

M.N. Roy: From Nationalism to Radical Humanism

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Introduction

On the 15th of August 1947, the stalwarts of the Indian Freedom Movement were celebrating the beginning of a new chapter in India's history. The lowering of the Union Jack was a sight which few wanted to miss. However, away from the national capital and from electoral politics, M.N. Roy, the founder of the Communist Party of India was busy promulgating a new philosophical treatise. This was the last milestone of a journey which began in the first decade of the twentieth century with the revolutionary movement in Bengal. Through the course of his life Roy travelled across the world, interacting with different cultures and ideologies. As a member of the Communist International, he formulated policies for international communism and worked extensively to form the Communist Party of India (CPI). Later, he returned to India and actively participated in the struggle for independence and subsequently in electoral politics. In 1946, he retreated from active politics and propounded the theory of *Radical Humanism*. Roy's thought constantly evolved and grew with the influx of new experiences, which he tried to explain through his understanding of socio-economic structures and political ideology. His ideas were often ahead of their time and faced stiff opposition from different camps. Nevertheless, he remained committed to his ideals and intellectual evolution. He was neither an opportunist in search of political office nor a blind adherent of populist ideologies. His frequently changing opinions can only be understood through an analysis of his intellectual pursuits and experiences. Roy incessantly struggled to make sense of the complex ideologies of his time including communism, fascism, imperialism, capitalism and nationalism. Although he started out as a nationalist revolutionary, Roy went on to become an advocate of class-struggle through his deep involvement with Marxism. His subsequent disillusionment with Marxism, his belief in democracy, and commitment to rational, scientific and socialist thought eventually led to his theory of Radical Humanism. In many ways, the only constant in Roy's life was a periodic change in beliefs, inspired not by political ambitions but by experience.

The motivation behind this work is twofold. The first, is to provide an account of M.N. Roy's life, and examine the evolution of his ideas and beliefs in the context of his experiences. The second, is to analyze in detail, some of his writings on the Indian freedom movement, and on the Communist International. These writings namely *Nationalism a, Democracy and Freedom* and *The Communist International* are in my opinion, among his finest works and provide great insight into his intellectual and political contributions. In these works, Roy spells out his views and grounds them in his understanding of political philosophy, history and the global setting at the time. His analysis of the Communist International which was published in 1943 is a particularly interesting document. Written more than two decades after he was introduced to the theory of Marxism, it presents an opinion about the international communist movement which is very different from the one Roy had in his early years. It serves as a great example of his constantly evolving ideas.

This work is divided into three main parts: (1) *Biography*, (2) *Nationalism, Democracy and Freedom*; and (3) *The Communist International*.

Biography

Early Years and Nationalism

Narendra Nath Bhattacharya (later M.N. Roy) was born on 21 March 1887 in Arbelia, near Calcutta in British India to a family of hereditary priests. Bhattacharya was schooled in Arbelia and at the Harinavi Anglo-Sanskrit School in Kodalia. For higher studies, he enrolled at the National College and subsequently at the Bengal Technical Institute. As a school boy, Bhattacharya was exposed to the writings of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar¹, Swami Vivekananda², and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay.³ Their views on nationalism, Indian culture, Hinduism and social reform had a profound impact on him.^{4,5}

The teachings of spiritual leaders and ascetics deeply influenced Bhattacharya. He was introduced to Sivnarain Swami, a Hindu monk, in the year 1901. Believed to be a fugitive of the revolt of 1857, Swami was a determined advocate of social reform in Hindu society including the removal of caste barriers. He tutored Bhattacharya in Yoga and spirituality. However, Bhattacharya was not ready to become a *sanyasi* just yet. The nationalist movement had started to gain momentum and in 1905, the British Viceroy, Lord Curzon, unveiled his plan to partition Bengal. Bhattacharya, a high school student at the time, began actively participating in demonstrations and protests against the plan. Soon enough, he

1. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966) was an Indian revolutionary associated with the India House, a group for political activism in London. He was incarcerated at the Cellular Jail in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands from 1910-1921 for his revolutionary activities. He is famous for having coined the term 'Hindutva' which he used to describe the cultural identity of India. He was a staunch critic of the Indian National Congress and opposed the Quit India Movement in 1942.

2. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) was an Indian spiritual leader and a disciple of the mystic Ramakrishna. He contributed immensely to Hindu revivalism and to the concept of Indian nationalism. He went on to found the Ramakrishna Mission and represented India at the Parliament of World Religions in 1893.

3. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894) was an Indian writer and poet best known for composing Vande Mataram, a poem which was a part of his novel, Anandamath. The first two verses of this poem were later adopted as India's national song. He was a prominent figure in the literary renaissance of Bengal and many of his works went on to become inspirations for the Indian freedom struggle.

4. Samaren Roy, *M.N. Roy: A Political Biography* (London: Sangam, 1997), 1-5.

5. Prakash Chandra, *Political Philosophy of M.N. Roy* (New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 1992), 20.

concluded that demonstrations weren't enough and the use of force was necessary to attain *Swaraj* (self-government). His political comrade and cousin, Harikumar Chakravarty wrote, "We had decided our course. Vivekananda's path was our path. Our God was our country."⁶ Both Bhattacharya and Harikumar joined the *Anushilan Samiti*, a major center for revolutionaries in Bengal and soon after they were sent to the Ghedapahar hills to be trained in the use of firearms. They conducted several operations to secure funds for the revolutionary underground.⁷ In April 1908, an Indian revolutionary, Khudiram Bose, tried to kill a British magistrate in Muzzafarpur. He was arrested and hanged. In retaliation, Bhattacharya shot dead the police officer responsible for arresting Bose. "It was from this time that Bhattacharya rose in the hierarchy of leadership. With his untiring energy, he contacted different leaders and groups to forge coordination and was preparing for guerilla warfare to drive the British out of this country."⁸

Armed Rebellion and Indian Independence

Bhattacharya worked tirelessly to unite various revolutionary groups in Bengal. He was convinced that an armed struggle was the only way to liberate India. The First World War which started soon after "activated the underground."⁹ In the months to follow he and Jatin Mukherjee, another senior leader of the Anushilan Samiti, met the German Consul General. They discussed plans for armed rebellion in India with the help of the German Government. Bhattacharya believed that British force and influence in India would be significantly weakened after the war. This would allow for the success of an armed struggle. He travelled to Batavia in April 1915 under the name C.A. Martin to work out the details of a plan to deliver arms. Arrangements were made to receive cargo from the *S.S. Maverick* at an island in the

6. Samaren Roy, 4.

7. Suchetna Chattopadhyay, "Being 'Naren Bhattacharji'", *Communist Histories* (New Delhi: Leftword Books, 2016), 32.

8. Samaren Roy, 4-10.

9. Suchetna Chattopadhyay, 60.

Sundarbans, in southern Bengal. However, the ship never arrived. Undeterred, Bhattacharya left India and resolved not to come back without arms. He travelled throughout South East Asia and met several important nationalist leaders, including Rashbehari Bose¹⁰ and Dr. Sun Yatsen.¹¹ However, nothing substantial came out of these meetings. Both leaders did not, at the time, appreciate his urgency for Indian independence and suggested putting off action until Japan was ready to lead a Pan-Asian Movement. During his travels, Bhattacharya also came to believe that the Japanese thought of themselves as a superior race. This reduced his affinity for Japanese involvement in the Indian freedom struggle. He decided to travel to the United States in search of financial and material support.

On June 15, 1916 Bhattacharya reached San Francisco and made his way to Stanford University.¹² It was at Stanford that Bhattacharya adopted the name Manabendra Nath Roy. “The adopted surname was significant. It was not a caste name as was ‘Bhattacharya’ though many *Brahmins* used it. ‘Roy’ was symbolic of a break with orthodoxy.”¹³ It was also at Stanford that Roy met Evelyn Trent, who went on to become his wife. During his time in San Francisco, Roy became acquainted with the Socialist Party in America. For the first time, he met individuals who were not bound by nationalist sentiments in their vision, and were able to look beyond such allegiances to a more universal vision. He had extensive discussions with them which formed the beginning of a long period of ideological contemplation. By February of 1917, the Americans were ready to enter the war against Germany. Roy was still keen on obtaining German help to liberate India. He was also close to the Socialist Party and many left-wing intellectuals in America, both of which were matters of concern for the American law enforcement

10. Rashbehari Bose (1886-1945) was an Indian revolutionary and a key figure in the Ghadar mutiny in 1915. Later he led the Indian Independence League in South East Asia and steered the creation of the Indian National Army in 1942.

11. Sun Yatsen (1866-1925) served as the first provisional president of the Republic of China and founded the Kuomintang, or the Nationalist Party. He was instrumental in overthrowing the Qing dynasty in 1911. He is often referred to as the Father of Modern China.

12. M.N. Roy, *M.N. Roy's Memoirs* (Bombay, India: Allied Publishers, 1964), 3-21.

13. Samaren Roy, 14.

agencies. Since the Bolshevik Party's rise to prominence, the fear of leftist ideologies spreading across the globe had engulfed many capitalist countries. As a result, Roy's movements became increasingly difficult.¹⁴ He was arrested in March 1917 and decided to seek refuge in Mexico as soon as he was released on bail. By the time he left the US, Roy had "accepted Socialism, except its materialist philosophy and had written a thesis on pacifism."¹⁵

International Revolutionary

Roy was well received in Mexico. He contacted the Mexican Government and began to contribute articles to *El Pueblo*, the official daily. He also began translating his book, *The Way to Durable Peace*, which he had written in the United States, into Spanish, adding a chapter about the Monroe Doctrine and North American influence in Mexico. In addition, he became an advocate for the formation of a Latin American league to counter the Pan-American conference hosted by the United States. The time Roy spent in Mexico was also significant in terms of his discovery of western leftwing culture. Away from the influence of Indian revolutionaries, he was surrounded by American bohemians – writers, artists, socialists and radicals. He began to outgrow his nationalism as he became increasingly aware of western philosophies, histories, cultures, food and music. As his biographer explained, "The introduction was at two levels – the rich and the bourgeois who preferred to be orderly and formal; and the bohemians who gave primacy to spontaneity."¹⁶ Slowly, the previously vegetarian teetotaler Roy came to appreciate a different way of life in the company of free thinkers.¹⁷

14. M.N. Roy, *M.N. Roy's Memoirs*, 37-43.

15. Samaren Roy, 18.

16. *Ibid.*, 20.

17. M.N. Roy, *M.N. Roy's Memoirs*, 59-71, 129-134.

In the summer of 1919 Roy met Michael Borodin, an agent of the Comintern who had been expelled from the United States.¹⁸ The two got along very well and Roy's interactions with Borodin were significant in shaping the thoughts and ideas that came to dominate his politics throughout the 1920's and 1930's. Although Roy had agreed with socialism, by and large, he came to understand the core of materialism and Marxist philosophy after his long discussions with Borodin. Roy also started to get involved in Mexican politics and made several attempts to organize support for the left wing.¹⁹ The Socialist Party of Mexico was renamed as 'The Communist Party of Mexico' during this time. Roy also organized a conference of socialists from Mexico and other Latin American countries.²⁰ A congratulatory note from Lenin was read out at this conference and Roy was invited to represent Mexico at the Second Congress of the Communist International in Moscow. He left for Moscow in December 1919, travelling on a Mexican passport as a special emissary of President Carranza²¹. In Mexico, he went through a philosophical and intellectual revolution.²² It was now time for him to contact mass movements.

En-route to Moscow, Roy stopped in Berlin for a couple of months. During the First World War, Berlin had served as a hub for Indian revolutionaries. Grouped in what was known as the 'Berlin Committee', they were involved in talks with the Germans for arms to support violent resistance in India. Roy observed that like emigres everywhere, they were involved in petty quarrels and disconnected from larger movements. He wrote, "They were largely broken men, quarrelling among themselves and were

18. Michael Borodin (1884-1951) was an agent of the Communist International who worked in Mexico, Spain, Turkey, America and the United Kingdom in the early 1920s. In 1923, Borodin was sent to China as an advisor to the leadership of the Nationalist Party and helped them organize an army. Roy and Borodin were together again in 1926 when Roy was sent to China.

19. M.N. Roy, *M.N. Roy's Memoirs*, 189-212.

20. Ibid., 141-147.

21. Venustiano Carranza (1859-1920) was a leader of the Mexican Revolution. He served as the President of Mexico from 1917 to 1920. He was instrumental in drafting the current constitution of Mexico.

22. Prakash Chandra, 26.

unable to utilize the conflict between the rival imperialist blocks and had lost the gamble for German aid.”²³ Before leaving for Moscow, Roy prepared the *Indian Communist Manifesto* in Berlin. Though many in the Berlin Committee did not appreciate the manifesto, it did mark a change in the direction of revolutionary activity. The *Manifesto* argued that, “the growing spirit of rebellion in the masses must be organized on the basis of class struggle in close cooperation with the world proletarian movement.”²⁴ It advocated mobilization of the proletariat in a socialist revolution as opposed to a nationalist revolutionary movement, which would inevitably be recruited from the educated youths of the middle class. Roy also contacted the Communist Party in Germany during his time in Berlin and held long discussions with August Thalheimer, a German Marxist and founder member of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD).²⁵

The Communist International

The Communist International (Comintern) was founded in 1919 with the objective of overthrowing bourgeois regimes and organizing communist revolutions across the globe. To achieve this, the Comintern was to employ all means available, including armed struggle. In all, seven World Congress sessions of the Comintern were held between 1919 and 1935. The Second Congress of the Comintern held in 1920 extensively debated the ‘colonial question’. At this session, Roy’s thesis was focused on the role of colonies in maintaining the capitalist system. He argued that the imperialist countries had been able to avoid the crisis of capitalism by investing in colonies and reaping greater profits through exploitation. Therefore, according to him, the success of proletarian revolutions in Europe depended on revolutionary movements in Asia. These views were in direct contradiction with those of Lenin who had placed revolution in the colonies as secondary to proletarian revolutions in the West. Roy also claimed

23. Samaren Roy, 39.

24. Ibid., 40.

25. M.N. Roy, *M.N. Roy's Memoirs*, 272-277.

that, “though the revolution in the colonies was not going to be communist in the first stages, if from the beginning the leadership of the revolution is in the hands of a communist vanguard, the revolutionary masses would not be led astray.”²⁶ Here too, he disagreed with Lenin. While Roy argued for class struggle to be the focus of the communist parties, Lenin had asked that the communists support nationalist and democratic freedom movements in the colonies. The Comintern eventually adopted Lenin’s view with a small modification. Nationalist, anti-imperialist movements in colonies were to be supported but only if such alliances did not negatively affect the development of class struggle. This became the official policy of the Communist International. Roy’s views were included in a supplementary section with the major disagreements toned down.

Roy’s thinking on the relationship between revolution and anti-colonial struggle continued to develop over time. At the Third Congress (1921), Roy argued that in countries where capitalism had developed, the native bourgeoisie did not direct their efforts against the colonial bourgeoisie. The elite from the colonized and colonizing nations exploited the colonies in collaboration and one drew strength from the other. Therefore, it could not be expected of the nationalist movements led by the native bourgeoisie to speak against capitalist exploitation in the colonies. In his assessment, the colonial bourgeoisie could not be a force for national emancipation. At the Fourth Congress in 1922, Roy further elaborated on these views. He argued that capitalist equilibrium was forcing imperialist nations to seek markets in under-developed countries and further industrial development in these countries. Thus, revolution in industrial-capitalist countries was even more integrally connected to anti-colonialism than before. It was, therefore, necessary to set up communist parties in the colonies, to take charge of the leadership and encourage clearly directed revolution.²⁷ To organize the peasants and workers, “Communist parties were directed to take part in every movement which gave them access to the

26. Samaren Roy, 43.

27. Ibid., 52.

masses.”²⁸ While participating in the wider freedom movements, they were expected to expose the interests of the bourgeoisie and champion those of the lower classes. These ideas formed the basis of what later came to be known as ‘The Theory of Decolonization’.

Communist Party of India

Shortly after the Second Congress, Roy left for Tashkent to head the Central Asiatic Bureau of the Comintern and the Indian Military School, aimed at training an army of Indian revolutionaries.²⁹ He formed the Communist Party of India while in Tashkent on the 17th of October 1920. He was also successful in raising an army of revolutionaries from Muslim volunteers who were going to fight for the Caliphate after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. It is significant that during this period, he was assisted by Soviet military advisors.³⁰ In March 1921, the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement was signed, and along with trade concessions, the Soviet Union received partial recognition from Great Britain. In return however, the British demanded that the Soviet Union cease all covert operations against British India, including the operation of the Indian Military School in Tashkent. In response to this demand, the Comintern shifted the Indian revolutionaries to the ‘Communist University of The Toilers of The East’ in Moscow.³¹

Roy’s emergence as a recognized Asian leader in the Comintern was not to everyone’s liking. In 1919, Abdur Rabb Barq and T. Prativadi Acharya had formed the Indian Revolutionary Association. This group had also been lobbying for Soviet support, but unlike Roy, they were not recognized at the Congress of the Comintern.³² So right from its early days, the émigré CPI was split between the camps led

28. Richard B. Remnek, *M.N. Roy and the Comintern 1920-194*. (Humboldt: Humboldt Journal of Social Relations, Vol. 3, No. 1), 26-35.

29. M.N. Roy, *M.N. Roy's Memoirs*, 419-444.

30. Richard B. Remnek, 26-35.

31. M.N. Roy, *M.N. Roy's Memoirs*, 525-532.

32. M.N. Roy, *M.N. Roy's Memoirs*, 459-476.

by Roy and Rabb. Rabb, claiming seniority over Roy, openly dissented until he had to be expelled. Unhappy with this decision, Acharya too continued to resist Roy's leadership until Roy begrudgingly expelled him as well. These expulsions significantly diminished the overall stature of the CPI. Later, around the time of the Third Congress of the Comintern, Roy faced another challenge to his leadership when he attempted to expand the CPI by involving the Berlin Committee of Indian revolutionaries. To this end, he pushed for a combined meeting of the two groups. Tensions came to the fore between the two groups as they slanted in different directions. The Berlin Group wanted to be recognized as a separate organized group and not be considered a part of Roy's CPI. The Berlin committee continued to challenge Roy's position over the years. Roy's group also faced challenges in India. In 1921, Roy sent Mohamed Ali Sapassi, Mohamad Shafiq and Nalini Gupta to India to build a base for the CPI. However, much to their chagrin, they found their style of functioning to be at odds with their communist-leaning counterparts who had spent their careers in India. A local leadership had grown up under leaders like Shripad Amrit Dange³³ which resented those trained in Moscow. As such, the CPI couldn't influence the political situation in India as much as Roy had hoped.³⁴

Revolution in China

In the later 1920s the Comintern extensively discussed the direction of the communist movement in China. At the time, China was a predominantly an agriculture-based society with a long history of colonial domination. "The overwhelming majority of people were peasants and the revolutionary fight

33. Shripad Amrit Dange (1899-1991) was an India communist leader and a founding member of the Communist Party of India (CPI). He was instrumental in the formation of trade unions and served as chairman of the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC). In 1964 a set of letters which were said to have been written to the British Viceroy by Dange, promising cooperation after being convicted in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case became one of the causes for a split in the CPI. He remained chairman of the CPI till 1978.

34. M.N. Roy, *M.N. Roy's Memoirs*, 477-485.

against imperialism depended upon their being drawn into the struggle under proletarian leadership.”³⁵

The Communist Party of China (CPC) was formed in 1921 with Chen Tu-hsiu as its leader. In keeping with the united front policy of the Comintern the communists joined the Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party) in 1923. For the Kuomintang, the CPC provided a way to mobilize workers and carry the movement beyond the elite and the intelligentsia. At the same time, most of the leadership of the CPC was more inclined towards nationalism than towards the global proletarian revolution. In 1923, the Third Congress of the CPC decided that the Kuomintang must be the “central force in the national revolution,” acknowledging that the communists did not yet have the mass support necessary to assume leadership.³⁶ With the death of Sun Yat-Sen, the leader of the Kuomintang, a struggle for succession between the right-wing leader Chiang Kai-shek and the leftist leader Wang Ching-wei engulfed the Kuomintang. In March 1926, Chiang Kai-shek carried out a coup against the communists and the left wing of the Kuomintang. Even though a settlement was reached between the two groups, Wang Ching-wei was exiled and the influence of the communists in the Kuomintang was severely curtailed. At the Seventh Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI), which met especially in late 1926 to discuss the developments in China, the Comintern reaffirmed the policy of a united front with the Kuomintang. The fight against imperialism was given primacy over all else. “Since it was held to be self-defeating for the communist party to take on all the forces of reaction simultaneously, it was necessary for the party to make compromises” and gain the support of the naïve bourgeoisie. This amounted to keeping the peasant movements in check. Radical reforms had to wait.³⁷

35. Robert Carver North, and Xenia Joukoff Eudin, *M.N. Roy's Mission to China; the Communist-Kuomintang Split of 1927* (Berkeley: University of California, 1963), 37.

36. Samaren Roy, 67.

37. John Patrick Haithcox. *Communism and Nationalism in India; M.N. Roy and Comintern Policy, 1920-1939*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), 59-61.

In early 1927, Roy was sent to China as a representative of the Comintern to implement its policy, but the political situation there was fast changing. In March 1927, the Nationalists occupied Shanghai as part of the Northern expedition launched by Chiang Kai-shek to unite the country. This gave him control over China's hub for commerce and industry and in exchange for financial support from banks and trading firms, Chiang agreed to suppress the communist movement. Thereafter, the division of the Kuomintang between the two power centers was complete. On one side was the left wing along with its communist supporters led by Wang Ching-wei who had recently returned from exile and on the other was Chiang Kai-shek. The Eighth Plenum of the ECCI was convened in May 1927 to reconsider the China policy. It recommended a twofold approach. The Chinese communists were directed to maintain their alliance with the left-Kuomintang while simultaneously organizing peasant movements in the countryside. It was considered necessary to support the left-Kuomintang to keep the rightist forces of Chiang Kai-shek in check.

Roy disagreed with the position of the Comintern. By this point he viewed the united front as counterproductive. He advocated for an agrarian revolution rather than restraining peasant movements to satisfy the Kuomintang. The alliance could not be maintained at the expense of class struggle. However, the leadership of the CPC were convinced that the united front had to be preserved for the sake of national unity. The left-Kuomintang continued to resist an agrarian revolution on the pretext that the national revolution was not complete; nevertheless, in the meantime, peasant movements sprang up in the territories occupied by Chiang Kai-shek. This placed the left-Kuomintang and the communists in a difficult situation. With the warlords defecting towards Chiang Kai-shek and the peasant armies being sent on the Northern Expedition to unify China, Wuhan, the capital of the left-Kuomintang and the Communists' home base, was rendered defenseless. Wang Ching-Wei became increasingly desperate to make peace with Chiang Kai-shek to stabilize his position. Soon after, he made a deal with the right-Kuomintang in which he promised to expel the CPC and the Comintern representatives from Wuhan.

By August 1927, Roy and Borodin were out of China and Chen Tu-hsiu had resigned from chairmanship of the CPC.³⁸

Theory of Decolonization and the Growth of Fascism

On his return from China to Moscow, Roy drafted the ‘Theory of Decolonization’, further developing the ideas he had set forth earlier in the Comintern sessions. In the draft resolution, he wrote, “The Indian bourgeoisie, instead of being kept down as a political rival will be granted partnership in the economic development of the country under the hegemony of imperialism.”³⁹ Roy noted that over time, a series of measures had been taken by the British government to accommodate the demands of the Indian nationalists and the bourgeoisie. He argued that to protect the interests of capitalism, the colonial powers would slowly give up political domination and jointly exploit India alongside the native bourgeoisie. According to this theory, dominion status for India was imminent. Roy came under heavy criticism for his theory and was accused of being “an apologist of British imperialism.”⁴⁰ His argument was in fact quite the opposite. He claimed that even if some form of political emancipation were achieved, it would benefit only the native bourgeoisie. Thus, the national bourgeoisie could no longer be expected to lead the freedom movement and “it was necessary to unite all the forces in an effort to capture the leadership of the Congress Party.”⁴¹

The Sixth World Congress of the Comintern held in July 1928, marked a major shift in the policy towards nationalist, democratic movements. It claimed that the nationalist bourgeoisie had betrayed the revolutionary cause world over. The communist parties had to work independently to organize

38. Robert Carver North and Xenia Joukoff Eudin, 84-128.

39. Samaren Roy, 81.

40. Ibid., 81.

41. John Patrick Haithcox, 113.

peasants and workers to free them from the influence of the bourgeoisie. The policy of forming united fronts was abandoned because of the failure of the alliance in China. Only “temporary agreements” with nationalist forces were to be permitted in the future. However, a severing of ties with the nationalist parties was also not proposed. It was suggested that in countries like India where the nationalist movements enjoyed widespread support, the communists would have to take advantage of nationalist struggle. Isolation from the masses was to be prevented at all costs.

The Tenth Plenum of the ECCI (1929) took an even harder stance towards nationalist movements. “Tactical agreements with Indian nationalists, which the Sixth Congress had condoned, were to be abandoned in favor of a policy of ‘ruthless struggle against the Indian bourgeoisie.’”⁴² Roy vehemently opposed this position. According to him the political situations in India and China were completely different. The experience in China did not call for abandoning the united front in India. He argued that the CPC-Kuomintang had been undermined by the threat of the militarists, of which there was no equivalent in India. Further he saw this as a failure of the Comintern to “appreciate the revolutionary significance of the lower middle class and intelligentsia” in particularly in the case of India.⁴³

In the meanwhile, the growth of Fascism in Europe, particularly in Germany, was becoming a cause of great concern. Roy supported a united front between the Communist Party of Germany and the Social democrats to counter fascism. Even though he had opposed a united front in China, he argued for one in Germany because he saw fascism as a threat which had to be eliminated at all costs. Apart from being a staunch communist, he was also a determined anti-fascist. However, recent Comintern policies had completely abandoned any ideas of united fronts. Roy’s support for a united front in Germany, opposition to Comintern policies in relation to the Indian freedom struggle and the revolution in China, widespread criticism of his ‘Theory of Decolonization’ and his deteriorating relationship with Stalin

42. John Patrick Haithcox, 129.

43. Prakash Chandra, 34.

ultimately led to his expulsion from the Comintern in September 1929. He returned to India in November 1930 after having spent a year in Berlin with the German Communists.

Return to India

Roy arrived in India in December 1930, travelling on a forged passport. For the next seven months, he toured the Bombay Presidency, Punjab and the United Provinces. During this period, he got involved with trade unions and met with many leaders of the Indian freedom movement. However, these activities were called to a halt by his arrest in Bombay in July 1931.⁴⁴ Roy was taken to Kanpur to stand trial on a warrant issued in 1924 in relation to the Kanpur Conspiracy Case. “The charge was that between 1921 and 1924 he had conspired to deprive the King-Emperor of his Sovereignty of British India by means of violent revolution.”⁴⁵ In prison Roy spent most of his time reading and writing. He read multiple works on historical materialism and class struggle along with books on social and physical sciences. When he was released from jail in 1936, he carried with him nine unfinished manuscript volumes entitled ‘Philosophical Consequences of Modern Science’.⁴⁶

Upon his release, Roy joined the Congress Party with a program for alternate leadership. At the time, the Congress Party was India’s largest public organization and was spearheading the Indian independence movement. While previously Roy had rejected the idea of working with the Congress, his position regarding the relationship between colonialism and socialism, as well as the role of the CPI in a united front organization changed. He argued that the immediate aim for India was independence from colonialism and not socialism. He said, “The National Congress is our common platform. I shall get myself formally enrolled as a member of the Congress. I am determined to show to the people of India

44. Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1959), 147.

45. John Patrick Haithcox, 198.

46. John Patrick Haithcox, 200.

that communists are not alien elements within the body politic of India.”⁴⁷ He believed that the organizational structure within the Congress i.e. the primary committees could be used to form a Constituent Assembly which could challenge British rule. Roy also became active within the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), a socialist faction within the Congress party.⁴⁸ He aimed to make the Congress a leftist organization and bring about an agrarian revolution using the party.

At its Lucknow session in 1936, the Congress party decided to take part in the provincial elections of 1937 provided for by the Government of India Act 1935. Roy endorsed this decision. He claimed that if elected, the Congress could intensify the struggle for independence, disregarding British interests. Mahatma Gandhi on the other hand supported the idea of a constructive agenda if congressmen were elected. He asked ministers to “enforce prohibition, make salt free for the poor, purchase all clothes for their departments in khadi and to follow similar measures.”⁴⁹ In opposition, Roy argued that both revolutionary emancipation and a constructive agenda could not run concurrently and that one would not lead to another.⁵⁰

Differences with Mahatma Gandhi and World War II

In 1938, Subhash Chandra Bose⁵¹ was elected the President of the Congress party. Unlike Mahatma Gandhi, Bose had leftist leanings and accepted the use of force as a method of resistance.

47. Dipti Kumar Roy, *Leftist Politics in India: M.N. Roy and the Radical Democratic Party* (Calcutta, India: Minerva, 1989), 9.

48. John Patrick Haithcox, 225.

49. Dipti Kumar Roy, 18.

50. Ibid., 9-25.

51. Subhash Chandra Bose (1897-1945) was a nationalist leader who participated in the Indian Independence movement. Bose became President of the Indian National Congress in 1938 and 1939. He left the Congress due to differences with Mahatma Gandhi. An advocate of violent resistance, Bose led the Indian National Army (INA) with Japanese support in an attempt to liberate India during the Second World War. The INA fought alongside the Imperial Japanese Army against British forces in Burma, Imphal and Kohima.

At the Haripura session under Bose's presidency, Roy moved a resolution proposing a socio-economic program for the Congress. With a view on advancing a more radical program for the Congress he also campaigned extensively for Bose's reelection campaign against Gandhi's candidate, Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Even though Bose was re-elected as the president, he could not form a working committee due to opposition from Gandhi's supporters and eventually resigned. In an attempt to organize against the Gandhian leadership within the Congress Party, Roy formed the League of Radical Congressmen (LRC). He said, "The consensus was that while categorically rejecting the tendency of forming parties inside the Congress, those opposed to the present policy and the Gandhian leadership of the Congress, must conduct their activity in a coordinated manner."⁵²

Roy's differences with Gandhi continued to grow. At the annual session of the Congress in 1940, Gandhi proposed the initiation of a civil disobedience movement based on *Satyagraha*. Elaborating on the views of the LRC, M.N. Roy said, "We believe Satyagraha is no longer contemplated as a mass movement and therefore it will give no political training to the masses."⁵³ He argued the way forward was revolutionary nationalism as opposed to civil disobedience. Furthermore, while he pushed for an organized revolution to gain independence and industrialization to raise the living standards of the poor, Gandhi had argued for civil disobedience and an economy centered around self-sufficiency. Roy also criticized Gandhi for tying in spirituality and faith with the mass movements and the freedom struggle. He insisted that the freedom struggle had to be separated from religious ideologies and matters of faith. "Roy felt that Gandhi's style of political leadership was antithetical to the growth of democratic attitudes and perpetuated the values of subservience, submission and self-abnegation already enshrined in Hinduism."⁵⁴

The Second World War completely changed Roy's politics. For a long time, he had believed that there was no enmity between bourgeois democracy and fascism. According to him they were both

52. Dipti Kumar Roy, 30.

53. Dipti Kumar Roy, 36.

54. John Patrick Haithcox, 198.

expressions of capitalism. Why then had nations which were based on different manifestations of capitalism gone to war? He began to rethink the war against fascism and against the still larger system of capitalism. He concluded that fascism was the last defense of the capitalist system which emerged only when bourgeois democracies and imperialism could no longer provide for it. Thus, the defeat of fascism would hasten socialist revolution. He decided to support the British government whole-heartedly in its fight against Germany. The Congress party, however, viewed the war as one imposed on India. The leaders of the Congress contended that the British Government had made India party to the war without consulting them. On the 7th of July 1940, the Congress Working Committee demanded a guarantee of independence and formation of a provisional National Government as a prerequisite for cooperation in the war effort. At a meeting of the Central Executive of the LRC held soon after, Roy stated, "Congress membership has become incompatible with anti-fascist conviction."⁵⁵ He decided to leave the Congress form the Radical Democratic Party.

Radical Democratic Party

The Radical Democratic Party (RDP), was officially formed in Bombay in December 1940. Roy, who had fought the British for all these years, now allied himself with them completely and actively began talks to help with anti-fascist propaganda. D.K. Kumar, a historian wrote, "The change in the international situation led M.N. Roy virtually to postpone the struggle against the British. This postponement, he believed was necessary to safeguard the ultimate aspirations of Indian nationalism."⁵⁶ Roy saw the Anglo-Soviet agreement of 1941 as final proof of the fact that the war against fascism was not simply a quarrel among fascist nations. He believed that Britain and the Labor Party were moving closer to the Soviet Union and away from the fascist powers. He also argued that with the defeat of fascism there

55. Dipti Kumar Roy, 47.

56. Ibid., 67.

would be a change in the world's social order and that Indo-British relations too would be deeply affected by the outcome. These however were not the views of much of the Indian leadership. The Congress Party decided to oppose the war effort. In August 1942, it launched the Quit India Movement, demanding an end to British occupation of India. At this point Roy saw little difference between someone like Subhash Chandra Bose, who was seeking help from the Axis powers to liberate India, and the Congress Party, which initiated the Quit India Movement. "Despite the Anti-Fascist and Anti-Japanese posture of the Congress leaders, their movement, M.N. Roy pointed out, would actually help the fascist powers and encourage them to invade India."⁵⁷

The RDP was formed with a program that was "the same as should have been adopted by the Congress, if the latter could be transformed into the political party of the people."⁵⁸ At the Lucknow session of the RDP in 1945, the party established that its main objective was to strengthen its ranks so that it could play a role in Indian electoral politics. The Lucknow conference adopted a program of 18 fundamental principles as the basis of the Indian Constitution. Roy predicted that soon after the war, elections would be held. He began to reach out to leftist leaders, even those within the Congress Party and invited help from the Labor Party in England. "Roy thought in terms of international cooperation in the context of an international civil war - cooperation of all the anti-fascist socialist democratic forces of the world against the reactionary world camp consisting of capitalists, imperialists and fascists."⁵⁹ From 1943 and 1944 the RDP was occupied with building its base in anticipation of a potential mass movement. In the meantime, the labor organization of the Royists, the Indian Federation of Labor (IFL) grew into a massive labor movement and helped the British keep up production to support war efforts.⁶⁰

57. Ibid., 56-85.

58. John Patrick Haithcox, 296.

59. Dipti Kumar Roy, 112.

60. Ibid., 90-130.

In June 1945, the Viceroy of India, Lord Wavell convened the Shimla Conference to debate and approve the Wavell Plan for self-government. The Viceroy's executive council was to be reconstituted with Indian leaders representing all the different communities and sections of society. It was also agreed that all portfolios except for Defense would be held by Indian members. The RDP was not included in these discussions. Roy was sharply critical of the plan because he felt that the absence of the RDP at the Shimla Conference meant that the poor and the labor classes had been left out. However, since the executive council was only a temporary measure, the RDP decided to continue to focus its efforts towards the elections. Elections to the Provincial Assemblies, the Central Legislative Assembly and the Council of States were held between December 1945 and January 1946. While the Congress campaign was entirely focused on Indian Independence, the RDP produced the "Draft Constitution of Free India" and the "People's Plan of Economic Development" as the basis of its program. The RDP was thoroughly defeated in these elections and this marked the end of Roy's involvement in electoral politics. In March 1947, Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India helped the Congress and the Muslim League reach a settlement on the fate of undivided India and on the 15th of August, India became an independent country.

Radical Humanism

After the electoral defeat of the RDP, Roy spent most of his time developing a new ideology - Radical Humanism. He elaborated on this treatise in a manifesto titled 'New Humanism'. In May 1946, the RDP organized a study camp where Roy introduced the ideas and principles behind Radical Humanism. Many thought these principles to be in stark contrast to Marxism, but Roy claimed that change of ideas and opinions because of experiences was essential within the framework of Marxism. "He therefore, at first presented his new ideas not in direct opposition to Marxism, but as its

development.”⁶¹ Roy’s experiences during the war and the elections in 1945-46 had made him re-assess the communist doctrines. He began to realize that “in the making of history, cultural factors played a more important role than economic forces and that men were moved more by their ideas than by their interests.”⁶² Although he had opposed the Congress with a well written out socio-economic program, the masses did not support him. He argued that the nationalist movement derived its strength from religious outlook, medieval dogmas and hero-worship. Fascism in Germany and Italy, too, could be explained not by economic factors but by the lack of democratic traditions in their culture and the presence of high nationalistic and militaristic spirit. He wrote in Thesis 6: “Cultural patterns and ethical values are not mere ideological superstructures of established economic relations.” His new ideology led him to recognize the importance of ideas, and since people develop ideas, he had to recognize the importance of individuals rather than classes.⁶³

Roy became highly disillusioned with the post-war foreign policy of the Soviet Union and the bureaucratization of government machinery. With the end of the war against fascism, Roy believed that the right-wing bourgeoisie in Europe had suffered a terrible setback and that establishment of communism would no longer require a “violent insurrectionary method.”⁶⁴ He claimed that the Soviet Union had accepted the situation, and that it would try and ally itself with the British Labor Party, to form a united left front in Europe. However, he was proven wrong. With the development of a Cold war, the Soviet Union became increasingly hostile towards Great Britain, which allied itself more firmly with the US. He concluded that foreign policy in the U.S.S.R. was becoming increasingly driven by considerations of national power, and decreasingly by socialist ideals. About the economy, he argued that “Private Capitalism had been replaced by State Capitalism”⁶⁵ and that state ownership and nationalized economies

61. Ibid., 160.

62. Ibid., 162.

63. Ibid., 150-153.

64. Ibid., 154.

65. Ibid., 159.

had not led to an equitable distribution of resources or higher standards of social welfare. Roy advocated the system of an organized democracy where power would remain with the people's committees without any delegation. He wanted the RDP to become an organization of "spiritually free individuals"⁶⁶ who would work for public good and declared that the party must give up all attempts to come to power and dedicate itself to educating people. The party ultimately adopted these ideas at its Annual Conference in December 1946 in Bombay.

In August 1946, Roy founded the Indian Renaissance Institute to teach the ideals of Radical Humanism. According to him the purpose of the humanist philosophy was not purely academic. It was meant to bring about revolution to change the social order. Since the RDP had given up electoral politics, he also felt that "the old style of activities was no longer appropriate for the party after it had accepted the philosophy of Radical Humanism."⁶⁷ Therefore, the party was dissolved at its fourth all-India conference in Calcutta in December 1948. Roy spent the remainder of his life furthering his philosophy of New Humanism. He died on 25th January 1954.

66. Ibid., 164.

67. Ibid., 169.

Nationalism, Democracy and Freedom

In 1942, the Radical Democratic Party (RDP) published a book comprised of M.N. Roy's articles relating to the Indian freedom movement, India's role in World War II, and Britain's policies on India titled *Nationalism, Democracy and Freedom*. In a series of articles, which were written over a year, Roy explicated his views on the formation of a National Government and the need for democratization. He maintained that although the cause of India's freedom was very dear to him, it was necessary to support the Allied powers in the war against fascism. Through the course of his writings, he was also extremely critical of the view of handing over power to a National Government formed by the Indian National Congress.

In an article titled "An appeal to the friends of India in Britain," Roy vehemently argued against the transfer of power to a National Government comprised of congressmen. He maintained that if the Congress party were to head the National Government, not only would India be defenseless against a Japanese invasion from the east, but the war against fascism would also be weakened. Leaders of the Congress party had consistently argued that India had been forcefully drawn into the World War due to British interests. They maintained that although the Congress Party was deeply critical of fascism, India had the right to choose its role in the war. Furthermore, they thought that the threat of a potential Japanese invasion from the east existed because of British administration in India. In other words, they believed that the Japanese would not invade a free India since their feud was with the British Empire and not with the Indian people. To strengthen his argument, Roy quoted from Jawaharlal Nehru's speech, delivered on 21 February 1942: "The responsibility may come to us any day and any moment, when it will be too late to raise an army for effective defense. If the war has proved anything, it has proved that ineffective resistance is the greatest folly. Spending money on ineffective defense is a waste of money. From the practical point of view, what we could do, is that we must not surrender. It is no question of

stopping an invading army. Certainly, we are not going to be the tools of the British.”⁶⁸ According to Roy, the leaders of the Congress party were thinking only in nationalistic terms and were disregarding the larger goal of a war against fascism. He argued that it was necessary for India to be industrialized and militarized to face a possible fascist invasion from the east. By asking people to not organize resistance, the Congress party was not helping the cause of Indian freedom. After all, the issue of independence would hardly have been resolved if India passed from being an English to a Japanese colony. About the Congress party leaders, he wrote, “Narrow-minded nationalism and spitefulness, born of impotence and frustration are driving them towards the betrayal of the ideals they are believed to cherish.”⁶⁹ Although Roy supported a national government, he did not want it to be led by the Congress party. For him it no longer represented the interests of the Indian masses. He advocated for the formation of a war cabinet composed of men chosen based on individual merit. This body would work towards concentrating all resources for winning the war. He claimed that the defeat of fascism was a concern for the welfare of all mankind, which included India. India, too, therefore had to play its role in the war, and a national government free from party control would be able to take the necessary decisions in that direction.

Roy actively campaigned for a greater role for the RDP in decision making. In another article written on April 5, 1942 Roy said, “The Radical Democratic Party alone has, from the very beginning of this crisis, acted with a keen sense of responsibility, not only towards India but also towards the democratic and progressive forces throughout the world. It alone grasped the nature of the problem of Indian defense. It has labored indefatigably, in the face of endless difficulties, much of which came from the authorities to help, at least the progressive section of the Indian people realize the vital issues involved in the war, and to quicken self-confidence and spirit of resistance.”⁷⁰ He argued, therefore, that any National Government without the participation of the Radical Democratic Party would not be truly

68. M. N. Roy, *Nationalism, Democracy & Freedom*, 5.

69. Ibid., 6.

70. Ibid., 25.

democratic since there would be no representation of the “toiling masses” of India who did not have any active or intelligent political, religious or communal affiliations.

On the question of a Japanese invasion, Roy believed that the views of the Congress leaders were overly idealistic. Many Congress leaders thought, at the time, that the fascists would not invade India with a National Government at the head of the country, and even if they did, peace could be achieved with the aggressors. Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, a prominent Congress leader who went on to become Governor General of India said, “What does it matter who wins or fails. If unfortunately, we fail, and we are left to ourselves to make peace with the aggressor, even then it is not impossible to achieve peace on honorable terms.”⁷¹ According to Roy the belief that the Japanese would not invade India if it were free was based on superficial illusions about the solidarity of Asian races and did not consider the history of Japanese expansionism in Asia. Ridiculing this argument of the Congress leaders he wrote, “So, let Britain clear out, or at least hand over her Indian business to a managing agency, with the full power of attorney and Japan will be appeased.”⁷² Roy thought this belief to be based on misconceptions and to his mind there was no reason to expect the Japanese to treat India any differently than the British did. Writing about Rajagopalachari’s view of making peace with the Japanese, he sarcastically noted, “He evidently believes that Japan can be appeased; that the Axis Powers are more reasonable, sympathetic to the political aspirations of India than British Imperialism. Korea, Manchukuo, the Nanking Government of China and recently Indo-China and Thailand have achieved peace with the Japanese invader on ‘honorable’ terms!”⁷³ He argued that an invader would only execute a military campaign to conquer and so favorable terms could not be expected.

Roy was also extremely critical of the Congress party’s opposition to the Defense of India Act, 1915. This act was an Emergency Law enacted by the Governor General of India to curtail nationalist

71. Ibid., 10.

72. Ibid., 11.

73. Ibid., 10.

activities during war. Framed during the First World War, it was used again during the Second World War to curb fascist propaganda and activities against the war efforts. Leaders of the Congress party including Gandhi had criticized the British Government for making arrests under this act. Roy feared that if the Congress were to head the national government, the Defense of India Act would be repealed. This would only further strengthen the pro-fascist voices, thus making invasion of the country even easier. He wrote, “The fact there is a widespread fascist sympathy and desire for a victory of the Axis powers in this country cannot be disputed because they are hardly concealed. The National Government would ignore them. Thus, it would begin the defense of the country by removing all watch on the most vulnerable and decisive home front.”⁷⁴

During the war, the British Government made several attempts to secure Indian cooperation for the war efforts. In 1942, the Cripps Mission led by war cabinet member Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India. Cripps had many rounds of negotiations with Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders. He also interacted with Muhammad Ali Jinnah from the Muslim League who went on to become the first Governor-General of Pakistan. In return for cooperation and support with fighting the war, the Cripps Mission promised self-government and dominion status. However, both the major parties rejected these proposals. In an article written on April 12, 1942 Roy criticized the Congress party’s refusal to accept the plan presented by the Cripps Mission. According to the plan, while the functioning of the Government of India was to be transferred to the Indians, the direction of the defense of India was reserved for the War Cabinet in England. However, the organization and finances of the military were also to be transferred to the Government of India. The Congress party, unwilling to compromise also wanted the Government of India to have the authority to make peace with an invader. Criticizing this demand, Roy wrote, “The British proposals may not satisfy them. But do they expect the Japanese to give India more power and more freedom? They could not possibly take up their reckless attitude except with that expectation. The

74. Ibid., 15.

more charitable opinion will be that they are risking the future of the nation for their own prestige.”⁷⁵ Roy argued that in their futile and isolated nationalism, the leaders of the Congress party failed to see the danger of a Japanese invasion. Furthermore, he said that, even in case of defense, the Government of India was given enough room to make decisions. It was within its power to raise militias and paramilitary forces and to industrialize the country for defense equipment manufacturing. He maintained that if the Government of India wanted to help the British war efforts in keeping with the defense policy laid down by the War Cabinet in England, it would find sufficient autonomy for making administrative decisions. Moreover, in Roy’s opinion, fighting fascism alongside the British was an absolute necessity for India. According to him national prejudices could not be allowed to impede the fight against fascism. In relation to the demand for the authority to make peace with the invader, Roy wrote, “From our point of view, from the point of view of democratic freedom and progress of the Indian people, we must say that even to suggest the idea of making peace with any of the Axis Powers is simply atrocious. Anyone who can contemplate that idea, does not realize the gravity of the situation, and therefore he may have his own idea of patriotism or prestige but cannot have any share in guiding the destinies of the country in these crucial days.”⁷⁶

At the 1942 session of the Chamber of Princes, a forum for interaction between the rulers of Indian princely states and the British Government, the Viceroy of India suggested the formation of a National War Front. The purpose of the national front would be to maintain public morale and inspire the masses to resist fascism. Roy welcomed the formation of a National War Front and argued for the formation of people’s defense committees throughout the country. He added that these committees would be tasked with combatting fascist sympathizers in the country and educating people about how a successful invasion of India by the fascist powers would prejudice the cause of freedom. Although Roy

75. Ibid., 30.

76. Ibid., 35.

sided with the British administration on many issues, he did not receive much recognition from the British authorities. This was primarily because Roy's ideas were directly opposed to those of India's biggest mass leader, Mahatma Gandhi. However, due to British recruitment efforts and big contributions from the Indian princely states, by the end of the war in August 1945 the Indian Army became the largest volunteer army in the world with over 2.5 million soldiers.

On April 26, 1942 Roy came out with an article in which he addressed the issue of organizing a National War Front. He criticized the belief that the cooperation of the Congress and the Muslim League was important for the defense of India. He advocated the Marxist view of going straight to the masses and instilling in them a sense of ownership. He argued that ninety percent of the Indian population lived in seven hundred thousand villages and if they were provided with a sense of ownership and told that the land they tilled was theirs to cultivate and protect, mass resistance could be organized in India. He wrote, "India should not be identified with the nationalist and communalist organizations, which are composed of vocal minorities, and dominate the situation by their ability to make noise. It is quite possible to go straight to the masses and mobilize them for the defense of the country." This way India would have seven hundred thousand points of resistance across the country and the line of defense would be "as thick as the whole country."⁷⁷ Roy also argued that the British Government's approach to the war was wrong since it saw the war as a conflict between nations as opposed one between ideologies. According to Roy, countries could not be viewed as monoliths and each nation was split into the two opposing camps, making the global situation like an international civil war. These two camps comprised of people from different countries who were allied internationally. Describing the nature of the war, Roy wrote, "The present war is a war between two international alliances of the two antagonistic forces, which are in operation inside every country. Any attempt to rally India as a whole on the side of the non-

77. Ibid., 47.

aggressor powers was unrealistic and therefore bound to fail.”⁷⁸ What was required was to unite the anti-fascist forces under a National War Front.

The biggest opposition to Indian support towards the war effort came from the Congress party. From 29 April to 1 May 1942, the All India Congress Committee assembled in Allahabad to discuss the ‘Quit India’ resolution of the Congress working committee. The resolution stated: “India’s participation in the war is a purely British act imposed upon the Indian people without the consent of their representatives. While India has no quarrel with the people of any country, she has repeatedly declared her antipathy to Nazism and fascism as to imperialism. If India were free, she would have determined her own policy and might have kept out of the war.”⁷⁹ In an article written on May 10, 1942 Roy emphatically opposed this resolution. He argued that the fact that India had no quarrel with any country was not relevant since the war was between ideals as opposed to being between countries. It was against a socio-political system based on exploitation which having overrun the democratic institutions in the fascist countries threatened the entire world. Roy argued that the belief that nations could remain aloof from the war by remaining neutral was flawed. He wrote, “This is the opinion of all orthodox full-blooded nationalists who identify nationalism with the aspirations of certain sections of the people. Fascism is the expression of antiquated nationalism.”⁸⁰ Drawing similarities between the Indian nationalists and fascists, Roy argued that it could not be expected of the nationalists to be a part of the anti-fascist camp. The nationalists in India eagerly waited for a “strong man to appear on the scene to take Mother India by the throat and treat her children like dumb-driven cattle.”⁸¹ This in Roy’s opinion had nothing in common with democratic freedom.

78. Ibid., 50.

79. Ibid., 54.

80. Ibid., 55.

81. Ibid., 55.

Roy also opposed the idea of non-violent resistance prescribed by the Congress. The 'Quit India' resolution called for the non-violent non-cooperation as the only form of resistance in case of an invasion. Roy argued that although such measures might have been effective against civilian governments, non-violence could not be the answer for an invading army. He saw this entire approach as a refusal to defend the country till the Congress could decide whether India should partake in the war or not. He wrote, "suppose that the demand of the Congress leaders was conceded; what would then happen? If we are to believe that the Congress policy is determined by the principle of non-violence, the only resistance even then will be non-violent non-co-operation, that is to say, capitulation for all practical purposes, or after a token resistance by an improvised army, peace will be concluded with the invader. In view of the expressed desire to prefer India's staying out of the war, this inference is irresistible."⁸² Towards the end of his article Roy concluded that if freedom was granted and the Congress party were to head the Government, the policy of non-violent resistance would make fascist invasion imminent.

As the war raged on, the idea of forming a National Government became came to be linked with the defense of India against an invasion. Roy claimed that there was no reason to believe that defense of the country would be better handled by a National Government led by the Congress. In the 'Quit India' resolution the Congress had made clear their policy of non-violent resistance and so in the event of an invasion the National Government would prefer to avoid war and come to terms with the Japanese. Roy claimed that under those circumstances the terms would be dictated by the Japanese, and they would demand a price for not invading India. In this situation, Roy wrote, "the burden would be quietly passed on to the Indian democracy who would pay the piper for playing a tune called national government. A situation would be created in which the national government would have to introduce all sorts of repressive measures for suppressing the democracy."⁸³ He also argued that a National Government

82. Ibid., 58.

83. Ibid., 73.

formed by the Congress party would not be truly democratic. He wrote, "Today nationalist isolation runs counter to democracy, which can be defended internationally, by an international effort. A really democratic government can no longer be nationalistic; conversely, a nationalistic government cannot be instrumental in mobilizing the popular energy of any particular country on the side of the international democratic front."⁸⁴ The primary justifications for the policy of non-cooperation were that India had been dragged into the war without her consent and that if Britain won, freedom would become harder to obtain. According to Roy the only conclusion which could be drawn from these, was that the nationalists preferred a fascist victory thus putting themselves in the anti-democratic camp. Therefore, freedom from British rule would not mean freedom for the common man or a democratic government for the people.

During this period, differences between the Congress and the Muslim League continued to grow over the question of representation of Muslims and the Two-Nation theory which became the ideological basis for the partition of India and the formation of Pakistan. It presupposed that the unifying factor for the Muslims in South Asia was their religion and not their ethnicity, region or language. In an article written on June 7, 1942 Roy elaborated on the rift between the two major organizations and argued that since the legitimacy of the Muslim League could not be ignored, the Congress could not be thought of as the only national organization representing all of India. He argued that since the Muslim League represented a significant section of the minority a truly democratic government would have to take the form of a coalition between the Congress and the Muslim League. This according to Roy was not possible since a big part of the Hindu population represented by the Congress party would dissent. Elaborating on the differences between the two organizations, Roy wrote, "The two major organizations are irreconcilable. Between them, they have liquidated nationalism, if that is to be understood as the common urge of a united people for political freedom. What is regarded as national freedom by the Congress is dreaded by the Muslim League as Hindu majority domination. The right of self-

84. Ibid., 69.

determination demanded by the Muslim League on the other hand is denounced by the Congress as dangerous for the Indian nation.”⁸⁵ Roy considered both the Congress and the Muslim League to be sectarian organizations which represented different nations and different sections of society. Since the two could never come together, neither of them could claim to represent the Indian democracy. Instead of taking India towards democracy, the two organizations, according to Roy, had become impediments in the road to democracy.

Roy evaluated the economic consequences of the formation of a National Government in an article dated September 13, 1942. He wrote that the industrialized sections of society continued to exploit the country. Even though the production of food had not fallen, prices had sky-rocketed during the war. He accused traders and grain dealers of hoarding grains to artificially drive prices up. According to Roy it was these traders and businessmen who financed all the principal parties. He wrote, “The workers are actually earning less. On the other hand, the peasants have to pay much more for the manufactured things that they buy but do not get proportionately more for the food grains although the price of the latter has gone up so much. Traders make huge profits, and they constitute the social basis of the principal parties.”⁸⁶ Roy argued that war inflation was leading to the advancement of the rich and the exploitation of the poor. He believed that a National Government formed by the principal parties would be a government of the industrialists and that their relationship with the poor and marginalized sections of society would be no different than that of the British. Such a government would work only for the elite and a privileged minority while the interests of the bulk of the society would be ignored.

In the articles that were compiled to put together *Nationalism, Democracy and Freedom*, M.N. Roy appears to be committed to his stance against fascism. His arguments relating to India’s role in World War II drew strongly from his views against isolated nationalism and from his belief that the anti-

85. Ibid., 80.

86. Ibid., 94.

fascist forces of the world had to stand united. Throughout the series of articles, Roy argued that since India could not isolate itself from the global situation, thinking exclusively in a nationalistic vacuum was inane. In an article written on March 22, 1942 Roy said, “In these fateful days, the cause of India’s political progress and general welfare can be promoted only by far sighted patriots, who realize that the national interests of India cannot be separated from the rest of the world, and that therefore the future of India is conditional upon the defeat of the forces of evil bent upon the destruction.”⁸⁷ This position pitted him directly against the Indian National Congress under Mahatma Gandhi’s leadership. The Congress had repeatedly argued that India would not partake in the Second World War as an instrument of British imperialism and that India’s stance, vis-à-vis the global situation, would be determined by a national government. The Congress Party had also advocated non-violence to resist a potential Japanese invasion. Congress Party leaders had repeatedly stated their views – that the fascist powers had no animosity with the Indian people. Furthermore, in the event of an unlikely invasion, negotiation with the Japanese would prove far easier than with the British. Roy’s views were in complete opposition to these ideas. He believed that the Japanese would seize the opportunity to invade India regardless of who was in power, and that they would be no easier to deal with than the British. He was apprehensive of substituting one master for another. Furthermore, in his opinion, declaring non-violence as a national policy was tantamount to issuing an open invitation to any belligerent power to invade India. Roy also argued that since there were sections of the minorities represented by the Muslim League and not by the Congress, any National Government formed by the Congress party would not be truly democratic. For all the reasons given above, one can see that Roy was strongly opposed to the Congress party’s views. This proved to be a big mistake politically the result of which was seen in the defeat of the RDP in the 1946 provincial elections. Ironically the British administration came to attach much lesser importance to Roy as a public figure even though unlike the Congress party, he campaigned extensively in support of their

87. Ibid., 22.

war efforts. This was because he still maintained a commitment to class politics which the British feared as antithetical to their post-colonial interests and because his popularity among the masses was much lesser than that of the Congress party and Muslim League leaders. The biggest confirmation of this came when the Cripps Mission, sent by Prime Minister Winston Churchill to secure Indian cooperation for the British war effort did not hold consultations with the RDP leadership. Opposition of Gandhi and the Congress Party became one of the major reasons for Roy's diminished status as a mass leader and his eventual withdrawal from political activity. Even though Roy was aware of that fact that opposing Gandhi was equivalent to political suicide, he remained committed to his ideals and campaigned vigorously against the Congress Party for not taking a strong stance against fascism. So great was his commitment to the war against fascism that he unconditionally supported the British government's war efforts after having opposed them for nearly three decades.

The Communist International

Following the dissolution of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1943, Roy wrote a detailed analysis of its contributions towards international communism, and the reasons for its dissolution. The work, titled *The Communist International* was published by the Radical Democratic Party. In it, Roy analyzed the immediate global political situation that led to the dissolution of the Comintern. However, he argued that the reasons for its dissolution stretched far back into its past. He explored the relationship between the Soviet government and the Comintern and argued that the Comintern policies were primarily based on the interests of the Soviet Union, which were not always the same as those of the international communist movement.

In his work, Roy analyzed the history of the international communist movement in detail and elaborated on the policies of the Comintern in relation to different events over time. The work starts with a summary of Marx's views and the First International. According to Roy, Marx believed that even though capitalism developed within national boundaries it was protected by a universal system. The laws of capitalism were identical globally and industrial workers were exploited in much the same way in every country. Marx had argued that since the system was universal, the struggle to liberate the working classes had to be initiated simultaneously across the globe. "Even the immediate demands of the industrial workers, with regards to wages and conditions of labor could not be enforced successfully in one country. If wages remained low in one country and the workers there labored under worse conditions, the capitalists in another country would not redress the grievances of their workers in that respect that greater cost of production would make them unable to compete in the world market."⁸⁸ Nationalism only served to further exploit industrial workers by not allowing them to consolidate internationally. Marx had called on the workers of the world to unite and declare that they had no country. To facilitate this consolidation of industrial workers throughout the world, the International Association of Workers or the First

88. M.N. Roy, *The Communist International*, 18.

International was founded. Karl Marx was convinced that capitalism, a stage of economic development, was bound to disappear. Political power however could be a deterrent or a catalyst in this process and so the capture of political power by the working class was essential.

In 1871, an insurrection of French workers established the Paris Commune, a revolutionary government that ruled Paris for a few months. However, unlike the participants of the French Revolution who faced the disorganized royal armies of France, the insurgents in 1871 faced strong retaliation. The French Government was much more stable both economically and militarily than the Bourbon dynasty had been at the time of French Revolution. Roy wrote of this experience, “The First International was disrupted by the consequences of the fall of the Paris Commune.”⁸⁹ The Second International, a confederacy of socialist parties and labor unions was formed in 1889. It stood for parliamentary democracy, a belief which according to Roy, was subsequently corrected by history when workers’ parties failed to influence politics for their own benefit. He argued that most parliamentary democracies did not lean towards socialism and were influenced by fascist elements from time to time. This was also the reason that many socialists advocated violent overthrow of capitalist regimes to establish proletarian dictatorships. The Third International or the Communist International came into being immediately after the Russian Revolution. Since communists across the world were enormously influenced by the success of the revolution in Russia, the belief was that revolution had to take the same form everywhere. “The scenes of Leningrad and Moscow in 1917 had to be reenacted to the minutest detail.”⁹⁰

In *The Communist International*, Roy analyzed the Russian Revolution (also known as the October Revolution) at great length. He discussed the situation at the time to establish that it was a host of factors both within Russia and globally, which led to its success. He described it as a “fluke of history.”⁹¹ According to the Marxist scheme, socialism was to be realized first in the most advanced countries.

89. Ibid., 23.

90. Ibid., 25.

91. Ibid., 27.

However, the conditions in pre-revolution Russia were quite different. Unlike most other European countries Russia had not seen a great deal of industrialization and a feudal system had prevailed almost until the fall of the monarchy in 1917. Roy argued that the Russian revolution owed its success to the economic backwardness, corruption and inefficiency of the state machinery. Furthermore, the successive defeats of the Russian army in the World War I served to completely demoralize the military. Apart from these internal considerations, the fact that most of the powerful countries in Europe were engaged in the First World War during the revolution contributed to its success. This was not the case for subsequent revolutionary attempts in other countries. Roy claimed that “Insurrection succeeded in Russia because it did not have to contend with an organized modern army. That was an accident. Revolutionary outbreaks in other countries, inspired by the Russian experience, did not have the advantage and all failed.”⁹² He argued that since a combination of very specific circumstances led to the success of the Russian revolution, it could not necessarily be replicated throughout the world. He wrote, “The Communist International disregarded this lesson of history. It proposed to organize revolutions in all the other countries of the world after the model of the Russian Revolution. The impracticability of that plan became evident very soon.”⁹³

Roy’s analysis of the Russian Revolution led to his theory of “revolutionary defeatism.” In his thinking, the collapse of a state due to military defeat was a prerequisite for a successful social revolution. At the same time, he recognized that the military defeat of a state did not guarantee the success of a revolution. For instance, in 1918 the German Army suffered defeat and the monarchy collapsed; despite this, the communist revolution in Germany was suppressed. Even though people joined with the Communist Party in substantial numbers, the German Army did not disintegrate completely, and its remnants remained loyal to the ruling classes. The German and the Romanian armies also suppressed

92. Ibid., 30.

93. Ibid., 28.

the revolutions in Finland and Hungary respectively. All these experiences bolstered Roy's claim that each country had to forge its own path toward revolution based on its own unique circumstances and configurations of power. It was not practical to adopt the Russian model in other countries. He summed up, "Towards the end of 1920, it became evident that the history of revolution of our time was not to be written as expected upon the foundation of the Communist International a year ago."⁹⁴

Learning from history, the Soviet Government moved to change its policy regarding the role of the Comintern. Stalin's move toward the idea of "socialism in one country," foreshadowed a change in the Soviet Union's and hence the Comintern's stance toward world revolution. In Roy's words, "Stalin heralded the dissolution of the Communist International when he declared that communism was not a commodity for export."⁹⁵ The Soviet leadership decided that the October Revolution would influence the world in due course of time as the success of the Soviet state became increasingly evident. Thus, although the Comintern continued to exist, its Soviet leaders were preoccupied with building successful socialism in the Soviet Union rather than putting their efforts into fomenting revolution around the globe. Between 1925 and 1929, the Comintern was subject to many purges in which it was deprived of its most far-sighted and intellectual thinkers. These leaders who also led the October Revolution had spent considerable parts of their lives abroad and hence were aware of the global situation. Roy argued that these men, such as Grigory Zinoviev⁹⁶, Lev Kamenev⁹⁷ and Trotsky⁹⁸, all thought in terms of world revolution. Once it

94. Ibid., 33.

95. Ibid., 36.

96. Grigory Zinoviev (1883-1936) was a member of the Bolshevik party and a central figure in the Communist leadership of the Soviet Union. Zinoviev was a member of the first Politburo of the Soviet Union and later became Chairman of the Communist International. His opposition to Stalin led to his expulsion from the Central Committee of the Communist Party. He was convicted and executed during the Moscow Show Trials of 1936.

97. Lev Kamenev (1883-1936) was Bolshevik revolutionary and member of the first Politburo of the Soviet Union. He served as Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union from 1923 to 1926. His opposition to Stalin led to his expulsion from the Communist Party and ultimately his execution in 1936.

98. Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) was a Soviet Communist leader and member of the Bolshevik Party. He served as the People's Commissar of Military and Naval Affairs (1918-1925) and played an instrumental role in the victory of

became clear that the revolutionary wave in Europe had subsided, they were dispensed with. Furthermore, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, being engrossed in its post-revolution constructive program, could not spare any capable leaders for the Comintern. Most of the new leaders were inadequately informed about other countries. While the older revolutionaries had always considered Russian problems in the larger context of the global situation, the new leaders did quite the opposite.

In his writings, Roy was also very critical of the position the Comintern adopted toward the rise of fascism in Europe, and particularly in Germany. He believed that the Soviet leaders of the Comintern, preoccupied with the post-revolutionary construction of the Soviet state, grossly underestimated the rise of Fascism in Europe. He wrote, “The Communist International ridiculed those who sounded the alarm with the complacent slogan: ‘Germany is not Italy.’”⁹⁹ Roy argued that the Comintern leaders believed that once the fascists were successful in removing the Weimar Republic and “freed the masses from the democratic illusion”, the communists would bring about a revolution and take control of the government. In keeping with this policy, the Communist Party of Germany made a united front with the fascists as against the Social-Democrats. In this case, the Communists had helped the fascists come to power in Germany with the hope of leading a social revolution at a later point.

In *The Communist International* Roy launched a scathing attack on the attitude of sycophancy and unconditional acceptance of Soviet Communist thought. According to him this was especially prevalent in communist circles in India. This was further compounded with the fact that the Comintern resolutions regarding India at the time were based on inadequate information about the conditions in colonial countries. The Sixth World Congress (1928) had passed a resolution directing the Communist

the Red Army during the Russian Civil War. After a failed power struggle against Joseph Stalin, Trotsky was expelled from the Communist Party and sent into exile. He was assassinated in 1940.

99. M.N. Roy, *The Communist International*, 47.

Party of India (CPI) to break ties with the Congress and organize a revolution under the leadership of the proletariat. Acting on the advice of the Comintern, the CPI denounced the Congress party as an organ of counter-revolution. It also denounced the idea of a Constituent Assembly as counter-revolutionary. Roy viewed this as a mistaken and slavish adherence to Moscow's erroneous leadership. He wrote, "Because how could Communists demand a constituent assembly after the Russians had disbanded one in Leningrad twenty years ago! Such was the intellectual degeneration caused by the desire to imitate the Russians in every single detail."¹⁰⁰ Roy was arguing, at the time for a multi-class movement to take on the colonial authorities. In 1935, the Seventh World Congress reversed its policy and recommended a National Front with the national bourgeoisie – a stand it had so far emphatically opposed. Here again, the CPI took its position based on ill-informed direction from Moscow, rather than an analysis of its own conditions in India.

In the meanwhile, the political situation in Europe was changing rapidly. As a result, Soviet geopolitical strategy, and consequently global communist positions changed with an equally rapid pace. Initially, to counter the rise of fascism, the Soviet Union tried to form an anti-fascist alliance. However, the breakdown of the negotiations, coupled with the Munich Pact - signed in September 1938 between the Germans, the French, the English and the Italians to recognize Nazi Germany's annexation of Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, worried the Soviet Union. It was in this critical situation that the Soviet Union was forced to forego its anti-fascist stance and enter into a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. The non-aggression pact with Germany was not based on common objectives or long-term strategy, but simply to check the Nazi advance towards the east. "It was a matter of simple common sense that the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact was not meant to initiate the policy of fraternization between communism and fascism throughout the world. As a matter of fact, the pact not only warded off the Nazi

100. Ibid., 49.

attack on the Soviet Union but effectively checked Nazi aggression towards the East.”¹⁰¹ However, according to Roy the communist parties outside the Soviet Union in their mindless imitation of their Russian counterparts interpreted this act as an alliance of communism and fascism against imperialism. Denouncing these actions, he, wrote, “Having for nearly twenty years stood at the forefront of the struggle against the danger of rising fascism, suddenly the communists became fanatical advocates of peace with Hitler.”¹⁰² By this time it became clear to Roy that all other communist parties across the globe were mere puppets. He also claimed that the Russians had become too engrossed in themselves, and this led to one-sided theoretical solutions that did not factor in the local dynamics in different countries. He argued that after the revolution, the Russians started to see many Marxist principles as divine truths, which were not open to debate; they were thus “living in a world of their own.”¹⁰³ Once leaders came to power they become too busy with matters of practicality to expound theories. Therefore, the communists in other countries were in better positions to test the theories of Marxism and add to them. It was for them to take Marxism forward and the Russians to accept these new ideas and not the other way around.

The position of communist parties around the world changed once again with the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Upon the invasion, the Soviet Union joined the Allied powers in their fight against the Axis powers. This policy of a united front both in terms of the Soviet Union allying with capitalist nations and the working classes working with the bourgeoisie was a significant deviation from the previously stated policies of the Comintern which were strictly focused against bourgeoisie led governments. “By sponsoring the new movement, the Communist International substituted dictatorship of the proletariat by a democratic alliance.”¹⁰⁴ With changes in the diplomatic interests of the Soviet

101. Ibid., 52.

102. Ibid., 53.

103. Ibid., 55.

104. Ibid., 11.

Union post 1938, the existence of the Comintern became an inherent contradiction. Though it can be argued that the Comintern was organizationally separate from the Soviet Government, Roy maintained that “the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was a member of the Communist International and was therefore committed by all its pronouncements and responsible for all its actions.”¹⁰⁵ The Communist Party of the Soviet Union was also the most dominant force in the Comintern. Since the Comintern had previously described the war as an “imperialist war”, the Soviet Government’s new diplomatic arrangement stood in stark contrast with the ethos of the Comintern. Roy noted, “As long as the Communist Party of the Soviet Union remained a member of the Communist International, it could not be immune from its theoretical weaknesses and obsolete traditions.”¹⁰⁶ The existence of these contradictions led the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943. Roy reasoned that since intellectual subservience toward the Russians was the norm in the Comintern, the communist parties in other countries did not object to the dissolution of the Comintern once it was proposed by the Russians.

In the last chapter of his book, Roy focused on the dissolution of the Communist International. He argued that its dissolution did not mean abandonment of the ideal of communism. Since communism is a historical necessity, the ideal could not in fact disappear. The spirit of internationalism would always remain and that the dissolution of the Comintern was not an exoneration of nationalism. He wrote, “Communist Internationalism is not an antithesis of nationalism. The Communist International, from its very beginning, stood for national freedom of all peoples. But Marxists do not regard any state of social or political organization as final.”¹⁰⁷ He drew a distinction between the spirit of internationalism and a plan of action on an international scale. The Comintern was a kind of action carried out on an international scale and since the impossibility of its success was proven by time it was since abandoned. According to Roy, the dissolution of the Comintern was the result of the realization

105. Ibid., 13.

106. Ibid., 62.

107. Ibid., 64.

that internationalism “must be practiced on a higher plane, embracing the entire mankind.”¹⁰⁸ Roy argued that changed world conditions called for a change in the method of attaining the ideal of communism which, for him, remained the final goal.

‘*The Communist International*’ captured Roy’s political predicament circa 1943. No longer a member of either the Comintern or the CPI, he was very vocal in his criticism of the activities of the Comintern after his expulsion in 1929. He argued that although the Comintern was once an effective organization leading international Communism, it was rendered obsolete with the rise of fascism in Europe. He wrote, “There was a new polarization of world forces. The working class was no longer alone in the fight which it had undertaken more than a century ago” and therefore the need for an organization to coordinate the efforts of the working classes no longer existed. In his criticism of the Comintern’s policies on India, Roy drew from his ‘Theory of Decolonization’. While describing the Comintern’s India policy he said, “For India the Communist International was an unmitigated evil. Its Indian section had done more harm to the cause of the Indian revolution than any other single factor. Composed of a handful of half-baked youngsters, it could not do so if the authority of the Communist International and of the Soviet government standing behind it, did not enable them to make an appeal to the romanticism of the middle-class youth.”¹⁰⁹ He wrote, “The disappearance of the Communist International will strengthen the position of a realistic revolutionary leadership in India.”¹¹⁰ He was also extremely critical of the way in which the CPI simply followed all the instructions from their counterparts in Russia without any analysis of the Indian situation. He argued that the CPI were mere imitators of Russian policy and that this mindless imitation had grown to such extents that the CPI had denounced the idea of a constituent assembly only because the Bolsheviks had dissolved the Leningrad constituent assembly in

108. Ibid., 65.

109. Ibid., 50.

110. Ibid., 50.

1918. In 1943, the RDP was preparing for elections in India, and Roy wanted to project the party as the true representative of leftist ideologies. He wanted the leadership of the RDP to be the leaders of the revolutionary movement in India. In this way, the '*Communist International*' was a product of both his ideologies and his political ambitions. By criticizing the CPI's policies and trying to prove its political irrelevance, Roy attempted to justify both the dissolution of the Comintern and the formation of the RDP. Furthermore, Roy remained committed to the cause of India's freedom, class-struggle and fight against fascism. Since according to Roy, the Comintern contributed to none of these, its dissolution was the logical step forward.

Conclusion

Roy was a curious amalgamation of practicality and idealism. His ideals and beliefs constantly evolved through the course of his life and he continually attempted to make sense of the developments around him whilst propounding theories to explain these changes. His beliefs evolved in concert with the complexities of a changing reality, and whether he found himself in India, U.S., Mexico, Russia, or China, he was always willing and able to create plans for change based on the situation on ground. For example, even though in the early part of the 1920's he was in favor of an Indian Communist Party that was independent of the Congress, later he came to see the Congress as a national movement that communists needed to join. Finally, he left the Congress party after a difference of opinion over supporting the British war effort. His commitment to his beliefs was unflinching. After being introduced to the theory of Communism, the purview of his ideological beliefs expanded considerably and his life and core ideals came to encompass much more than the cause of India's freedom. Roy never compromised his core ideals to further his personal ambitions. He remained committed to the cause of Indian freedom. At the same time, he was also convinced that fascism posed a profound threat to democracy.

Roy's commitment to his core beliefs often led to confrontation between him and the preeminent leaders in his vicinity at any given time. During his time in China, as a Comintern representative, he was opposed by Mao, and later, he fell out of favor with Stalin, and left the Soviet Union in 1929. Upon his return to India, he eventually came to oppose the policies of the Congress party, and Gandhi in particular. Despite his intelligence, Roy never rose to the highest echelons of any extensive, developed political hierarchy. He was also not able to build a mass movement based on his program and ideas. However, his thought reflected the intersection of the most complex ideas of the twentieth century. That said, he didn't consider such lofty ideals in a vacuum; he constantly attempted to reconcile these in the

real world. Roy is a largely forgotten thinker today. Unlike Mahatma Gandhi, his ideas were not kept alive in India or the world. He was neither a Trotskyist nor a Stalinist, and lacked a group to continue to promulgate his theories and his contribution. Yet Roy's views on fascism and his understanding of the social classes are hardly irrelevant today. His ideas may prove to have a striking relevance in the decades to come.

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