

The Colonial Question and the Comintern 1919 -1928: Dissertation by Dubravka Stajic, Beograd.

REPORT BY AVGUST LESNIK, LJUBLJANA

At the University in Ljubljana, Dubravka Stajic (Belgrade) took (under the mentorship of Prof. Dr. Marjan Britovsek) her doctor's degree in June 1994, with the thema: „Standpoints of the Third (Communist) International with Regard to the Colonial Question from 1919 to 1928". Short summary on Dissertation theme:

The CI was the first international organization to proclaim the right of the peoples to self-determination without discrimination and precondition. It proclaimed the right of colonial peoples to independence and establishment of socialism in former colonies.

The Comintern introduced a new notion into modern history, that of the „half-colony" (aside with the notion „colony"), by which it meant formally sovereign countries, but actually countries economically and politically dependent from the imperialist powers. This notion corresponded to the situation of the Latin America countries which were an important region of revolutionary activity in the period between the world wars. The colonial question represents a part of the theoretical tradition of Marxism and socialism of the First and Second International. The most severe and theoretically most valuable discussions were those between Zinoviev, Trotsky and Bucharin. The colonial question was not dealt with independently, but within the changes of general strategy. In the first period of Comintern's activity (1924 - 1928) there were frank debates on all questions, including the colonial one.

In the second period of the so-called „bolshevization" (1924 - 1928) Stalin gained victory over the left opposition in the RCP(b) and Comintern and ended the discussion on these issues. The highest degree of dogmatization took place after the Sixth Congress (1928 - 1935) with the policy of „class against class" The communist parties behaved in a sectarian manner and refused cooperation with other patriotic forces, which has done a lot of harm, especially to communists in colonies who worked under the worst conditions. This was a period of arrests and trials on a massive scale against leaders of communist parties in the colonies. The leadership of the Comintern has special responsibility for the wrong strategy and the following defeats. The proclamation of the strategy of cooperation with patriotic and anti-fascist forces through the policy of the People's Front remains for many of contemporary historians more a tactical maneuver aimed at protecting the international position of the Soviet Union, than the renunciation of extreme sectarianism by the Comintern leadership.

In spite of dogmatism and Stalinism, the idea of socialist revolution provoked an independent development of revolutionary thought in communist movement in colonies. A few independent Marxists in Latin American countries, which acted independently from Moscow, proved to understand the real essence of modern colonialism better than bureaucrats from the Comintern apparatus.

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