I told him: ‘You will do it differently’, replied to me: ‘No, we shall do exactly the same thing, only we shall do it better than you’. Against such an attitude (such a deduction) I was unable to advance any decisive argument. They should be given the opportunity to carry out their modest wish—to create a soviet authority in a better way than we ourselves have done it in Russia. It is impossible not to take into account that the course to be followed there runs somewhat differently, and one must never say: ‘Down with the people’s right of self-determination! We are giving the right of self-determination only to the working masses!’ Self-determination advances along a very complex and difficult road. It does not exist anywhere except in Russia, but we must not, by foreseeing all the phases of development in other countries, decree anything from Moscow.”<sup>21</sup>

Thus, in looking upon the recognition of the people’s right of self-determination as upon the people’s freedom to express their own characteristic (national) forms in the struggle against capitalism and in favor of socialism—as upon the question of conditions underlying the development of revolution and socialism—Lenin reduces this point to its barest substance, i.e. to the historically conditioned and inevitably differing ways followed by various individual nations in their advancement towards socialism.

Lenin could not indeed look upon this question in any other way. If a simultaneous outbreak of revolution all over the world (therefore, also in a number of capitalistic countries) is nonsense—and that is what it is; and if on the other hand the outbreak of revolution and the victory of socialism in individual countries taken separately is the social law, then diversity of forms of the struggle for power, forms of power itself, and forms and rhythms of transition from capitalism to socialism is, of course, an inevitable and lawful phenomenon, just as, if not even more than, the

<sup>21</sup> Lenin, vol. XXIV, pp. 138-139.



outbreak of revolution is itself an inevitable and lawful phenomenon. The different forms of revolution, power, ways to, and rhythm of the progress towards socialism are not—therefore—the outcome of fanciful imagination on the part of “eccentric” minds and megalomaniacs, but are natural phenomena which are historically conditioned and inescapable. The proletariat in any particular country does not therefore follow different forms because it wants to be different from the proletariat in other countries, but because there is actually no other way for it to achieve power, to march towards socialism, to advance towards the ultimate goal of mankind—the elimination of all differentiations amongst peoples and of all differentiations amongst nations. And whoever does not see this lawful, this historically conditioned and inevitable diversity of the ways leading towards the downfall of capitalism—diversity of the ways followed by various individual peoples towards socialism—he must indeed renounce dialectics and its laws relating to diversity of development—he must inescapably find himself wavering between the Trotzkyist “theory” of “permanent” revolution (i.e. “indispensability” of a simultaneous outbreak of revolution in the whole world or in the majority of developed countries), and the narrow-minded nationalism wanting for narrow-minded reasons to proclaim the forms of “its own” revolution and “its own” ways towards socialism as universally valid and to impose them upon other peoples.

The slanderers of the CPY headed by the “theoreticians” and revisionists of Leninism from the USSR reject this very diversity of forms in the advancement of the working class of various individual countries towards the assumption of power, and in their construction of socialism. They deny to other peoples the very contribution these peoples want to make to the common treasury of socialism. In practice, also in theory, they have thereby stooped to idealism, and have repudiated the dialectical law relating to diversity of development—a law which is valid both for natural and for social phenomena. By negating this inexorable and lawful diversity of forms in the exercise of power by the working peoples and in their advancement towards socialism, these new “theoreticians” and revisionists of Leninism from the USSR have inevitably come into conflict with reality, both as it exists in individual socialist countries and in individual socialist workers’ movements throughout the world. Therefore, it is not in the least coincidental that communists in various countries say more or less publicly that “the Russians” do not understand their countries and cannot grasp their situations.



THE DENIAL OF THESE VARIATIONS between the paths followed by individual countries towards socialism—a denial which has proved harmful both to genuine unity amongst socialist countries and to the policy of the workers' parties in capitalistic countries—arises because the leaders of the USSR have actually turned from internationalist to nationalist positions. They have—they themselves, to begin with—introduced into the relations between socialist states the principles of capitalistic trade (the basis for the exchange of commodities between socialist countries is—the dollar, while the doctrine is—sell at the highest price and give the lowest-grade commodity, but buy at the lowest price and take the highest-grade commodity). Through the mere function of economic laws, these principles unavoidably mean the extraction of extra-profits and the exploitation of the weak and undeveloped by the powerful and developed. The political relations, in their turn, are also based upon this kind of economic relations—therefore the need to maintain in the various socialist countries the kind of regimes that will always be prepared to agree, for the sake of some “higher” internationalist ideals, to accept such unequal status and exploitation of their country. Thus—subservient and vassal governments and vassal states are actually being formed, instead of free and fully equal socialist states.

Plans also existed for the formation of such a government in Yugoslavia. For this “task”, the Hebrand-Zujovic set-up was prepared long in advance. These methods of imperialistic exploitation have unavoidably given rise to the notorious imperialistic tactics which we ourselves know so well (slanders, espionage, border provocations, assassination and imprisonment of innocent men who refused to agree to such “policy” and such methods; need for control of the entire state activity in socialist countries



by the intelligence services of the USSR; formation of clandestine factions within the various parties for the purpose of exercising control over their line and over individual forums and individual leaders; black propaganda which takes advantage of local conditions and difficulties in individual countries and which goes so far as to threaten with occupation; exploitation of the international peace struggle for the purpose of terrorizing individual socialist countries and workers parties; silencing and persecuting those who do not agree with the policy of inequality between socialist states and workers parties; trading and bargaining with the imperialists, for example, over the questions of Carinthia, Greece, etc. at the expense of individual socialist states and workers' and democratic revolutionary movements, etc., etc.) This has led to duplicity in the relations between the communists of the USSR and the communists of other parties, also between the communists of individual parties (except in Yugoslavia). They all fear one another, they "control" one another, and they appear in different lights before one another and try to outsmart one another (mostly those of the USSR and *vice versa*). This has further led to the practice of labeling as revolutionaries and patriots various opportunistic and dubious elements, who are in most cases connected also with the imperialistic intelligence services, but who are pushing themselves and are being pushed to the leading positions in the socialist states and in workers' parties.

On this same basis (apparent loyalty and subservience to the USSR), finally, the imperialists are strengthening their intelligence centers and spreading demoralization inside the workers' movement. On the basis of this erroneous, nationalistic and unprincipled policy of the leaders of the USSR, a policy which in practice negates all independence and equality of socialist states and workers movements—independence and equality which necessarily arise from the characteristic conditions, the specific ways towards the assumption of power, and the varying forms of power and of conditions and forms of the construction of socialism in individual countries—on that basis, the imperialists are constructing their own policy and their own tactics and are engineering secret plots against the socialist and democratic world—plots which surpass by far all those which were engineered by the fascists and which were in the past organized inside the Soviet Union with the aid of Trotzky, Bucharin, & Co.

On the other hand, as regards the workers' parties and democratic movements in the capitalistic countries, the leaders of the Soviet Union are neglecting the concrete local conditions in the individual countries and are endeavouring to subordinate the policy of these parties and movements to their own state policy. They do not start from the standpoint



that moral and material assistance should be given to these movements while guarding their internal autonomy—as is required by concrete internal and international conditions—so that they could grow stronger in the struggle for democracy and socialism. On the contrary, they start from the standpoint that these parties and movements must adapt their policies to the direct interests and propaganda slogans of the USSR. And seeing that the policy of the USSR has stepped down from the internationalist position, these parties and movements have unavoidably come into the hopeless situation where they must either clash with the policy of the USSR or else become divorced from their own masses (from the concrete internal and external conditions of the struggle in their own respective countries). At the same time, this has led to the appearance in the various workers' parties and the various capitalistic countries of the "theory" that loyalty to the workers movement and proletarian internationalism are not to be measured by the yardstick of revolutionary consistency in the struggle against "one's own" bourgeoisie and foreign imperialists, but by the recognition of the leading role of the Soviet Union (publicists in the USSR write: by the recognition of the leading role of the great Russian people). Meanwhile, the struggle against "one's own" and foreign bourgeoisie is adjusted to the day-to-day propaganda slogans and diplomatic turn-about of the government of the USSR, while in addition to this there is a widespread conviction in large communist circles that their respective countries can only be liberated through the direct action on the part of the Soviet Army (to be waited for until the next war, in regard to which nobody knows when it will take place, or how it will evolve through its various phases). Moreover, the needed agreements between the socialist states—the Soviet Union—and the imperialists (for example, during the Second World War) are not classified as a necessity, but are justified on the ground of uniformity of ideological aims (the terms used being: bloc of democratic countries, democratic understanding, democratic cooperation, etc.) which can only introduce ideological confusion into the concepts and the tactics of the workers' parties (Stalin, for example, predicted in his speech of November 7, 1944, that the allied states, if they were able to cooperate in time of war, would all the more be able to cooperate in time of peace). This prophecy, like most other prophecies, generally speaking, did not come true. But it did serve as the basis for parliamentary illusions and tactical inconsistency on the part of many parties. Etc. etc.

In passing over to the nationalist position, the leaders of the Soviet Union advocate, on the one hand, internationalism for other parties (under which term they really understand only the recognition of the leading



role of the USSR), while in their own country, on the other hand, they advocate under the mask of soviet patriotism the most vulgar nationalism. Their propagandists speak about the exceptional ability of the Russian people (e.g. in the message from the Academy of Science of the USSR to Molotov), about the superiority of Russian culture (great as it indeed is) over the cultures of other nations. The leaders of the USSR do practically nothing to acquaint their peoples with the revolutionary, socialist, and cultural achievements of other peoples, not even of those who have already embarked upon the road of socialist progress. They have invented the anti-Marxist theory of the exceptional importance of discovery "firsts" in the field of science (viz. that Russian scientists have been the first to discover one thing or another), and on the basis of this "idea" they have appropriated innumerable inventions made by nationals of many other nations.

There is hardly any need to stress that all that is new about this "theory" (also the "theory" of an exceptional ability of a given nation) is that it has now appeared in the USSR, but otherwise it was advanced long ago, in a somewhat different form, by all sorts of racists and nationalists. Neither is there any need to stress that Marx, Engels, and Lenin, and even Stalin, in their works so far made public, make no mention at all of the theory of exceptional importance of discovery "firsts" in the field of science and culture by a given nation. The propagandists of the USSR look down upon the culture of other nations and insinuate, for instance, that the French language, the language of Rabelais, Moliere, Diderot, and Saint Simon, is the language of feudal aristocracy; that the English language—the language of Shakespeare, Dickens, Smith, and Owen—is the language of mercenary mercantile bourgeoisie, while the Russian language—indeed the language of one of the greatest cultures—is *the* language of socialism, and not just one language with which all other languages should be equal under socialism (Zaslavski in the "Literary Gazette", New Year's Day issue, 1949). Furthermore, the propagandists of the USSR loudly proclaim that their country holds the title of "first" in the struggle for socialism and that nobody can deprive them of that title. Socialism—which is an international phenomenon and is neither the property of a given nation nor the fruit of the struggle of any given nation but of the international proletariat and its struggle—which moreover has not grown either exclusively or primarily in Russia—is thereby transformed by the Soviet propagandists today into a national phenomenon and national property and privilege of the Russian people.

It is, therefore, not at all coincidental that in Soviet propaganda



today there is almost a complete disappearance of any criticism of Tzarism and Tzarist imperialistic policies in general, and vis-a-vis the down-trodden and weak nations in particular.

Here, then, we can see to what nonsense and distortions one is bound to be led when one abandons Lenin's principle of equality of peoples and states under socialism!

For, it is one thing to develop the faculty of national dignity, to free one's people of the feelings of inferiority vis-a-vis other peoples, imposed upon it by its really inferior reactionary classes, but it is an entirely different thing to attribute to one's own people an exceptional ability, to make it look down upon and nourish feelings of contempt for other peoples, and to attribute other people's achievements to oneself and one's own people. The first constitutes the struggle against national nihilism, struggle in favour of socialist patriotism, while the second constitutes nationalism in its most vulgar form.

Here, then, we can see to what nationalist absurdities have the leaders of the USSR come since they abandoned Lenin's road and started to deny in practice the abilities and possibilities other peoples display in the struggle for socialism—when they started to deny the specific characteristics and diversities all other countries manifest in their march towards the dictatorship of the proletariat and construction of socialism, towards the development of their national (as regards the form), democratic and socialist (as regards the substance) cultures.

And, finally, the leaders of the USSR in their unprincipled struggle against the peoples of Yugoslavia use a special argument—the exploitation of the traditional links between Russia and the individual Yugoslav states (Serbia and Montenegro) and the Yugoslav peoples in the past (in a letter addressed by the CC of the CPSU (b) to the CC of the CPY, the leadership of our country is accused, amongst other things, of pursuing an anti-Russian policy). But, since this question has now been raised, let it be said that our Party knows of two kinds of traditional relations between our own peoples and Russia. There are, first, the progressive traditions—the relations between progressive thinkers of our country and the progressive thinkers of Russia (e.g. Svetozar Markovic and the followers of Tchernishevski and his teachings, etc.), between our progressive cultures and Russian progressive culture (for instance, links between our realistic school of thought and Russian realism, etc.). Those traditions we nourish and should nourish. It is to be understood, however, that they do not constitute the only progressive links of our people with the outside world in the past: Such links have existed in various other periods also with various



other nations—in a larger degree in the case of some of our people, in a lesser degree in the case of others.

But in addition to these links there have also been others—viz. the reactionary links with Russian Tzarism which ended in the majority of instances with the shortsighted and reactionary Russian Tzars and their advisers letting us down in our liberation struggle and coming to terms with other aggressive nations at our expense. (Here are a few examples: terms made with the Turks in 1812 and abandonment to the mercy of the Porte of our insurrectionary people in the first Serbian revolution; abandonment to Austria in 1876 of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of our national revolution in those two countries; recognition of the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, etc., etc.) Our peoples in their struggle for national liberation were forced to look to Tzarist Russia because other imperialistic states always did all they could in order to thwart and crush our struggle for liberation. But, for the reactionary policy of Tzarism, which, as a rule, always ended with betrayal of our liberation movement—our peoples do not bear any responsibility before history. Such traditions (which are today brushed aside in silence by the propagandists of the USSR and their “Yugoslav” tools) we do not cherish and uphold, nor do we have any reason for cherishing and upholding.

And since the question of our own “anti-Russian” policy has now been raised, let us say also this: Both our Party and our people cannot but love the Russian people who have, through their great men, enriched the culture of mankind and who have, in several instances, especially in more modern history, brought their influence to bear in a vital manner so that history could evolve in a progressive direction. We admire their heroic efforts and accomplishments. We respect the immeasurable sacrifices which they have given for their own freedom and for the liberation of mankind, and we shall remain forever grateful for the assistance which they have offered to us and to our people. But the liberation role which has been played by the peoples of the USSR, i.e. by the Russian people does not give any moral right whatever to the leaders of the USSR arbitrarily to decree unequal relations vis-a-vis other peoples. In the struggle against capitalism—according to Lenin—every workers party, every people has the duty to give as much as it can and to display the spirit of self-abnegation and self-sacrifice to the maximum limits of its possibilities. This is the internationalist duty of every revolutionary party and every people. But this does not mean, nor can it mean, that it also carries any title to privileges.

And finally, let us make it perfectly clear that our Party has never



pursued and never will pursue any "anti-Russian" or any "pro-Russian" policies, nor indeed any other policies which in any way might be directed against any other nation. Our Party has pursued and will continue to pursue the policy of socialist revolution and construction of socialism, the policy of solidarity with all the truly socialist and genuinely democratic movements and peoples who are fighting for their freedom, independence, and equality. In starting from these principles, our Party called upon its peoples to rise in revolt when the first socialist country was attacked, thus combining its own socialist revolution with the performance of its internationalist obligations.

It could not be said, however, that the slanderers of the CPY are today upholding these same principles, not only in relation to Yugoslavia and the CPY, but also in relation to other socialist countries and other workers' and democratic movements.



EVERY MARXIST WHO STUDIES the national question must be familiar with Lenin's utterances about the advantage (during the first period which is, in fact, the period of the struggle for the maintenance of power) of a large state over a small state and about the indispensability of economic unification under socialism.

As regards the first question—advantages of a large socialist state over a small state—Lenin approached it from the standpoint of the fact that a large workers' state affords greater possibilities of successful resistance against imperialistic states, the development of productive forces and achievement of a better life. To the extent to which a large state possesses greater possibilities for a speedier victory of socialism, for the improvement of the living conditions of the working people, Lenin was—and quite rightly—the supporter of a large state. But not even in the question of advantages of a large state over a small state was Lenin an *unconditional* supporter of a large state. What was *unconditional* for Lenin is the strengthening of socialism and, in that connection, the strengthening of the right of self-determination and the principle of voluntary action. On the other hand, his advocacy of a large state—which no doubt has great advantages in a general way over a small state for the development of productive forces, especially during the first phase of the struggle for socialism, when capitalism is still strong—is *conditioned* upon the above mentioned *unconditional* principle.

Here is what Lenin says on this point:

“The proletariat of Russia can neither realize the victorious democratic revolution at the head of the people (this is its immediate task), nor can it fight for the socialist revolution together with our brethren—the proletarians of Europe—without demanding at once, unconditionally



and quite openly, the freedom of secession from Russia of all nations oppressed by Tzarism. We demand this, not independently of our revolutionary struggle for socialism, but because this latter struggle will remain an empty word if we do not link it up with a revolutionary examination of every democratic question, including also the national question. We demand the right of self-determination, i.e. independence, i.e. freedom of secession of the downtrodden nations, not because we entertain any illusions about economic dismemberment or about the ideal of small nations, but on the contrary because we desire large states and the association, and indeed the integration of nations, only on the truly democratic, on the genuinely internationalist bases which *could not even be imagined* without the freedom of secession. As Marx demanded, in 1869, the secession of Ireland, not for the sake of any dismemberment, but for the sake of a continued and freely constituted union of Ireland with England; not because of any "justice for Ireland", but for the furtherance of the interests of the English proletariat's revolutionary struggle—so we ourselves would now regard a refusal on the part of socialist Russia to demand self-determination of peoples in the above-explained sense as a direct betrayal of democracy, internationalism, and socialism."<sup>22</sup>

And in another passage he says:

"Socialism—our Polish comrades say—will be able to give to undeveloped peoples in colonies an unselfish and non-profit-bearing cultural assistance without ruling over them. This is quite correct. But where is the basis for thinking that a large nation, a large state, during its transition to socialism, will not be able to attract a small downtrodden nation in Europe by means of 'non-profit-bearing cultural assistance'? The very freedom of secession—which Polish social-democrats 'give' to colonies—will attract to large socialist states the small states of Europe which are oppressed but which are cultured and have political ambitions,<sup>23</sup> because a large state under socialism will mean: so many hours of work *less* per day, so much earnings *more* per day. The working masses, liberating themselves from the yoke of the bourgeoisie, will be powerfully moved towards union and integration with large and advanced socialist nations for the sake of this 'cultural assistance', simply because in that situation their oppressors of yesterday would not insult the sensitive democratic feelings of self-respect on the part of a nation long oppressed, but would accept

<sup>22</sup> Lenin, vol. XVIII, page 328.

<sup>23</sup> Lenin says: politically necessitous nations (i.e. nations which have political claims). Considering that I was unable to find a corresponding term in our own language, I have used the word "ambitions".



it as equal in every respect, therefore also in respect of its state construction, its experience—equal to build ‘its own’ state. Under capitalism, this ‘experience’ means wars, divisions, isolation, the narrow-minded egotism of privileged small nations (Holland, Switzerland). Under socialism, the working masses will never of their own accord accept isolation out of purely economic motives as mentioned above, while as regards the diversity of political forms, the freedom of secession of small states, the experience in the building of states—all these will constitute, until every state everywhere is extinguished, the basis for a richer cultural life, the guarantee of intensified evolution toward voluntary association and integration of nations.”<sup>24</sup>

In speaking about the advantages of a large state in general terms, Lenin at the same time indicated certain conditions and limits—i.e. that it must “leave” a small state equal in every respect, including its state construction—having an equal right to build “its own” state. Lenin saw that such a policy is the only way to strengthen socialism in general. In accordance with his entire science, he laid down unequivocally—even while he spoke of the advantages of a large state—that “the freedom of secession from a (larger) state” must unconditionally be maintained for the benefit of small states, because the fundamental question does not lie in the state relations, but in the “intensification of the process of voluntary association and integration of nations”—which can be achieved, according to whatever may be the general conditions, either through integration, through federation or through secession. For Lenin it was clear that the working masses of these other nationalities will not actually secede from the larger states for purely economic reasons—regardless of the form of state relations. Their secession will be all the less a probability inasmuch as the large state proves to be consistent in guaranteeing to the small state the right to secede. (“Simply because in that case their oppressors of yesterday would not insult the sensitive democratic feeling of self-respect on the part of a nation long downtrodden and oppressed, but would accept it as equal in every respect, therefore also in respect of its state construction, its experience—equal to build its own state”.) On the other hand, even state secession itself need not necessarily mean real—economic—secession also. Such a secession under socialism—says Lenin—can in fact only constitute “the basis for rich cultural life, the guarantee for an intensification of the process of voluntary association and integration of nations”.

Accordingly, in perceiving the advantages of a large state both in

<sup>24</sup> Lenin, vol. XIX, pp. 255-256.



general and during particular periods of development, Lenin clearly saw—being himself a consistent internationalist, i.e. an uncompromising supporter of the widest equality of peoples—that a large socialist state can only be brought into life by way of voluntary action and that such a state, as we have already seen, does not exclude but on the contrary presumes the actual recognition of the people's right of self-determination and the principle of voluntary action in the matter of relations between socialist states, also the right of a given nation—even if it constituted only 1/500th part of the total number of downtrodden nations, and even before the ultimate victory of the proletariat—to secede and thus to add its own contribution to the diversity of the forms of democracy and of the forms of transition to socialism.

Lenin approached in a similar manner the question of the economic unity of various countries under socialism. In starting from the standpoint that capitalism, especially in its imperialistic phase of development, has already done away with all national and economic isolation, while socialism is now completing this process of elimination and creating all the required conditions for a widespread association of peoples—Lenin considered that economic unity of socialist states is necessary for the more rapid progress and earlier victory of socialism. Furthermore, Lenin considered, as we have seen from his attitude regarding the advantages of a large state, that the existence of separate socialist states need not necessarily mean their economic separation also. But even this—economic—unity he did not consider unconditional. Lenin was bound even in regard to this question to be opposed to its unconditional character, because he had defended in all his writings the right of self-determination and the principle of voluntary action, and a consistent defense of these ideas would not be possible if economic unity was unconditionally required (i.e. if one nation could *force* another nation into a unity of unequal economic relations), because self-determination, independence, and voluntary action precisely mean the actual, i.e. also the economic self-determination; the actual, i.e. also the economic independence, and the actual voluntary action, i.e. voluntary action which is the consequence of economic freedom and independence. It is quite a different question, however, whether economic secession will be in the interest of any single nation. Of course, it will not be, and cannot be, in anybody's interest. But unity of economy, like unity in regard to other issues, can only be realized—according to Lenin—voluntarily. In economic matters also, agreement between equals is the only way to bring about association and unification.

Here is what Lenin says on this point:



“With the red Finnish government which lasted for a short while we concluded an agreement, we entered into some territorial concessions, on account of which I heard a great many chauvinistic objections: ‘There are apparently good fishing grounds there, and you have given them away.’ The objections thus put forward made me observe: Just scratch no matter what communist and—you will find the Great Russian chauvinist.

“To me it seems that this example concerning Finland, like the example concerning the Bashkirs, shows that *in dealing with the national question one should not consider that economic unity*<sup>25</sup> is indispensable at all costs. Of course, it is indispensable, but we ought to achieve it by means of propaganda, agitation, voluntary union.”<sup>26</sup>

As can be seen—voluntary action is a prerequisite which has to be fulfilled if we are to attain the reality of economic unity.

Lenin never made economic unity conditional upon state unity. It is well known, for example, that he had a positive attitude in regard to the secession of Norway from Sweden—which was effected by means of democratic processes—because this severance of forcibly imposed state relations has actually led to the real and genuine association of the peoples of the two states, both in the cultural field and in the economic field.

Here is what he says on this point:

“The severance of *forcibly imposed* links marks the *strengthening* of the voluntary economic links, the strengthening of mutual respect between the two nations which are in many other ways very near to one another. This community, this nearness between the Swedish and Norwegian nations has actually gained through secession, because secession in their case has meant severance of *forcibly imposed* relations.”<sup>27</sup>

From this example, as well as from Lenin’s entire interpretation of it, it can be seen that state unity is not a prerequisite for economic unity and that it can moreover constitute an obstacle to the actual economic unity and cultural rapprochement and association of nations.

Meanwhile, some people who today boast about being consistent Leninists, act in their slanderous campaign against the CPY quite differently.

First: In regard to the question of relations between a small and a large state, they have acted in a way precisely contrary to Lenin’s advice

<sup>25</sup> Italics are mine.

<sup>26</sup> Lenin, vol. XXIV, pp. 154-155.

<sup>27</sup> Lenin, vol. XVII, page 327.



to communists of large states. They deny to small nations the freedom to build "their own" state, they deny to small nations the right to make the contribution they wish to make to the common treasury of socialism. They emphasize the numerical strength and material might of their own country—the USSR—although it is clear that, if peoples are to be equal, as they are supposed to be, then *numbers and power*, according to Lenin, *do not and cannot have any fundamental meaning in the matter of mutual relations between socialist states.*

Second: They have transformed economic unity—which Lenin considered indispensable under socialism, to be realized by means of "economically non-profit-bearing and politically non-dominant assistance"—into capitalistic commerce based on capitalistic principles and the laws of the jungle as they operate under capitalism. The "economically non-profit-bearing and politically non-dominant assistance" which according to Lenin constitutes a prerequisite for the association of peoples under socialism, has been transformed into exploitation of the weak and undeveloped by those who are powerful and developed, while as regards Yugoslavia, which is making unheard-of efforts in order to rise from the ruins of the war and its historical backwardness, even an economic blockade has been organized against her.

Such a blockade, for which Yugoslavia has given no cause, has not been applied by the USSR and the countries of the people's democracies against any of the capitalistic states. On the contrary, all these countries are doing all they can to develop their exchange with the latter states to the largest possible extent. Moreover, they are all fighting in the various international forums against economic discrimination, which American monopolists have unsuccessfully tried to organize. Such a blockade is a rare phenomenon even in the history of capitalism (in our own national history something similar was attempted only by the Austro-Hungarian monarchy against small Serbia).

Our Party, meanwhile, has fought and still fights for economic unity between socialist states, but for real unity which is to be realized on the basis of "economically non-profit-bearing and politically non-dominant assistance" and not for the so-called "unity" which is to be realized on the basis of capitalistic trade, on the basis of exploitation of the weak and the undeveloped by those who are powerful and developed. The first type of unity leads to actual association, to widespread unification, to brotherly cooperation, while the second type of "unity" leads to divisions, to national isolation, and to internecine quarrels. Our Party and our country have been the only ones who—by giving the weak and



undeveloped Albanians abundant assistance without any interest, without any terms of repayment, or any obligations at all, have given a genuine example of Leninist "economically non-profit-bearing and politically non-dominant assistance".



LENIN, IN HIS VIEWS ABOUT the relations between socialist states, excluded every possibility of coercion and oppression. This is quite understandable, because he had consistently built up the theory of the people's right of self-determination and voluntary action in the matter of these mutual relations. From the passages quoted so far this can be seen quite clearly and unequivocally. However, I want to quote also the following passages from Lenin, which deal more specifically with this very question:

“ . . . That we, the party of the proletariat, must be always and unconditionally *opposed to every attempt at exercising by means of tyranny or injustice any outside influences upon the people's self-determination.*”<sup>28</sup>

“The proletarian party tends towards the formation of the largest possible states, because such states are more advantageous for workers—it tends towards *association and further integration of peoples*, while it does not want to achieve this purpose by means of tyranny but entirely by means of a free, a brotherly union of workers and working masses of all nations.”<sup>29</sup>

Lenin referred in many other passages to this same question: both while the bolshevist party fought for power and when it was in power. His attitude was always the same: against every kind of resort to compulsion in the matter of relations between socialist countries. He argued explicitly that socialists in the country where the working class is in power “cannot drive other people into paradise by beating them”, that they cannot “force them into accepting their friendship”, but that they must

<sup>28</sup> Lenin, vol. V, page 243.

<sup>29</sup> Lenin, vol. XX, page 123.



endeavor to win their friendship “by treating them as equals, as allies and brothers in the struggle for socialism”.

I think that the present post-war practice, especially during the last year (beginning with the initial resolution of the Cominform) on the part of the leaders of the USSR and those who support them in other countries, tells us clearly enough whether they have followed Lenin's principles in regard to this question, or not. What else are slanders and falsehoods and pressures, if not a resort to oppression? What else are economic, cultural, and other kinds of blockade against a socialist country? What else are border provocations and raids by terroristic and diversionist bands? What else are recruitments of spies amongst citizens of a socialist country with the purpose of reducing it to a status of inequality? What else is the deliberate planting in the bourgeois press of news items about the concentration of troops on Yugoslav frontiers, and the failure to deny these reports—if not a part of an imperialistic “war of nerves” aiming at terrorization by threats of brute force?

Finally, the question arises: to what limits and up to what stage of social development has Lenin admitted the possibility of the existence of separate, independent socialist states (separate and independent in the socialist sense, i.e. in the sense of the right of individual states to make their “own contribution” to the forms of construction, the right of full equality in the matter of construction of “their own states”, and so on)?

One does not need much brains to conclude on the basis of the passages we have cited from Lenin's works, that so long as states exist, so long as the communist social order is not established and states are not yet fully suppressed, so long also will the people's right of self-determination, and the principle of voluntary action in the matter of relations between socialist states, exist and be fully valid as well for communists.

Lenin's teachings regarding relations between socialist states would neither be complete nor consistent if such a conclusion did not indeed follow from it. But just because Lenin's science is an entity, just because it is a consistent theory, and because it forms an integral part of the theory of the proletarian revolution under the conditions prevailing in the imperialistic epoch of capitalism, the stated conclusion follows from it. Besides, Lenin himself has dealt with this question on several occasions and has formulated it quite clearly.

The stated conclusion—i.e. that the people's right of self-determination and the principle of voluntary action in the matter of relations between socialist states are meant to be valid so long as states exist at all,



and that this is the only way towards the genuine association of peoples under socialism and communism—is likewise based in its final analysis on Lenin's teachings about revolution, i.e. on the fact that it is not necessary that the proletarian revolution should break out all of a sudden throughout the world, that it cannot break out at once even in several major countries, but that it must occur first in one single country. The victory of socialism, accordingly, will not come—and has not come—all of a sudden all the world over, but first in one country and then through various stages in other countries. Which means that the development of the proletarian revolution does not follow an even, but a zig-zagging and uneven course. This is necessarily so because the revolution results from conditions prevailing in the capitalistic world considered both as an entity and as it exists in various individual countries, and it is to be borne in mind that the development of capitalism in the epoch of imperialism was itself marked in the highest degree by a zig-zag and uneven evolution. This aspect of Lenin's teachings has since been fully confirmed by the entire course of events, by the sequel to the October Revolution, by the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union, and by the revolutionary movements during and following upon World War II (especially in Yugoslavia and China).

If, thus, the proletarian revolution does not break out in several major countries simultaneously, but in various individual countries at different periods—then also the forms of socialist states brought into being under these varying revolutionary circumstances are bound to be different, and likewise the paths to be followed by various states towards socialism. And so long as these variations exist, so long as a specific form of progress is suitable for one given country but not for another—so long will the association of peoples be possible only by fully “outliving” these varying forms, i.e. only by observing the people's right of self-determination. Every pressure, every artificial enforcement of forms which are not suitable, every imposition of forms from outside, and every other endeavour “to drive people into paradise by means of beating them” can only hinder both the transition of individual countries to socialism and the process of association of peoples under socialism, therefore also of the progress of socialism in general.

The process involving the application of these specific state and other forms of development to various individual peoples will last a long time, because various peoples will advance by varying ways and in varying forms towards communism. How long it will last—is impossible to foretell. One thing only—according to Lenin—is certain: so long as there



is a real "desire", viz. an objective necessity on the part of a given people to make its contribution to socialist development, so long will this people also have the right to do so, because it is the only way for its real and genuine association with other peoples. Every denial of this right would amount to denial of equality and the right of self-determination of peoples. And it is not possible—according to Lenin—as long as states exist—to presume any kind of situation where at least some people (Lenin speaks of even a five-hundredth part of the downtrodden peoples before the ultimate victory of the proletariat) would not manifest the "desire" to enrich the common treasury of socialism and socialist culture by its own forms of socialist construction born out of its own historical and concrete conditions. Moreover, this diversity of forms is socially lawful and is inevitable. It is a prerequisite of progress itself—the condition for the association of peoples and unification of mankind under socialism and communism. In advancing towards socialism, peoples are coming nearer to a constantly more consistent and increasing freedom and democracy. To imagine that they will all advance towards socialism in one and the same way, according to one and the same pattern, would be just as senseless as to figure socialism like some barracks where all people are to be lined up "equally" and uniformly. The freedom of the progress of individual peoples constitutes indeed the freedom of socialism as a whole. This is the only way towards the association and real brotherhood of peoples.

The progress of peoples towards socialism is evolving by varying paths and in varying forms. On the other hand, the transition to communism will give rise to even fuller and broader forms of economic and cultural construction. Only by means of a free and unhindered development of peoples in this respect will it be possible for mankind to attain real association and unification—to attain the elimination of all differences (class differences, national differences, differences between intellectual and physical work) which it has inherited from the class societies. Therefore—through an abundant variety to unity! That is the only way towards the real equality of men. That is the way towards the further unlimited and unhampered progress of mankind under these new, these even fuller and broader forms. That is the dialectical law of development, the law of inexorable and never stopping forward motion of everything—therefore also of human society—in this material and only existing world.

Here are Lenin's brilliant thoughts in which he unequivocally confirms that until the stage of the extinction of states is reached, i.e. until



the stage of the establishment of communism is arrived at, the right of self-determination and other Marxist, i.e. Leninist principles relating to the solution of the national question and the settlement of relations between socialist states, as well as to the inevitability of the existence of frontiers as long as states themselves exist, must be valid for Marxists:

“Under capitalism *it is not possible* to abolish national (and generally speaking, political) oppression. That is why it is *indispensable* to destroy classes, i.e. to introduce socialism. But although based on economics, socialism cannot under any circumstances be reduced entirely to economics. In order to eliminate national oppression, it is necessary to possess these bases, i.e. socialist production, but in addition to this foundation, it is also necessary to have democratic organization of the state, a democratic army, etc. By transforming capitalism into socialism, the proletariat creates the *possibility* for the complete elimination of national oppression; this possibility will be transformed into *reality* ‘only’—‘only’!—following upon the complete introduction of democracy into all the various fields, right to the point of the establishment of the frontiers of states in accordance with the ‘sympathies’ of the inhabitants, right to the point of the complete freedom of secession. On this basis will be practically developed, in its turn, the absolute elimination of the slightest national friction, of the slightest national suspicions—will be brought into life the intensification of the association and integration between nations which will finally end with the *extinction* of states. That is the theory of Marxism . . .”<sup>30</sup>

Lenin’s theory on relations between socialist states is an integral part of his theory regarding the national question. It constitutes in all its basic premises a harmonious and unbreakable entity—both if considered by itself and in its relations to Leninism as a whole. Briefly, it amounts to this: In order that the proletarians and working people in general may collectively and successfully struggle against capitalism and build socialism, they must, when they come into power, safeguard to all peoples the right of self-determination, i.e. the right to possess their own separate, independent national state; every people determines voluntarily, without any forcible pressure from outside, what are to be the forms of state relations into which it will enter with other nations (federation, confederation, independent states); and seeing that socialist states do not come into being all of a sudden all the world over, but through various stages of the struggle against capitalism, and that they do not begin their march towards

<sup>30</sup> Lenin, vol. XIX, page 245.



socialism from one and the same economic and cultural starting point, their paths towards one and the same goal are necessarily diverse, their transition to socialism necessarily evolves in various forms; therefore the right of self-determination and the principle of voluntary action in the matter of relations between socialist states must also be indispensably observed and applied until the final extinction of states, until the final establishment of communism. Large states in a general way may have their advantages, especially during the first phase of the struggle against capitalism, but they can only come into being under the assumption that the above prerequisites (respect of the right of self-determination, making it possible for other peoples to enrich mankind through their own forms of transition to capitalism) are fulfilled; therefore, large states are not, even as economic units, an indispensable condition under *all* circumstances, all the more so because, in the first place, it cannot be in any way in the interest of the workers of a nation who possess their own independent state to be economically separated, because it would mean that they are deliberately making their material position worse and impeding the progress of their state; and in the second place, the existence of an independent state taken by itself does not necessarily involve its economic and other secession as well, but is only the way, the transitory phase towards further association under communism; moreover, large and developed socialist states are under the obligation—according to Lenin—to give economically non-profit-bearing and politically non-dominant assistance to smaller and undeveloped states, because that is the only way to the further association of peoples under socialism.



BETWEEN SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM there is a wide period of development. In this period, parallel with the capitalistic states, there will also be socialist states which will come into life under the most varying conditions and in the most varying forms, also with varying historical backgrounds and within varying economic, cultural, etc. levels of development. These today are already well known historical facts which have fully proved Lenin's genial predictions concerning the uneven course of revolution and the variations between the concrete paths leading towards communism. What state relations are to be formed between individual socialist states it is not possible to foretell, because nobody can foresee all the concrete forms which the masses of the people, in their struggle for the new, the classless society, will construct amongst themselves. But it is certain that the forms thus constructed will be richer and more varied than they have been under capitalism, for the very reason that there will no longer be a handful of large states to impose their will and their ways of life upon the multitudes of the subjugated peoples. One thing is quite certain on the basis of Lenin's teachings: the forms of these relations must be made to rest upon the genuine will, upon the voluntary action of every given people, i.e. upon the people's right of self-determination—a right which the masses of the peoples will be free to use until the final extinction of states, until the final establishment of communist society—otherwise all progress towards socialism, i.e. the "right" of individual peoples to make their own contribution to this progress, would inevitably be restricted.

These principles of Lenin are all the more important considering, as I have said already, that parallel with the socialist states and the socialist system there are also the capitalistic states and the capitalistic



system. No nation could rise in revolt and embark upon the struggle for its liberation from capitalism if the perspectives of its free development under socialism were to be closed to it, viz. if its rights as regards the settlement of its relations with other states were to be restricted. Socialism in that case would not have the force of attraction which it does have, nor would it mean the full freedom of peoples. That is the reason why it is of such momentous import that the relations between socialist states be settled in the spirit of Lenin's theory. because this theory is an integral part of his theory relating to revolution. To depart from Lenin's teachings in this matter would mean, in fact, not only to depart from his theory relating to revolution, but also to hinder all revolutionary development in the world, and especially the initiative of the individual peoples wanting to liberate themselves in one manner or another—as it may be best for themselves and for the movement as a whole—from the imperialistic system and to take the road to socialism.

To believe that the substance of relations between socialist states, if these relations are not correctly settled, can be concealed by no matter what propaganda—is extreme nonsense, because the bourgeoisie itself has never permitted and never will permit the proletariat to conceal its faults and illusions. It is in its interest to throw light upon them, so as to harm the proletariat. And for the imperialists today, for the sake of the pacification of “their own” proletariat and “their own” peoples (in the metropolis and colonies), nothing is more advantageous today than to show that the relations between socialist countries are very much the same as those between themselves and their dependent peoples and colonies. He who does not or cannot see this, does not see anything. He does not see that the bourgeoisie, headed by the American bourgeoisie, fears nothing so much today as it fears the genuine freedom and the real, the voluntary cooperation between peoples on the basis of equality, for the simple reason that it wants to develop to its extremes the domination of one nation, viz. the domination of a handful of monopolists, over the entire world, over all other peoples.

Today—inequality exists between socialist states. The root of this inequality lies in the capitalistic relations which reign supreme amongst them. Everybody sees it—nobody says anything about it. But since it exists in reality, no force (at least from the standpoint of Marxism-Leninism) can either conceal or defend it. This inequality is already felt very severely by the working masses of Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, etc. It is doing harm to the tempo of construction and the prosperity of those countries, while the party leaders who say nothing about it or



who even try to conceal it by means of bombastic statements about "assistance" from the USSR are inevitably divorcing themselves both from the party and from the masses. It would be very unwise to believe that these unjust and unequal relations will not have a grave effect upon the entire evolution of socialism in the world and that the imperialists will not abundantly take advantage of them in all possible political and war crises. Instead of a genuine equality between socialist states becoming one of the fundamental moving forces behind the growth of socialism and democracy in the world, the genuine inequality between them can become and is already becoming the main weapon in the hands of the imperialistic bourgeoisie in the struggle against the internal unity of the socialist world and against the promotion of the progressive movement in the world.

In one way or another, under one leadership or another, the peoples will fight for their equality so long as it is actually denied them by no matter whom. The workers' and democratic movements should do well not to permit this mighty weapon in their own struggle for socialism and democracy to become a weapon in the hands of the reactionary imperialistic powers.

The revision of Marxism-Leninism concerning the national question, or to be exact, concerning the question of relations between socialist states and workers' parties (which has broken out into the open in the case of Yugoslavia) has affected not only this issue but others as well, not only in regard to Yugoslavia, but also in a general way. Like a contagion, it spreads necessarily in an ever increasing volume into all the branches of Marxism—from its philosophy and questions of culture to the question of the state and further socialist construction. Nor could it be otherwise, for Marxism is an entity and it is impossible to separate and distort one section of it without affecting thereby the whole structure. Marxism is the instrument of the social struggle of the proletariat and any distortions of any portions of it are bound to harm this struggle in its entirety. Likewise, considering that contemporary socialist and democratic movements—regardless of all their indispensable diversity—are an entity, that they are the expression of the universal struggle of the world proletariat against imperialism, it is impossible to affect a portion of it (as the slanderers of the CPY thought) without thereby harming the entire struggle. That is why it is not coincidental that the attack against socialist Yugoslavia—which the leaders of the CPSU(b) thought could be reduced to the question of Yugoslavia only and therefore brought to a "successful end" within a matter of three to four weeks—has inevitably become and is becoming



more and more one of the most important problems (if not the most important) of all the workers' and democratic movements, both of every one of them individually and of the movement as a whole.

The phase of the existence of one single socialist state encircled by imperialistic states which are mutually fighting one another—has come to an end. A new phase has come into life—the phase of the co-existence of a series of socialist states which the imperialistic states—amongst them one, the U. S. A., which is endeavoring to establish its absolute domination—can no longer encircle. This phase, as well as the further conditions in the struggle of the proletariat within its framework, Marxists still have to elaborate theoretically and tactically, because Lenin has only given and could only give the basic ideas and principles on which are to be made to rest both the relations between socialist states and—under these new conditions—the struggle of the working class, of the working masses and the individual peoples for liberation, socialism, and democracy.

Marxism, however, does not grow and does not become richer on the sheer intellectual power of geniuses. Its enrichment is possible in the first place where the revolutionary development in a given phase has reached the highest level. Only the revolutionary practice of the masses can give the indispensable material for its theoretical generalization. And revolution is not a static phenomenon—it moves from country to country. At the time of Marx and Engels it evolved in Western Europe, at the time of Lenin and Stalin in Russia, in the Second World War and thereafter it emerged most powerfully in Yugoslavia and in China. Tomorrow—it will move into other countries and will enrich the international workers movement with new experiences—it will make its new contribution to the general teachings of Marx and Lenin relating to the universal liberation struggle of mankind. Which party will lead this new development, and how great that party's role may be, is not important. But that it is already being formulated as an expression of the struggle of the universal workers' and democratic movement and that it will become the property of the entire international workers and democratic movement—of this there can be no doubt.

By not grasping the substance of the new conditions and by revising Leninism, the leaders of the USSR have come both in theory and in practice to extraordinary conclusions. They have divided the world into two sections—a capitalistic section led by American imperialists, and a socialist section which is to be led by the USSR (instead of dividing it as the world of capitalism where individual nations are endeavoring to liberate themselves from American domination, and the world of fully



equal socialist states and fully equal workers' parties and democratic movements). They actually try by all possible means to legalize this division in practice. They have invented the anti-Marxist "theory" of the leading role of the USSR and what is more the leading role of the Russian people. They have proclaimed the recognition of that role as the condition *sine qua non* of internationalism and communism. They have forgotten that neither in Marx's teachings, nor in Engels' nor in Lenin's nor even in Stalin's until the most recent times is there a single letter—literally not one single letter—about the indispensability and the necessity of leading states, leading parties, and leading nations under socialism. They have forgotten what Engels wrote about the leading role of individual movements:

"What is at stake, above all, is to preserve the real international sense which does not permit any nationalist chauvinism to grow and which greets with joy every new step forward in the proletarian movement, regardless of what nation it comes from. If the German workers are thus to march in front of the others, then they will not, it is true, march at the head of the movement, and it is not in the interest of the movement that the workers of no matter what nation march at the head of it—but they will by all means assume an honorable place in its battle lines; they will stand fully armed at their battle stations, if they are confronted either by unexpected trials, or by great events which will demand from them an even greater courage and endurance, an even greater energy and resolution."<sup>31</sup>

They have forgotten that Lenin was fully in agreement with and quite enthusiastic about this attitude of Engels.

There are no leading nations and states and there cannot be any under socialism unless they are to become transformed into ruling nations and states—which is what is actually taking place today. What can be leading is the principle of equality of states, nations, and parties—what alone can be leading is understanding and cooperation amongst them. What alone can be leading is Marxist teachings, loyalty to those teachings and consistency in the struggle for their realization.

This is the substance of Lenin's concepts on relations between socialist states and workers' parties—concepts most closely connected with Marx's and Lenin's teachings as an entity. This is the only way to the real unity of socialist countries, to the real unity of the universal workers' and democratic movement, to the victory over capitalism. Every other way leads to the strengthening of capitalism, to the hampering of the

<sup>31</sup> Engels, "Peasant War in Germany", Foreword, page 18, German edition, Berlin, 1946.



revolutionary and democratic movement, to the weakening of brotherly cooperation amongst liberated nations.

To revive, to develop, and defend Lenin's teachings on relations between socialist states is today one of the vital conditions both for the strengthening of the real unity of socialist countries and for the successful and correct development of the revolutionary and democratic struggle of the working class and the peoples still suffering under the yoke of capitalism.







