

# THE DEBATABLE ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF THE CONTEMPORARY HISTORY OF INDIA\*

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The present study is an attempt to present the issues which arise out of the task of making a historical evaluation of the major problems in the development of contemporary Indian history. First, the period from the Indian Rebellion to World War I is defined as the transition stage from modern history to contemporary history. Second, the problems in contemporary Indian history after World War I have been reviewed applying the rules of historical methodology. Finally, the problems of the post-independence era are considered mainly from the aspects of the role of Jawaharlal Nehru, of the changes in the character of the Congress Government, and of the split of the Communist Party and its ideological struggles. An attempt has also been made to forecast the India's prospects from the point of view of unity of the nation-states in South Asia.

## I. THE FRAMEWORK OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY OF INDIA

The transition from modern to contemporary history in the developmental process of the history of India corresponds to the epoch of transition from the modern to the contemporary stage in the world history. This may be stated to have been the year 1919, when Mahatma Gandhi launched his First Non-violent Resistance Movement after World War I. There is another point of view, held both by Indian and foreign scholars, that the contemporary history of India begins from 1947, when India won her political independence. However, it was the success of the Russian Revolution in 1917, which awakened the people of colonial and semi-colonial countries: armed with an ideology and action programs against imperialism and feudalism, the people in these parts realized that they could shape their own fate and therefore it would be only proper to suppose that the transition into contemporary history occurred after 1917. At that time, the Indian people were placed in a situation where they could achieve true independence and liberation through their own efforts. If it is assumed that even today the Indian people are not liberated from the realities and problems of that stage from the historical point of view, it appears to be appropriate to establish the starting point of contemporary history immediately after World War I.

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It goes without saying that the modern stage of Indian history precedes this contemporary history. The starting point of modern Indian history is generally recognized to be the beginning of the 17th century, when the British-owned East India Company was established and their aggression in India commenced. In this connection, attention should be drawn to the fact that the middle of the 19th century or, to put it more concretely, the phase after the Indian Rebellion (1857-59) and up to the end of World War I, should be considered to be the transition period leading to the contemporary history of India. What were the historical factors which gave momentum to this transition into contemporary history? First of all, it was the rise of capitalism in western India with its nucleus in Maharashtra and Gujarat. In the middle of the 19th century, the establishment of factories for the manufacture of cotton goods by the Parsi merchants sowed the seeds of capitalism in colonial India. The rise of capitalism reflected the special characteristics of Indian society and promoted the advancement of a specific nation.<sup>1</sup> In other words, there came into existence firstly a Gujarati bourgeoisie comprised of Gujarati-speaking people with the Parsi community as its main pillar. Following this, capitalism made its appearance in Maharashtra and Bengal, and a Maharashtrian and a Bengali bourgeoisie were formed. It should be noticed that the multiplicity of forms in the development of capitalism corresponded with the multiplicity in the formation of these nations. Beginning with the Gujarati nation, formation of Bengali, Panjabi, and Hindustani nations was promoted in the latter half of the 19th century. In other words, the origins of India's present-day multi-national structure can be traced to the developments set in motion by the Gujarati nation after the Indian Rebellion.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the whole life and activity of Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), a statesman representing this pioneering nation, clearly show that he was not mainly interested in the welfare and advancement of his own Gujarati nation, but rather that he devoted himself to the realization of independence and prosperity for the whole Indian people who were groaning under conditions of stagnant poverty. It is of great significance that this process of a formation of a multi-nation society also at the same time corresponded to the process of self-realization by the Indian people of their unity and need for unification. It is needless to say that this self-realization of their unity was a reaction to the imperialist rule.

The second factor which gave momentum to the transition to contemporary history was the commencement of a series of peasant struggles after the Indian Rebellion and of the independence movement started by the bourgeoisie. For example, in Maharashtra in western India, there was a well-known peasant uprising in 1870 in which the peasants struggled successively against landlords,

<sup>1</sup> As for the definition of nation here, refer to my book review in *The Developing Economies*, IV-1 (March, 1966), 114.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Pavlov, *The Indian Capitalist Class—A Historical Study*, New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1964, pp. 220-370. See the Soviet interpretation of present-day multi-national India as being a multi-nationality structure in V. V. Balabushevich and A. M. Dyakov eds., *A Contemporary History of India*, New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1964, p. 378 and also my criticism of it in the above-mentioned book review.

moneylenders, and the colonial administration. The leader who backed this up was Vasudeo Balvant Phadke (1845-1883), who until recently had been ridiculed as a wild robber. The progressive broadening of the scope of activities of the movement from a struggle against the landlord to that against the moneylender and finally against imperialism clearly shows the Indian peasants consciously stepping forward into contemporary history. An analysis of the so-called structural characteristics would be insufficient to serve the purpose of revealing the special features of Indian agriculture at the stage of imperialism after the 1870's. In fact, the matter which should engage our immediate attention is the way in which the peasants struggled against the existing state of affairs, the way they tried to change it, and the legacy left by them in the realm of ideology. While doing research on the peasant struggle both of this phase and in general, difficulties are encountered which cannot be explained away only by the paucity of research materials. However, to fail to introduce and discuss such points of issue would simply result in the study of the history of the Indian National Congress and would be far from a discussion of the issues of modern and contemporary history.

Even with regard to the history of the Indian National Congress, it cannot necessarily be stated with certainty that the functions and activities of the Congress in the inaugural period were oriented towards a struggle against imperialism. In the early days of the Congress, in which Dadabhai Naoroji was a founding member, Lal-Bal-Pal, i. e., Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928), Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), and Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932), could be considered as having grasped the significance of revolutionary democracy. However, research about these leaders, both in India and outside, has only begun. In this case, from the point of view of research on contemporary history, neither the "traditional" method of trying to fit them into categories such as Hinduism or Brahmanism, nor the recently popular method of simply analyzing them in terms of the problems of party leadership, seems to be satisfying. Before anything else, our initial task should be to analyze how the leaders concerned confronted the problem of the extinction of both imperialism and feudalism, that is, those problems which had been imposed on them.

The thought and activities of Tilak, whose aim was India's independence, greatly influenced the national independence movement which started after World War I with Gandhi as leader, and could also be linked to the revolutionary movement with the working population forming the vanguard. From the point of view of political thought, it may be stated that Tilak himself gave creative momentum to the evolution of the concepts of both national independence and national liberation.

Indian history after World War I is generally treated as a transition from Gandhi (1869-1948) to Nehru (1889-1964). There is also a tendency to treat Gandhi as representing the development of colonial India and Nehru as representing India after independence. If we assume the contemporary history of India to be the same as the history of the Indian National Congress, it would be correct to apply the analysis from Gandhi to Nehru in this study.

But while it is not possible to discuss contemporary Indian history without taking into account all the activities of the Indian National Congress, it can never be stated that the history of the Indian National Congress alone represents contemporary Indian history. The problems to be studied in this connection are to what extent the history of the Indian National Congress influenced the contemporary history of India and, within the Congress, what were the relations between Gandhi and Nehru. Moreover, there is also the more basic problem of how to evaluate those political influences within contemporary Indian history, both of the right and of the left, which maintained positions different from that held by the Congress Party. Of course, depending upon the change of circumstances, the interrelation between the right and the left also fluctuated. In other words, at specific points in time, for example, in the latter half of the 1930's, there is no point in discussing separately the trends of the Indian National Congress and the Communists.

In this connection, it should be pointed out that a number of problems would arise, if the method "from Gandhi to Nehru" is adopted in an analysis of the contemporary history of India. First, if the approach "Gandhi to Nehru" is adopted, this would imply that we take for granted that the framework of contemporary Indian history is the course of the bourgeois democratic national movement. Of course, it cannot be denied that this approach gives a historical significance and can serve as an introduction to contemporary Indian history. However, by following this method, the thought and activities of national revolution and the liberation movement with the working people as the vanguard recede to the background. In fact, it becomes difficult to introduce them. Actually, in the latter half of the 1920's, working independently of the Indian National Congress, there were movements for the promotion of political consciousness among the working people, and also for the formation of class party. Even after independence, it is not possible to talk about political developments, disregarding the Communist Party's activities. To put it simply, it is not appropriate to narrate the contemporary history of India as only the rise and growth of a non-violent resistance movement.

Second, if we talk about "Gandhi to Nehru," there is the problem of the period of change in leadership. E. M. S. Namboodiripad has expressed a profound opinion on Gandhi's splitting away from the leadership of the Congress; in fact, he has pointed out how Gandhi had to abandon the leadership.<sup>3</sup> The Indian bourgeoisie used Gandhi only when he was needed to advance their own interests and otherwise brushed him aside. Namboodiripad has also pointed out how the estrangement between Gandhi and the bourgeoisie finally became complete after the end of World War II, just before and after the attainment of independence. This judgment has been based on historical viewpoints and is very instructive. However, if we strictly investigate the changes in political history, it seems that Gandhi's historical role as the promoter of an organized resistance movement finally ended with

<sup>3</sup> E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *The Mahatma and the Ism*, New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1959, pp. 115-117.

the Second Non-violent Resistance Movement (1930-1934). Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi (1907-1966), a pre-eminent historian of present-day India and an energetic leader of the Peace Movement, has discussed the Quit India Struggle launched by the Congress in 1942 during World War II and, as an eye-witness, he has also sharply criticized Gandhi's lack of an integral leadership during this period of struggle.<sup>4</sup>

Third, it is necessary to discuss, within the framework "Gandhi to Nehru," the changes in the Congress organization in the latter half of the 1930's, especially with reference to the division of the Congress leadership into conservatives and progressives. Within the Congress, centered around Nehru, the younger generation started seriously criticizing Gandhi in the 1930's. This criticism started with the demands for socialist thought. To put it concretely, these demands were made by the progressive youth within the Congress, who formed a Congress Socialist Party in 1934. The membership of the Congress Socialist Party was limited to members of the Congress, and the Party was formed to prevent the alienation of the Congress from the masses, who had been influenced by communism. Again, as is clear from its structure, it was not necessarily aimed at developing into an independent people's political party and, indeed, Nehru was unconcerned about this from the very beginning. In spite of this, the formation of such an organization within the Congress performed the task of creating a united front and, through the mediation of this organization, some sort of route was opened for a "dialogue" with the Communist Party of India. If we analyze the trends of the conservative wing, on the one hand, during the period from the latter half of the 1930's till the attainment of independence, they severely opposed the "socialism" of the progressive wing. On the other hand, they took the line of putting into practice most of the progressive plans set forth by the progressive wing. While rushing headlong into a discussion on the plans for industrializing the Indian economy as proposed by the progressive wing of the Congress, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel established the Indian National Trade Union Congress on the eve of independence just to counter the All India Trade Union Congress supported by the communists. It goes without saying that Sardar Patel of Gujarat headed the conservative wing. If we recall that Nehru was the President of the All India Trade Union Congress toward the end of the 1920's, it will be no exaggeration to say that within 20 years the state of affairs had made a 180 degree turn. The more assiduously we follow the political processes immediately before and after independence, the more difficult we will find it to ignore the activities of the conservative wing represented by Patel. If we presume that Nehru era started in the latter half of the 1930's, some of the conditions which regulated the Congress in his era are those mentioned above. As the activities of the Congress Socialist Party, in both organizational and ideological aspects, lost flexibility during and after World War II, it may be stated that, on the whole, Nehru continued to sustain the progressive wing

<sup>4</sup> D. D. Kosambi, *Exasperating Essays—Exercises in the Dialectical Method*, Poona, People's Book House, 1957, p. 16.

in the Indian National Congress.

## II. NEHRU IN THE CONTEMPORARY HISTORY OF INDIA

How should Nehru's position in the contemporary history of India be assessed? Nehru, who started as a glorious leader of the national independence movement, later won ovations among the comity of nations for his foreign policy of non-alignment and peace. In his declining years, he was compared to Chiang Kai-shek of the Kuomintang Government in Taiwan. Thus the evaluation of Nehru has undergone drastic changes. An analysis of Nehru's thought and activities during his life must be reserved for other occasion,<sup>5</sup> here we will limit ourselves to the subject of Nehru's role in the development of the contemporary history of India. It is also appropriate that we discuss in this context Nehru's nationalism or his national interest keeping in mind the former evaluation of Nehru. Proceeding chronologically, it is possible to review his activities in two periods, before and after independence. Again, after independence, the period 1959-60 could be termed a turning point, with the preceding and succeeding periods considered separately. Leaving aside these divisions for a moment, if we look at Nehru's life as a whole, then the basic principles of his thought can, in the last analysis, be said to be based on bourgeois democracy. The honor and glory which Nehru earned as a statesman was truly the result of his adherence to bourgeois democracy.

It is true that Nehru has repeatedly made statements supporting socialism. In 1930 he stated that if he had to make a choice between fascism and communism, he would definitely choose the latter. Again, in January 1955 at the 60th Annual Session of the Indian National Congress, a resolution was passed with Nehru's support that India should build a socialistic pattern of society, and it became quite common among the Congress leaders to talk about socialism after this Session. However, this does not imply that the Congress Government started taking the socialist path. It can also be said with certainty that Nehru was not a socialist. It is true that at the end of the 1920's, Nehru held the office of the President of the All India Trade Union Congress, but he did not continue his participation in the labor movement. In addition, he never led the peasant movement, which developed through organizing *Kisan Sabha* or the peasant union. As was observed in the 1950's both within India and abroad, it is a great misconception to treat Nehru as a socialist, and India after independence as a socialistic state.

As an individual, Nehru exhibited a positive interest in the ideals and objectives of socialism and communism and approved them; but on the other hand, he dismissed lightly the means and methods used by socialism or to put it more explicitly, communism. As mentioned above, there were some special features in Nehru's attitude towards Marxism. Nehru's affinity to the Soviet Union and to China till the end of the 1950's arose more out of his

<sup>5</sup> H. Nakamura, *Nerū—hito to shisō* (Nehru—Man and His Thought), Tokyo, Shimizu-shoin, 1967.

admiration for the development of a nation-state through its own efforts, than because of the victory of revolution achieved by class struggle. This knowledge enables us to surmise what attitude Nehru would have taken towards and what expectations he would have had about the Indian communists or the Communist Party of India. Generally speaking, Nehru took an attitude of coercion towards the communists. It may be correct to conclude that Nehru in his heart was sufficiently self-conceited to believe that the nationalists in India instituted the concepts of independence and revolution earlier than did the communists, and that he further believed firmly that the nationalists actually put these concepts into practice.

Nehru, who was guided by the ideology of bourgeois democracy, could develop an anti-imperialistic and anti-feudalistic struggle in his political activities because he found India to be an oppressed country, or in other words, a colony. Among his anti-imperialist activities, the most important were the attainment of political independence in August 1947, and the development of a foreign policy of non-alignment and peace while the Soviet-American conflict or the Cold War was continuing.

The Communist Party of India in 1948, however, called India's independence a "fake independence," since it believed that the subservience of the Indian economy to British financial capital within the infrastructure also linked to the subjugation of Indian politics to Britain within the superstructure. It is felt, however, that Nehru's foreign policy as well as his domestic political policies clearly indicate his campaign against imperialism and also his politically independent stand. At the same time, it is true that under his administration India did not achieve economic independence, and economic subjugation was allowed to continue, introducing an element of instability in Indian politics. But this kind of inconsistent relationship, i. e., political independence along with continuing economic subservience, is prevalent in all newly developing countries including India, and calls for a more thorough understanding of the realities of politics and economy as a whole. The foreign policy of non-alignment and peace suddenly was stalemated when the Cold War, i. e., the Soviet-American conflict, changed into a Sino-American showdown. There is no doubt that India's role in international politics was at one time glorious and coupled with Nehru's individual personality, the voice of India commanded wider respect. It should be noticed that apart from the problem of changes in the motivations of Nehru's foreign policy, the non-alignment policy as such had its limitations. It was generally explained that the core of Nehru's foreign policy was non-alignment, but actually there was no definite ideology which could specifically be called the axis around which Nehru's foreign policy revolved in a systematic way. Actually, his policy was all along a pragmatic adaptation suited to the changing realities of the international situation.

In this context, let us consider Nehru's programs against feudalism. The most important task which the Congress Government faced after independence was the problem of the Indian Princely States. During the colonial

days, Indian territory was divided into British India, which was under the direct control of Britain, and while the Indian States were ruled by the Princes, they were usually under the indirect control of Britain. These Indian States (numbering a total of 562) covered one-third of the total area of India and one-fourth of the Indian population. Nehru himself has pointed out that the big State was as big as France and the small one only as big as an ordinary farm. In all the States, there prevailed a typical feudal system, which denied freedom to the people and ensured a despotic rule.<sup>6</sup> Therefore Nehru's Government had to take military action against the feudalistic Ruler of Hyderabad, who had declared the independence of his State (though located in the heart of the Indian sub-continent) from the rest of the Indian Union. Most of the Indian States, even before independence, had declared their consent to merge with the Indian Union by renouncing some of their rights like transport and communications, foreign policy, etc. At that time, the Nehru Government tried to conduct peaceful negotiations with the Ruler of Hyderabad. But the Muslim Ruler of Hyderabad, the Nizam, declared his independence on the eve of the partition of India into India and Pakistan on August 15, 1947. Following this, he started purchasing arms in London, launched a plan to purchase Goa (then a Portugese-occupied territory), and tried to establish a branch office of an American news agency. At the same time, he also made preparations for appealing to the United Nations. In September 1948, the military action of the Indian Government in Hyderabad dealt the final death-blow to the Indian feudal system, which was embodied in the form of Indian State. After independence, there was no occasion since Kashmir, when India had to counter a war of intervention brought about by the direct machinations of the imperialist powers. But she had to wage a sort of civil war caused by the struggles against the feudalistic elements within the country, which were aided indirectly by imperialistic influences. India finally grew out of this stage by the 1950's. Though the Princes were completely stripped of their political powers, they have been allowed to maintain some economic privileges. For example, they are granted privy purses by the Government and in this way receive visible and invisible protections. Therefore, though the merger of the Princely States led to the complete breakdown of the feudal political system, it did not completely or at one stroke break up all kinds of feudal relationships. In this connection, attention must be drawn to the fact that both the conservative wing and the progressive wing of the Congress were completely in agreement on the matter of the dissolution of the feudal system, i. e., the system of Princely States. At the same time, the fact that agreement was reached on the assignment of specific extraordinary economic privileges to the Princes reflects the limits of anti-feudalism envisaged by the bourgeois democrats of the Congress including Nehru. Nehru's ideas on land reform will be taken up in the next part.

Nehru, as a bourgeois democrat, has often used the argument of nationalism or national interest while discussing political and economic problems and

<sup>6</sup> J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, London, Meridian Books Ltd., 1956, pp. 306-307.



also foreign policy. Starting with the Asian Relations Conference held in New Delhi in March 1947 prior to independence, and in other conferences such as the 19 Nation Asian Conference held in New Delhi in January 1949, the 11th International Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations held in Lucknow in October 1950, and ending with the Asian African Conference in Indonesia held in April 1955, Nehru's statements and activities were based on his sentiments of anti-colonialism and independence of nations. Nobody can dispute Nehru's historical role in this context. Even in the discussion of Asian nationalism among intellectuals in Japan in the 1950's, it was accepted that the activities of the leaders of the developing nations including Nehru were closely connected with the growth of Asian nationalism itself.

From Nehru's own point of view, however, to emphasize nationalism even at the post-independence stage would mean that, even on the premise of continuing the power of the state on which he himself was dependent, he still took into account the interests of the people. Leaving aside here the question of whether Nehru himself was conscious of the implications of the separate functions of nationalism, it may be noted that the tragedy which was to be the result of the disparate functions began to be apparent with the partition of India and Pakistan. Even when the principles of national interest are adhered to, pursuit of the interests of state power may be initiated *sub rosa* in declarations of protection of national interests. In some cases, in the name of the pursuit of state interests, nationalism is inclined to deny or even to obliterate the realization of the people's national interest. Of course, this may be said to be a general trend. It cannot be denied that the conceptions of "nationalism" or "national demands" have to be distinguished in the context of contemporary history of India. Whenever Nehru failed to see this distinction, the path of his political activities was strewn with danger.

Actually, nationalism is premised upon the differentiation in significance mentioned above and on account of this the world of Nehru's nationalism expanded without any limitation. On the occasion of the Tibetan Revolt in March 1959, Nehru made clear the three basic principles of India's policy in a speech in the Indian Parliament. They were: the preservation of the integrity and security of India; continuation of friendly relations with China and deep sympathy with the Tibetan people.<sup>7</sup> In this connection, it is not understood how the Tibetan Revolt, which was an internal problem of China, could affect the security and integrity of India. From the beginning, there was no connection between the two. Actually, the statement about maintenance of friendly relations with China could be considered as a reawareness of the basic five principles of peaceful co-existence (*Panch Sheela*) laid down in June 1954. However, the point which should attract our serious attention is the expression of sympathy with the Tibetan people. About ten years before this, Nehru made a statement to the effect that India's relations

<sup>7</sup> J. Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961*, Delhi, The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of the Government of India, 1961, pp. 319-326.

with Tibet would be limited to cultural and trade relations.<sup>8</sup> In the later context of 1959, he drew the conclusion in the same Parliament that there was no doubt that the basis of the Tibetan Revolt touched the deepest sentiments of nationalism affecting not only the upper classes in Tibet, but all other strata as well. This statement necessitates questioning Nehru's arguments about nationalism from two angles. First, from the foreign policy angle, this statement amounted to interference in the internal affairs of another sovereign state. Again, it also brings into question Nehru's principles of nationalism, which he consistently maintained as an antithesis to colonial rule. If we limit ourselves to the principles of nationalism, this was clearly an expression of lack of restrictions and limitations. As far as Nehru personally was concerned, this was a major turning-point in his career.

The insufficiencies in our discussion of Nehru and nationalism can never be resolved until we realize the above-mentioned deficiencies in our method of approach.

### III. HISTORICAL STAGES AFTER INDEPENDENCE AND THE CONGRESS

The most important task now to be faced is to grasp the historical development of India after independence from the point of view of differentiation of the stages.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, investigation has been attempted in order to understand the significance and special features of the development of India in terms of foreign policy, but this approach avoids certain problems, a discussion of which is needed to present the historical development of India as a whole in a clearer light. It can be stated that the "foreign policy approach,"<sup>10</sup> which separates impassés in foreign policy from India's historical developments after independence and merely follows the changes in foreign policy in the field of international relations, has lost any significance. Again, after the Tibetan Revolt and Sino-India border dispute, the notable setback suffered by the Congress Government became apparent. As a result, in the context of the continuing Sino-Soviet conflict, renewed interest has been paid to evaluate Nehru's role, the true character of the Congress Government and the entire process of India after independence. Thus, going beyond the attempt to divide India's development after independence into two stages, it

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>9</sup> The point of view that the Indian political and economic system and structure after independence are the same as those found in the colonial stage is expressed by Nagao Katō and Yoshirō Rōyama in "Indo oyobi Pakisutan kenkyū nyūmon" (Introduction to the Study of India and Pakistan) in *Ajia Afurika kenkyū-sho* [General editors: Bokurō Eguchi, Koshirō Okakura and Yoshirō Rōyama], *Ajia Afurika kenkyū nyūmon* (Introduction to the Study of Asia and Africa), Tokyo, Aoki-shoten, 1965, pp. 211, 215, and 221.

<sup>10</sup> H. Nakamura, "Kokusai seiji ni okeru Indo no chii" (India's Role in International Politics), *Nihon kokusai seiji gakkai ed.*, *Tōnan-Ajia no kenkyū* (Study of Southeast Asia), Tokyo, Yūhikaku, 1961.

is proposed here to raise the issues in each stage along with discussing the transformations in the character of the Congress.

In the beginning of the 17th century, after India was forcibly brought under the control of British colonial rule, the salient features of Indian society could be said to be colonial and semi-feudalistic. It has already been pointed out that the turning-point between modern and contemporary Indian history can be traced to the end of World War I. It has already been explained how this point of view is supported by arguments from political history. The special features of a colonial semi-feudalistic society, which existed in India, continued down even after World War I.

Reviewing the matter of whether political independence in August 1947 and later developments brought any qualitative changes in Indian society, we come to the conclusion that independence brought about the transformation of the colonial semi-feudalistic society into an independent semi-feudalistic society. Thus national independence was definitely a victory for the anti-imperialist struggles, as the national bourgeoisie acquired political power from Britain. From the aspect of transformation from a colony to an independent state, the independence of India added an important page to contemporary history after the 17th century. And from the aspect of the development of contemporary history, political independence in 1947 marks the beginning of the second stage.

The new national Government assumed its fundamental characteristics as directed by the national bourgeoisie. As already planned even during the colonial stage, they started with the pre-condition of bourgeois development and the promotion of capitalism on the basis of heavy industries. Immediately after independence this national bourgeoisie government drew up a concrete Five-Year Plan with the clear purpose of industrialization and land reform. But the first and greatest problem which confronted the newly-formed Government was, as stated earlier, the break-up of the feudal system, which existed in the form of Princely States. There was a certain degree of regular capitalist development within the Princely States also. But the democratic standards of the political system were lower than those found in the British-controlled areas. In other words, political standards in the Princely States could definitely be put in a lower category than those in colonial British India. The Divide and Rule Policy followed by Britain was not only implemented in the partition of colonial India into India and Pakistan, but it also became apparent in the directive to the Princes, the day before independence, that the sovereignty and freedom of each would be respected. After the break-up of the Princely system, which was a kind of civil war, the bourgeois Government found it possible to construct a bourgeois nation-state by building up an appropriate political and economic system.

Politically speaking, it is possible to point out many special features: promulgation of the Constitution (1950), general elections (1952 to date), development of the policies of anti-colonialism and non-alignment (1947-1959), reorganization into linguistic states (1956), establishment of the Communist

Government in Kerala and its development (1957-1959). The democratic arrangements made by the Congress Government were certainly to the advantage of the national bourgeoisie. It is needless to say that the struggles of the working people existed in the background. The establishment of a Communist Government in Kerala only exhibited a fringe of the struggles of the working people.

Viewed from the economic aspect, policies were implemented continuously through the Five-Year Plans, starting from the First Five-Year Plan (1951-1955) and continuing into the Second Five-Year Plan (1956-1960), and so on. The Five-Year Plans progressed on a two-fold basis. One was the establishment of branch of production of the means of production with the public sector as the main axis and special emphasis laid on industrialization. On the other hand, the progress of land reform was also given serious consideration in this period. The parasitic landlord class, and in particular those who were acting as intermediaries between the actual landowners and the actual tillers of the land, were uprooted. A partial land reform proceeded in the direction of establishing to some extent a direct relationship between the newly-born state power and the actual tiller with the object of creating a strata of cultivators owning their own land including a strata of rich peasants.

This stage was earlier defined categorically as a politically independent but semi-feudalistic society. The fundamental character of this change was to be a democratic revolution of anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism. In particular, there was the presence of British financial capital, which precipitated conditions and always kept political independence in an unsettled condition. The economic subservience of India to Britain was approved by the bourgeois Government. Again, though the land reform program did not bring about a decisive change in Indian agriculture, since the program was not followed to the ultimate abolition of the landlord system, there does not seem to be the slightest reason to deny our earlier definition of India enjoying political independence, but possessing a semi-feudalistic society. However we may define it, it is clear that India's independence and later developments only formed a part of the second stage of the general crisis of world capitalism. Though incomplete, the Congress Government created conditions for the implementation of bourgeois democratic change or revolution. However, the path which lay ahead for the Congress was not smooth.

India underwent a great change in the period from the end of the 1950's to the beginning of the 1960's. To put it more concretely, India stood at the crossroads both with regard to her internal and to her international policies in the year 1959-1960. On an internal basis, the Congress Government started instituting a series of anti-democratic measures. The repression of the Communist Government in Kerala in July 1957 can be cited as a typical example. The Communist Party of India neither aimed at carrying out a communist revolution in Kerala nor did it actually carry one out in fact. It only implemented bourgeois democratic reforms, which were set in motion by the Congress itself. Alarmed at the "revolutionary nature" of the political and

economic policies of the Communist Government, the leaders of the Congress Party, which was the biggest opposition party within the Kerala state, adopted all kinds of violent methods to overthrow the Communist Government. They made it seem as if Mahatma Gandhi's ideas of non-violence and non-violent resistance were old myths. At the same time, the Swatantra Party was inaugurated in August 1959 in Bombay with the support of big business and former Indian Princes, with anti-Congress and anti-communism as its motto. The formation of the Swatantra Party, in view of its being a rightist conservative party, may not deserve much serious attention. However, the points to be noted are first that the Party was formed in the year 1959 and second that the content of the policy programs adopted by the Party are significant. The Party called for the abolition of the public sector and the discontinuance of the "socialist" land reform programs, and openly supported the interests of big business in the economic field. In the field of foreign policy, the Party called for scrapping the non-alignment policy and proposed alignment with the West and its military bloc. The class which gave a helping hand to the Swatantra Party, i. e., the big capitalists, Princes and landlords, was without exception composed of those who directly or indirectly benefitted from the policies followed by the Congress Government after independence. If we take this factor into account, the anti-Congress stand taken by this class in the year 1959 assumes greater significance. In the beginning, a group of Congress leaders including Nehru dismissed lightly the role and the policies of the Swatantra Party. The basic conditions which led to the birth of the Swatantra Party actually lay in the administration of the Congress Government. Instead of investigating surrounding conditions objectively, the Congress Government continued to be blind to and ignorant of its own deficiencies.

Turning our attention to India's foreign policy, we may notice that from the time of the Tibetan Revolt to the Sino-Indian border conflict, India's prestige in international politics fell sharply as if rolling down hill. The Sino-Indian border dispute cannot be considered without taking into account the interference of the Government of India under Nehru into the internal affairs of China on the occasion of the Tibetan Revolt. In particular with the conclusion of *Panch Sheela* between India and China in 1954, the Indian Government of her own accord bound herself to a position where there was no scope for vindication. Thus the Sino-Indian border dispute began to assume serious proportions when the prerequisites for a peaceful and friendly approach, which ought to have been maintained, were mutually denied. The situation developed from a battle of words on both sides to actual military action. After the conflict in 1962, there has been a lull, but this only demonstrates the strained relations between India and China, which continue even today. The political and economic deterioration in India after this conflict cannot be denied. In the political sphere, she has renounced non-alignment policy to a greater extent than that to which even actual military agreements with America and Britain have been signed. In the economic field, beginning with food "aid" from the USA, the introduction of American capital into the

country has been promoted. In other words, Indian economic dependence on the USA, nay indeed subservience to the USA, started after 1959 and became ever strong.

If we analyze these new changes in India as a whole, what issues should hold our attention? Even the national bourgeois Government, which attained national independence, failed to promote bourgeois reforms completely. Again, the policies of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, which were announced to the outside world, could not be translated into action within the country. After independence, the development of capitalism reached a stage in which the branch of production of consumer goods, which, centered on the textile industry, existed even in the colonial days, was augmented by the branch of production of the means of production, which was established by one means or another mainly with the help of aid received from communist countries. In brief, a stage of pseudo-industrial capitalism was introduced. At this stage, the big capitalists, who were brought up on enforced capital accumulation, began to ask for the induction of a good deal of Western, especially American capital into the country and they did not lose much time in making these demands. For this purpose, the Gujarati capitalists represented by the Tata began to consider the planned economy emphasized by the Congress as fettering their own activities, though they strongly supported the Congress. The Sino-Indian border conflict gave them a golden opportunity to fulfill their own demands.

The inflow of foreign capital after 1959 was headed by American capital; this inflow was a danger signal that India was becoming prey to neo-colonialism. As is well known, the rise of neo-colonialism signals the third stage of the general crisis of capitalism, in which imperialism is confronted with a further retrogression, that is, from the collapse of colonial system to that of colonialism itself. Speaking in general terms, it was an indication of the third stage of general crisis. Aligned with foreign capital, the Indian big bourgeoisie made use of the Congress Government to support themselves, at the same time that they struck an anti-Congress posture in another group, the Swatantra Party.

Therefore, after 1959, the working people were confronted with two tasks: on the one hand, confrontation with monopoly capital from India and abroad; on the other, complete abolition of the landlord system. Even India's political independence itself is being nullified by reactionary forces in India and outside; or at the least, political independence is beginning to be reduced to extremely unsettled conditions and in this sense, India in her present stage is exhibiting all the special features of a semi-independent, semi-feudalistic society. It need not be stressed that the fundamental task facing India after 1959 has been the accomplishment of a democratic revolution against imperialism, monopoly capital, and feudalism.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> "Programme of the Communist Party of India" adopted by the Seventh Congress of the CPI, Calcutta, October 31–November 7, 1964, p. 43. For my analysis of the significance of the transition stage from 1959–60 in Indian history, cf. H. Nakamura,

Finally, it is necessary to say a few words about the Congress Government. As representatives of the national bourgeoisie, they followed a given program of reform against imperialism and feudalism after independence. The big bourgeoisie, who actually grew under the protection of the progressive attitudes and ideas of the Congress, made the Congress Government change its policies. From the time of its formation, the big bourgeoisie has been inducing foreign capital into the country. Thus the Congress, which was built up by the big capitalists of the Gujarati, Hindustani, Bengali, and Tamilian nations, has now reached a stage in the 1960's where all the members of the small and medium national bourgeoisie are being excluded from it. This is but natural. It is the responsibility of the working people to draw into participation in the revolution the intellectuals, laborers and some of the Indian capitalists, who have been still placing their hopes with the Congress. In this connection, it is needless to reiterate that a sharp distinction ought to be drawn between the political and economic developments made under the aegis of the Congress and the antagonistic stand taken towards the people as a whole by the Congress Government since 1959.

#### IV. NATIONAL UNITY AND INDIA'S PROSPECTS

At the Fourth General Elections held in the spring of 1967, the Indian National Congress suffered a big setback in the Central Parliament as well as in the State legislatures. This landslide defeat of the Congress Party was not anticipated either by the central executive of the Party or by political circles in New Delhi. However, the waning of the Party's popularity started early in the 1960's. In fact, the ideological and organizational disintegration of the Congress Party or, to put it briefly, the fact that the ruling Congress Party was reduced to an empty shell was revealed to the people of the world through the General Elections.

Along with the losses of the Congress Party, it was also noticed that the anti-Congress Parties, both of the right and the left, made substantial gains. On the one hand, United Front Governments including the Communist Party (Marxist) were established both in West Bengal and Kerala. After the Sino-Indian border dispute, the Congress Government consistently disseminated anti-Communist propaganda and slandered the Communist Party (Marxist) as being an agent of the Communist Party of China. In spite of this, the working people made their choice of a political party on their own judgement. On the other hand, in Madras in South India, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, DMK (which posed as a champion of Tamil nationalism) achieved a resounding victory and put a stop to Congress Party rule which had continued in that State for 20 years. We have to examine carefully whether, after assuming office, the DMK is actually performing the function of promoting Tamil nationalism. But the unifying of the people on the basis

"Chū-In kokkyō mondai to Indo no genjō" (Sino-Indian Border Dispute and India's Present Condition), *Rekishigakukenkū* (Journal of Historical Studies), No. 274 (Mar. 1963).

of a Tamil nation has to be investigated within the over-all context of Indian politics of the 1960's.

Can the new situations mentioned above be explained simply as the establishment of a multi-party system in India? It is true that a multi-party system has significance in the development of parliamentary democratic politics. However, in this connection, conversely, it ought to be understood that the problems connected with the type of parliamentary democracy supported by the Congress Party are the ones in question. To put it more concretely, it may be stated that the new situation reflected fierce antagonism to the slogan of Indian unity raised by the Congress Party, or in other words, it was contrary to the "doctrine of unifying India from above." This state of affairs clearly revealed the alienating and divisive tendencies among the various nations within India, tendencies which were already coming to light from the beginning of the 1960's. The separatist demands by the Naga Tribe in Assam marked the beginning of these trends. The demands of the Naga Tribe were only a reflection of the failure of the Congress Party's policy regarding the so-called minority groups. In the latest general election, a trend towards alienation among the local state units or, more strictly speaking among the national units, was clearly discernible. Special attention has to be paid to this new development, and in this regard it is widely felt that we have to understand the necessity of elucidating the theoretical perspectives in this newest aspect of class problems as well as national problems.

The particular task assigned to the working people of India is to chalk out the idea of "unity of India from below" and build its future, which should effectively counterbalance the concept of "unity of India from above" put into practice by the Congress Government, but which ended in a failure. In other words, instead of following the bankrupt policy of building up a bourgeois federation of states, it is necessary to set out with bold theoretical outlook of building up a socialist federation of multi-nation states. The United Front Government in West Bengal was made to resign in November 1967 because of the strong measures taken by the Central Government. It is true that such developments were not entirely unexpected, and it also showed the dangerous situation in which parliamentary democratic system was placed under the Congress Government. The coming task of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which maintains a revolutionary course line, as explained in Part III, seems to be how to institute action for national revolution by the people of Bengal. In other words, the problem is to set in clear perspective the Bengali people's democratic revolution within the framework of democratic revolution of the people of India. In the case of Kerala too, it is necessary to examine seriously the problems of the Malayali people's democratic revolution in Kerala. In terms of the theory of "base areas" each with its own language, the meaning of the "September Resolution" of the Communist Party of India in 1942 should be considered here again in an entirely new context, one in which the rights of self-determination for each nationality in colonial India were aptly defined.



If the problem is viewed from the above angle, historical and fundamental criticism can be raised against the *raison d'être* and *forme d'être* of various nation-states in the Indian sub-continent, i. e., India, Pakistan, and Ceylon. It is quite natural to presume that the problem of achievement of a democratic revolution in West Bengal should be inevitably connected with the destiny of the Bengali nation in East Bengal, that is to say, the Eastern portion of Pakistan today. Again, it seems that the future of the Tamil nation in the Madras state is closely linked with the destiny of the Tamil nation of present-day Ceylon, which is comprised of the Sinhalese and Tamil nations. This argument seems to be applicable to the Punjabi and Kashmiri nations also whose territory is divided between both India and Pakistan. This point of view may give a vital blow to the reactionary forces within India, which are trying to force India into the old-fashioned orbit of a Hindu state; but at the same time, it will cast strong doubt on the present political setup of Pakistan, where Islam is considered to be the sole unifying idea. Moreover, applying the same argument, the traditional way of understanding present-day Ceylon as a Buddhist state also is likely to have lost its basis. Taking a broader perspective, instead of applying the formula of "unity of India from below" simply to the future of the Indian Republic alone, it may be applied more widely to the entire Indian sub-continent comprised of a few nation-states, and it will give a theoretical perspective to the formation of a South-Asian federated states. Since India experienced an uneven development of capitalism, it would be quite possible for her to experience an uneven transition to socialism especially given her extensive size over which the standard of productive force differs from one state to another state.

This theory is bound to be attacked by all the conservative reactionary forces including the Congress Party as leading to secession and disruption. However, it should be stated that, from an ideological standpoint, the disintegration of India's unity by the Congress Party has led to the ripening of objective conditions which can be effectively utilized by the working people. The DMK Government has already raised the cry of Tamil nationalism in order to seize political power, but it is presently laying down policies which are against the interests of the working people. Thus DMK's Tamil nationalism is also disintegrating at a faster and deeper rate than expected. Therefore the seizure of political power in the Madras state by the working people, by supporting Tamil nationalism or, to put it more concretely, the real interests of the Tamil nation, is a historical task of the Tamil working people. This may be criticized as giving birth to sectarian and disruptive influences, but this criticism could be effectively smashed by the historically dialectic integration of the nations of India as a whole by the working people of India.

The issues in present-day India have been briefly outlined above in the context of the historical relationship between national problems and class problems. In November 1964, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) made clear its revolutionary course line and established its line of action by criticizing the revisionism of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The open

support of the Right Wing Communist Party of India by the Soviet Union made it clear that Party was representing the revisionist line in India's revolution. Along with this, the Soviet Union's chauvinistic attitude is revealed in its support of the Congress Government's internal and foreign policies. In August 1967, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) established a critical front against the dogmatism and chauvinism of the Communist Party of China.<sup>12</sup> This was an open counter-criticism of the attack made by the Communist Party of China against the Party program adopted by the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in 1964 as well as against the Party's leadership. The Communist Party of China has defined the Naxalbari peasant struggle in West Bengal as the model for Indian revolution and has denied any role to the United Front Government in which members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) have also participated. The Communist Party of China also called E.M.S. Namboodiripad a revisionist.<sup>13</sup> The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has answered these charges one by one and has severely condemned the Chinese views about the need for enforcing an armed struggle in India. It has also taken great exception to the open criticism by the Communist Party of China of the executive of a brother party, a violation of proletarian internationalism. It therefore appears that the Communist Party of India (Marxist), taking the above two stands, against Soviet revisionism and against Chinese dogmatism, is progressing step by step towards adoption of an independent revolutionary course line. If we subject the point of view and stand of the Communist Party (Marxist) to a historical evaluation, we cannot help observing that the working people of India are really confronting a number of problems. As regards the organizational problem of the working people, both the workers' movement and the peasant movement have to be reorganized in a new dimension. And in particular, it will not be possible to achieve the objective of bringing about the people's democratic revolution of the national unit, unless strategy and tactics are formulated on the basis of a careful reassessment of the workers' movement and the peasant movement.

In the above discussion, the study of the present stage of the contemporary history of India has been treated to an analysis of the stresses and strains experienced by India, through the introduction of a series of relevant issues. India presents a picture of morass to the outside world, if only a fleeting glance is taken. However, strikingly new moves are perceptible in present-day India. Therefore, it appears that the urgent task confronting Indian and foreign scholars of contemporary Indian history, is to make a proper analysis of these changes and of the evolving factors, and to present them in proper historical perspective.

<sup>12</sup> "Divergent Views between Our Party and the C.P.C. on Certain Fundamental Issues of Programme and Policy," Supplement to People's Democracy, September 10, 1967.

<sup>13</sup> "Spring Thunders over India," *Peking Review*, No. 29 (July 14, 1967).