

BOOK REVIEW

To See the Dawn

Baku, 1920—First Congress of the Peoples of the East

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To See the Dawn, which consists mainly of an edited version of the stenographic report of the 1920 Congress of the Peoples of the East, organized by the Comintern as part of its effort to impose Moscow's control over the international revolutionary movement, is interesting on several scores.

First, it appears opportunely and provides basic background information to help decipher the jumble of developments along the southern frontier of the former Soviet Union during the past half-dozen years. In the aftermath of World War I and the October Revolution, the Russian Empire of the Tsars dissolved into a slew of national components—and that is what appears to be happening once again. This attractively formatted and helpfully illustrated volume provides material for comparing today's situation with that of seven decades ago.

Second, To See the Dawn is interesting because it includes a number of documents, "hidden for many decades in closed Soviet archives," which purport to show that criticism of Great Russian chauvinism was openly expressed at the Congress and that Lenin and the Politburo were sympathetic to the criticism and resolved to end Russian excesses. The editor has also included several rarely seen documents indicating the diverse opinions on Zionism that were expressed at the Congress, such as those of the "Mountain Jews," who were dedicated to the achievement of their "sacred goal—the creation of a Jewish communist society in Palestine"—and those of the Ycvsektu of the Russian Communist Party, which regarded Zionism as the handmaiden of British imperialism.

But by far the most interesting aspect of To See the Dawn is the evaluation this publication of the Trotskyite press makes of the contemporary situation in the Caucasus and Central Asia for the development of Marxism. The position taken is that "Socialism in One Country," the Bolshevik ideological expression of Great Russian nationalism, was entirely a Stalinist contribution for which Lenin had no responsibility. Had Lenin lived, the introduction indicates, there would be no nationality problems in the Former Soviet Union because Lenin recognized the evils of Great Russian domination and would not have permitted them to prevail. This is, of course, just one more application of the proposition, held not only by Trotskyite Marxists, that all of the problems identified with Marxism are the product of Stalinist improvisation. Under Stalinism, the editor states in the introduction, the "continuity" of Marxism was "extinguished" in the Soviet Union and the possibility of its extension throughout the world "closed off." But now that the obstacle posed by Stalinism has been "decisively weakened," the principles of Marxism are destined to be revitalized and its promises fulfilled. "On a world scale, the prospects for realization of the goals of the Baku congress are today better than at any time since the early 1920s."

With this assertion, the editor remains faithful to the Marxist tradition that every major historical development brings the final triumph of communism closer to realization, as he places the disintegration of the Soviet Communist empire into that context.