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this crucial stage has been reached— the point at which Communist tactics must abruptly change from “revolution from above” to “revolution from below”? Though never clearly stated, an analysis of the theses and debates of the Second Congress reveals that this would depend on three factors: the class structure, the stage of development of the nationalist movement, and the relative strength of the bourgeois and proletarian forces within the country in question.

In accordance with the first two considerations, continued support of a bourgeois nationalist movement would be considered inadvisable should bourgeois sub-groups, deemed reactionary, capture its leadership or should the national bourgeoisie, sensing impending victory over the imperialists, begin to panic at the prospect of unleashing class antagonisms. The former situation occurred in China in 1926-1927, when feudal remnants and militarists gained predominant influence over the direction of the nationalist movement. Roy held out the latter prospect for India. In either case, the national movement would cease to be revolutionary and lapse into reformism. To illustrate the third factor, it would obviously be folly to continue to subordinate the interests of the proletariat to those of the bourgeoisie should the former become sufficiently strong to capture the leadership of the movement for itself.

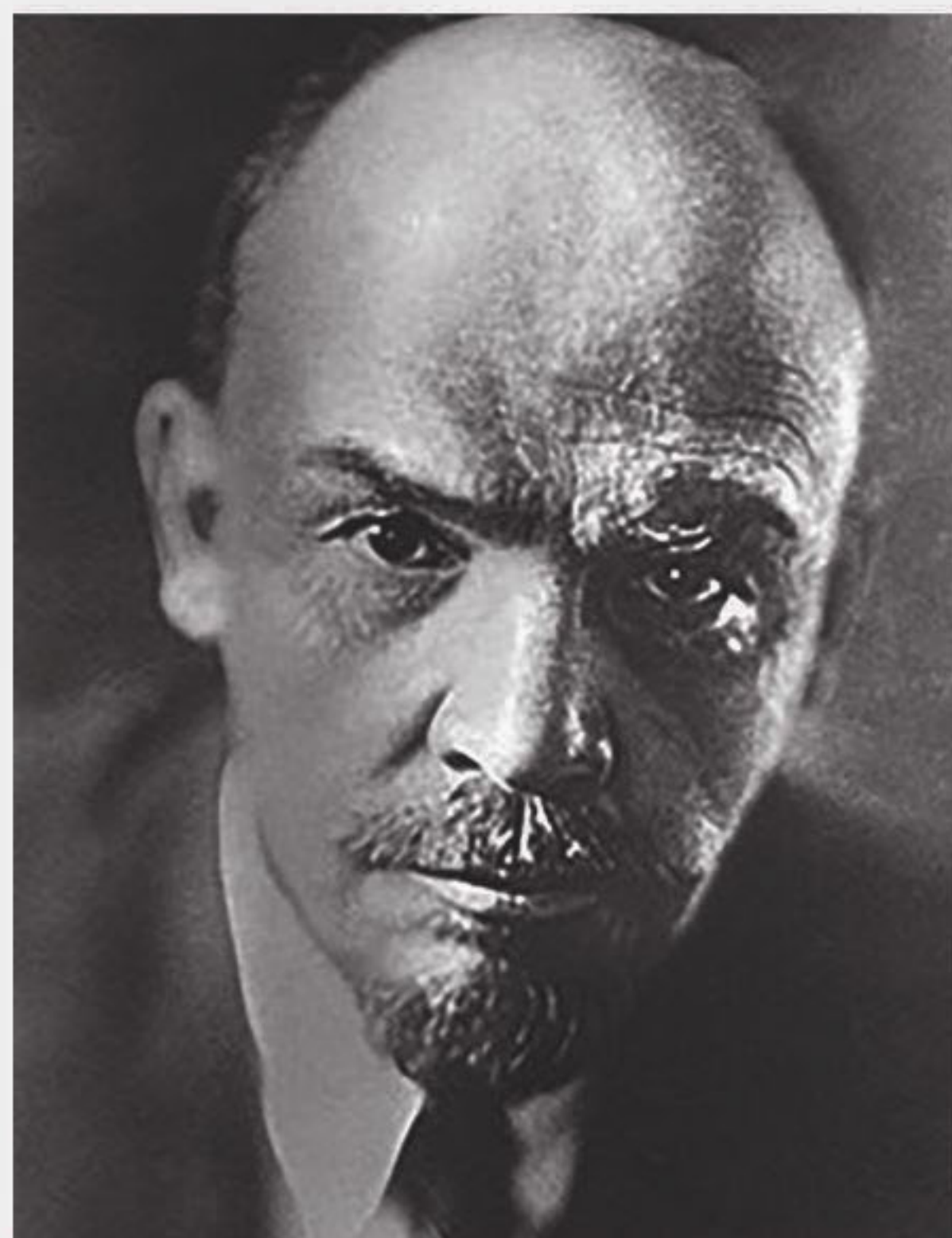
Though Lenin and Roy agreed on the principle of supporting “revolutionary movements of liberation” or “bourgeois-national revolutionary elements,” they differed markedly in their analysis of the Indian situation with respect to the class structure of the leadership of the Indian National Congress, and the relative strength of class forces within India.

The first disagreement centered on the role of Gandhi. Lenin believed that as a leader of a mass movement Gandhi was a revolutionary. Roy maintained that “as a religious and cultural revivalist, he was bound to be reactionary socially, however revolutionary he might appear politically,” and, in support, he cited Plekhanov’s similar judgment of Russian Populist and Socialist Revolutionary Movements, which Roy felt corresponded with Gandhism in that, believing in the special genius of the Slavic race, they had denounced capitalism as a Western vice and championed a return to the village and the revival of the “Mirs.”

In his analysis of class forces, Roy greatly exaggerated both the numerical and ideological strength of the Indian proletariat. Estimating that India possessed 37 million landless peasants and five million

proletariat, he reported to the Congress that, although the nationalist movement rested for the most part on middle classes, the proletarian masses would shortly blaze their own revolutionary trail. In his supplementary theses, he claimed that “the real strength of the liberation movement is no longer confined to the narrow circle of bourgeois-democratic nationalists. In most of the colonies there already exist organised revolutionary parties.”

But Lenin did not share Roy’s optimism in the Indian proletariat. He lacked Marx’s faith in a “spontaneous” development of class-consciousness. He saw an essential difference between the proletariat and the socialist, i.e., the class-conscious proletariat. Two years earlier Lenin had written that “workers have to work in the factory as if on a chain gang and neither time nor



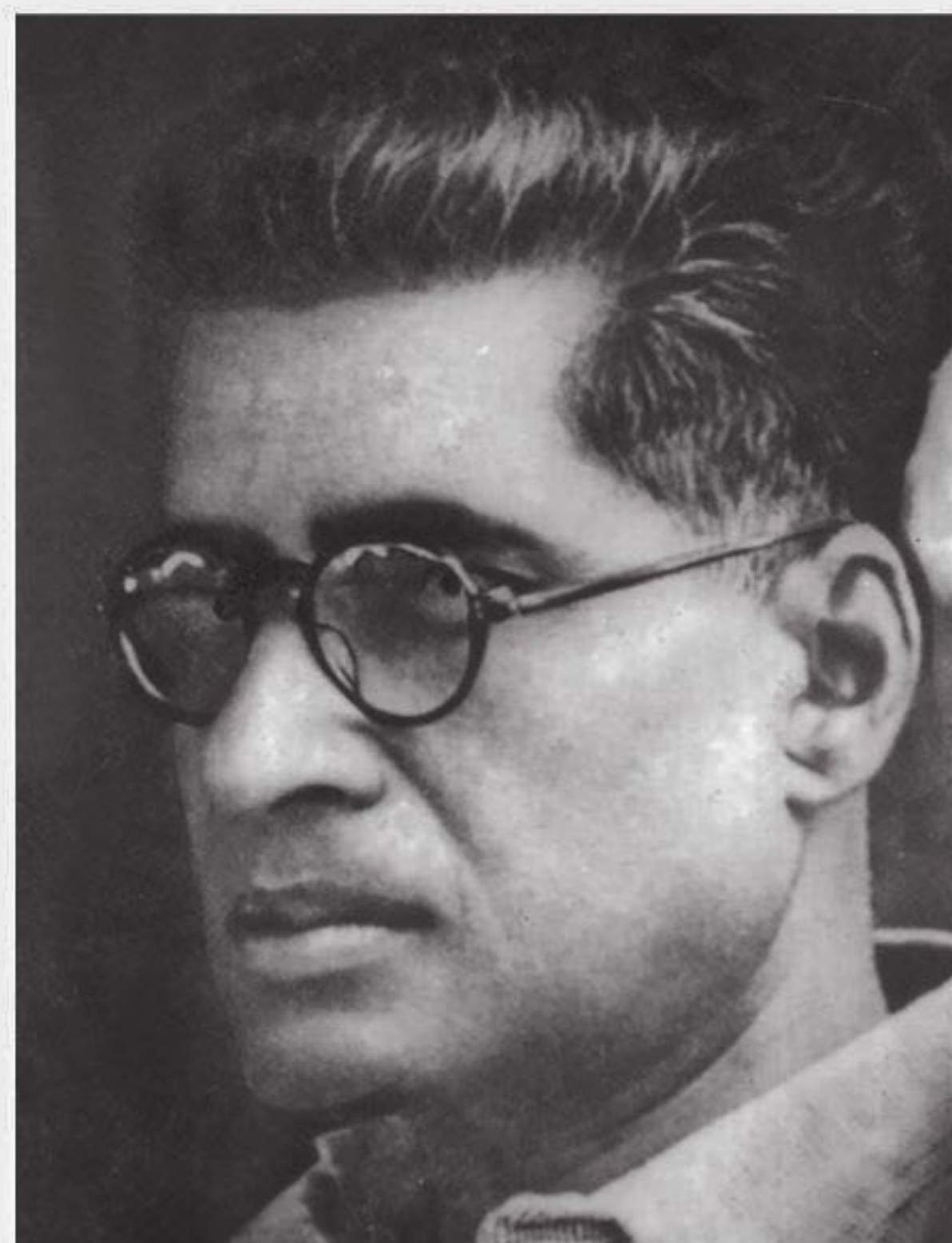
Vladimir Lenin

possibility remain for them to become socialists.” “Spontaneity” represented merely nonrational opposition to society, which might temporarily coincide with the interests of a class, but would in the long run oppose it. Lenin considered the development of genuine class-consciousness dependent upon party organisation, discipline, and indoctrination.

At the time of the Second World Congress, there was no Communist Party in India but only a few scattered revolutionary groups. Lenin is reported to have pointed out to Roy that it would take some time before the Indian proletariat and peasantry could be mobilised. Their differing assessment of the Indian situation resulted in contrasting attitudes toward nationalist movements. Lenin urged “temporary relations and even unions” with nationalist movements. Roy, with India undoubtedly in mind, spoke only in terms of “cooperation” with such movements. More distrustful of the

national bourgeoisie than Lenin, he laid greater stress on the development of the Communist revolution than in supporting the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the colonies. In his theses he recommended a modified agrarian programme of land reform and urged that “peasants and workers Soviets” be organised “as soon as possible.”

In his fervent faith in the class-consciousness of the proletariat, Roy resembled Marx before 1848. Marx had looked forward eagerly and with high optimism to the European revolutions which finally erupted in 1848, but each one had failed. It is not unreasonable to assume that, as a result of these events, Marx concluded that he had overestimated the degree to which class-consciousness could arise spontaneously as a result solely of “objective



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conditions” and that he came to realise the necessity not only of a longer apprenticeship of the proletariat than he had thought necessary heretofore, but also of aiding the proletariat in the development of class-consciousness by destroying those elements in the objective situation which tended to retard this development.

To achieve this, Marx conceived what has been termed a minimum programme. It was devised to remove all obstacles to the maturation of capitalism—a stage which Marx considered a prerequisite to the development of full-scale class warfare. It sought to facilitate class-consciousness by the promotion of democratic liberties, such as universal suffrage, in order to bring social grievances into the open and solidify class divisions. It also involved the undermining of religious and patriotic sentiments, beliefs in reform, and other ideological blinkers.

In conjunction with the minimum programme, a maximum programme was

also to be pursued. While working for the development of bourgeois democracy in its purest form, Communist parties were simultaneously to strive to weaken the bourgeois order by making ideological attacks on the capitalist system and by encouraging rebellions. It can be seen that these programs, in the sense that they urge the strengthening of the bourgeoisie as a step in the direction of their overthrow, require antennae acutely sensitive to a developing situation and a delicate sense of timing.

In a sense the conflict between Roy and Lenin over the question of supporting colonial nationalism can be viewed as a disagreement over the relative weight to be given to a maximum and minimum programme in the formation of colonial policy. At the time of the Second World Congress, Roy was young and impatient. Like Marx before 1848, he tended to underestimate the task of effectively mobilising class unrest. Roy wanted to force the pace set by Lenin in order to liberate the masses at once from all oppressive relationships, both foreign and domestic.

It is true that Roy’s supplementary thesis, which states that “the imperialist policy of preventing industrial development in the colonies” had restricted the growth of a proletarian class “until recently,” is ambiguous on this point. But Roy’s whole case in 1920 had rested on the assumption that India had already attained a stage of capitalist development in which class interests were beginning to solidify. In defense of his thesis, Roy attempted a Marxian analysis of Indian society which was published under the title *India in Transition* in 1922. A Russian version had appeared as early as 1921. In his book he argued that as a result of the “spectacular” growth of Indian industry during World War I, the Indian bourgeoisie was now demanding a much larger share in the exploitation of the natural and human resources of India, and that the British Government, in order to prevent the native bourgeoisie from joining forces with the masses against their common enemy, was now pursuing a policy of placating the former by granting them larger concessions. But the Indian capitalists, Roy argued, shared the British fear of mass revolt; though for a time they would use the strength of the masses to win still further concessions, they would eventually compromise with their rulers and settle for less than complete independence. This was the basis of Roy’s distrust of the national bourgeoisie.

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1923

Workmen’s Compensation Act is passed

1926

Trade Unions Act is passed.

1929

Trade Disputes Act is passed.