

## ORIGINS OF BANDUNG

This history should be written as it will help people to understand that Bandung did not originate in the heads of the nationalist leaders (Nehru and Sukarno particularly, rather less, Nasser) as is implied by contemporary writers. It was the product of a radical leftwing critique, which was at that time conducted within the communist parties. The common conclusion of these groups of reflection could be summed up in one sentence: The fight against imperialism brings together, at the world level, the social and political forces whose victories are decisive in opening up to possible socialist advances in the contemporary world.

This conclusion, however, left open a crucial question: Who will ‘direct’ these anti-imperialist battles? To simplify: The bourgeoisie (then called ‘national’), whom the communists should then support, or a front of popular classes, directed by the communists and not the bourgeoisies (who were anti-national, in fact)? The answer to this question often changed and was sometimes confused.

In 1945 the communist parties concerned were aligned, based on the conclusion that Stalin had formulated: The bourgeoisies everywhere in the world (in Europe, aligned with the United States, as in the colonial and semi-colonial countries – in the language of that era) have ‘thrown the national flag into the rubbish bin’ (Stalin’s phrase) and the communists were therefore the only ones who could assemble a united front of the forces that refused to submit to the imperialist, capitalist American order.

The same conclusion was reached by Mao in 1942, but only made known (to us) when his New Democracy had been translated into Western languages in 1952. This thesis held that for the majority of the peoples of the planet, the long road to socialism could only be opened by a ‘national, popular, democratic, anti-feudal and anti-imperialist revolution [the language of the day], run by the communists.’ The underlying message was that other socialist advances were not on the agenda elsewhere, i.e., in the imperialist centres. They could not possibly take shape until after the peoples of the peripheries had inflicted substantial damage on imperialism.

The triumph of the Chinese revolution confirmed this conclusion. The communist parties of South East Asia, in Thailand, Malaysia and Philippines in particular, started liberation struggles inspired by the Vietnamese model. Later, in 1964, Che Guevara held similar views when he called for ‘one, two, three Vietnams.’

## ANTI-IMPERIALISM AND THE ACCUMULATION PROCESS

The avant-garde proposals for initiatives by the independent and anti-imperialist ‘countries of Asia and Africa’, which were formulated by the different communist groups of reflection, were precise and advanced. They are to be found in the Bandung programme and that of the Non-Aligned Movement, of which I gave a systematic presentation in my *L’veil du Sud* (Awakening of the South). The proposals focused on the essential need to reconquer control over the accumulation process (development which is auto-centred and delinked from the world economy).

It so happens that some of these proposals were adopted, although with considerable dilutions in certain countries, as from 1955 to 1960, by the governing classes as a whole in both continents. And at the same time the revolutionary struggles waged by all the communist parties of South East Asia were defeated (except in Vietnam, of course). The conclusion would seem to be that the ‘national bourgeoisie’ had not exhausted its capacity for anti-imperialist struggle. The Soviet Union also came to that conclusion when it decided to support the non-aligned front, while the imperialist Triad declared open warfare against it.

The communists in the countries concerned were then divided between the two tendencies and became involved in painful conflicts that were often confused. Some drew the lesson that it was necessary to ‘support’ the powers in place that were battling imperialism, although this support should remain ‘critical’. Moscow gave wind to their sails by inventing the thesis of the ‘non-capitalist way’. Others conserved the essentials of the Maoist thesis, according to which only a front of the popular classes that was independent of the bourgeoisie could lead a successful struggle against imperialism. The conflict between the Chinese communist party and the Soviet Union, which was apparent as from 1957 but officially declared as from 1960, of course confirmed the second tendency among the Asian and African communists.

However, the potential of the Bandung movement wore out within some fifteen years, emphasising – if it should be needed – the limits of the anti-imperialist programmes of the ‘national bourgeoisies’. Thus the conditions were ripe for the imperialist counter-offensive, the ‘re-compradorisation’ of the Southern economies, if not – for the most vulnerable – their recolonisation.