

## INDIAN COMMUNISM

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

*Hindi Against India—The Meaning of DMK, 1968*

# INDIAN COMMUNISM

## *Split Within a Split*

MOHAN RAM

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For someone  
who willed it — and  
for all my friends in the  
Indian communist movement

# Preface

THE INDIAN COMMUNIST MOVEMENT, now over 40 years old, has split twice within the last five years. The split in the Communist Party of India in 1964 occurred in the wake of the Sino Indian border war of 1962 and roughly synchronised with the international communist schism reflected in the Sino Soviet ideological conflict. But it would be a facile explanation to attribute the first split in the Indian communist movement to either of these factors or to a combination of these factors.

Communist parties of countries which have had no border disputes with China were among those that split about five years ago and therefore Sino-Indian border dispute could not have been the sole or decisive factor in the split in the Communist Party of India (CPI). Likewise, the Sino Soviet ideological dispute could not have been the sole factor in the CPI split because a good many communist parties did not split in spite of the international schism. Some were wholly on the Soviet side, some were wholly on the Chinese side and some remained neutral and united when the international schism came.

The origins of the 1964 split in the CPI predate both the Sino-Indian border dispute and the Sino Soviet ideological conflict though an interaction of the two can be said to have hastened the split. The Sino-Indian border dispute telescoped into the Sino Soviet ideological dispute and Soviet attitude to India in the border dispute was itself to become

an issue in the Sino-Soviet ideological conflict. Secondly, the Sino-Indian border dispute had a close parallel in the Sino-Soviet border dispute which was to escalate later and the Soviet leadership had every reason to fight to retain its influence over the CPI.

Thus the Sino-Indian border dispute and the Sino-Soviet ideological conflict together interacted on a complex pattern of differences that already existed in the CPI. The dominant leadership of the CPI found in the Sino-Indian border dispute an occasion and in the Sino-Soviet ideological conflict an alibi for forcing a split to suit its interests.

Reconstructing the developments at this distance of time, one is inclined to believe that the 1964 split in the CPI was more a secession than an ideological split. For, the break-away wing, which later called itself the Communist Party of India (Marxist), had to split four years after its formation when it came to grips with the question of ideology. The Maoists broke off with the CPI(M) and the Indian communist movement polarized into non-Maoist and Maoist formations.

But Maoism in India is not a phenomenon resulting from the Sino-Soviet ideological conflict, because the CPI threw up a Maoist trend as early as 1948, even before Maoism had been formalized into a comprehensive revolutionary strategy or anything like "Asian" communism had been recognized as something distinct. The first recorded debate on the legitimacy of Mao Tse-tung's teachings as part of Marxism-Leninism dates back to 1948 when the communists of the Andhra region in India challenged the all-India communist leadership by advocating a Maoist strategy for the country's revolution. The Maoist trend in the CPI was suppressed by international communist intervention.

Maoism has returned to India after two decades, with a long suppressed trend reasserting itself in a changed context, amidst the Sino Soviet ideological conflict. The Indian communist movement now comprises two mainstreams — one non Maoist (or anti Maoist) and the other, Maoist.

This study does not claim to be a complete history of the Indian communist movement of the period it covers or a final analysis. Nor does it lay any special claim to scholarship. It is at best a tentative analysis, a preliminary reconstruction of the developments by one who has been close to them since 1946 and had later reported them as a special correspondent. It is the first step towards a more systematic and detailed study the author hopes to undertake later.

Several friends helped me in writing the book and it would be invidious to mention names. Nevertheless, I must acknowledge the unfailing help I got from K. N. Ramachandran and the assistance I got from S. Swaminathan in getting the manuscript ready for the press.

MOHAN RAM



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*Early Maoism : 1946-51*

DISTINCTIVELY WESTERN IN ORIGIN the communist movement in pre Independence India was a colonial adjunct of the Communist Party of Great Britain which in turn was suborned to Moscow. The Communist Party of India formally launched in 1925 had obscure beginnings abroad in the nebulous groups of romantic expatriates — students intellectuals and political exiles and emigres from India. These groups tried to build a movement in India with the help of the Comintern sending the Indian communists back home or working for the cause from abroad. Alongside in India under the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 scores of middle class intellectuals in the freedom movement turned to communism and founded little groups which looked for political direction from abroad. Out of these groups was knocked together the Communist Party of India (CPI).

The CPI had very little Asian character to it and had set its sights on a classical working class revolution. Led by petit bourgeois intellectuals and directed from London and Moscow the party went through a welter of confusion over the strategy and tactics of the Indian revolution reflected in its weird tactical zigzags throughout. It was not until after 1946 when the movement was over 20 years old that any part of the CPI came close to the Asian reality or discovered a strategy of its own.

Even before the British pull out of India after the Mountbatten Award in 1947 the communists of what now constitutes the Telugu speaking Andhra Pradesh State in

south-central India were leading a peasant struggle against the feudal order and monarchy in the Telengana region. The struggle, which had small beginnings in 1946, soon grew into partisan warfare, directed from "liberated villages," and attained the character of a war of national liberation, however short-lived or abortive. Telengana had elements of Yenai.

Irrespective of whether the CPI, through a succession of general secretaries, was committed to a right reformist line (of P. C. Joshi until 1948), a left adventurist line (of B. T. Ranadive until mid 1950), a Maoist line (of C. Rajeswara Rao until early 1951) or a "centrist" line of peaceful constitutionalism (of Ajoy Ghosh until late 1951), the Telengana struggle continued. It was abandoned in October 1951 under pressure from without.

The Andhra communists, who had discovered a uniquely Indian idiom of revolution were in search of a theoretical basis to legitimize it in the eyes of the international communist movement. They turned to Mao Tse-tung's New Democracy (published in 1944) and the Chinese revolution as the model for India. The Telengana struggle incorporated all the basic elements of what later came to be formalized as the Maoist strategy—a two stage revolution based on a clear understanding of the differences between the stages and their interrelation, liberated bases from where peasant struggles could be conducted to achieve proletarian hegemony and the triumph of the democratic revolution, and a close alliance between the working class and the peasant masses towards a revolutionary front with the national bourgeoisie against imperialism. Between 1946 and 1951, the Maoist anti-feudal and anti-imperialist strategy along with the Maoist tactic of peasant partisan warfare found practical application in Telengana under the leadership of the Andhra communists.

The brief period also witnessed what perhaps was the first open debate in a communist party on the legitimacy of Mao Tse-tung's teachings as part of Marxism-Leninism. The

CPI challenged the validity of Mao's theories as a source of Marxism Leninism while the dissidents in the Andhra region continued to apply the teachings over a vast tract. Later, for a brief period the Andhra communists triumphed and exercised their hegemony over the whole party. Then came the coup against the Andhra leadership and its line derived from Mao's teachings. The movement in Telengana continued nevertheless until international communism forced its abandonment in October 1951. Thereafter it has been a long spell of ideological wilderness marked by two splits in the movement during the last five years. The first split, in 1964 roughly coincides with schism in the international communist movement. India's second communist party came into being as a result of the split. The new party split in 1968 leading to a third party and the imminence of a fourth party. The latest developments signify the re-assertion — though with all the attendant distortions — of a trend that later came to be described as Maoism but was suppressed in India as early as 1951.

India's Independence in 1947 should provide a convenient starting point to understand the origins of the ideological confusion that has been afflicting the Indian communist movement in the recent years. The CPI's attitude to the Mountbatten Award leading to India's Independence was itself one of unmitigated confusion leading to a swing in its strategy from right reformism of the days preceding Independence to left sectarianism proclaimed early in 1948.

#### THE PARTY BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

M N Roy, a young Indian revolutionary who went to the United States and then to Mexico where he helped found the communist party, was the Comintern's first link with the Indian communist movement. Roy, who headed the Mexican delegation to the Second Congress of the Comintern (July-August 1920), achieved international recognition when he challenged Lenin's thesis on strategy

and tactics for the colonial countries and produced an alternative draft thesis. Both the drafts were modified after discussion and adopted. Roy next went to Tashkent as one of three members of the new Central Asian Bureau of the Comintern. His principal task in Tashkent was to recruit a liberation army for India from among the Indian emigres there. His converts mainly were from the fanatic band of Muslims (*muhajir*) who had fled India in the hope of going to Turkey. One of them Shaukat Usmani founded the short-lived Indian Communist Party in Tashkent despite Roy's attempts to discourage the effort.

Shortly afterwards Roy who was a member of the Comintern executive was sent to Berlin to direct the Cominform effort in India. He started a bimonthly journal *Vanguard of Indian Independence* which was to change its name several times until 1928. Copies of the journal and of the Comintern's official organ *Improcor* were smuggled into India with the help of Indian seamen to provide guidance to the numerous communist groups. In August 1922 Roy asked the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) for the services of two functionaries to organize the party in India. But the only functionary sent Charles Ashleigh was detained by the British Government and deported before he could set to work. By now several communist groups were active in the major Indian cities. The more important of them were those led by Singaravelu Chettiar in Madras, S. A. Dange in Bombay and Muzaffar Ahmed in Calcutta. Roy's plan was to unite communists from all over India into a single country-wide organization. But the Cawnpore conspiracy case in February 1924 delayed the formation of the all-India party because most of the prominent communist functionaries were implicated in the case. The first conference of the Communist Party of India was held in 1925 with most leaders still in jail.

The 1924-25 period witnessed a sharp decline in Roy's influence in India and the Communist Party of Great Britain took over the task of guiding the Indian communist move-

ment The Fifth Comintern Congress had asked for close contact between the communist parties of the imperialist countries and the communists in their colonies So the CPGB set up a Colonial Committee in 1925 and sent Percy E Glading (alias R Cochrane) to India to make a report on the situation Roy's protests against this to the Comintern resulted in a detente between him and the CPGB which had meanwhile gained control of the movement in India Among functionaries sent to India were George Allison (alias Donald Campbell) and Phillip Spratt who was joined later by Benjamin F Bradley in September 1927 and last in the chain was H I Hutchinson in September 1928

The CPI was the illegal apparatus of the legal front' organization the Workers and Peasants Party The first all India conference of the Workers and Peasants Party was held in December 1928 but in the meantime the Sixth Congress of the Comintern (August-September 1928) had adopted its famous colonial thesis Revolutionary Movement in Colonies and Semi-colonies which called for a bourgeois democratic revolution in the colonies Defining the specific tasks for India it called for the "union of all communist groups and individual communists scattered throughout the country into single independent and centralized party" and for a ruthless exposure of the national reformism in the Indian National Congress But there was intense confusion among the Indian communists because the advice it was getting from the Comintern and the CPGB was conflicting The Comintern wanted a single centralized communist organization for India and this implied the liquidation of the Workers and Peasants Party while the CPGB wanted this front party to continue But the Comintern's tenth plenum in July 1929 clinched the issue for the Indian communists by denouncing the two-class Workers and Peasants Party Meanwhile on 20 March 1929, the British Government struck a severe blow at the Indian communist movement picking up 31 top party and trade union functionaries in the Meerut conspiracy case

Nevertheless the new Comintern orientation resulted in a disastrous tactical swing in India in 1930. The communist opposition to the struggle launched by Mahatma Gandhi was in line with the Comintern's call for an exposure of the reformist leadership but this isolated the CPI from the mass movement. The CPI tried to form an anti-imperialist League outside the Congress fold. It forced a split in the All India Trade Union Congress and formed a rival Red Trade Union Congress. The CPI itself split into two though only for a short while. Amidst this confusion some of the Meerut conspiracy prisoners sought the Comintern's intervention to check the sectarian drift. The result was the *Open Letter to the Indian Communists in June 1932* signed by the communist parties of China, Great Britain and Germany. The letter castigated the Indian communists for following the Comintern line too rigidly and the resultant isolation of the party from the Congress led mass movement. It also called for an all India communist party. With the release of the Meerut prisoners the party was able to correct the ultra left deviation but only to a degree. There was more specific direction regarding party organization through a second letter of advice this time from the Chinese Communist Party which advocated the formation of a "militant mass Indian communist party".

As fascism gained ascendancy in Germany threatening international communism the Comintern line underwent a major shift at its Seventh Congress in 1935. Wang Ming of China was the principal exponent of the new line for colonial countries. He singled the Indian communists out for severe criticism of their left sectarian errors and prescribed a soft line towards the Congress and the freedom movement led by it. In short it was a call for an anti-imperialist united front, the colonial variation of *Front Populaire* and communist identification with bourgeois nationalism.

India was not represented at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern but Rajani Palme Dutt and Benjamin Bradley of the CPGB took upon themselves the task of interpreting

the new line for India. The exposition came in the form of the "Dutt Bradley thesis" which underscored the role of the Indian National Congress in the anti-imperialist people's front and the importance of the Congress Socialist Party—a component of the Congress—to left unity. The result was a united front from below with the Congress Socialist Party which had agreed to admit individual communists (The CPI had technically been illegal since 1930). Soon, following charges of communist attempts to disrupt the party and to capture it, the Congress Socialist Party stopped admitting communists. The communists next tried the tactic of united front from below to infiltrate the Congress and succeeded largely under the CPGB's direction.

With the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August 1939, the Indian communists could with equanimity step up their campaign against the 'Imperialist War' when Hitler invaded Poland. This invited a repressive retaliation from the British Government. Amidst these developments, the communists could have attempted a united front from above with the Congress or chosen a hard line fighting both the imperialist war and Congress 'reformism'. But the Soviet entry into the war forced a new dilemma on the communists who were debating the international communist call for support to the 'People's War'. But what is believed to have decided the issue was a letter from Harry Pollitt of the CPGB delivered to the jailed leadership in the Deoli prison camp with the connivance of the British jail authorities. The letter is believed to have directed the CPI's support to the war effort.

The Indian communist somersault from 'Imperialist War' to 'People's War' in February 1942 was followed by the legalization of the CPI. In August 1942 the Congress launched the Quit India movement and was declared illegal. The CPI stepped into the vacuum and consolidated its hold over many mass organizations to capture as many as was possible. The main communist activity was directed at aiding the British war effort in India.



## THE MOUNTBATTEN AWARD

After the Second World War the CPI which had isolated itself from the mainstream of the 1942 Quit India movement found itself overtaken by the dizzy pace of the political and constitutional developments culminating in the British Cabinet Mission to India in February 1946. A plan for the final settlement of the Indian question was taking shape. A year later on 70 February 1947 Britain announced its decision to withdraw from India in 18 months. Lord Louis Mountbatten replaced Lord Wavell as Viceroy to work out the plan for a settlement. The plan which in its final form became the Mountbatten Award was announced by Prime Minister Clement Attlee in the House of Commons on 3 June 1947 and the date for the formal British abdication in the subcontinent—15 August 1947—was announced the following day.

Writing 17 years later a top CPI theoretician found that the ideological political beginnings of the differences in the party which were to lead to an open split in 1964 went back to its confused understanding of the Mountbatten Award. This development posed several issues for the CPI: the nature of the award, the class essence of the new State and the strategy and tactics for the new period.<sup>1</sup>

The CPI's confusion in a sense reflected Moscow's confusion or more correctly the absence of any clear directive from Moscow on the award. The day after the award was known the CPI General Secretary denounced it as a diabolical plan to balkanize India because it involved not only the partition of India to create a Pakistan but also excluded the States ruled by the Princes from the settlement. He pledged the party's efforts to the single aim of defeating at all costs the new and dangerous imperialist manoeuvres and towards ensuring victory to the cause of full and final

<sup>1</sup> I. M. S. Nanbhoodipad, *Note for the Programme of the CPI*, 4 Windsor Place, New Delhi, 1964, P. 65.

independence for the whole of India”<sup>2</sup>

The initial CPI reaction to the plan seemed to have anticipated the Soviet reaction. Almost simultaneously, a Soviet article denounced the award as a manoeuvre to perpetuate British control of the subcontinent and said that, in accepting it under pressure from “top levels of India’s wealthy classes,” the Indian leadership was “abandoning their former position.” But there was no forthright condemnation of the Congress leadership for its compromise — this was the line of the CPI — suggesting that a large Congress section under Jawaharlal Nehru was still a progressive force<sup>3</sup>

But even before it could read this article the Central Committee of the CPI went into a 10 day session in New Delhi to discuss the Mountbatten Award. The crucial question the party faced according to a later day account, was

what was the economic significance of the transfer of power, does it mean greater opportunities for the national bourgeoisie to take the country along the path of capitalist development, will it take the economy of the nation in the direction of slower or more rapid elimination of its colonial and feudal features and strengthen the capitalist features, how will the forces of revolution headed by the working class play their role in completing the bourgeois democratic revolution and launching the process of socialist revolution?<sup>4</sup>

With the main question of ideology went the question of policy, whether the old anti imperialist front of all classes suffice or should the forces led by the working class develop their struggles against their erstwhile allies? The bourgeoisie was now the class in power and that made all the

<sup>2</sup> P. C. Joshi “The Mountbatten Award,” *People’s Age*, Bombay, 8 June 1947

<sup>3</sup> A. Dvakov, “The New British Plan for India,” *New Times*, Moscow, 13 June 1947

<sup>4</sup> I. M. S. Namboodiripad, *op. cit.*, p. 61

difference to the situation

The outcome was a resolution pledging unqualified support to the nationalist leadership under Jawaharlal Nehru and calling for a national front

Though the resolution began with a customary denunciation of the award as a "manoeuvre" for transition from direct to indirect rule, it recognized that the plan did represent "new opportunities for national advance" It pledged full co-operation to the national leadership for the "proud task of building the Indian Republic on democratic foundations, thus paving the way for Indian unity" Such co-operation was to be extended through a "broadest joint front" to be built on the initiative of "all progressives — the communists, the left elements in the Congress, and the League" The task of the working class and the peasantry "in the coming critical transitional phase" was to ensure that the fight for real independence, full democracy, and Indian unity achieved "final victory" and then play their full role in forging the unity of the National Front, "shoulder to shoulder with all the progressives and left elements in the country"<sup>5</sup>

#### RIGHT OPPORTUNISM

Shorn of verbiage, the resolution meant a non-class approach on the assumption that the new government was no longer an imperialist government or its satellite and it was a national independent government beset by problems and threatened by an imperialist conspiracy The resolution thus sanctioned a united front from above with the Nehru government and the Congress section behind him

According to a party theoretician, the resolution emphasized both aspects of the transfer of power — the compromise of the national leadership with imperialism as well as the retreat forced on imperialism by the rising mass national revolt An independent State had been created but im-

<sup>5</sup> "Statement of Policy," *People's Age*, 29 June 1947

penalism was conspiring to exploit the partition difficulties, princes and feudal forces. Its economic grip over the country made independence formal. The resolution also implied that the new State was no longer an imperialist State because power vested in the nationalist leadership, which the CPI recognized at that time, represented the national bourgeoisie's interests.<sup>6</sup>

But another theoretician who thinks the resolution represented a non-class approach and right opportunism, recalls that a minority had disagreed with it. According to him, the first ideological trend to emerge after India's Independence had found expression in the resolution. The ideological basis of the resolution was that, though imperialism was forced to make "important concessions to the urgent demand of the national liberation movement," complete independence was not a reality yet. Since imperialism and feudalism continued to be well-entrenched, the anti-imperialist front the CPI was trying to build in the post-Independence days called for "unity of all—from Gandhi to communists."<sup>7</sup>

Moscow's assessment of the Mountbatten Award did not tally with the CPI's. In July 1947, a Soviet article heralded a cold war on the Nehru government while the CPI had just decided on unqualified support to his leadership. The article by E. M. Zhukov charged the Congress leadership—in his view the representative of the big bourgeoisie—with capitulating to reaction and to imperialism and with being content with its deal for formal independence alongside continued British economic and military links. Zhukov's new strategy for the CPI called for an anti-imperialist united front from below drawing the wavering bourgeoisie into it.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> C. Adhikari, *Communist Party and India's Path to National Regeneration and Socialism*. Communist Party of India, New Delhi, 1964, pp. 88-9.

<sup>7</sup> E. M. S. Namboodirpad, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> E. M. Zhukov, "The Indian Situation." Russian original in 1947, *On Colonial Question*, PPH, Bombay, 1948.

## ZHIDANOV LINE

In any case the June 1947 line of the CPI was to be short lived. It changed by a strange coincidence with the famous Zhdanov report to the inaugural meeting of the Cominform in September 1947. The Zhukov line earlier while indicating a Soviet cold war against the Nehru government was vague about whether the Indian big bourgeoisie was to be fought or not. This point was not clarified by Zhdanov either.

Zhdanov merely worked out the strategy against imperialism in the epoch of the general crisis of the colonial system amidst a weakening of the imperialist system as a whole following its failure to crush the colonial liberation movements. In the new situation the chief danger to the working class lies in underrating its own strength and overrating the strength of the enemy and communists should lead the movements to oppose the plans of imperialist expansion and aggression along every line<sup>9</sup>.

The resolution of the Cominform meeting on the basis of the Zhdanov report ended with a call against imperialism for the unity of the communist ranks "on the basis of a common anti-imperialist and democratic platform and rally all the democratic and patriotic forces of the people"<sup>10</sup>.

A few months of the application of the June 1947 line reduced the CPI to an appendage of the Congress Party. The upheaval and the communal riots that followed India's partition provided the "right reformist" leadership an alibi for abandoning struggle against the new bourgeois-led government which had been characterized by the resolution as a "popular government" behind which national unification was possible. The communists were even looking for allies in the Congress. The radical elements who resented

<sup>9</sup> A Zhdanov "The International Situation" *For a Lasting Peace For a People's Democracy* 10 November 1947

<sup>10</sup> *People's Age* 12 October 1947

this opportunism in the name of foiling the imperialist' plot against the Nehru government were becoming restive. The Zhdanov line appears to have come in handy to these elements in their struggle against the Joshi line and to force a policy shift at the December 1947 meeting of the Central Committee.

The two main reformist deviations resulting from the June 1947 line according to B. P. Ranadive were that the edge of the party's struggle against imperialism was dulled and it began to trail behind the bourgeoisie instead of exposing it and following an independent policy'. As a result, the party was tending to line up behind the 'hypocritical bourgeois slogan of national reconstruction' and to settle for industrial truce (a treacherous slogan) when it set its face against strikes even after the capitalist offensive against the working class. Particularly noticeable was an anxiety to back Gandhi and Nehru 'instead of exposing their policy of phying into the hands of imperialist feudal not-mongers'<sup>11</sup>

Amidst the backslide and retreat resulting from the reformist line advocated mainly by Joshi even the radical elements in the Central Committee began to vacillate and the June 1947 resolution could secure unanimous passage. Ranadive says nobody realized the enormity of the reformist deviation involved in it. The CPI even built up a theory of differences between a 'reactionary' Sardar Patel (who was the Home Minister) and Gandhi and Nehru forgetting the simple truth that the "riot offensive" of imperialism and its allies could not be defeated by lining up behind Gandhi and Nehru.<sup>12</sup>

According to G. Adhikari who was in the Politbureau, three factors dominated the CPI's understanding of the situation. In its subjective assessment, the party thought the upsurge in the country was against the compromise of the national leadership and not for the consolidation of

<sup>11</sup> 'Self-Critical Report to Second Party Congress,' *People's Age*, 21 March 1948.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*.

national independence. The communists were particularly angry at the government's repressive measures against the working class and the party. In the situation developing after the riots the party was deadlocked because the June 1947 resolution did not help them to get a move on from the dead centre.<sup>13</sup>

Towards the end of 1947 the radical elements in the Central Committee forced a change in policy under Rana Dives leadership. The December 1947 resolution denounced the June 1947 understanding of the situation as one of opportunism and ended the illusion that the Nehru government could be pressured into following leftist policies or into including leftist elements. The new resolution was a total break with the immediate past based on a new understanding of the role of the bourgeoisie in power which had abandoned its opposition to imperialist domination and had turned collaborationist. The resolution found that the Indian big business had become a reactionary force opposed to anti-imperialist national front.

In line with the Zhdanov thesis of a world divided into two hostile camps the resolution saw in the acceptance of the Mountbatten Award a capitulation to the position of collaborating with Anglo-American imperialism. What the Award gave India was only fake independence. The bourgeoisie was subservient to the British whose domination had not ended but had assumed a new form because it 'does not really signify the retreat of imperialism but its cunning counter-offensive against the rising forces of the Indian people'.<sup>14</sup> The party was no longer confused in its attitude to the national bourgeoisie; it had to be fought through a democratic front and an all-out war against the Nehru

<sup>13</sup> C. Adhikari, *Communist Party and India's Path to National Regeneration and Socialism* p. 99.

<sup>14</sup> *Communist Statement of Policy For the Struggle for Full Independence and People's Democracy*, Bombay 1947. Excerpts from this document appeared in *World News and Views*, London 17 January 1948.

government From right reformism and united front with the Congress from above the CPI's line was swinging to the other extreme The December 1947 resolution was the basis of the *Political Thesis* to be adopted by the Second Congress of the party in Calcutta early in 1948

## CALCUTTA THESIS

The Calcutta congress elected extremist Ranadive as the General Secretary in place of Joshi and called for a people's democratic front from below a new class alliance of the working class peasantry and revolutionary intelligentsia (or the oppressed middle class) under working class leadership The slogan of power was a democratic State of workers peasants and the petit bourgeoisie to be attained through a one stage people's democratic revolution through violent means<sup>15</sup>

The Second Congress documents were essentially an elaboration of the December 1947 resolution because the emphasis now was more on the concept of one stage revolution and the violent means to achieve it An armed struggle already on in Telengana acquired a new relevance to the extremist leadership which was gaining control of the party Ranadive declared Telengana is another big landmark in the history of the struggles under the leadership of the party Here we took the struggle to new qualitative heights with exemplary organization Telengana today means Communists and Communists mean Telengana<sup>16</sup>

Thus the CPI was now in open war with the bourgeoisie and the government run by it and was waiting for the imminent revolution To what extent the switch to a left strategy was dictated by the Zhdanov line is still a matter of speculation Two years after the Calcutta congress Joshi said that in December 1947 the Central Committee revised

<sup>15</sup> *Political Thesis of CPI Bombay 1948* pp 75-6

<sup>16</sup> *People's Age* 21 March 1948



its post war policy on the basis of the Zhdanov Report" and that in February 1948 the Calcutta congress endorsed the new policy while the "sectarian oversimplification" involved it remained unnoticed due to the "theoretical immaturity" of the party's following.<sup>17</sup> But 16 years later, a senior leader of the 1948 days offered elaborate but convincing reasoning to establish that the Cominform documents of September 1947 were of little direct help to the CPI in formulating the *Political Thesis*.<sup>18</sup>

One could at best surmise that Moscow had no clear line yet for Asian countries, more particularly India, and the CPI read the Zhdanov line all wrong to arrive at incorrect formulations. Adhikari thinks the mistakes were the result of a wrong understanding and application of the Sixth World Comintern Congress thesis but Joshi does not agree with this. He thinks Ranadive mixed up two elements of the Zhdanov thesis — the relative positions of the capitalist and socialist worlds in the epoch of the general crisis and the contradictions manifesting themselves in the form of American imperialism's drive for world domination and wars of aggression. The *Political Thesis* based on a wrong understanding, reached the conclusion that the bourgeoisie as a whole had gone counter-revolutionary and was in the Anglo-American bloc.<sup>19</sup>

#### SOVIET ADVICE

But there appears to have been a formal and feeble Soviet attempt to draw the CPI's attention to some of the mistaken formulations in the *Political Thesis*. According to Joshi, soon after the Calcutta congress, *Bolshevik*, the Soviet party's official journal "positively corrected our mistaken

<sup>17</sup> P. C. Joshi, "Letter to Foreign Comrades," *Views*, Hourly, 1950, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> G. Adhikari, *Communist Party and India's Path to National Regeneration and Socialism*, p. 105.

<sup>19</sup> P. C. Joshi, "Letter to Foreign Comrades" *loc. cit.*, pp. 34-5.

formulations by making alternative formulations," particularly regarding the character of the Indian bourgeoisie. But Ranadive did not reconsider his viewpoint on the bourgeoisie and the article was not even reprinted in *People's Age* though Joshi admits that it was circulated among leading party cadres<sup>20</sup>. There is no evidence of a Soviet follow-up on the *Bolshevik* article.

Further evidence to suggest that the *Political Thesis* was the result of a wrong understanding and application of the Zhdanov line is available from yet another source. S. A. Dange recalls that, quite some time before the Second Congress the Politbureau was divided on the character of Independence. Joshi thought it was not a sham but a victory for the people. The two others in the Politbureau, Ranadive and Adhikari, held that independence was a sham and a manoeuvre. "Joshi was put in a quarantine and Ranadive became the virtual General Secretary."

Dange also recalls that as he was going to Europe it was suggested to him that he could consult the communists there on the new perspectives.

I had the benefit of discussing things with Tito and Kardelj [Kardelj?] in Belgrade. I talked to Zapotovski in Czechoslovakia. I met Dimitrov in Sofia and finally the comrades in Moscow.

I was diffident when speaking to Comrade Zhdanov. "I want to discuss a few things about India. But there is no Comintern now," I said.

"There is no Cominform but international brotherhood remains. So let us talk," he said. Then I learnt that he had just returned from the meeting of the European Communist Parties where the Cominform had been formed<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> P. C. Joshi, "Letter to Foreign Comrades" and "Covering Letter on Letter to Foreign Comrades," *Views*, Howrah, 1950.

<sup>21</sup> S. A. Dange, "Can a Country have more than One Communist Party?" *Mainstream*, 3 August 1968.

Indian communists knew little about these developments when their understanding of Independence was changing. The Zhdanov report might have provided an alibi to those trying to change the party line. Though it was Europe-centred its references to the colonial situation vague, the Zhdanov thesis did have the newly emerging freedom in the colonial world in view. By the time Dange returned to India the Politbureau had already decided the line for the Second Congress. Dange's version of the subsequent developments is interesting.

*A sober class analysis of the new phenomenon of a colonial country acquiring independence was not done. At the Congress the slogans and approach that were embodied in the Cominform manifesto were ignored. The oppositional role of the national bourgeoisie was underrated or almost ruled out. Even the short message of greetings of the CPSU which spoke of strengthening the independence and sovereignty of India was virtually suppressed though formally read. Those who raised it in the Central Committee were brushed aside as reading too much meaning in a formal message.*"

Joshi underlining the folly of the one stage revolution concept and the manner in which it was arrived at says that the Ranadive leadership adopted the strategy of socialist revolution for democratic revolution and masked the folly with the Titoic phrase of the 'intertwining of the two stages of revolution'.<sup>22</sup>

The 'intertwining' theory was propounded by the Yugoslav leader Edvard Kardelj at the Cominform's inaugural meeting in September 1947 where Zhdanov delivered his

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>23</sup> P. C. Joshi *Problems of Mass Movement* Allahabad 1950  
p. 5

famous report<sup>24</sup> Ranadive seems to have based his anti-capitalist strategy largely on Yugoslav thinking which had enthused many extremists in the CPI before the Calcutta congress. Significance attaches to the participation in the congress of a fraternal delegation from the Yugoslav League of Communists comprising Vladimir Dedijer (Tito's biographer later) and Radoven Zokovic.

#### SECTARIANISM TO TERRORISM

From the left sectarian oversimplification in the Calcutta thesis to a sectarian deviation in practice was an inevitable next step for the party. In the months following the congress, the CPI went on an adventurist spree, launching a wave of strikes and trying to convert every partial strike into a general strike. When it found itself isolated from the people, it switched to terrorism, sabotage, and violence inviting crippling attacks from the government leading to the liquidation of the party in most areas by mid-1949.

Joshi noticed two basic problems before the party in the wake of the congress. It had no tactical line because the leadership could not work it out collectively and every unit and leader had one's own line. Secondly, there was a drift over working out the organizational implications of the new political line. As a result, functionaries who had not been herded into jails continued to work openly as before and were picked up in due course. Those who had gone underground did little more than send out "instructions" while they themselves looked for instructions from above.<sup>25</sup>

When the government cracked down on the party, it had hardly prepared for the semi-legal functioning that the new political line required of it. The consequences were disas-

<sup>24</sup> Kardelj's speech entitled "Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the Struggle for Independence of her Peoples, for the People's Power and Socialist Reconstruction of the Economy" was published in *People's Age*, 22 February 1948. A month after the Zhdanov report had been published (*People's Age*, 25 January 1948).

<sup>25</sup> P. C. Joshi, "Letter to Foreign Comrades," loc. cit.

trous. With the leadership scattered between jail and underground the tactical line or its organizational implication were never worked out. There was no collective functioning by the leadership and Ranadive was directing the entire adventurist operation in his splendid isolation. The CPI's practical failures in the mass fronts sent it hurtling from its sectarian deviation to misdirected terrorism in the second half of 1949. The party had been declared illegal in several States early in 1949 and enjoyed only formal legality in the rest. It attempted a political struggle through the mass fronts and in the process liquidated most of them. Its failure here led to further acts of terrorism and violence. Against the wishes of the All India Railwaymen's Federation (in which it had a fraction) the CPI called a country wide strike by railwaymen for 9 March 1949 and believed that the strike would be the first step towards seizure of power through *insurrection*. Not only was there no response to the call but communists found themselves expelled by the *socialists from the federation*.

The Ranadive line had virtually broken up the trade unions the CPI had been controlling. The peasant movement did not exist in most part of the country. Other mass fronts stood paralyzed under the impact of the government's sledge hammer blows. Morale in the party had sunk low and functionaries in the jails were vacillating while dissenters outside were being expelled right and left and denounced as traitors.

The second half of 1949 witnessed feeble attempts by the CPI to initiate a wave of movements. All these movements ended in failure. In June the detenus in West Bengal jails were asked to go on strike and this led to police firing on the detenus. The call for a general strike to back the "jail struggle" was a fiasco despite the fact the CPI had its best trade union base in West Bengal. There were more jail struggles" leading to blood baths.

In September the call for a strike in the Calcutta Corporation was a resounding failure when given by the com.

minist dominated All India Trade Union Congress but was a success when given by the Congress controlled Indian National Trade Union Congress a little later. The communist union had to support the strike which was called off after a few concessions had been won. When the communists called for its continuance, the workers did not respond. In November, the CPI called an all Bengal strike in the jute mill industry but not a single mill closed. On 2 January 1950 it called a one day all India token strike in the textile mill industry and even the most modest claims it made about the impact were found to be absurdly false.

Joshi bitterly complained later that the Leninist principle of 'leadership of the vanguard' was 'prostituted' to inspire members to indulge in individual or group acts of terrorism by invoking typical Indian terrorist or Russian *narodnik* arguments. Functionaries in jail were called upon to "commit suicide" through repeated hunger strikes and instructions were mandatory under threats of expulsion. Only the petit bourgeoisie youth sections could be mobilized for the terroristic acts and raids.<sup>26</sup>

The political sanction for this disruptive line came through an authoritarian revision of the formulations of the *Political Thesis*. The new Politbureau did not meet for eight months after the congress and when it met (in September-December 1948), it laid the liquidationist line in its document *Strategy and Tactics*.<sup>27</sup> Joshi thinks that while polemizing against group violence this document really provided the basis for the tactics of raids and the ideology of the acid bulb.<sup>28</sup>

#### TELENGANA PEASANT WAR

The occasion for the revision was the battle against the

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>27</sup> In its full form, this was circulated as a party document. An abridged version appeared as "Struggle for People's Democracy and Socialism—Some Questions of Strategy and Tactics," *Communist* (monthly), Bombay, June-July 1949.

<sup>28</sup> P. C. Joshi, 'Letter to Foreign Comrades,' *loc. cit.*, p. 15

Andhra Provincial Committee of the party which had submitted to the central leadership a document known as the *Andhra Letter*<sup>29</sup> of 1948 four months after the Calcutta congress. The Andhra leadership had been directing the agrarian movement in the Telugu speaking tracts of the erstwhile Hyderabad State known as Telengana which adjoined the Telugu speaking tract of the erstwhile Madras State known as the Andhra region. As early as 1946 the movement had developed into armed clashes with the feudal regime and the communists were organizing the peasantry on the basis of an agrarian programme. The struggle broke out in 1946 when in the district of Nalgonda alone 10 000 people were arrested and innumerable women raped. The struggle flared up again in 1947 and starting in 150 villages it has spread to hundreds of villages more according to a report<sup>30</sup>.

On the eve of the Second Congress the CPI journal reported in detail on the "liberated areas of Hyderabad and the agrarian programme of the liberation movement" led by the CPI and its front organization *Andhra Maha Sabha*. The programme comprised distribution of fallow government land to agricultural labourers, distribution of fallow *zamindari* land to tillers (landlords loyal to the free administration were to be paid a fair rent and the disloyal toadies to be deprived for the land without any rent), substantial reduction in rent, illegalization of eviction of tenants, guarantee of minimum wages to labourers and complete stoppage of extra levies and taxes<sup>31</sup>.

At the Second Congress the "revolutionary significance" of Telengana was realized as a result of strong criticism of

<sup>29</sup> This document in its full version is not available but it has been summarized in the *Self-Critical Report of the Andhra Communist Committee* (typescript 1951).

<sup>30</sup> *Telengana Peasants Fight for Freedom* People's Age 2, January 1948.

<sup>31</sup> *Nizam's Rule Non-existent over Large Parts of Hyderabad* People's Age 15 February 1948.

*Political Thesis* from the delegates representing Telengana. They said the thesis did not realize the significance of the struggle to the "present epoch of maturing democratic revolution in India." The criticism was no sooner made than accepted and a delegate from Telengana moved a special resolution on this and the congress adopted it amidst resounding cheers.<sup>32</sup> The new leadership's support to Telengana was reflected in the reports appearing in the party journal in the weeks following the congress. One was about the expanding 'liberated zones' and the "consolidation and organization of people's power' in these zones. "To the forty lakh liberated people ten lakh more have been added in the last few weeks and the vast area of the territory over which the Nizam's autocracy has been destroyed has also considerably grown in size," it claimed.

The report also detailed numerous guerilla encounters with the Nizam's police, military and the private army known as the Razakars. It recounted a series of 20 well planned and co-ordinated acts on 26-27 February 1948 to disrupt rail communications temporarily paralysing railway traffic in the State as part of the effort to destroy Nizam's rule over non-liberated areas. Peoples governments, people's courts and people's militia's were springing up all over the free territory.<sup>33</sup> In short it was a liberation war. According to another document, almost the whole of Nalgonda and Warangal districts were under communist rule.<sup>34</sup>

But the Nizam was holding out refusing to accede to the Indian Union and trying to secure British support to his case for a sovereign Nizam State and to take the issue to the United Nations. Faced with a communist controlled zone in Telengana and a popular movement for accession

<sup>32</sup> "Review of the Second Party Congress,' *People's Age*, 21 March 1948

<sup>33</sup> 'People's Free Governments being set up over Liberated Areas of Hyderabad,' *People's Age*, 21 March 1948

<sup>34</sup> 'On Telengana,' Information Document No 7(2), 7 October 1950



to India in the rest of the State he entered into negotiations with New Delhi. Typical of Ranadive leadership's reaction was the slogan "Arms for Hyderabad People". The CPI called for end to 'surrender negotiations' with the Nizam to make way for armed people's "popular intervention" before 'imperialist intervention' began<sup>35</sup>. As New Delhi began thinking of military intervention to secure the State's accession to the Indian Union, the CPI called for 'final resistance, armed resistance' to "fascist terror". It had no faith in New Delhi's action, even if it were military action but wanted the people armed and a mass campaign launched over the heads of Congressmen of Hyderabad who it thought were compromising their struggle<sup>36</sup>. But the Indian army marched into Hyderabad in September 1948.

While breaking with the reformist line of Joshi's days the Ranadive Politbureau did not give serious political thought to Telengana. It broadly supported the armed struggle but did not effectively support the local leadership which was in the thick of the struggle. The explanation here has to be sought in Ranadive's dogmatic reliance on revolution by the urban proletariat and not by the peasantry. In actual practice Ranadive's line of adventurist terror in the urban areas turned out to be a failure degenerating into petit bourgeois revolutionarism because the "revolutionary upsurge" he saw did not really exist<sup>37</sup>.

#### THE MAOIST ALTERNATIVE

But the peasant partisan warfare in Andhra Pradesh was on the offensive. The Andhra leadership, young and well knit executed its own line defying Ranadive. *The Andhra Letter*

<sup>35</sup> *People's Age* 27 June 1948

<sup>36</sup> *People's Age* 25 July 1948

<sup>37</sup> According to Ajoy Ghosh, Ranadive expected a revolution within six months. Prabodh Chandra (pseudonym of Ajoy Ghosh), 'On "A Note on Present Situation in our Party,"' *PIIQ Open Forum* No 12, October 1950 pp 56

of June 1948 proposed a strategy based on Mao Tse-tung's New Democracy to realize the Second Congress programme thereby challenging Ranadives adventurist tactical line. The Andhra thesis was an attempt at applying the Chinese experience to the Indian situation rejecting the contention that the situation in India was similar to that of pre 1917 Russia. As it summed up

Our revolution in many respects differs from the classical Russian revolution and is to a great extent similar to that of the Chinese Revolution. The perspective is likely not that of [sic] general strikes and general rising leading to the liberation of the rural sides, but the dogged resistance and prolonged civil war in the form of an agrarian revolution culminating in the capture of political power by the democratic front<sup>28</sup>

Applying the Chinese lessons the Andhra thesis identified feudalism and imperialism as the main enemies and the stage of revolution that was beginning as the new democratic stage as distinct from that of a proletarian revolution. It saw the CPI's struggle as part of the national liberation struggles in South East Asia. In Mao's New Democracy it saw a new form of revolutionary struggle to advance towards socialism in colonies and semi-colonies. Mao advanced new democracy as distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat<sup>29</sup>

The four-class strategy proposed by the Andhra leadership aimed at uniting the entire peasantry (including the rich peasantry) under the working class leadership for "guerrilla warfare". With imperialism and feudalism as its main enemies the strategy aimed at including a section of the bourgeoisie in the united front because only the big bour

<sup>28</sup> Quoted from *Andhra Letter* in 'Struggle for People's Democracy and Socialism—Some Questions of Strategy and Tactics' *Communist* June July 1949

geoisie, like the big landlords, had become reactionary. 'the middle peasant is a firm ally in the revolution and participates in the revolution. The rich peasant who has no feudal ties can be neutralized as a class but in areas like Telengana and Rayalaseema, where feudalism is very strong it is even possible to get sections of the rich peasantry in the struggle (though vacillating)'"<sup>29</sup> Thus the Andhra leadership advocating a two stage revolution, seeking the inclusion of the middle bourgeoisie in the united front and relying on the peasantry and armed struggle, was the custodian of Mao's teachings in India long before Maoism came to be formalized as a strategy.

#### RANADIVE ATTACKS ANDHRA THESIS

Ranadive could contain the opposition to his line from the trade union veterans by invoking the rules of discipline in the name of democratic centralism. But the challenge from the Andhra leadership was on the ideological plane, calling for a polemical battle. The Politbureau at its marathon session (September-December 1948) turned out four documents which together constitute Ranadive's counter attack on the Andhra leadership.

The first of the four, 'On People's Democracy' restated the orthodox Sixth World Congress of the Comintern (1928) position and contended that imperialism had been eliminated from India and that the democratic revolution virtually over was about to dovetail into a socialist revolution. There was no direct reference to the Andhra thesis, Mao Tse tung, or the Chinese party but there were implied attacks on all the three. In his anxiety to justify his per formulation of 'people's democracy,' Ranadive even took an uncertain leap from his earlier formulation in the *Political Thesis* which had referred to a "colonial order" in India and of a "satellite State" Ranadive was now definite about

the main enemy. It was the Indian bourgeoisie and not foreign imperialism in a national State. "What place does the fight against imperialism occupy in the struggle? the bourgeoisie has secured a national State, linked with world capitalism, and therefore a satellite State. Freedom and independence now mean freedom from the world capitalist order — not from this or that imperialism only. Thus, again, the task of fighting for real freedom is linked with the defeat of capitalists at home."<sup>40</sup>

The second document, "On the Agrarian Question in India," applies the strategic formula expounded in the earlier document to a specific problem. While the *Political Thesis* stressed the feudal character of the economy and called for an anti-feudal struggle with special attention to the agricultural labourer, the new analysis made a notable departure. The peasant struggle was to be not only anti-feudal but also anti-rich peasant because he hired others to work for him and was, therefore, a capitalist. The analysis sees in the emergence of the rich peasant and the sharp rise in the number landless agricultural labourers the rapid growth of capitalism in agriculture though feudalism was not dead yet.

While the first document saw the entire bourgeoisie as the enemy to be fought, the second one not only saw the capitalist enemy in the rich peasant but rejected the argument of the Andhra thesis that the middle peasant was a firm ally. To the Politbureau the middle peasant could at best be a vacillating ally. The correlation of forces in the people's democratic front was to be the urban proletariat and its only firm ally, the rural proletariat which led another firm ally, the poor peasant. The middle peasant and sections of the petit bourgeoisie were vacillating allies. The bourgeoisie and the rich peasants together constituted the main enemy.<sup>41</sup> The two documents constituted the rejec-

<sup>40</sup> "On People's Democracy" *Communist*, January 1949.

<sup>41</sup> "On the Agrarian Question in India," *Communist*, January 1949.

tion of the Andhra thesis which had identified feudalism and imperialism as the main enemies

The third Politbureau statement *Struggle against Revisionism Today* was an enigmatic one obviously designed to snipe at sections in the party which Ranadive did not want to name. It began with a denunciation of the revisionist trends in various communist parties especially among some of the major European parties after the World War II. But the attacks on the Yugoslav party and of the United States party of Earl Browder were specific thereby demonstrating his loyalty to Moscow. Turning to dissenters in the CPI (the rightists like Joshi and the Maoist leadership of the Andhra Committee) Ranadive attacked the revisionist deviations that had bedevilled the party during the pre Independence decade. Though the Second Congress had mended some of them some still remained donning the robe of fight against reformism. He blamed the deviation on the petit bourgeois composition of the party which needed to be changed quickly<sup>4</sup>. This might have been the alibi for the purge he ordered and the arbitrary reconstitution of the committees he carried out by expelling the dissenters.

The fourth document which took a long time coming was the most significant though much of it was a repetition of earlier formulations. Titled *Struggle for People's Democracy and Socialism—Some Questions of Strategy and Tactics* reiterated the contention that experience of the Soviet revolution was valid for India (an implied attack on the Andhra leadership) and that the bourgeoisie was the main enemy. The failure of his adventurist line did not inhibit him from speaking of the imminence of a revolution in India. Capitalist production was nearing collapse and a world crisis was coming. They were on the threshold of revolutionary battles. "The partial struggles of the present

<sup>4</sup> "Struggle against Revisionism Today" *Communist* February 1949

period therefore, become wide mass battles, miniature civil wars, which, when they are organized on a sufficiently big scale easily develop into political battles and throw up embryonic State forms [Telengina]—such is the situation’<sup>43</sup>

The bourgeoisie was the main enemy of the revolution because as the “most fighting, active partner” of the ‘bourgeois feudal imperialist combine’ it was the strongest of the three in relation to the people. The fight, therefore, was to be directly against the Congress rule “and no amount of curses and abuses against imperialism can alter the fact. It is so because the Congress Government and the bourgeoisie are not mere puppets but because in reality they are active partners and leading forces in the combine.”<sup>44</sup> By establishing that the State was “not merely a puppet one” he was finding additional justification for his earlier theory about the bourgeoisie having won its ‘national State’.

Harking back on the third document’s reference to the petit bourgeois composition of the party, Ranadive said that at the Second Congress, it was “almost exclusively” non-proletarian while the Andhra unit was dominated by rich and middle peasants and had, therefore, succumbed to the influence of rich peasant ideology. The Andhra unit’s strategy of reliance on the peasantry was a “shamefaced theory of class collaboration” stemming from a “reformist conception of class relations” clothed in “left phrasology about Telengina’.” Ranadive rejected the outlook represented by the Andhra thesis as “anti Party, anti Leninist, and being in utter repudiation of the *Political Thesis*” and the accepted Marxist outlook on the world situation as given in the Zhdanov report. If anything Ranadive’s conclusions revealed a mistaken understanding of Zhdanov’s two camp theory while the Andhra leadership’s identification of the Anglo US imperialism as

<sup>43</sup> “Struggle for People’s Democracy and Socialism—Some Questions of Strategy and Tactics,” *Communist*, June July 1949

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*

one of the two main enemies appeared more consistent with the Zhdanov line

Ranadive attacked the Andhra leadership on another issue — its demarcation of the hegemony of the proletariat from the dictatorship of the proletariat citing Chinese experience in support. To Ranadive proletarian hegemony in the struggle for power developed into hegemony in the State which was the same as the dictatorship of the proletariat. But the Chinese had abandoned the notion of proletarian hegemony and this was wrong. It was the workers of Shanghai and Canton who carried the flames of revolution to agrarian China. Thus hegemony cannot mean hegemony of the party without the working class being in action but directly the hegemony of the working class led by the party, the entire working class in action. Ranadive was trying to challenge the Maoist theory which relied on agrarian revolution put across by the Andhra leadership because it ran counter to his own theory which relied on urban proletariat and weapon of general strike.

#### MAO DENOUNCED

Logically Ranadive had to carry the attack further to the source of the unorthodox strategy — Mao himself. The more important question here was whether Mao Tse-tung could be an authoritative source of Marxism Leninism. Perhaps for the first time in the international communist movement the bona fides of Mao's teachings as part of Marxism Leninism was being debated in public. The Andhra leadership was upholding Mao's strategy of New Democracy as the one applicable to India while Ranadive was looking to the classical Western sources in his search for arguments to attack Mao. The Andhra thesis had said: "Mao the leader of the historic Chinese liberation struggle from his unique and rich experience and study has formulated a theory of new democracy. This is a new form of revolutionary struggle to advance towards socialism in colonies and semi-colonies. Mao advanced

new democracy as distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat'<sup>45</sup> Ranadive joined issue straightaway 'Firstly, we must state emphatically that the Communist Party of India has accepted Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin as the authoritative sources of Marxism. It has not discovered new sources of Marxism beyond these. Nor for that matter is there any Communist Party which declares adherence to the so called theory of new democracy alleged to be propounded by Mao and declares it to be a new addition to Marxism'<sup>46</sup> His argument was that there was no reference to this "addition" to Marxism at the inaugural meeting of the Cominform and therefore,

it is very wrong for the leadership of the Central Committee to take upon itself the task of recommending new discoveries which one of the most authoritative conferences of Marxists has not thought fit to recommend. It is impermissible for communists to talk lightly about new discoveries, enrichment, because such claims have proved too often to be a thin cloak for revisionism [Tito, Browder]

Secondly, the documents of the Andhra Secretariat do not even mention by word that a conference of leading communist parties including the CPSU (B) took place that, at that conference, Zhdanov submitted a report explaining the nature of People's Democracies. A very precise class character of People's Democracy is given there—a characterization which excludes the bourgeoisie from power.<sup>47</sup>

The attack on Mao was more direct in a subsequent passage

This is not the place to sit in judgment over the formulations of Comrade Mao in his *New Democracy*. At the

<sup>45</sup> Quoted from Andhra Letter, *ibid*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*



same time since the Andhra Secretariat quotes Mao against the understanding of the world situation and peoples democracies as given by Zhdanov and CPSU (B) it is necessary to examine some of its formulations

It must be admitted that some of the Maos formulations are such that no Communist Party can accept them they are in contradiction to the world understanding of the communist parties <sup>49</sup>

Denunciation of Mao was not enough and the polemic had to extend to the Chinese Communist Party Ranadive said China had to go through a long-drawn out civil war because its communist leadership at times failed to fight for the hegemony of the proletariat for bringing the majority in alliance and under the leadership of the proletariat because it followed the tactical policies which led to disaster <sup>50</sup>

While there is no evidence to suggest that the Andhra leadership had any communication with the Chinese party it is quite possible that Ranadive had Soviet backing when he denounced Mao At least Moscow had no reason to pull him for his impetuosity It is still a matter of speculation why Ranadive went beyond what was strictly necessary to fight the Andhra leadership The theoretical basis of the Andhra line had to be attacked and that was understandable But widening it to draw Mao and the Chinese party in and Moscow's passivity throughout could mean that Ranadive was acting at Soviet behest because Moscow was the only legitimizing agency in the international communist movement and it was still the Stalinist last phase when the Soviets were exacting in their demands for international conformism as is evident from the purge of Earl Browder and the break with Tito

It is quite possible that when Ranadives polemic against

<sup>49</sup> *Ib d*

<sup>50</sup> *Ib d*

Mao came in July 1949 (a few weeks before the final victory of the Chinese revolution) Moscow was still engaged in evolving a line for the colonial and semi-colonial countries and did not think it necessary to intervene even if it thought Ranadive was overdoing things. But from the subsequent developments (the virtual legitimization of the Maoist strategy in January 1950) suggests that much as Moscow disapproved of Ranadive's political line it did not mind an attack on Mao Tse-tung. Even as Ranadive was carrying on his polemic Moscow was coming round to accepting the Chinese strategy as the model for Asian countries. A meeting of the USSR Academy of Sciences in June 1949 heard E. M. Zhukov endorse the Chinese strategy based on New Democracy. In the struggle for people's democracy in the colonies and semi-colonies are united not only the workers the peasants the petty bourgeoisie the intelligentsia but even certain sections of middle bourgeoisie which is interested in saving itself from the cut throat foreign competition and imperialist oppression".<sup>20</sup> "The peasant uprisings in India" found significant mention along with the armed revolts in other countries which he said testified to the "new and higher stage of national liberation movements. Just before the meeting of the Academy *Pravda* published Liu Shao-chi's pamphlet *Internationalism and Nationalism* which *inter alia* called upon Asian communists (including those in India) to adopt a firm and irreconcilable policy towards the "reactionary section of the big bourgeoisie which has already surrendered to imperialism" but alongside communists should enter into an alliance with the section of national bourgeoisie which still opposed imperialism and did not oppose the anti imperialist struggle of the people".<sup>21</sup>

A clearer guideline for Indian communists was to be found in a report by Academician V. Balabushevich at the

<sup>20</sup> E. M. Zhukov, *Problem of National and Colonial Struggle Colonial People's Struggle for Liberation* Bombay 1950 pp 111

<sup>21</sup> *Pravda* ~ 8 and 9 June 1949

meeting of the Academy. The report hailed the Telengana struggle as the first attempt at creating Peoples Democracy in India and the harbinger of agrarian revolution.<sup>52</sup> This was a vindication of the Andhra leadership's line based on Mao's strategy — of a four-class alliance for a two stage revolution.

The Zhukov and Balabushevich documents were the subject of a serious debate in the CPI and Ranadive's line was coming into question. In the meantime another indication of Soviet support for the Maoist strategy for Asian parties came this time from a Chinese source. Liu Shao-ch'eng claimed at the trade union conference of Asian and Australasian countries at Peking in November 1949 (a bare month after the triumph of the Chinese revolution) that "the road of Mao Tse tung" was the path for other colonial countries. Prescribing armed action as the main form of struggle for these countries wherever and whenever possible Liu noted that such a struggle had already begun in India.<sup>53</sup> But the manifesto of the Peking conference did not list India among the countries witnessing armed struggle. India was not represented at the conference but Liu's address strengthened the Andhra leadership's position vis a vis Ranadive. The changing Soviet line did not induce any rethinking on Ranadive's part and the Peking conference declarations were ignored by the party journal *Communist*.

The Andhra leadership had no means of seeking any party debate in the wake of the shift in Moscow's line for Asia but the attack on Ranadive came oddly enough from Joshi who had been expelled from the party arbitrarily without even a hearing. Joshi by no means a supporter of the Andhra line (he denounced it later as the continuation of Ranadive's "Titoite" line under a new garb) seemed to have

<sup>52</sup> V. Balabushevich, 'The New Stage in the National Liberation Struggle of the People of India', *Colonial People's Struggle for Liberation* 1950, pp. 32-59.

<sup>53</sup> For a Lasting Peace For a People's Democracy, 30 December 1949.

sensed that Moscow had begun doubting the correctness of Ranadive's line. While the Andhra leadership had not sought any intervention from abroad in the CPI's affairs, Joshi kept up a sustained campaign against Ranadive emboldened in the knowledge of a change in Moscow's thinking. His famous 'Letter to Foreign Comrades' sought intervention from abroad because he thought the Ranadive leadership was incapable of any self-criticism. The letter, dated 13 January 1950<sup>54</sup> anticipated the Cominform editorial two weeks later. At best, Joshi's appeals might have hastened the intervention but could not have been its cause.

The Cominform editorial made Moscow's approval of Liu Shao-chi's Peking speech known because it was largely a restatement of his formulations. It endorsed a crucial formulation in Liu's speech:

The experience of the victorious national liberation struggle of the Chinese people teaches that the working class must unite with all classes, parties, and groups, and organizations willing to fight the imperialists and their hirelings to form a broad nation-wide united front, headed by the working class and its vanguard — the Communist Party.<sup>55</sup>

Mao's four class strategy was what the editorial sought to commend but when it came to specifics, it hedged on the tactic of armed struggle, taking care to limit its applicability. "A decisive condition for the victorious outcome of the national liberation struggle is the formation when the necessary internal conditions allow for it, of people's liberation armies under the leadership of the Communist Party."<sup>56</sup> But the categorizations of countries in the context of armed struggle is interesting. China, Viet Nam, Malaya and

<sup>54</sup> P. C. Joshi, 'Letter to Foreign Comrades' *loc cit*.

<sup>55</sup> 'Mighty Advance of the National Liberation Movement in the Colonial and Dependent Countries' *For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy*, 27 January 1950.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*.

other countries were listed as examples of how armed struggle was becoming the main form of struggle of the national liberation movement in many colonies and dependent countries. Then it listed Viet Nam, South Korea, Malaya, the Philippines, Indonesia and Burma as countries engaged in armed struggle. India was mentioned as a country with sham independence. But the crucial paragraph in the editorial said:

In these conditions the task of the Indian communists, drawing on the experience of the national liberation movement in China and other countries is naturally to strengthen the alliance of the working class with all the peasantry to fight for the introduction of urgently needed agrarian reform and — on the basis of the common struggle for freedom and national independence of their country against Anglo American imperialists oppressing it and against the reactionary big bourgeoisie and feudal princes collaborating with them — to unite with all classes, parties, groups and organizations willing to defend the national independence and freedom of India.<sup>57</sup>

#### COMINFORM DEBUNKS RANADIVE

By commending the Chinese example for India, the editorial debunked Ranadive's dogmatic assertions about the applicability of the Russian example and by endorsing the four class strategy, it was rejecting his theory of one stage revolution for India. Up to this point the editorial was in focus with the Chinese strategy and the line advocated by the Andhra leadership. But there appeared to be a vital difference between the Chinese and Soviet attitudes to tactics because there was a clear attempt in the editorial at playing down armed struggle as the tactic of the Indian revolution. If nothing else, the editorial was an open critic to the CPI

to repudiate Ranadive's one stage revolution theory and his suicidal tactical line. But Ranadive was the last to realize this.

Ranadive who had ignored Lau Shao-chi's speech at the Peking conference of trade unions and its manifesto was now obliged to publish both of them together with the Cominform editorial in the February-March issue of *Communist* which also carried a statement by the Politbureau equivocating on the editorial and giving it a perverse interpretation to cover up the failure of the Ranadive line. For instance while hailing the editorial for its brilliant contribution and the correct lead it gave the CPI the Politbureau tried to prove that the editorial was a vindication of Ranadive's fight against right reformism. It vaguely noted certain errors in the dogmatist and sectarian direction but tried to justify his terrorist adventurism by quoting the editorial's reference to the formation of people's liberation armies which were needed when the necessary internal conditions allow for it. Moscow had not prescribed armed struggle for India but the Politbureau tried to read just the opposite meaning in the editorial. It was even made to appear that the editorial did not call for any basic change in Ranadive's line.

In his brave effort to convert defeat into victory, Ranadive was forced to make a major concession to the Andhra leadership by shifting his emphasis from urban insurrection to rural struggle thereby endorsing the Chinese model and the tactic of armed struggle (that is the Telengana path) though Moscow had not decreed such a tactic for India.<sup>8</sup>

The Cominform just ignored this exercise in prevarication. Its journal did not reprint the Politbureau's statement. Ranadive thought he could survive the defeat and issued another statement through the Politbureau to secure Moscow's support for his leadership. According to Joshi

<sup>8</sup> Statement of the Editorial Board *Communist* February-March 1950

the statement of 6 April 1950 (which was not published) admitted a Trotskyite deviation in the CPI's understanding of the Indian situation and its advocacy of a one-stage revolution<sup>59</sup> But it still pinned faith in the Telengana type armed struggle, indicating the gradual ascendancy of the Andhra leadership Ranadive also looked to the Balabushevich report of June 1949 endorsing the Telengana struggle in justification of his insurrectionary line But Moscow was just not for any form of insurrection in India though its call for a four-class strategy implied a united front from below in contrast to Joshi's united front from above which had already been abandoned

#### MAOIST LEADERSHIP

The ouster of Ranadive from leadership was now a matter of time The Cominform editorial meant a tragic anticlimax and disorientation for him He had taken on a leader of Mao's stature in the belief Moscow would back him to the end In his self-righteousness he became a victim of his own delusion He was so committed to his own strategy and tactical line that even an unabashed *volte face* could not have saved him The Andhra leadership as well as the trade union veterans had mounted a two-pronged attack on him and he was isolated and found himself on the defensive

Ranadive had suppressed all opposition to his line by reshuffling the leading party committees through his fiat from above But the Andhra committee had stood up to his bullying Joshi says the political mistakes of the Andhra secretariat led by two "junior" Politbureau members "were far more serious" than those of the Bengal committee But the Andhras were a united team and the Ranadive Politbureau "dare not do any monkey tricks with them"<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> P. C. Joshi, 'Postscript' Views, *loc cit* pp 59-60

<sup>60</sup> P. C. Joshi, 'Letter to Foreign Comrades,' Views, *loc cit*, p 24

The Andhra leadership was set to take over the party leadership when the Central Committee met in May-June 1950 (for the first time in two years). Ranadive had got the party constitution amended at the Second Congress authorizing the Central Committee to reconstitute itself. This came in handy for the Andhra leadership. C. Rajeswara Rao replaced Ranadive as the General Secretary and the Central Committee and the Politbureau were reconstituted. In the new Politbureau of nine four were from the Andhra region.<sup>61</sup> But the public announcement of the shake-up came only in July 1950 in the form of a Central Committee statement published in *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. The statement proclaimed the CPI's adherence to the Maoist strategy. 'The new policy will be based on the national liberation movement in China. The course China is taking and which the countries of Southeast Asia are following is the only correct course before our people.'<sup>62</sup>

The new leadership (known in the party as the 'June CC' because the new Central Committee was elected in June 1950) tried to demarcate itself from the Ranadive line without any delay. Its first public statement was a message of greetings to the Chinese Communist Party leadership gratefully acknowledging its "invaluable" aid to the discussion in the CPI. The new leadership's faith in the Chinese model was beyond doubt as also its reliance on guerilla warfare as part of the model because it noted that "the peoples of Viet Nam, Malaya, Burma, the Philippines, — Indonesia have already taken to this path and other colonial peoples are going to take it" while "the brave fighters of Telengana, Andhra, Mymensingh, etc., have already shown that the Chinese path is the path for India also."<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> "Letter of the New Central Committee (Reconstituted by the Central Committee Elected at the Second Party Congress) to All Party Members and Sympathizers" 1 June 1950, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> "Statement of the Central Committee of the Indian Communist Party" *Pravda and Izvestia*, 23 July 1950.

<sup>63</sup> 'Greetings to the Communist Party of China on its 29th Anniversary, July 1, 1950,' *Communist*, July-August 1950.



## CPI APOLOGIZES TO MAO

Two authoritative statements by the reconstituted Editorial Board of the Communist proclaimed the final and complete break with Ranadive's left sectarian line. The new board dominated by the Andhra leadership withdrew Ranadive's half-hearted self-criticism which it said represented an utterly left sectarian line and a 'full fledged Trotskyite thesis'. It also withdrew the Ranadive Politbureau's four attacks on the Andhra thesis in the course of which Ranadive had denounced Mao. It offered its deeply felt apologies to Mao and the Chinese party and charged the old leadership with dishonestly putting the authority of the Nine Communist Parties Conference against Comrade Mao in order to declare his great revolutionary work as revisionist and going to the extent of suggestively brickbating Tito and Earl Browder with Mao.<sup>61</sup>

The Andhra advocates of Mao's strategy went hammer and sickle at the Ranadive leadership charging it with having distorted Zhdanov's report and turned a blind eye to the valuable articles of brother parties<sup>62</sup> with slandering brother parties failure to publish the articles of Chinese leaders and suppressing the Peking manifesto and delaying publication of the Cominform editorial.<sup>63</sup>

Exposition of its own strategy presented no difficulty to the June CC because the Andhra thesis of June 1948 had advocated what Moscow had just come round to accepting. The lengthy reiteration of the thesis combined an attack on Ranadive's Trotskyite concept of one stage revolution. The new policy statement quoted Soviet and other international sources to support its reasoning but the reliance was

<sup>61</sup> Statement of the Editorial Board and Statement of the Editorial Board of Communist on anti-Leninist Criticism of Comrade Mao Tse-tung. *Communist* June-July 1950.

<sup>62</sup> Had. The CPI's unofficial journal *Crossroads* reprinted the Cominform editorial of 27 July 1950 in its issue of 3 March 1950.

primarily on Mao's *New Democracy* and Chinese experience in general<sup>66</sup>

#### INDIA'S YENAN

There was little doubt that the June CC realized that Moscow had not sanctioned the tactic of armed struggle for India. So it had to invoke Mao by way of external justification for the Telengana line of armed struggle by the peasantry which went beyond Moscow's requirements. The June CC quoted Mao as saying "In China without armed struggle there will be no place for the Communist Party and no victory for the revolution." But even this was inadequate justification of the specific Maoist tactic of Telengana type peasant war in India. So the CC had to go farther. The *Communist* journal's editorial of 27 January 1950 which facilitated Ranadive's overthrow had prescribed armed struggle for "many" of the Asian countries but not for all of them and certainly not for India. But earlier in May 1949, the same journal had listed India among the countries where armed struggle was in progress. This, and its own interpretation of Liu Shao-chi's speech at the Peking trade union conference in November 1949, helped the June CC rationalize its tactical line.

Moscow had not bargained for this. It wanted a Maoist strategy but no armed struggle in India. But Maoist leadership had replaced Ranadive. In defiance of Moscow, the June CC saw "the objective conditions for starting guerilla resistance" in India as a whole, "leaving aside some areas." Maoism had arrived in India and Telengana was to be *India's Yen-an*.

<sup>66</sup> *Communist*, July-August 1950

## CHAPTER TWO

# *Retreat from Maoism*

THE TRIUMPH OF the Telengana line of peasant partisan warfare as the tactic of Indian revolution was to be short-lived. Moscow's intervention first indirect through the Communist Party of Great Britain and later direct with an Indian communist delegation forced its abandonment in 1951. The five year old Telengana struggle was called off under external pressure and the Communist Party of India settled for peaceful constitutionalism. It was a long spell of ideological confusion once again culminating in the final rejection of violence to accept the goal of socialism through peaceful means at the Fifth Congress in Amritsar in 1958.

When the Andhra leadership took over from B. T. Ranadive in mid 1950, the party machinery was all but shattered and its following decimated in most of the country. The new leadership could not extend the Telengana struggle to other areas of Hyderabad State because the Indian army had marched in and launched a counter-offensive. Nor could it initiate similar struggles in other parts of country because the party was in a state of "semi paralysis" with the attendant organizational deadlock and a serious financial crisis.<sup>1</sup>

The Ranadive line left sectarians were not reconciled to the rejection of the copy book tactic of general strike-insurrection relying on the urban proletariat and were not co-operating with the Andhra leadership. At the other end, the reformist trade union leaders who preferred Gandhian

<sup>1</sup> Politbureau Circular, 16 September 1950, Mimeographed

methods of non violence looked plaintively to Moscow for intervention and tried to run a parallel party centre. In addition to the two pronged attack from within the Andhra leadership also faced snipings from P C Joshi former General Secretary who though technically expelled from the party was campaigning against the new leadership.

The first open attack on the Andhra leadership came from trade union leader S A Dange who on release from jail issued a statement deploring the ill planned behaviour of some sections of the leadership which had strengthened the wrong belief that the party was planning an armed revolt. He admitted that his views were not final because the party was yet to decide its policy and there were conflicting views within. This necessitated a Politbureau statement to make clear that Dange's views did not represent the party's because its basic policy was still under discussion.<sup>2</sup> In a few weeks Dange along with Ajoy Ghosh and S V Ghate produced a document attacking the tactical lines of both Ranadive and C Rajeswara Rao.<sup>4</sup>

Shortly a parallel party centre had come into being to direct the campaign against the Rajeswara Rao leadership. Styling itself the Party Head Quarters (PHQ) unit in Bombay it brought out an occasional publication PHQ Open Forum as part of its campaign. Alongside Joshi continued his campaign through occasional publications, *Views and For A Mass Policy* to prove that the Andhra leadership was making a "bogus" claim (in its *Letter to Ranks* of June 1950) that it had bypassed Ranadive's line to apply the lessons of the Chinese revolution and had successfully developed the Telengana struggle. He even

<sup>2</sup> *Crossroads* (weekly) 28 July 1950. This was the unofficial journal of the CPI and was to become its official journal later. The Bombay based leadership which dominated the party headquarters had direct control of this journal.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* 11 August 1950.

<sup>4</sup> *A Note on the Present Situation in Our Party* September 1950.

called the Andhra leaders "unprincipled liars" who had only applied the Ranadive line in Telengana in "Ranadive's own Titoite manner" He levelled four charges against the new and old Central Committees in general

First both the committees had failed to make an objective report on Telengana to the party The Ranadive leadership had 'hed' when it talked of the area of struggle growing despite the entry of the Indian army "when the struggle sentiment was actually cooling off" The Rajeswara Rao leadership had 'hed' when it propagated the "myth" that it had developed the Telengana struggle bypassing Ranadive "Both the old and the new leaderships were equally guilty of sabotaging the most significant struggle of our people through exaggeration and lies, a typical Trotskyite trick"

Secondly, both the leaderships had failed to get the party to run a solidarity campaign on Telengana and had only exploited the martyrdom of members there to buttress their own positions

Thirdly under the Ranadive leadership, the party had taken an equivocal if not hostile" stand on Hyderabad's accession to the Indian Union and was for a free verdict of the people after the realization of peoples democracy (Joshi had wanted a coalition of the communists and the Congress, ending the struggle when the Indian army marched in) Both the leaderships had rejected this line "To Joshi, the Telengana upsurge of 1950 was a myth" like Ranadive's "Bengal upsurge of 1948"

Lastly both Ranadive and Rajeswara Rao leaderships were guilty of conducting the Telengana struggle on the basis of the tactical line "personally given by the Titoite Yugoslav delegates to our Party Congress" Ranadive did not check upon the Telengana line even after the Cominform's June 1949 resolution on the Yugoslav party Ranadive did not call a meeting of the Central Committee to change the Telengana line<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> P C Joshi *For a Mass Party Problems of the Mass Movement*, Allahabad 1950 pp 71-3

Joshi makes a sensational disclosure here. Central Committee members from the Andhra region (at least P Sundaravva) were present at the talks the Rnadive leadership had with the two Yugoslav delegates to the Second Congress. But his charge that the Andhra leadership 'acquiesced with the Tito line on Telengana lacks substance because the struggle had been launched as early as 1946 and even before the Cominform had denounced Tito and his party, the Andhra leadership had worked out its thesis in the form of the *Andhra Letter* of June 1948. It was equally open to the Andhra leadership to have invoked Yugoslav arguments in support of its own formulations when the Yugoslav party was still a part of the Cominform. Joshi's objectivity is thus open to question.

When Moscow felt the need to intervene in the affairs of the Communist Party of India (CPI) the compelling factor was not so much the need to put the foundering Indian revolution back on the rails but to placate the Nehru government in a changed cold war situation. When Nehru's foreign policy of nonalignment showed signs of independence of the Western bloc, Moscow thought it advantageous to stop the three year old cold war against his government and to neutralize him before his nonalignment lapsed into identification with the West. The new Soviet policy towards Nehru meant a moratorium on class struggle in India.

But the manner of intervention was extraordinary and roundabout. An editorial in the Cominform journal should have been the normal course. But Moscow chose to put the line across through the British party. A letter from the Political Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) to the CPI traced the paralysis in the Indian party to its perverse understanding of the Cominform editorial of 27 January 1950. Armed struggle had not been ruled out for India but the situation in the CPI and in the country did not hold an immediate prospect for such a struggle, the confidential letter said. The CPI should utilize all opportunities for legal activity and prepare for the

general elections. The letter also called for a change in the leadership (that is the overthrow of the Andhra leadership) because it had not been elected in a democratic manner. The solution to the party crisis lay in full and unfettered discussion so that the armed struggle tactic could be rejected formally. But the most important references in the letter were to the CPI's failure to work out a policy on Korea and the peace movement which meant a directive to step up pressure against Nehru's foreign policy.\*

The CPGB had played the role of a mentor to the CPI in the colonial days. But it was appropriating for itself the same role even after India had become free. The letter could not have been sent without Moscow's direction. It was addressed to the CPI's Central Committee and therefore did not get into circulation in the party. But the parallel party centre (the PIHQ Unit) got hold of it some three months after its receipt and circulated it to exert pressure on the Rajeswara Rao leadership on the eve of the December Central Committee meeting. The meeting could not resolve the differences or agree on a political line. It reorganized the Central Committee and the Politbureau to provide representation for all the trends though Rajeswara Rao continued as the General Secretary. The new Central Committee promised a party congress shortly.

Meanwhile the British party renewed pressure on the CPI leadership. The directives were now explicit and more positive and were conveyed in the form of answers by R. Palme Dutt to five questions on the Indian situation. The peace movement had to be stepped up against the Anglo American imperialism and for the liberation of Asia. Nehru's foreign policy should be reappraised in the light of his attitude to the Korean war and to China's admission to the United Nations though Nehru's was not a "consistent peace policy" yet and his opposition to imperialism was hesitant and

\* PIHQ Covering Note to the Letter of the Political Committee of the CPGB to the Communist Party of India 6 December 1950

limited" Peace and freedom went together and India needed a 'broad democratic front' from above on the basis of a common action programme for peace and independence. Finally, armed struggle was not the correct path for India for the present.

#### OPPOSITION TO ARMED STRUGGLE

Dutt elaborated his advice in an interview he gave to two visiting Indian communists. He said that, as stated in his party's letter to the CPI, 'ultimately the revolution in India will and must take the form of armed struggle. It is hardly to be debated. He had no idea of the exact situation in Andhra and he could not say what would be the proper form of struggle there. But if the Andhra unit of the CPI had adopted correct forms of struggle during the post-Second Congress period the party should not have suffered any disruption there. 'But from the report we possess, this does not seem to be true. When on the top of it, the so called experience of Andhra is applied mechanically all over India, where the conditions of present organization and the strength of the party were both weaker than in Andhra, the result cannot but be disastrous' he said.<sup>7</sup> The basis on which Dutt concluded that the party organization in Andhra had suffered disruption was not clear. Nor was much known about the report he was referring to. But the Andhra communists recorded the most spectacular success in the Andhra and Telengana regions at the 1952 general elections demonstrating that their mass base had grown during the post-Second Congress period.

Elaborating his concept of armed struggle, Dutt said it was "the higher form of struggle, must bear a mass charac-

<sup>7</sup> "Palme Dutt Answers Questions on India," *Crossroads* 19 January 1951.

<sup>8</sup> Deven and Bil Krishna, *Talks with R. Palme Dutt and Other Impressions Gained Abroad* PHQ Unit, 6 January 1951.



ter" is different from terrorism of individuals or small groups. Again armed struggle was a "higher state of mass movement which therefore becomes the prerequisite." Peace movement presented the CPI with one of the most important weapons for building a front of all sections of Indian people. If we recognize that the building of the National Democratic Front is the key task for the national liberation struggle then it should be obvious that leaving the main activity of the party — the broad front that will emerge out of the peace movement may lay the basis for the National Front for national liberation.

The guideline was clear. The CPI had to launch a peace offensive through a broad front. The Nehru government had secured qualified support from Moscow because its foreign policy did not always coincide with the Anglo-American policies. Dutt also saw the possibility of a Sino-Indian conflict as the reason for this. India is a country bordering China and at least sections of the Indian big bourgeoisie realize that a war with China might mean their doom. They are conscious of the fact that China is rapidly emerging as the leader of Asia. Sardar Patel represented the trend in Indian big business leaning heavily on Anglo-American imperialism while Nehru represented the interests of the monopolist big bourgeoisie. This differentiation of the bourgeoisie explained the Nehru government's vacillation and it was for the communists to exploit its stand on Korea, the bomb, etc.\*

In sum Dutt's advice aimed at persuading the CPI to give up its tactic of armed struggle at least for the moment and to seek the broadest possible united front for peace while the task of a national democratic front could wait. In practice the CPI was required to attempt a united front from below with the Congress and a united front from above with the leftist parties. In any case the peace movement mainly aimed at pressuring the Nehru govern-

ment into supporting the Soviet bloc was to get priority over class struggle

#### CPI'S MISSION TO MOSCOW

The reconstitution of the Central Committee and the Politbureau in December 1950 did not solve the crisis in the CPI though the Andhra leadership's hegemony over the party had practically ended. Amidst diverse factional pulls and the resulting confusion the Politbureau however announced a new programme and a new policy statement in April 1951. This was surprising because four months was too short a period to evolve a consensus in the new Politbureau considering the nature of the differences. Yet the May meeting of the Central Committee approved with minor changes the Politbureau's *Draft Programme* and secured the resignation of Rajeswara Rao its General Secretary.

On 8 June the party announced important organizational changes. The Politbureau was to function as the Secretariat of the Central Committee and Ajay Ghosh was to be Secretary of the Secretariat<sup>10</sup>. He was later made the General Secretary.

The full story behind these dramatic developments has not been told yet. The new *Draft Programme* was published in the Cominform journal immediately after it was released in India<sup>11</sup> and the Statement of Policy within a fortnight of its adoption<sup>12</sup>. This was significant because the journal had not reprinted a single CPI document or statement in the last three years. The prompt Cominform publicity to the documents amounted to vindicated Moscow approval of the new line ostensibly worked out by the CPI with the

<sup>10</sup> CPI Announces Organizational changes. Politbureau Statement Crossroads 8 June 1951

<sup>11</sup> For a Lasting Peace For a People's Democracy 11 May 1951

<sup>12</sup> Ibid 15 June 1951

friendly advice of the CPGB

But there is more to it than the facts on surface would suggest. At that time it was widely believed that a top-level CPI delegation had gone to Moscow clandestinely to seek the Soviet party's intervention. But there was no evidence to support this surmise. It was not before 1968 that a CPI leader admitted that a delegation did go to Moscow. Dange narrated the long-concealed story. The December 1950 Central Committee asked the Central Committee of the Soviet party for a consultation on the CPI's problems. The Comintern was gone and the Cominform was on the way out. The four-man delegation comprised Rajeswara Rao, M. Basavapunniah (both advocated the tactic of armed struggle), Dange, and Ajay Ghosh. There were warrants pending for the arrest of Rajeswara Rao and Basavapunniah and the delegation had to leave India and later return to India clandestinely.

The Soviet side at the Moscow talks comprised J. V. Stalin, who led the "Commission" Mikhail Suslov, V. M. Molotov and G. M. Malenkov. "After the discussions, we ourselves drafted the programme of the party. The draft was made by our Commission. With a few changes it was put before a special Party Conference which met in Calcutta in 1951."<sup>15</sup>

The 1951 Draft Programme as well as the Statement of Policy were the outcome of Moscow's intervention (even if it was at the CPI's request) but was little more than application of the advice given earlier by the CPGB in various forms. The CPGB was only interpreting Moscow's mind to the CPI which would not heed the advice until the clarifications came directly from the Soviet leadership.

### THE 1951 PROGRAMME

The new programme did not represent a fundamental depar-

<sup>15</sup> S. A. Dange, 'Can a Country Have More Than One Communist Party?', *MI*, Mainstream 3 August 1968.

ture from the formulations on which the Andhra line was based as far as the strategy was concerned. The reliance was still on a four class alliance and a two stage revolution. It adhered to the aim of a socialist society but was not demanding socialism "in the present stage of our development". The party regarded as "quite mature" the task of 'replacing the present anti democratic and anti popular government by a new government of People's Democracy created on the basis of a coalition of all democratic anti-feudal and anti imperialist forces in the country'. A four-class alliance was clearly stressed by the programme.

Our party calls upon the toiling millions the working class the peasantry the toiling intelligentsia the middle classes as well as the national bourgeoisie interested in the freedom of the country and the development of a prosperous life to unite into a single democratic front in order to attain complete independence of the country, the emancipation of the peasants from the oppression of the feudals<sup>14</sup>

The new characterization of the Nehru government and its foreign policy were the main features of the programme. The government played on the rivalries between Britain and the United States "to its own disadvantage in certain circumstances" but it essentially carried out the foreign policy of "British imperialism". In addition the government's subservience to the British made for the United States domination of the Indian economy, life, and the affairs of the State threatening the country 'with added slavery to American capital'. The programme was less soft on Nehru's foreign policy than CPGB would have liked it to be. The CPI was demanding India's identification with the "peace camp" 'Instead of joining hands with the partisans

<sup>14</sup> Programme of the Communist Party of India, Bombay, 1951, pp 23-4

of peace against the aggressor and branding the United States of America as chief aggressor, the Indian government is carrying on a suspicious play between these two camps and is flirting with the USA thus facilitating the struggle of aggressors against the peace loving countries" Instead of playing between peace and war India should join peace-loving countries and befriend them<sup>15</sup>

#### THE TACTICAL LINE

The CPI's new tactical line was not part of the programme document. It was reserved for an allied document *Statement of Policy*, which observed at the outset that "a fundamental democratic transformation in the country by parliamentary methods alone" was not possible. Hence the road to the goal set by the programme has to be found elsewhere. The statement referred to the party controversy over tactics. The Second Congress had rejected the 'reformist policy which in the name of building the United National Front crushed the struggles of workers, the peasants and other sections of the people'. After the Second Congress there had been a controversy over the path the Indian revolutionary movement must adopt. It noted that for a time it was advocated that the main weapon in our struggle would be the weapon of the general strike of industrial workers followed by countrywide insurrection as in Russia. Later on the basis of a wrong understanding of the Chinese revolution the thesis was put forward that since ours is a semi colonial country like China our revolution would develop in the same way as in China with partisan warfare as its main weapon. The statement got to the crux of the problem. Our revolution therefore will have many features in common with the Chinese revolution. But peasant struggles along the Chinese path alone

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid* p. 22

cannot lead to victory in India"<sup>16</sup> India had a big working class and it had to play a role that could be decisive in the struggle for freedom. A working class peasant alliance and combined worker and peasant struggles under the party's leadership 'utilizing all the lessons of history for the conduct of the struggle is to be the path for us'

In short, the statement tried to rationalize the rejection of armed struggle as the tactic for India. The line of relying on general strike in the cities neglected the role of peasantry while the other line, of peasant partisan warfare, deprived the peasantry of its great friend and leader 'the working class. The working class had remained leader only 'in theory' only through the party because the party was defined as that of working class. Both the lines had ignored in practice the task of building the working-class peasant alliance as the basis of the united front. Therefore neither the Russian path nor the Chinese path "but the path of Leninism, applied to Indian conditions" was to guide the party.

#### UNPUBLISHED VERSION

The *Statement of Policy* was the legal or open version of a highly confidential unpublished document prepared by the CPI delegation to Moscow and was entitled the *Factual Line*. The principal difference between the two was limited to the varying degrees of emphasis each of them laid on violence as means. The published version was not explicit on this when it said that the government and the classes "that kept it in power" would not allow them to carry on a "fundamental transformation in the country by parliamentary methods" and "hence the road has to be found elsewhere". In contrast the unpublished version was outspoken on the need for an armed revolution.

<sup>16</sup> *Statement of Policy of the Communist Party of India*, Bombay, 1951, "Policy Statement," *Crossroads*, 8 June 1951.

While resorting to all forms of struggle including the most elementary forms and while utilizing all legal possibilities for mobilizing the masses and taking them forward in the struggle for freedom and democracy the Communist Party has always held that in the present colonial set up in India and in view of the absence of genuine democratic liberties legal and parliamentary possibilities are restricted and that therefore the replacement of the present State upholding the imperialist feudal order by a People's Democratic State—is possible only through an armed revolution of the people<sup>17</sup>

Again while the *Statement of Policy* refrained from making an open case for the tactic of combining peasant partisan warfare with workers strike action in cities the unpublished document mentions the combination of these two basic factors as an absolute necessity. But neither of the documents referred to armed revolution as part of immediate programme. At best it was to be an ultimate tactic. The *Tactical Line* was only reiterating the classical Marxist theory of force being the midwife of history when it said resort to arms would become inevitable. As the crisis matures as the unity consciousness and organization of the masses grow as strength and influence of the party develop and as the enemy resorts to more and more ruthless measures to crush the agrarian movement the question of when where and how to resort to arms will be more and more forced on the agenda<sup>18</sup>

It cautioned the party against premature uprisings and

<sup>17</sup> *Communist Conspiracy at Madurai* Bombay 1954 p. 35. This is the first published version of the secret document. When it was published as part of a volume by the Democratic Research Service, a voluntary anti-communist organization, the CPI denounced the document as forgery. But many CPI leaders have admitted to the author in private that it was an authentic document but the party could not own it when published for obvious reasons.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p. 40

adventurist actions" and yet thought it wrong to lay down that armed struggle in the form of partisan warfare should be resorted to in every specific area only when the movement in all parts of the country rose to the level of an uprising. This was because the uneven levels of mass consciousness in a vast country like India would not permit peasant movements of the same tempo everywhere. On the contrary situations demanding armed partisan warfare might arise in several areas. For instance when in a big and topographically suitable area the peasant movement rose to the level of seizure of land the question of effective seizure and defending it would become a burning one and "partisan warfare in such a situation undertaken on the basis of a genuine mass movement and firm unity... if correctly constructed and led, have a rousing and galvanizing effect on the peasant masses in all areas and raise their own struggle to a higher level"<sup>19</sup>

The need for two overlapping documents on tactics is not clear because even the unpublished version did not hold armed struggle an absolute necessity for the Indian revolution. Its open publication would not have made much difference to the party's fortunes. From talks with CPI leaders, one gained the impression that the proximity of the general elections made it expedient for them to withhold publication of the *Tactical Line*. Through its *Statement of Policy*, the CPI was trying to project the image of a party that had virtually abjured violence and was settling for parliamentary methods. The leadership feared that some of the formulations in the *Tactical Line* might stand in the way of the party regaining legality in the States where it was still illegal (Travancore-Cochin and Hyderabad). Another reason could be that a more explicit reference to the tactic of combining peasant partisan warfare with urban insurrection might provide extremist elements an argument to oppose the party's switch to parliamentary methods.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*



## SURRENDER IN TELANGANA

The 1951 documents formalized Moscow's decrees on strategy and tactics for India. A four-class alliance and a two stage revolution was to be the strategy but armed revolution was not to be part of the immediate programme. Moscow had not sanctioned this tactic and in fact it had succeeded in bringing the CPI's thinking to conform to its own wave length.

Armed violence as a tactic had been shelved if not abandoned but the peasant partisan warfare was continuing in Telengana even after the change in tactics. It was a hard task bringing the Andhra leadership into line with the rest of the party though Rajeswara Rao had already resigned as the General Secretary in May, 1951 marking the end of the Andhra leadership's hegemony over the party.

The new leadership went about the delicate task rather apologetically. A Central Committee resolution<sup>10</sup> began with the tacit admission that, while the CPI could offer suggestions on tactics 'it is primarily for the masses, the people of Telengana who began fought and suffered in their great fight against feudal oppression for land and liberty, who have to decide the issue' of the tactics of the Telengana struggle. But the Central Committee was ready to solve the problem by negotiations and settlement to protect the interests of the peasantry and to restore normalcy in Telengana.<sup>11</sup>

Thus the Central Committee was virtually disowning the struggle and trying to find itself in the role of a mediator offering its good offices for a negotiated settlement. The party was not prepared even to admit that the Telengana movement was aimed against the Government of India.

It is believed in some circles that the struggle in Telengana is being fought in order to overthrow the Nehru

<sup>10</sup> CPI Ready for Negotiated Settlement, Crossroads, 15 June 1951.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*.

government. These circles ignore that the struggle of the peasants for land and against the oppression of the feudal landlords and the Nizam began in 1946 long before the Nehru government came into existence.

And it continued even after its entry into the Nizam State solely to protect the peasant against the landlords who were now being reinstated by the Nehru government in alliance with the Nizam to overthrow whose rule it had ostensibly entered the State.

This indeed was a strange way of proving that the struggle of the Telengana peasants was neither begun nor continued to overthrow the Nehru government. The resolution listed seven demands as the basis of a peaceful settlement. The demands covered the protection of the rights of peasantry, restoration of civil liberties and democratic rights in the area, and withdrawal of the Indian army and other forces. This was followed by the despatch to Hyderabad of a three member delegation of communist negotiators A. K. Gopalan, Muzaffar Ahmed and Jyoti Basu. Gopalan listed three conditions for ending the struggle: stoppage of evictions until after the general elections, leaving the land question to a constituent assembly to be elected, withdrawal of military forces from Telengana, and release of the communist prisoners to create a favourable atmosphere for the CPI to participate in the general elections.<sup>23</sup>

The government had by implication rejected the terms and did not want to negotiate because there was no response to the offer. This forced the party to climb down. It had to call off the struggle: settlement or no settlement because Moscow had decreed so. In October 1951, Gopalan, on behalf of the Central Committee and the Andhra Committee announced the withdrawal of the struggle.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> "CPI States Basis of Telengana Settlement," *Crossroads*, 27 July 1951.

<sup>24</sup> "CPI Advises Stoppage of Partisan Action in Telengana," *Crossroads*, 26 October 1951.

Though the government had rebuffed the party by refusing to negotiate, the leadership was obliged "to advise the Telengana peasantry and the fighting partisans to stop all partisan actions' and to mobilize the entire people to rout the Congress at the general elections

It was tame surrender because the party gave the peasantry no guarantee about protecting their hard won gains. The withdrawal of the struggle meant surrender of all the "guerrilla zones and the liberated "village soviets' to the Indian army and with them all the other gains. The party was settling for peaceful constitutionalism and as the election results in 1952 revealed the best communist showing in the country was in the Telengana area, which was tangible proof the people were behind the movement

The CPI had at last abandoned peasant partisan warfare, and even armed struggle in general as its immediate programme. This was but the first logical step towards the rejection of the tactic even in the ultimate sense because the withdrawal of the Telengana struggle was the beginning of a new process of adjustment to parliamentarism culminating in the philosophy of peaceful transition seven years later

#### TEMPORARY UNITY

Looking back on the developments in the CPI during the years preceding its open split in 1964 the 1951 programme can be said to have unified it though temporarily on the eve of the 1952 general elections in the country. The Programme was formally adopted at its Third Congress in Madurai (December 1953/January 1954) but it became obsolete in a year and was out of step with the changing political situation

For the next ten years the fight was over a correct programme. At the Fourth Congress in Palghat (April 1956) attempts to amend the programme failed and what followed was another spell of confusion right through the Fifth Con-

gress at Amritsar (January 1958) to the Sixth Congress at Vijayawada (April 1961). Immediate issues were solved temporarily on the basis of pragmatic and empirical assessments of the changing situation. The battle between the right and the left resulted in a deadlock, making for a centrist deviation with the attendant opportunism.

The battle for a programme was joined seriously on the eve of the Sixth Congress and the party moved to the verge of a split. The split was barely averted by shelving the question of a new programme and what followed was only formal unity. The party had to split into two before the Communist Party of India could adopt a programme to replace the 13 year old document.

The 1951 programme went little beyond correcting the left sectarian deviation of the *Political Thesis* (1948). According to G. Adhikari, the 1951 programme left many problems unsolved including the class character of the government, the role of the national bourgeoisie as the ruling class, and the path of the working class in its struggle for hegemony.<sup>25</sup>

The differences which were to lead eventually to the 1964 split, originated in the course of the battle for a correct programme as evident from the controversy at Madurai and later at Palghat. Broadly, the issues, as summed up by Adhikari were the nature of India's independence, the class character of the Congress government, the party's attitude to economic development and planning under the government, and lastly, since the 1951 programme had set the task of building a national democratic front including the national bourgeoisie, the party's attitude to the Congress and other parties and its tactics vis-a-vis the government.<sup>26</sup>

The controversy at Madurai related to two questions

<sup>25</sup> G. Adhikari, *Communist Party and India's Path to National Regeneration and Socialism*, Communist Party of India, New Delhi, June 1964, pp. 125-6.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 128-9.

arising out of the first of these issues. The country's foreign policy had a bearing on the degree of its independence. The issue was whether India's nonalignment policy was showing signs of independence of Britain and United States and whether British imperialism or American imperialism was the main enemy. The Andhra unit raised the question much to the discomfiture of pro Soviet sections in the party which were ready to tailor the party's programme to suit Moscow's cold war interests and declare American imperialism as the main enemy.

#### IDENTIFYING THE MAIN ENEMY

The challenge came in the form of a draft thesis for the congress from a group of Andhra delegates. According to the Andhra thesis Anglo American contradictions manifested themselves not only in the international field but also had its specific expression in India. The United States was trying to push the British out from its "dominant position" in the market and British and Indian interests closely allied with it were interested in resisting such attempts.

So clubbing the two imperialisms together to fight them simultaneously and equally would land the party into the position of fighting all the enemies of the proletariat at one stroke instead of taking them on in turn. It would collectively amount at this stage to fighting the battles of English imperialists against America. While Britain was the chief national enemy, the United States was the international enemy. If we forget the concrete question of British imperialism and the concrete task of fighting it for our national freedom and only indulge in the general talk of fighting Anglo American imperialism we reduce ourselves to the position of tall talkers and fail to mobilize the people for the struggle for complete national independence from British imperialism.

When it debunked the vague talk of fighting Anglo American imperialism the Andhra thesis was not ignoring

## the threat from American imperialism

Now, Comrades raise the questions Is not American imperialism the spearhead of reaction and the chief enemy of the Soviet Union, People's China, and other People's Democratic States? Is not American imperialism hatching *conspiracies against communist parties throughout the world*, our party being no exception? Is not American imperialism trying to penetrate our country and exploit and enslave us? When such are the facts are we not to fight American imperialism as well?<sup>27</sup>

The thesis admitted the international obligations of the party as the component of an international detachment to fight the American imperialism. But the party had its national duties as well. "Internationally speaking, America is the spearhead of world reaction as the main enemy of Peace and Freedom for all the people. We situated as we are in a country under a particular State, have some concrete tasks to perform. The chief enemy of our national freedom today is British imperialism."<sup>28</sup>

The Andhra thesis was incidentally raising the more fundamental question of the party's understanding of India's independence and the nature of the Mountbatten Award. The document was placing the party's national obligations above the requirements of international conformism and the influence of Soviet foreign policy. The other view at the congress was that the threat to India from the United

<sup>27</sup> "Andhra Thesis (1953)," *Communist Conspiracy in Madurai*, Democratic Research Service, Bombay, 1954, pp. 49-54. The authenticity of this document has been vouched for by many Andhra leaders to the author. In any case the General-Secretary's report on the work of the Third Congress repeatedly refers to the controversy raised by this document, thus indirectly admitting its existence.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51-5.

States should be made the basis of the entire activity"<sup>29</sup> Between the two extreme positions the opportunism of the centrists paid off. General Secretary Ajoy Ghosh dismissed both the positions as "deviations" and called for a simultaneous struggle against the British and the Americans.

One deviation held that US imperialism was a threat to peace but constituted no serious and immediate threat to India's freedom. The other deviation in practice, though not in words, wanted to make the US threat the basis of our entire activity. "Thus the question 'who is the main enemy?' is not an academic question for with it is bound up the entire line of action"<sup>30</sup>

The congress tried to negotiate the Andhra challenge with equivocation.

If the US imperialism becomes the main enemy not only to peace but to freedom then we could take up no other attitude but one of progressively lining up behind the Nehru government on the plea of fighting the American threat.

If the US constitutes a danger to peace and in no way menaces our freedom then the struggle against it and the struggle for peace loses all sense of urgency in relation to our country.

It became necessary at the party congress to be absolutely clear on the point. For the way we understand this point will decide our attitude towards the Nehru government itself.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ajoy Ghosh "On the Work of the Third Party Congress," *New Age* 24 January 1954 (also published in pamphlet form New Delhi 1954)

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*. But in the pamphlet version published later the first paragraph of this excerpt was modified as follows: "If US imperialism is looked upon as the main enemy not only of peace but also of freedom then the tendency would increasingly be of lining up behind the Nehru government on the plea of fighting the American threat" (italics added)

Ajoy Ghosh's arguments epitomized the party's equivocation on the issue. While the basic task of fighting British imperialism remained, the immediate task was to fight the American danger. He called for a simultaneous struggle against both the imperialisms. 'We have to win full freedom from the British but we also have to defend our existing freedom from the increasing menace of the US'<sup>32</sup> Unless freedom was defended from American assaults, it could not be won fully from the British. But no direct answer was given to the issue raised by the Andhra thesis. The fight against British imperialism was compromised to that extent, obviously under international pressure exerted through Harry Pollitt, General-Secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain who attended the congress as a fraternal delegate.

The controversy as to which of the two imperialisms was the main enemy had a bearing on the party's attitude to the Nehru government. If United States imperialism posed the real threat and was therefore the main enemy, it would oblige the party to rally behind the Nehru government and Moscow would have liked it. Harry Pollitt's speeches in India<sup>33</sup> left one in no doubt as to what Moscow expected of the Madurai congress. In fact the Madurai resolution<sup>34</sup> was based on a policy of equivocation to head off the Andhra challenge, theoretically accept a "third line" proposed by Ajoy Ghosh but in practice carry out a policy suited to Moscow's requirements.

The Madurai resolution called for simultaneous struggle against the two imperialisms turned out in practice to be a call to line up behind the Nehru government. The other formulations of the congress fitted well into the pattern.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>33</sup> *Harry Pollitt Speaks*, Calcutta, 1954

<sup>34</sup> *Political Resolution*, Communist Party of India, Delhi, 1954, pp 67



Ajoy Ghosh claimed that the congress by grasping the 'basic feature' of the new situation had armed the party with a correct appreciation of the political situation. 'We are now in the midst of a deepening economic crisis and the initial stages of a political crisis. The central slogan was the government of democratic unity. The congress called for correct united front tactics. Left unity was not to be a precondition for broad democratic unity because the party's preoccupation was with an anti-American peace front designed to help Moscow. As Ajoy Ghosh said in another context

One deviation says that the US is only a threat to peace and not to our freedom. The other deviation says that US is the only enemy we have to fight for both peace and national liberation.

The struggle for peace and the struggle for national liberation are not identical or co-extensive.<sup>2</sup>

He was right when he noted that all those who participate in the struggle must come into the peace movement but all those in the struggle for peace may not join the struggle for full freedom. The party's emphasis was on building a broad-based peace front and the task of full freedom took the back seat.

#### SOVIET SUPPORT TO NEHRU

A series of international developments compelling an apparent anti-West orientation to India's foreign policy helped the dominant leadership to hustle the party into supporting the Nehru government. Support to the new foreign policy logically blunted the party's edge against Nehru's domestic policies. The United States-Pakistan arms

<sup>2</sup>- Ajoy Ghosh, 'On the Work of the Third Party Congress', *New Age*, 24 January 1954.

pact was officially made known on 24 February 1954, a few weeks after the Third Congress. When Nehru denounced the pact and declared that "the countries of Asia and certainly India do not accept this policy and do not propose to be dominated by any country" the Soviet Premier, Goerge Melenkov, hailed India's "great contribution to the cause of peace"<sup>36</sup>

Nehru's foreign policy moved away from the deadcentre of rigid nonalignment towards the Soviet camp. He called for an end to the hydrogen bomb tests and India showed a great deal of initiative towards solving the Korean problem. On 25 June 1954, the Chinese Premier Chou En-lai arrived in New Delhi for talks with Nehru and they enunciated the famous *Panch Sheel* (five principles) of peaceful coexistence.

Thereupon, a section of the leadership tried to swing the CPI to the right, under the cover of "fighting the US machinations in Asia" and the "threat to India" and expected Nehru to give the lead. "The more Nehru takes a forthright stand against the imperialists and by the side of the forces of peace the more enthusiastic will be the support of our millions"<sup>37</sup> P Ramamurti, Politbureau member and editor of the party journal *New Age*, stretched the logic further to call for a 'national platform for peace' which, between the lines, meant a detente with the Congress.

This slideback on the Madurai position touched off a furore in the party. When the Central Committee met in September Ramamurti and the Politbureau were attacked for the reformist deviation. According to Namboodinpad, another Politbureau member, the slogan of "national platform for peace" which was to include the Congress was rejected because "the Congress organization dominated by landlords and monopolists collaborating with British im

<sup>36</sup> *The Hindu*, 2 March 1954

<sup>37</sup> P Ramamurti, "Drive U.S. out of Asia" *New Age*, 18 July 1954

penalism, cannot stand for a consistent policy of peace"<sup>28</sup> The Central Committee therefore found no need to revise its attitude to the Congress government and to the central political slogan of replacing the Congress government by a government of democratic unity

But the pressure against the deviation did not last long because international intervention to tilt the balance against the left came from R. Palme Dutt of the Communist Party of Great Britain. While the Madurai (Third Congress) resolution had taken care to demarcate the struggle for peace from the struggle for freedom, Dutt wanted to telescope them into one in view of the post-war American drive for domination of former colonies of the Western powers including India, Pakistan and Ceylon. "These can be no separation of the fight for national independence from the fight for peace" because 'the interests of the struggle of the colonial people for national independence are inseparably linked with the democratic and anti-imperialist peace camp and with supporting all moves which serve the cause of world peace'<sup>29</sup> After the mauling it had got at the September meeting of the Central Committee, the Politbureau found itself in a 'state of panic'

#### CRISIS IN CPI

The Politbureau (in "total disregard" of all principles which should govern relations between "brother parties") called an urgent meeting of the Central Committee in October 1954 to reject Dutt's article. But the Central Committee refused to endorse the Politbureau's draft resolution and adopted another instead. Discussion on Dutt's article, the

<sup>28</sup> E. M. S. Namboodiripad "Counter SEATO by Asian Solidarity" *New Age* 24 September 1954

<sup>29</sup> R. Palme Dutt "New Features in National Liberation Struggle of Colonial and Dependent People" *For a Lasting Peace For a People's Democracy*, 8 October 1954 *New Age* 14 November 1954

resolution said "revealed differences of important nature" More time and thought were needed to resolve them The discussion on the problem was to be taken up along with the assessment of the recent national and international developments Meanwhile the party was to carry on the work in accordance with the Madurai congress resolution<sup>40</sup>

But the Central Committee realized later, in 1956 that this was the 'most irresponsible and disruptive thing to do' Such a resolution, even if it had to be passed, should not have gone beyond Central Committee and it was improper to have told the members that important differences existed, while keeping them in the dark about the nature of the differences

The counsel contained in Dutt's article was reinforced by direct advice from the Soviet leadership because the ailing secretary away in Moscow since July, returned in December to plead for support to the "peaceful aspects of Nehru's foreign policy" and the relentless fight against his reactionary domestic policies<sup>41</sup> In sum, the party was beginning to hold Nehru's foreign policy progressive meaning full support while his domestic policies were still regarded reactionary<sup>42</sup>

The Politbureau together with some Central Committee members met in December (after Ajoy Ghosh's return from Moscow) but could not agree on the formulation that Nehru's foreign policy strengthened national freedom Its re assessment of the national situation however noted new features in the economy and their impact on the political situation Another meeting in February 1955, carried the

<sup>40</sup> The account of the situation created by Dutt's article is based on the Central Committee's report to the Fourth Party Congress, published for the first time in *Communist Double Talk at Palghat*, Democratic Research Service, Bombay, 1956

<sup>41</sup> Ajoy Ghosh "Communist Answer to Pandit Nehru," *New Age*, 5 December 1954

<sup>42</sup> 'Ajoy Ghosh Answers Questions on Communist Policies,' *New Age*, 12 December 1954

process forward, to the point of holding the Madurai assessment "obsolete"

Though a new tactical line for the changed situation remained to be worked out, the Andhra leadership got the clearance for its "blindly sectarian" tactics of forcing mid-term elections in the newly formed Andhra State. At the March 1965 poll the party made an ambitious bid for power in the new State and united all the other parties against it, behind the Congress. Though it was a rout for the CPI in terms of seats it piled up an impressive 31 per cent hard-core vote fighting against the Congress led alliance single-handed. The post mortem findings on the Andhra elections was unsatisfactory to most party committees because the Central Committee had no agreed understanding of the political situation. The Politbureau was virtually breaking up and the June meeting of the Central Committee aggravated the crisis.

Nehru's drive for closer relations with the socialist countries (among its manifestations were his visit to China in November 1954, the visit of President Tito to India in January 1955, Nehru's visit to the Soviet Union in June 1955, and the visit of the Soviet Premier Bulganin and First Secretary Khrushchev to India late in 1955) and the beginnings of Indo-Soviet economic co-operation with the signing of the agreement in February 1955 for the Bhilai steel plant cramped the CPI's style and complicated its policy problems. The Congress had set for itself the goal of a 'socialist pattern' at its annual plenary session in January 1955 and Moscow began noticing progressive features not only in Nehru's foreign policy but in domestic policies as well. A *Pravda* editorial on India's Republic Day 26 January 1955, lauded Nehru's policies much to the embarrassment of the CPI during the election campaign in Andhra State.

#### CPI SUPPORTS NEHRU'S FOREIGN POLICY

The report of a commission set up in November 1954 to reconcile the conflicting lines in the Central Committee

provided the basis of a new policy. In June 1955, the Central Committee discussed the report for a whole month and adopted a political resolution supporting Nehru's foreign policy, attacking the domestic policies and calling for the party's participation in the government's national reconstruction programme. The party could not help noticing a progressive shift in the domestic policies.<sup>43</sup>

In September 1955 the Central Committee met again to work out a series of amendments to the party programme and circulate them for discussion before they were moved at its Fourth Congress to be called shortly. At this stage there was evidence of a general agreement among the leadership on their attitude to foreign policy and the differences related to Nehru's domestic policies. The extent of the confusion in the party could be gauged from the conflicting assessments of the changed situation thrown up during the pre Fourth Congress discussions.

The shift in the government's foreign policy and the perceptible change in the domestic policies were taken by one section to mean that the national bourgeoisie had split into two: the monopolist section seeking collaboration and compromise with imperialism and native feudalism while the other section was fighting both these enemies. Bhowani Sen, a spokesman for this line, argued that "the pro-imperialist and pro-feudal circles amongst the big business and in the government were not interested in independent capitalist development. They feared the people more than imperialists and know that Nehru's progressive policies would ultimately strengthen the popular forces and recoil on them."<sup>44</sup>

The anxiety of the Nehru government to seek economic aid from the Socialist countries to use it as a bargaining

<sup>43</sup> *Communist Party in the Struggle for Peace, Democracy, and National Advance*, Communist Party of India, New Delhi, 1955.

<sup>44</sup> *Fourth Party Congress Document*, No 2, p 8 (for party members only).

counter with the West was sought to be explained through *tortuous logic* — representing the ‘progressive section of the Indian big business,’ the Nehru government had in the main abandoned collaboration with imperialism and taken to a policy of peaceful co-existence and co-operation with socialist States. The government’s drive for industrialization, nationalization of key sectors of the economy, etc. ‘undoubtedly’ aimed at the liquidation of semi-colonialism, leading to economic independence and Nehru had been able to take these steps only by moving towards an alliance with the camp of peace and anti-imperialism.’ The tactic suggested was a united national front which would pave the way for a ‘government of national unity,’ an emergency alliance to resist the “pro-imperialist and pro-feudal offensive”<sup>45</sup>

P. C. Joshi, S. S. Yusuf, and others were more explicit on this point and advanced the slogan of a “national democratic coalition government” which would enable the party to defeat pro-imperialist and pro-feudal forces and forge an alliance with national elements and help realize the hegemony of the proletariat over the national movement.<sup>46</sup> The other viewpoint was more or less a reiteration of the formulations of the 1951 programme that India was still a semi-colonial and dependent country because its economic, financial and military dependence on imperialism — mainly British — continued. It was still a bourgeois-lord government headed by the big bourgeoisie collaborating with British imperialism.<sup>47</sup>

Amidst these differences a compromise in the form of a centrist deviation was inevitable. Nambudiripad says the Central Committee had to drop its idea of amending the

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 178

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* p. 54

<sup>47</sup> Note on CC Resolution and Com. Ajoy’s Explanation Document by P. Sundarayya, M. Basavappanahli, and M. Hanumantha Rao. Fourth Party Congress Document, No. 2 October 1955 (for party members only)

party programme at Palghat due to opposition from a section of the party, particularly from the leadership<sup>48</sup>

#### CENTRIST DEVIATION AT PALGHAT

The Congress at Palghat formalized the centrist deviation into which the party had lapsed in practice and made some new formulations underscoring the positive as well as negative aspects of the government's policies. The government was a 'bourgeoisie landlord' one in which the bourgeoisie was the leading force. "Its policies are motivated by the desire to develop India along independent capitalist lines

The bourgeoisie seeks to strengthen its position not merely in relation to popular masses. It seeks to resolve the conflict with imperialism and feudalism at the cost of the people." This was a significant departure from the formulation in the 1951 programme (adopted at Madurai in 1953-54) which had characterized the government as one of landlords, princes, and the reactionary big bourgeoisie collaborating with the British imperialists.

The resolution traced the government's policies to the class character of the bourgeoisie which held State power and led the ruling Congress Party. The bourgeoisie was interested in "curbing feudal forms of exploitation transforming feudal landlords into capitalist landlords, creating a stratum of rich peasantry that can act as the social base of the bourgeois rule in the countryside, striving to extend a State sector, which in the existing situation is essential for the development of capitalism itself." All this would bring the government into inevitable conflict with imperialism, with feudalism and sometimes with the narrow sections of the bourgeoisie<sup>49</sup>

The tactics worked out by the resolution demanded support to every measure of the government 'against imperial-

<sup>48</sup> L. M. S. Namboodirpad, *Note for the Programme of the CPI*, New Delhi 1964, pp. 69-70

<sup>49</sup> "Political Resolution," *New Age*, 20 May 1956



ism and feudalism" but of resolute struggle against policies which helped imperialism, feudalism and the monopolies. The most important division in the democratic forces was between those following the Congress, on the one hand, and those following the democratic opposition parties, on the other and therefore the need was to draw the mass of Congressmen into struggle for correct government policies. But the resolution rejected the line of "general united front" with the Congress advocated by the rightist elements leading to a Congress-Communist coalition in view of the changed correlation of forces. About a third of the delegates voted for this line<sup>50</sup>. The resolution, rejecting united front with the Congress, took care to warn that the democratic front did not mean an anti Congress front either.

#### THE RUBINSTEIN THESIS

The rightists, not reconciled to the defeat of their line at Palghat, tried to reopen the issue on the basis of an article by a Soviet writer, Modeste Rubinstein, who had said that the Nehru government was set on the path to non-capitalist development, i.e. towards socialism<sup>51</sup>. The Central Committee rejected the understanding behind the Rubinstein thesis<sup>52</sup> after which the General Secretary, Ajoy Ghosh wrote a rejoinder to it. Ghosh said that the impact of the socialist camp and the extension of the State sector in India did not justify the thesis that by declaring socialism as the aim and by developing the State sector, the developing countries cannot launch themselves on the non capitalist path of development.

<sup>50</sup> F. M. S. Nambudiripad *Note for the Programme of the CPI* p. 71.

<sup>51</sup> Modeste Rubinstein, "A Non-Capitalist Path for Under developed Countries" *New Times*, 5 July 1956 and 2 August 1956; also reprinted in *New Age* (monthly), October 1956.

<sup>52</sup> *Fight Against Revisionism*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 4.

there undoubtedly exists a non capitalist path for underdeveloped countries like India. But it would be an illusion to think that the present government, headed by the bourgeoisie, can advance on that path. The Communist Party of India does not suffer from such illusions. Therefore, while fully recognizing certain possibilities of advance in the existing situation and while fully supporting all measures of the government which help realize these possibilities and strengthen the cause of peace, national freedom, and national economy, the Communist Party simultaneously strives to strengthen the forces of democracy and socialism in our country so that power passes into the hands of the democratic masses led by the working class. That alone complete the task of the democratic revolution with the utmost rapidity and advance the country towards socialism.<sup>53</sup>

#### AMRITSAR "PEACEFUL TRANSITION" LINE

The party at its next congress early in 1958, at Amritsar, was seized of the far reaching changes in the national scene. One was a big swing to the left, to the CPI in particular and the emergence of a communist led ministry in Kerala after the 1957 elections as a big factor in national politics. Another was a growing crisis inside the Congress, though it still remained the biggest force. The third was that, although Congress influence was declining, the right reaction was growing while it was not the left that was gaining in strength. Fourthly, the crisis in the government's economic planning was intensifying. The Palghat congress had underlined the contradictions in the aims and methods of planning and the crisis inherent in it. The reactionaries, who did not have any mass base but drew their strength in the policies of the government, were out to scuttle the plan. As a result, the Congress, which stood in the middle, stick-

<sup>53</sup> Ajoy Ghosh, "On India's Path of Development," *New Age* (monthly), October 1956

ing to nonalignment and consolidating national and political independence of the country was likely to witness a process of radicalization<sup>54</sup>

The party should therefore unite the democratic forces to bring about a leftward turn to the policies countering pressure from domestic reaction and from the US imperialism for a rightward shift. The political resolution summed up the task of a two pronged battle

It is precisely these policies of the government that have strengthened the position of these anti national forces in our economic and political life and offered them opportunities to build their links with foreign monopolists and to resort to the tactics of blackmail and pressure. The extreme right, therefore, cannot be defeated without a simultaneous battle waged with determination and vigour to defeat the anti people's policies of the government<sup>55</sup>

The moderate elements would have forced their old demand for a Congress Communist coalition by pointing to the emergence of the right reaction and the mounting US pressure on India. But the relentless Congress attempts to oust the communist led Ministry in Kerala appeared to have inhibited this section from calling for such a coalition.

But the most significant development at Amritsar was the party's decision to convert itself from a cadre party to a mass party and sweeping organizational changes to bring this about. Obviously guided by the 1957 Moscow declaration the party proclaimed its goal as socialism through peaceful means. This was incorporated in the preamble to the new party constitution. General Secretary Ajoy Ghosh later explained that "peaceful methods for us are neither a creed nor a tactic. It is a policy—a seriously meant

<sup>54</sup> *New Age* 27 April 1958

<sup>55</sup> *Resolutions of the Communist Party of India Communist Party of India* New Delhi, 1958, p 10

policy."<sup>66</sup>

Amritsar was the culmination of the long retreat from Telengana and from the 1951 tactical line because in its new found faith in peaceful change, the CPI was repudiating its tactic of combining peasant partisan warfare with the general strike weapon by the peasant-working class alliance with the working class as the leader. The 1951 tactical line had at best reiterated a theoretical commitment to this tactic because such a struggle was not part of the immediate programme. But Amritsar marked the repudiation of even this theoretical commitment.

#### SWING TO THE RIGHT

Beginning with late 1950 there was not let up in Moscow's pressure against the CPI, exerted initially through the British communists and later, directly, to force a change in its line. Soviet foreign policy interests required that Nehru's policy of nonalignment should not be allowed to drift into support to the West. It was necessary to stabilize his neutral position before forcing him to support the Soviet camp. As soon as Moscow decided to call off its cold war against Nehru, its first objective was to get the CPI to call off the armed struggle in Telengana. A new programme and a tactical line had been prescribed by Moscow for the CPI. Theoretically the tactic of armed struggle had been permitted for India but it was not to be part of the CPI's immediate programme.

Once the armed struggle had been given up in Telengana, the CPI was to be persuaded into believing that of the two imperialisms menacing India (the United States and Britain) the former was the main enemy because that was in Moscow's cold war interests. The CPI fell in line under pressure and went about the task set for it—the broadest national front against imperialism for peace. Moscow used

<sup>66</sup> New Age, 18 May 1958

the peace movement in India to exert pressure on Nehru's foreign policy, which was showing signs of independence since 1953. Thereafter it was in the Soviet interest to extend economic aid to the Nehru government in a big way and utilize his neutral position as a lever in the cold war. The CPI came in handy as a lobby and a pressure group.

With cold war replacing class struggle the CPI settled for parliamentarism believing in peaceful transition to socialism and even advocating a general united front with the ruling Congress Party in the hope that the basic tasks of democratic revolution could be completed under Congress leadership.

On the eve of the Palghat Congress in 1956 the differences in the CPI related to the issues of the Indian situation — the class character of the Congress government, assessment of its five-year plans for national economic development and its foreign policy. The resolution passed by majority vote at Palghat did not provide a working basis and by no means resolved the ideological and political differences. A good section in the party had even pleaded for a general united front with the Congress though this line was defeated.

In the years following the Palghat congress the majority stood behind the resolution and despite their serious reservations about it from the left angle tried to implement it. But the minority tried to push its alternative line of collaboration with the Congress in keeping with Moscow's interests. The Amritsar congress in 1958 was the climax of right opportunism in the party.

## *Sino-Indian Dispute and the CPI*

A BIZARRE PERMUTATION of the Sino Soviet ideological dispute and the Sino-Indian border conflict interacted on the continuing crisis in the Communist Party of India for three years after its Amritsar congress to take it to the verge of a split in 1961. The formal unity imposed by the Amritsar line (of simultaneous struggle against the right reaction and the government's policies) did not end the political deadlock. The strong centrist trend which had now emerged held the precarious balance between the right and left groups of near equal strength. The result was an opportunist compromise at the Sixth Congress in Vijayawada in 1961 to avert an open split.

The 1958-61 interregnum which exacerbated the right-left factionalism in the CPI also witnessed the escalation of the Sino Soviet ideological dispute and the Sino-Indian border conflict. In its first stage the Sino Soviet dispute which can be said to have had its beginnings immediately after the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union in 1956 was limited to bilateral discussions between the Soviet and Chinese party leaders. In 1957 it moved to a higher stage of open disputation. By mid 1959 when Nikita Khrushchev's plan for a detente with the United States became known and the Soviet Union formally backed out of its commitment on atomic aid to China the ideological conflict became open with the Chinese publishing the *Red Flag* article *Long Live Leninism* to be followed by a fierce clash in Bucharest in June 1960. Alongside the Sino-Indian border dispute was building up towards a confrontation between the two Asian countries.

## ORIGINS OF THE DISPUTE

The Sino Indian border dispute dates back to October 1954 when India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru raised with the Chinese Prime Minister Chou En lai the question of maps showing what India claimed was an inaccurate alignment. According to the Indian government it was given to understand that these maps were mere reproductions of the Kuomintang regime's maps and the new government in Peking had no time to revise them.

In 1956 when Chou En lai visited India he told Nehru that China had agreed to the formalization of the McMahon Line as the boundary in the case of Burma and proposed to recognize it in the case of India also according to the Indian version which also claims that there were surreptitious Chinese intrusions in the Ladakh sector on the northern border and Chinese had cleared a road across Ladakh.

In the meantime the Lama revolt was intensifying in Tibet across the Sino Indian border and on 20 July 1958 China charged India with permitting Kalimpong a border town to be used as the centre for directing the Tibetan insurrection<sup>1</sup>. In September India protested against the detention of a patrol party by the Chinese on the Ladakh border and against the clearance of the Aksai-chin military road across Ladakh. In January 1959 Chou En lai questioned the established boundary alignment but advanced no specific claims. In April 1959 when the Lama revolt was crushed and the Dalai Lama fled Lhasa to seek political asylum in India Sino Indian relations came under a severe strain. In September Chou En lai spelt out his country's claim for about 50,000 square miles of territory in India's possession. The claim followed a border incident on 25 August.

Needless to say the Soviet attitude to the Sino Indian

<sup>1</sup> *India China White Paper I* Government of India New Delhi 1959 p. 60

border dispute was one of the main irritants in the Sino Soviet relations. The Chinese were to admit this later. One of the main differences of principle between the Soviet leaders and ourselves turns on the Sino Indian boundary question'.<sup>2</sup>

#### CPI'S DILEMMA

The Lama revolt in Tibet and the strain it imposed on Sino Indian relations forced an awkward dilemma on the Communist Party of India (CPI) which had hitherto pledged unqualified support to Nehru's foreign policy and hailed "the positive and vital role" it had played "in changing the world alignment of forces"<sup>3</sup>. But Nehru's attitude to the Lama revolt brought the CPI utmost embarrassment. The choice was limited to endorsing his views and conduct or endorsing the Chinese criticism of Nehru.

The CPI tried to balance its cautious support to Peking with its qualified support to Nehru's foreign policy to get out of the predicament. Ajoy Ghosh, its General Secretary, observed ruefully that Nehru still seemed to think that India's conduct during the Tibetan episode has been "unimpeachable" and was in full conformity with *Panch Sheel* (five principles) and all the blame lay with the Chinese. If the Chinese press and leaders were "sharply critical of India" as never before, it was because the Indian government as distinct from individuals, political parties and the press had adopted a biased attitude on an internal problem of China. Even the statements of Nehru as the head of a government "cannot but be considered as having been heavily biased in favour of the rebels. Nehru does not even seem to realize this."

Ajoy Ghosh was nevertheless happy that Nehru had

<sup>2</sup> Truth about how the Leaders of the CPSU have Allied themselves with India against China," *People's Daily*, 2 November 1963.

<sup>3</sup> Communist Party Resolutions (Amritsar) New Delhi, 1958 p 3



rejected "imperialist" attempts to change India's foreign policy. He tried to interpret the Chinese charge of Indian expansionism as not intended against Nehru or his government but against "certain reactionary circles in India".<sup>4</sup> The resolutions of the CPI conformed to this line of thinking. Its Secretariat said India had always recognized Tibet as part of China and the *Panch Sheel* enjoined on both the countries strict neutrality and non intervention in each other's affairs. It also meant they should not allow their respective territories to be used for hostile or prejudicial acts against the other. The Secretariat endorsed the Chinese charge that Kalimpong had become the command centre of the rebels and demanded that the Indian government should investigate "the affairs of Kalimpong". The Nehru government had taken a "proper attitude" to the question and refused to oblige reactionaries whose sole aim was "to sow discord between our two friendly people".<sup>5</sup>

Two months later, the Central Executive Committee of the CPI was a little critical of Nehru because he had "permitted himself to take positions and make utterances which cannot be reconciled with his foreign policy and its guiding principle *Panch Sheel*". Some "unfortunate and incorrect steps" of the government were being "assiduously exploited" by the enemies of India's foreign policy. The executive hoped Nehru and all those who supported or pursued his policy would overcome the "powerful pressure" from certain "reactionary quarters" which were dreaming of Tibet as a "buffer State under their influence".<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ajoy Ghosh "India China Friendship—Repair the Damage," *New Age* 10 May 1959.

<sup>5</sup> "On Events in Tibet" Statement by the Secretariat of the National Council of the CPI *The India-China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India (for party members only)*, New Delhi 1963 pp 12.

<sup>6</sup> "Strengthen Friendship between India and China," Resolution Adopted by the Central Executive Committee of the CPI *ibid.* pp 5-7.

## PEKING'S BROADSIDE ON NEHRU

Chinese propaganda charged the Indian government with unwitting collusion with imperialism though it had no design on Tibet. An insight into the CPI's private attitude to the Tibet episode is available from two later day documents. In September 1960, a Central Executive Committee resolution admitted that the first breach of India-China friendship was created in the attitude and acts of the Indian government towards the counter-revolutionary uprising in Tibet and aid given to Dalai Lama to conduct the anti-China campaign in India. But the CPI did not subscribe, even in those days (May 1959) to the Chinese view that Kalimpong was the command centre of the rebels or that the Dalai Lama made his Tezpur statement under duress. The CPI did not agree with the loose use of the term expansionism in relation to India. (This explains why the Central Executive's May 1959 statement made no reference to Kalimpong while the earlier March 1959 resolution of its Secretariat had enthusiastically endorsed the Chinese charge of Kalimpong being allowed to be used as a base.) Moscow Radio which had repeated this Chinese charge on 28 March and twice early in April even after Nehru had denied it stopped all references to Kalimpong suddenly.<sup>7</sup>

## CPI EFFORTS TO RESTRAIN PEKING

The CPI's private efforts to restrain the Chinese leadership date back to this period. In a letter to the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) on 3 May and again on 5 May, the

<sup>7</sup> On Certain Questions Before the International Communist Movement. Resolution of the Central Executive Committee (4-7 September 1960) (excerpts) *ibid* p. 24. Full version of the resolution has not been published and is a restricted document.

<sup>8</sup> Harry Gelman, 'The CPI-Sino Soviet Battleground' in A. Doak Barnett (Ed.) *Communist Strategies in Asia* Bombay, 1968 p. 146.

CPI, while "extending full support to the general stand taken by the Chinese comrades," deplored some of their statements (regarding Kalimpong, "Indian expansionism," Dalai Lama being used as a "hostage" to blackmail China and his statements being made under duress) Disclosing this in the course of his speech at the Moscow conference of communist parties in November 1960, the CPI General-Secretary, Ajoy Ghosh, pointed out that they did not utter a single word in public to betray their differences with the CPC Even if Nehru had made a few anti China statements, a distinction should have been made between "those of Indian reactionaries who were striving to change India's basic foreign policy" and Nehru's Ajoy Ghosh said the two letters to CPC had also suggested a Nehru Chou meeting to restore good relations between the two countries But the CPC's reply was short and curt The CPI was told that the suggestion that the two Prime Ministers should meet was not proper There was no answer to any of the specific points raised in the two letters Instead, the CPC asked the CPI to study the article "The Revolution in Tibet and Nehru's Philosophy" for answers to all the questions\*

The uproar over Tibet died down but the CPI had to face another embarrassing situation when the Nehru government dismissed the 28 month-old communist-led ministry in Kerala in July 1959 It is significant that immediately after this constitutional coup against India's first communist State government, the Nehru government secured two Soviet credits totalling 350 million roubles (Rs 3,000 million) The Nehru government's disregard for constitutional norms, demonstrated by its decision to overthrow a duly constituted State government which commanded absolute majority in the legislature, strengthened the left group in the CPI which was growing restive at the reformist moratorium on class struggle The left group resented Soviet support to India's

\* "Speech by Ajoy Ghosh at the World Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties (November 1960)," *The India-China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India*, pp 38-9

domestic and foreign policies because such support in effect blunted the edge of the CPI's struggle against the reactionary forces

The Kerala coup unnerved the CPI leadership. To add to its worries came numerous reports of ill treatment of Indian nationals in Tibet, of incidents on the Sino Indian border and of the divergence between India and China over the border issue. Besides, the CPI expected a big "reactionary offensive" in the wake of the Kerala coup and feared that further deterioration in Sino Indian relations would harm the democratic movement in the country. One of the main weapons the "reaction" wanted to use in the offensive was the strained Sino Indian relations. A letter to the CPC on 20 August conveyed the CPI's apprehensions and implored the Chinese to observe restraint.

The campaign against China which is steadily gathering strength is a campaign against India's foreign policy, against Indo China friendship, and also against the Communist Party of India. Continuation and accentuation of the present differences would gravely endanger India's foreign policy, help the right wing to take India towards America and would also help the drive against the Communist Party of India. I would, therefore, like to know what can and should be done to resolve these differences. This has become an urgent matter both in the interest of our foreign policy and defence of democracy inside our country.<sup>10</sup>

The CPC leadership was in no mood to bail the Indian party out of its difficulties. The tension on the border continued and the climax was the Longju incident late in August. Ajoy Ghosh was in Moscow and at the urgent request of the CPI Secretariat, he addressed another letter to the CPC, on 3 September, pleading for Sino-Indian govern

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, pp 39-40

ment level negotiations and exchange of views on the border issue because delay would only help the very forces that seek to create hostility against China and pull India towards the Anglo American camp" The CPC ignored the letter<sup>11</sup> just as it ignored the two letters earlier in May. No less than eight notes had been exchanged between Peking and New Delhi between 23 June and 28 August 1959 but the CPC had not taken the CPI into confidence about these developments

#### AJOY GHOSH SEEKS SOVIET HELP

It is significant that *Pravda* announced on 8 September that Ajoy Ghosh was in Moscow and the following day *Tass* released a Soviet government statement deploring the Longju incident. The statement quoted Soviet leading circles as hoping that the Chinese and Indian governments would not allow the incident to further the aims of those circles who want the international situation to worsen" and that both governments will settle the misunderstanding. The statement also noted that this incident has been caught up by those circles in the Western countries in the United States especially who are seeking to prevent relaxation of international tension and aggravate the situation" on the eve of the exchange of visits by Khrushchev and Eisenhower.<sup>12</sup>

But the Chinese version of the behind the scene developments leading to the *Tass* statement puts the episode in a different perspective. According to the Chinese the Longju clash was provoked by Indians. On 6 September a Chinese leader told the Soviet Charge d'Affaires in Peking about the incident and China's policy of avoiding hostilities. On 9 September the Charge d'Affaires informed the Chinese government of his government's desire to issue a statement

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid* p. 41

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* pp. 47-8

on 10 September deploring the incident. The same afternoon, the Chinese government gave him a copy of Chou En-lai's letter to Nehru proposing 'friendly settlement of the border dispute'. In the evening, the Chinese government told the Charge d'Affaires that they had already published Chou's letter to Nehru and taking these developments into account there was no need for the proposed Soviet statement.<sup>13</sup> But ignoring the Chinese plea, the Soviet government released its statement a day ahead of its own schedule.

The statement, which China was to denounce in 1963 as 'diplomatic rocket' against it and the first overt disclosure of Sino-Soviet differences over India<sup>14</sup> was no doubt in response to an appeal by Ajoy Ghosh to the Soviet leadership. By giving up its neutral stand in the Sino-Indian dispute, the Soviet leadership was serving notice on the Chinese that its support cannot be taken for granted. Thereby, it was helping the CPI out of its predicament and relieving domestic pressure on it. One cannot help noticing the striking similarity between the Tass statement of 9 September and the CPI Secretariat's statement on 30 August on the Longju incident.

The operative part of the Tass statement expressed hope that 'both governments will settle their misunderstanding, taking into account their mutual interests, in the spirit of traditional friendship between the peoples of China and India'. The Secretariat's statement said it 'fervently hopes that immediate steps will be taken by both the governments concerned to settle controversies with regard to the border issue by mutual consultations'<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> 'The Truth about how the Leaders of the CPSU have Allied themselves with India against China,' *Peoples Daily*, 2 November 1963.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in 'Speech by Ajoy Ghosh at the World Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties,' *The India-China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India*, p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Soviet Union was equating a socialist country with a non socialist country and was making known to the world that it was not supporting China against India which it regarded a country of the peace zone. At least this was the CPI's interpretation of the Soviet stand. Defending the Tass statement Ajoy Ghosh said later that neither India nor China was planning aggression against the other and

in the interest of the socialist camp as a whole including China in the interests of the cause of peace and unity of the peace zone, it was necessary that measures were taken to minimize the conflict to restore good relations to defeat the game of those who wanted to drive a wedge between the socialist world and the biggest of the neutral countries. That is what the Soviet Union tried to do — and for this the whole socialist camp should be grateful to the Soviet Union<sup>16</sup>

While Ajoy Ghosh hailed the statement as "entirely correct wise and timely" the Chinese saw in it an open condemnation of their position and suggested that it was issued to please Eisenhower and that it had affected the interests of the peace camp and helped imperialists and Indian reactionaries<sup>17</sup>. The principal Sino Soviet difference here was over whether the Soviet Union was right in equating India with a socialist country without examining the question of right and wrong. The Chinese had never recognized India as a country of the peace zone.

#### WIDENING OF SINO-SOVIET RIFT

The 9 September statement marked the point of departure for Moscow and Peking over their respective attitudes to New Delhi. Its effect on the CPI was predictable. By in

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid* pp 48-9

<sup>17</sup> "The Truth about how the Leaders of the CPSU have Allied themselves with India against China" *loc cit*

dicating to the Nehru government that the Soviet position was shifting in its favour it was helping the right group in the CPI in its drive for support to the government. The CPI was no longer obliged to defend the Chinese position or actions because even Soviet Union was not backing them. It was now easier for the CPI to identify itself with the government's stand on the border issue.

Khrushchev aided this process by making a public statement on 30 September blaming China for wanting to "test by force the stability of the capitalist system" and in Peking's view this was an insinuation that China was being bellicose over Taiwan and the Sino Indian boundary<sup>18</sup>. The Chinese were to disclose later that when Khrushchev was in Peking, they explained to him on 2 October the background of the Sino Indian hostilities pointing out that China would not yield to "Indian reactionaries all the time". But Khrushchev did not want to know the true situation and the "identity of the party committing provocation" but insisted that it was wrong for people to die in clashes<sup>19</sup>.

#### CPI'S DISAGREEMENT WITH THE CHINESE STAND

With Ajoy Ghosh away in Moscow, the CPI leadership was divided over the Longju incident. The statement of its Secretariat on 30 August was ambiguous about the responsibility for the clash or its locale and it vaguely referred to the incidents as having occurred 'in some places on the Himalayan borders' and pointing out that "unfortunately a great part of the northern border of our country has not been clearly demarcated"<sup>20</sup>.

A pro Moscow journal reported that the statement did not convince anybody outside the party and when the Secretariat met again the members were divided. S. A. Dange

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>20</sup> *India China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India* p 7



Z. A. Ahmed, and A. K. Gopalan would have preferred a 'nationalist line, a clearer enunciation of the patriotic readiness to stand up to any aggression, even perhaps mild but open criticism of China' Both Dange and Ahmed had to speak in Parliament on briefs not wholly to their liking. Some other leaders were uninhibited in their reaction. The 9 September statement seems to have brought some confidence to some of the Secretariat members. P. Ramamurti, A. K. Gopalan, and E. M. S. Namboodirpad said in public that any aggression would be fought by the party though Namboodirpad was not sure whether aggression had taken place.<sup>21</sup>

After Ajoy Ghosh's return from Moscow, the Central Executive Committee met towards the end of September and called for a negotiated settlement of the border dispute without either side making prior acceptance of its own claims (namely the McMahon Line in India's case and the Chinese maps in China's case) the precondition for talks. It was convinced that "Socialist China can never commit aggression against India just as our country has no intention of aggression against China."<sup>22</sup>

The CPI leadership is believed to have regarded this resolution a stop gap one because the second-rank leaders were demanding a firm declaration backing the Indian government stand on McMahon Line. Despite his agreement with majority, Ajoy Ghosh was for a cautious line because he wanted to avoid a split. He is believed to have felt that a strong resolution at that juncture might prejudice the efforts to Soviet leaders to influence the Chinese leaders. It is possible he had prevailed upon the Soviet leaders to make such an effort when they went to Peking for the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Chinese People's Republic. Any open statement supporting the McMahon Line as demanded by the majority could await the Peking talks. If

<sup>21</sup> *Link*, 20 September 1959

<sup>22</sup> *The India-China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India* pp. 9-10

the efforts failed the National Council could state the majority view categorically.

The Calcutta resolution did not attack the Indian government's handling of the issue but endorsed Nehru's constructive approach. It also did not accept the Chinese claims and for the first time there was a difference between the CPI and a socialist government.<sup>3</sup> This stance was obviously the result of a shift in Soviet attitude to the dispute made known through the 9 September statement.

A CPI delegation which attended the Peking celebrations early in October had prolonged talks with the Chinese leaders. Despite the incorrect Chinese assessments of the Indian situation and the Nehru government's shift to rightist policies the discussions revealed Ajoy Ghosh gained the impression that it was possible to solve the border problem. He said

We must state that on their part the Chinese comrades did change their attitude—a change which found reflection in the stoppage of offensive expressions against India in Chinese press participation by China in the World Agricultural Exhibition held in Delhi steps to contact representatives of the Indian government and readiness to take initiative for Nehru Chou meeting.<sup>4</sup>

#### THE MERUT RESOLUTION

But meanwhile on 21 October there was a clash between the Indian and Chinese forces at the Kongka pass in eastern Ladakh resulting in casualties on both the sides including the death of 17 Indians. The CPI delegation had just returned from Peking and the leadership's attitude revealed a gradual shift. The Secretariat termed the incident un-

<sup>3</sup> Link, 4 October 1959.

<sup>4</sup> *The India-China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India* pp. 44-5.

justified and expressed its resentment and indignation<sup>25</sup> This was in contrast to its ambiguous statement on the Longju incident and a mere expression of concern over it

Following the Kong ka pass incident, the CPI sent off a message to the Chinese party pleading for bold initiative for negotiations The damage caused by the clash could be repaired to some extent if the Chinese expressed sorrow without blaming any country for the incident and indicated a desire for negotiations<sup>26</sup>

The response from Peking took a long time coming When it came on 7 November in the form of Chou En lai's letter to Nehru suggesting talks for a negotiated settlement, the CPI's Central Executive was in session at Meerut and the National Council was to meet in a few days On the eve of the Meerut session a section of the leadership was demanding open denunciation of China Typical of the statements by this section was Dange's warning to the Chinese party "I want to tell my Communist Party friends in China that you are pursuing a wrong line and must revise it" Namboodiripad said "In case of aggression we are one with the government It is for the government of the day to decide whether aggression has been committed or not"<sup>27</sup>

In the meantime Khrushchev back from the Peking celebrations, was queering the pitch for the Chinese by reiterating his call for a negotiated settlement and his neutral stand in the dispute In his report to the Supreme Soviet on 31 October, he regretted the incidents on the frontier between "two States friendly to us—the Chinese People's Republic to which we are bound by unbreakable bonds of brotherly friendship and the Republic of India, with whom we have been successfully developing friendly relations" He was especially sorry about the incidents because they had led to

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid* p 13

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid* p 45

<sup>27</sup> *Lank* 1 November 1959

casualties on both the sides. "We would have been happy if there were no more incidents on the Sino Indian frontier, if the existing frontier disputes were settled by way of friendly negotiation to the mutual satisfaction of both the sides"<sup>28</sup>

A week later Khrushchev reiterated this in an interview to the Moscow correspondent of the CPI journal. He was more outspoken this time. It was a 'sad and stupid story'. Nobody knew where the border was, he declared, agreeing with the correspondent that practically nobody lived here. Khrushchev recalled that the Soviet Union had settled the differences over the border with Iran. "We gave up more than we gained," he said, adding "what were a few square kilometres for a country like the Soviet Union?"<sup>29</sup>

These pronouncements of Khrushchev were also meant to provide the CPI leadership an alibi for pledging unqualified support to the Nehru government. But the CPI leaders were divided in their attitude to the Nehru government. A resolution to greet Nehru on his birthday, submitted by the Central Executive to the National Council at Meerut, reflected an anxiety to line up behind the Nehru government<sup>30</sup>. But there was strong opposition to the move from another section of the leadership. There were three conflicting assessments of Nehru. Sundarayya thought he was surrendering to rightist pressures. Ajoy Ghosh thought he was resisting, however feebly. S. G. Sardesai thought the Prime Minister was fighting these pressures single-handed.

#### PATTERN OF DIFFERENCES

The leadership was divided roughly along the same pattern over the Sino Indian border issue. Sundarayya thought the Indian government was primarily responsible for the dispute because it had whipped up tension between the two countries to cover up its retreat from progressive policies. Ajoy

<sup>28</sup> New Age, 8 November 1959

<sup>29</sup> New Age, 15 November 1959

<sup>30</sup> Link 15 November 1959

Ghosh blamed the Indian reactionaries for working up hysteria to oust the Prime Minister. China had not committed aggression but its attitude to maps, etc., had strengthened the reactionaries in India. So the party should persuade the Chinese to be conciliatory. The 7 November letter from Chou En-lai to Nehru was an indication that Peking had responded to his appeal. Ajoy Ghosh, who knew the letter was coming, wanted the Chou En-lai proposals made the plank for the party's campaign in defence of Nehru's foreign policy. Sardesai thought the Chinese had wrongly taken the Prime Minister to be the spokesman of Indian reaction and had intruded into Indian territory to make him see reason. But the result was just the opposite. The Prime Minister continued to oppose reaction at home and so deserved unqualified support. The party should back the Indian government on Ladakh and ask the Chinese to vacate aggression.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, Nehru's policies were central to the differences in the CPI. The right group tried to dissociate Nehru from the "reactionary" policies of his government and wanted to support him against reaction's pressures. The result was a compromise resolution supporting the government's stand on the eastern frontier (the NEFA sector) and equivocation over the western border (the Ladakh sector). The resolution rejected the Chinese contention that the McMahon Line was illegal. "Whatever the origin of the McMahon Line may be the fact cannot be ignored that for several years this had been the frontier of India and the area south of this line has been under Indian administration. The National Council holds that the area south of the McMahon Line is now part of India and should remain in India."<sup>22</sup>

On the western border, the resolution said, the Indian

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>22</sup> "On India China Relations, Resolution adopted by the National Council of the Communist Party of India, Meerut, 11-15 November 1959. *The India China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India*, pp. 137

government had taken the "correct" stand that the traditional border in this sector should be accepted. But there was a dispute as to what constituted the traditional border. A proper delimitation of the traditional border would need friendly discussions between the two governments. The resolution wanted negotiations without either side insisting on the acceptance of its stand as the precondition. In the meantime, clashes should be avoided. It welcomed Chou En lai's "constructive approach to the dispute. To balance this, it appreciated Nehru's determination to pursue his "independent foreign policy" despite terrific pressure" from "reactionary forces. Nehru had firmly rejected military alliances and stressed negotiations and peaceful settlement and warned against war psychosis".<sup>33</sup>

The National Council also censured Dange for his statements in defiance of the party line on the border issue.<sup>34</sup> After the 1964 split in the CPI, the breakaway group was to charge Dange with making these statements with the intention of lining the party behind the bourgeoisie. He was also to be charged with organizing a virtual revolt against the National Council's resolution on the border issue.<sup>35</sup> There was substance in the charge because the executive of the party's Maharashtra unit (controlled by Dange) refused to endorse the National Council's resolution, the Sardesai-Adhikari group insisting on its amendment and the Chitale group demanding its outright rejection.<sup>36</sup> Another charge against Dange was to be that his group utilized the bourgeois press "to spread tendentious reports against those who would not toe the bourgeois nationalist line, as the 'anti-national, pro China wing' of the Communist Party".<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>34</sup> *Link*, 22 November 1959

<sup>35</sup> *Fight against Revisionism*, p. 6

<sup>36</sup> *Link*, 6 December 1959

<sup>37</sup> *Fight against Revisionism*, p. 6

## CHINESE PRESSURE ON SOVIETS

The months following the Meerut resolution witnessed a relative lull on Sino Indian border. There was no incident of significance until October 1962. On 5 February 1960 Nehru wrote to Chou En lai suggesting talks and Chou En lai visited New Delhi in April 1960. It was decided that official teams of the two countries would go into the issues independently and submit reports.

But there was no let up in the Chinese pressure on the Soviet leadership to give up its neutral stance in the dispute. Between 10 December 1959 and 30 January 1960 the Chinese leaders had talks with the Soviet Ambassador in Peking on six occasions to point out that it was wrong for the Soviet leaders to have maintained strict neutrality and far from being neutral their statements had in fact censured China and favoured India. The Chinese were to claim later that on 6 February 1960 the Central Committee of the CPSU told the Central Committee of the Chinese party that "one cannot possibly seriously think that a State such as India which is militarily and economically immeasurably weaker than China would really launch a military attack on China and commit aggression against it that China's handling of the question was an expression of narrow nationalist attitude" and that when shooting was heard on the Sino Indian border on the eve of N. S. Khrushchev's trip to the United States the whole world considered this to be an event that could hamper peace-loving activity of the Soviet Union<sup>38</sup>. The Chinese also claimed that Khrushchev had told a Chinese party delegation at Bucharest on 22 June 1960 "I know what war is. Since Indians were killed this meant China attacked India. We are communists. For us it is not important where the frontier runs"<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> 'The Truth about How the Leaders of the CPSU have Allied themselves with India against China' loc. cit.

<sup>39</sup> *Ib. id.*

The Soviet leadership, while maintaining a neutral stance in public, lost no opportunity of informing the Chinese that their sympathies lay with India and not with China. The CPI was perhaps not aware of these developments. After the Meerut resolution, it was a deadlock over its attitude to the Nehru government and its policies in general. The Secretariat, after a week long session in March 1960, could not reach a unified understanding of the political situation and decided to take the issue to the Central Executive<sup>40</sup>

Khrushchev had just visited India and the party had fared badly at the mid term elections in Kerala where its ministry had been dismissed earlier by the Nehru government. The left leaders (Ranadive and Basavapunniyah) thought a "strong party" was the only alternative to the Congress amidst rising discontent among the people. Their argument was that the government's five year plan was in a crisis and vested interests were transferring the burden of the economic crisis to the people. The reaction had launched an offensive both inside and outside the Congress Party and Nehru had begun to compromise more and more with the rightists and with the growing penetration of the United States capital. The foreign policy was shifting to the Western camp. Ajoy Ghosh and Dange argued that there was no plan crisis because the Indian economy and the world economy were looking up. Foreign aid should be viewed in the context of its contribution to the growth of the national economy and all foreign aid did not necessarily lead to enslavement.

The differences had hardly any direct bearing on the Sino Indian border dispute. The main issue before the party was one of correct tactics. The right group, in the name of defending the policies which the reaction sought to reverse exploiting the border dispute, wanted to take the party closer to the government. The differing approaches of the

<sup>40</sup> Link, 20 March 1960



leaders to the border dispute were but the extension of their differences over the immediate tasks and the differences in their understanding of the new situation. The CPI was not yet aware of the Sino-Soviet ideological differences (as most Asian parties were not) and the Chinese had not yet attacked the CPI even after the Meerut resolution.

On the eve of the 3 April Central Executive meeting, the CPI was already divided ideologically. To go by a pro-Moscow account, Ranadive wanted left unity against the bourgeoisie offensive and stressed the futility of the 'middle path'. Dange was also against the middle path but had a different reading of the situation. The "so called right offensive" was only a 'right manoeuvre of the bourgeoisie' which dare not give up nonalignment. But he was vague about tactics and seemed to base them on hopes of a gradual process of social change to be brought about through a united front of all forces under the CPI's leadership. Dange rejected Ranadive's call to give up the Amritsar line. Joshi rejected the left unity slogan and wanted a further shift to the right from the Amritsar line. The party should seek 'national allies among progressive Congressmen because reactionary elements were menacing the middle path'.<sup>41</sup>

Ajoy Ghosh was trying to put Dange's economic analysis and Joshi's political analysis together to produce his own compromise thesis. The executive adopted a 6000 word draft resolution on the political situation, the result of a drastic amendment of the compromise thesis under pressure from the left. Ajoy Ghosh was neutral at the voting on the draft. A pro-Moscow journal termed this something close to a 'leftist coup' and the General Secretary's neutrality was forced 'by the fear of splitting the party'.<sup>42</sup>

The draft resolution noted a policy crisis amidst the growth of the rightist forces and a shift to the right in the economic policies as revealed by the latest budget of the

<sup>41</sup> Link, 3 April 1960

<sup>42</sup> Link, 17 April 1960

Nehru government The policies were "a result of the intense push and pull among the different sections of the ruling circles as well as between the ruling circles and the people The policies have therefore, a dual character—of conciliation as well as of resistance to the demands of the Right" The shift was a complex process leading to conflicting trends The Right had grown inside the Congress and the government and had formed its own political party in the Swatantra Party But this did not signify a split in the bourgeoisie class into two sections, one collaborationist and the other anti-imperialist It was not even a clear differentiation of the ruling classes "The emergence and the growth of the Right betoken the growth of a more conciliatory tendency towards Western imperialism"<sup>43</sup>

The CPI was coming into conflict with the Nehru government even on its foreign policy after a long detente The draft identified the party's task as one of fighting the policy shift to the right It was to be placed before the National Council but the ideological confusion was so intense that the session ended in a deadlock The right was not yet reconciled to its defeat in the Central Executive and was out to stall endorsement of the April draft On the eve of the National Council meeting in May, a journal closest to the right group predicted a showdown between the "neutralist section" (Ajoy Ghosh, Dange, and Ahmad) and the smaller leftist section (Ranadive, Basavapunniah, and Jyoti Basu) which had won in April<sup>44</sup> It disclosed certain developments that had preceded the April "coup" The National Council had appointed a panel of Dange, P Ramamurti and Basavapunniah to prepare a document but the panel could not agree on a draft Ajoy Ghosh prepared a 10 page note in February The note began with the admission that "a united political understanding is absent today" in the CPI "Ideologically and

<sup>43</sup> New Age, 17 April 1960

<sup>44</sup> Link, 8 May 1960

politically speaking we are living from hand to mouth evading basic questions. The result is drift, absence of direction and chaos.' It went on " during the last 12 years our assessment of the situations has many a time proved faulty and events have developed differently from what we anticipated.

When the National Council met, it had two documents before it. The Central Executive's draft (adopted in April) moved by Ramamurti on behalf of Ranadive, and a "rightist" document of Ahmad, Sardesai, K. Damodaran, and Bhowani Sen. Ajoy Ghosh's draft report on political situation (prepared for the April meeting of the Central Executive and virtually shelved) was circulated on demand.<sup>45</sup>

According to a post-split account, under Dange's pressure, Ajoy Ghosh refused to move the April resolution of the Central Executive though it had been passed by a good majority and the National Council had been called specifically to discuss the document.<sup>46</sup> The National Council session nevertheless, witnessed a head-on clash. The left focus was on three points: massive foreign aid had begun to undermine or had already undermined the country's independence, independent capitalist development under the leadership of the bourgeoisie was not possible, and in concrete terms joint action with democratic and progressive Congressmen against right reaction was impossible.

The National Council got over the immediate crisis by agreeing on a motion by T. Nagi Reddy to shelve the issue for the present. Nagi Reddy, who had opposed both the drafts, wanted a new report on the political situation drawn up and a new resolution placed before the next meeting of the Council and later before a party congress. The confrontation was thus postponed.

#### SINO SOVIET RIFT AND THE CPI

The CPI was deadlocked over its strategy and tactics when

<sup>45</sup> Link 15 May 1960.

<sup>46</sup> *Fight against Revisionism* p. 7.

the Sino Soviet dispute exploded in the open in April 1960 Peking challenged Khrushchev through the Red Flag article *Long Live Leninism* which was China's first comprehensive attack in theoretical terms on Soviet ideological positions. This was followed by a fierce Soviet retaliation at the Rumanian party congress in Bucharest in June. These developments stole on the Indian communists almost unawares. It was not until after the Bucharest clash that most of the third parties knew about the dispute which had remained a bilateral affair hitherto. In June 1959, Soviet Union had repudiated the military agreement of 1957 with China and refused to supply it atomic know how or data. Through its statement of 9 September 1959, Soviet Union had indicated its support to India in its border dispute with China. Soon after, Khrushchev stopped over in Peking on his way back from the United States and held forth to the Chinese on ideological issue and foreign policy matters like the need for peaceful relations with the United States.

When *Red Flag* article was published, there was a sense of bewilderment among the Indian communists and for a while the differences in the party over strategy and tactics were eclipsed by the Sino Soviet dispute. Ranadive, writing on 'Lenin and India,' did not mention Khrushchev and said proletarian internationalism was being attacked and pressure brought on the communist parties to adopt bourgeois nationalist digits. Lenin's teachings asked them to strengthen the struggle for world peace and coexistence carried on the Soviet Union, China and the socialist camp.<sup>47</sup>

Another article on Lenin in the same issue of the journal by General Secretary Ajoy Ghosh hailed Khrushchev's proposals on disarmament and extolled Soviet economic aid for the reconstruction of Asian and African countries.<sup>48</sup> The issue also carried an extract from Lenin's *Marxism and Revisionism* and another extract from his *Left Wing Com-*

<sup>47</sup> B. T. Ranadive 'Lenin and India,' *New Age*, 24 April 1960

<sup>48</sup> Ajoy Ghosh 'A Great Day for Humanity' *New Age*, 24 April 1960

munism—an Infantile Disorder to keep the balance<sup>49</sup>

A similar balancing act was evident two weeks later when journal reprinted without comment parts of Lu Ting-Yi's report to a Peking rally attacking modern revisionism alongside excerpts of Otto Kuusinen's report to a Moscow meeting on Lenin Day stressing the struggle for peace and socialism. Kuusinen's speech was a reply to Long Live Leninism<sup>50</sup>. Again, while the party's theoretical monthly edited by Ranadive carried *Long Live Leninism*, the right group retaliated by publishing Khrushchev's Bucharest speech. But the journal also published extracts from the speech of the Chinese delegation leader, Peng Chen, attacking revisionism<sup>51</sup>.

On the eve of the 10 August meeting of the Central Executive Committee a pro Moscow journal, commenting on the Bucharest clash, said that the "adventurists" in the CPI were in a dilemma of having to disown the Chinese line or face defeat<sup>52</sup>. The party had chosen to overlook the Moscow Peking differences until its two delegates to Bucharest, leftist Basavapunniah and left of centre Bhupesh Gupta returned to report their observations. Ajoy Ghosh and Dange who had attended the Peking meeting of the World Federation of Trade Unions early in June knew about these differences but had chosen to fight the "adventurist comrades" on issues of national policy without bringing in the Moscow Peking dispute<sup>53</sup>.

But the party could no longer ignore the differences after the Bucharest developments. On the eve of the Rumanian party congress the Soviet party had circulated a 'Letter of Information' dated 21 June to all participating parties, including the Chinese, attacking Chinese position on ideological issues. At Bucharest, Khrushchev began his offensive

<sup>49</sup> *New Age* 24 April 1960

<sup>50</sup> *New Age* 8 May 1960

<sup>51</sup> *New Age* (monthly), June 1960

<sup>52</sup> *New Age*, 3 July 1960

<sup>53</sup> *Link*, 31 July 1960

against the Chinese charging them with planning to set off a third world war of being purely nationalist with respect to the border with India and of employing Trotskyite ways against the Soviet Union. The Chinese hit back declaring that the communist movement would never be led by the baton of any individual. The Bucharest crisis was transmitted to the entire international communist movement. Sino-Soviet State relations were under severe strain. Soviet technicians and experts left China in July and publications devoted to Sino-Soviet friendship were stopped.

Basavapunniah and Bhupesh Gupta are reported to have told their colleagues of their surprise at Khrushchev's diatribe against the Chinese particularly for their attitude towards India and other Asian countries. Basavapunniah was absent when his turn to speak came at Bucharest but Bhupesh Gupta made an evasive speech without referring to basic issues like transition to socialism, non-inevitability of war and attitude to newly liberated countries—issues on which Soviet and Chinese position differed.<sup>54</sup>

A world conference of communist parties was due in November and the CPI had been invited for its preparatory meeting. So it could not put off a decision on the issues dividing the international communist movement. The Central Executive Committee discussions on the Bucharest crisis divided the CPI ideologically. While Ajoy Ghosh defended the thesis of peaceful transition to socialism and generally supported Khrushchev's theory on its correctness, the leftists did not commit themselves to anything. They perhaps lacked confidence in their strength and did not force the issue. Ranadive did not want the party to get involved in the Moscow-Peking conflict while Namboodirpad found logic in the positions of both Moscow and Peking. Another leftist, Sundarayya, thought Khrushchev was not altogether dependable.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>55</sup> *Link* 21 August 1960

## SUPPORT TO SOVIET POSITIONS

The executive first endorsed the Bucharest communique without committing itself to the Khrushchev line of peaceful coexistence or the Peking line. But at a subsequent meeting the executive adopted a more comprehensive resolution 'On Certain Questions Before the International Communist Movement.' The pattern of voting on the resolution revealed a clear polarization in the executive which was coming to grips with the problems of the international communist movement and in knowledge of the differences afflicting it. The left found itself in minority with some of its vacillating allies swinging to pro Moscow positions.

Of the two drafts before it, Ajoy Ghosh's was chosen for discussion by vote (14 to 8). The minority draft, sponsored by Basavapunniah and Bhupesh Gupta and believed to be of Ranadive's inspiration was hesitant and halting and said Sino-Soviet differences were being exaggerated. Sundarayya, Jyoti Basu and Sohan Singh Josh were among its supporters. Surprisingly, the majority draft got the support of Ramamurti hitherto regarded a leftist and of Namboodiripad and Joshi. The draft was passed (five against three neutral out of 22 present) and it was a victory for the pro-Moscow right wing because it could carry the vacillating left elements with it.<sup>58</sup>

The full version of the resolution was not made public. The abridged version released to the press reiterated the party's assessment of the Nehru government's policies made at Palghat and Amritsar earlier. The most significant feature of the resolution was its observation that, undisputedly, "the first breach in Indo China friendship was created in the attitude and acts of the Indian government towards the counter revolutionary uprising in Tibet and aid given to Dalai Lama to conduct an anti-China campaign in India." But the resolution also attacked the Chinese description of

<sup>58</sup> Link, 11 September 1960

Kalimpong as 'commanding centre' of the rebels, their insistence that the Dalai Lama was making his statements under duress and the use of the term "expansionism" in relation to India. All this had alienated India's goodwill for China.

The Chinese were charged with making a 'basically wrong assessment' of the Indian situation, and this without any effort to ascertain the views of the CPI. In contrast, the Soviet Union played a correct role, 'treating it as a conflict between two countries of the peace camp and advocating restraint and settlement by negotiations'. But for this role of the Soviet Union the damage to the peace camp and Indian democracy would have been far greater. Hostility to China, the resolution said, would have grown into hostility towards the entire socialist camp had the Soviet Union backed the Chinese position.<sup>57</sup>

The last paragraph of the published version said the Sino-Indian border dispute was not just an issue between the two countries. The Chinese party's new assessment of the role of India's national bourgeoisie had found its 'sharpest and most devastating expression' on this issue. The Chinese assessment was contrary to the understanding of the 12 Parties Declaration.

The unabridged version (not published) explicitly condemned the Chinese party and endorsed Soviet positions on the non-inevitability of war, peaceful transition, and national liberation movements, without any direct reference to Chinese positions on these issues of difference.<sup>58</sup>

The resolution also criticized the Chinese trade union chief Liu Ning's speech at the Peking meeting of the World Federation of Trade Unions. It was clear from the speech

<sup>57</sup> *India China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India*, pp. 22-8.

<sup>58</sup> The unabridged version, a copy of which was made available to the author by a leader in typescript form, was sent out to the State Committees on 11 September as an inner party document to serve as the basis of discussion.



that the elementary principle governing the approach, policy, slogans of non party mass organizations were not kept in mind. All distinction between party and trade unions tended to get obliterated, it said.

The final paragraph expressed concern at the divergences that had cropped up inside the world communist movement, which if allowed to continue and widen would have serious repercussions for the movement, and to parties especially in Asia and Africa. The manner in which these divergencies had come to be openly discussed in the press was also deplored. While the executive had not doubt these issues "cannot and should not be hushed up," they should be discussed in all seriousness. Not only should the divergences be overcome on the basis of the firm and principled adherence to the 1957 Declaration and Peace Manifesto but correct norms of conduct should also be laid down for observance by all the communist parties in the world when divergences cropped up between two or more parties. "This is of the greatest importance now, since the unity of the international communist movement is not based on the existence of any international organization but on the mutual exchange of views between two or more communist parties." The rightist offensive, despite its initial success at the executive meeting, was to encounter stiff position in the leftist controlled States of West Bengal and Punjab. The West Bengal State Council was said to have rejected the Central Executive Committee's resolution as 'wrong and harmful' and acting solely on the basis of the Soviet accusations without acquainting itself with the Chinese case and the Soviet provocations leading to the publication of *Red Flag* article. The West Bengal resolution said the Central Executive Committee knew that the Chinese delegates at Bucharest had replied to 'the untrue and slanderous' Soviet criticism.<sup>59</sup> The Punjab council was neutral<sup>60</sup> while an attempt

<sup>59</sup> *Hindustan Times*, 14 November 1960 gives purported text of the resolution.

<sup>60</sup> *Link*, 30 October 1960.

to get the Bihar committee to reject the resolution was defeated<sup>61</sup>

The West Bengal defiance was viewed seriously by the leadership because it was the highest revolt by a State unit against the party's central authority. The inspiration for the Bengal revolt to go by a pro Moscow account, was the report brought by Harekrishna Konar, who along with another Indian leader, K Damodaran, was a fraternal delegate to the Vietnamese Lao Dang Party conference in Hanoi from where they went to Peking.

Konar, back from Peking was reported to have told the Calcutta district council of the party that while the Indian communist knew only the Soviet point of view he could *place the Chinese view before them which he deemed his duty even if it amounted to a technical breach of party discipline*

The Chinese are believed to have told Konar that the Sino Soviet differences began soon after Stalin's death and that the Chinese did not like the Soviet leadership's handling of the Beria case their "obnoxious denigration of Stalin" and their "cringing attitude to Yugoslavia". The Chinese also told Konar that the alternative to peaceful coexistence was not war but cold war. But the Soviets were trying to scare the people by putting forward the thesis that war would break out if peaceful coexistence was given up.

Since capitalism was weak in Asian countries in relation to imperialism the bourgeoisie and the governments of these countries would link up with imperialism. The Chinese thought that in India, the Nehru government was learning more and more on imperialism. Konar also came back assured that the Chinese had no intention of crossing the McMahon Line<sup>62</sup>

#### MOSCOW CONFERENCE

Differences in the CPI, hitherto limited to its attitude to

<sup>61</sup> Link 18 December 1960

<sup>62</sup> Link 16 October 1960

the government's policies and to the Sino-Indian border dispute now covered differences in the world communist movement as evident from the belligerent reaction of some of the State Committees to the Central Executive committee resolution in September imposing the Soviet line on the party.

There were serious dissensions in the CPI over the ideological issues before the Moscow conference of world communist and workers parties was held in November 1960. In fact it is claimed that the conference was the result of the CPI's initiative.<sup>63</sup> The CPSU was trying to enlist the support of other parties to isolate the Chinese at the conference. The CPI after its September resolution attacking the Chinese positions on ideological issues, was of immense strategic value to the CPSU in this effort. In the international commission to prepare documents for the conference, the CPI was represented by Ajay Ghosh. The commission's work was to be based on an 84-page letter of the CPSU to some of the fraternal parties, the 160-page Chinese rejoinder to it, the 12 page resolution of CPI Central Executive Committee, and other documents.<sup>64</sup>

The 84-page CPSU letter was a closely guarded secret of the CPI leadership. Only extracts from it had been circulated to the Central Executive Committee members and State units. The extracts charged China with not accepting the ideas embodied in the 18 party Rome Declaration and the 12 party Moscow Declaration and traced Sino-Soviet differences to the period immediately following the Twenty-first Soviet party congress. Among the unfriendly acts of the Chinese listed by the letter were interference in the affairs of two East European parties, obstruction of the work of the Soviet political instructors in China forcing the withdrawal of Soviet technicians and attempts to disrupt international mass organizations. The letter was sent out in

<sup>63</sup> Link, 10 October 1960.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

mediately after the Ruminan party congress and had been drifted after face-to-face talks between Khrushchev and Mao Tse-tung<sup>63</sup>. Harekrishna Konar, a West Bengal extremist who visited Peking after attending the Vietnamese Lao Ding Party Congress in Hanoi brought the 160 page Chinese rejoinder to the CPSU letter to India. But the CPI did not deem it necessary to circulate the Chinese reply or extracts from it while extracts from the Soviet letter had been circulated.

When the question of a brief for the Indian delegation to the Moscow Conference of the World Communist and Workers Parties in November 1960 came up the Central Executive Committee found itself divided. The brief was decided by a slender majority<sup>64</sup>. The National Council was not called to discuss the differences but the majority decision was imposed on the whole party. The CPI delegation headed by Ajoy Ghosh comprised Dunge Nimboodipad Bhupesh Gupta and Ramamurti. Ajoy Ghosh's speech represented the agreed views of the delegation. The speech and the work of the delegation was later endorsed by the National Council on 31 December 1960<sup>65</sup>. But the leftists were to charge later that after the Moscow conference no discussions was held on the SI Parties Statement either in the Central Executive Committee or the National Council and no attempt therefore was made to resolve the growing differences<sup>66</sup>.

#### CONCEPT OF NATIONAL DEMOCRACY

The dominant leadership which had already committed the party to Moscow's positions in the international dispute made no serious attempt to resolve the differences but

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Fight against Revisionism p 7

<sup>65</sup> India China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India p 1

<sup>66</sup> Fight against Revisionism p 7

appointed two commissions to prepare documents for the Sixth Congress to be held shortly. After the Moscow conference, the National Council met early in 1961 to decide on the documents but found there were two draft programmes and two draft political resolutions before it because the commissions were divided.

The main issue in debate at this juncture was the 1960 Moscow Statement's formulation of a national democratic State, described as a form of transition to socialism in underdeveloped countries, especially in the nonaligned countries of the peace zone where the national bourgeoisie played an objectively progressive role and deserved political and economic aid. This was distinctively a Soviet innovation and the Chinese without explicitly rejecting it, did not consider the national bourgeoisie in countries like India progressive and wanted political support to the communist parties rather than to the "pro imperialist" national bourgeoisie.

The national democratic State was sought to be achieved through a broad anti imperialist front and the working class was to evolve as its leader only gradually, a concept Chinese never countenanced. A veiled Chinese attack on this concept was to be published in October 1961 by the *People's Daily* on the eve of Twenty second CPSU Congress.

Mohit Sen a CPI theoretician claimed that though the formulation of national democracy was a new concept for the international communist movement, the CPI, right from the time of its Palghat congress in 1956, has been putting forward a programme and producing an analysis of the Indian conditions which did not differ from the Moscow declaration's analysis. It was the culmination of a very precise formulation of the Indian party.<sup>69</sup>

Ajoy Ghosh's draft political resolution set the goal of national democratic government to replace the "vacillating" and "compromising" government. This was to be achieved

<sup>69</sup> *Maral* (monthly), New Delhi January 1961

through a national democratic front to fight the main enemy which to him was the extreme right of the Congress and the big bourgeoisie. The alternative draft by Ranadive, while endorsing the concept of national democratic front, was for an altogether narrower front than the one Ajoy Ghosh had envisaged but its goal was to be people's democracy and not national democracy.

The debate revealed a familiar division in the National Council. Namboodiripad dubbed Ajoy Ghosh's draft revisionist while the rightists attacked Ranadive's draft in the vocabulary usually reserved for Trotskyites. Ranadive's political report (which was part of the political resolution) as well as the joint report on the revision of party programme by Bhupesh Gupta and Ramamurti constituted the "leftist" documents. Both of them held that the country's independence was not complete yet because after the transfer of power by the British the bourgeoisie had compromised with domestic reaction and imperialism and instead of liberating the country from foreign capital was giving more and more concessions to foreign monopolies, leading to a link-up between domestic and foreign capital. Though the Soviet aid had helped India's economic development, the ruling class was using it as a bargaining counter for more Western aid which had retarded the growth and had created a new vested interest in the class of *comprador* bourgeoisie. The task was to fight American pressure, the right reaction, and the rightist shift in Congress policies, and the objective was to be people's democracy. The national democratic front to achieve the task was to be built in the course of the struggle. The proletariat was to be its main base but it was also to cover the rural poor, the agricultural labour who were the allies of the working class, and the middle class employees and the intelligentsia who were the vacillating allies and the petit bourgeoisie (hit by the growth of monopolies) as also section of national bourgeoisie (menaced by foreign capital).

The rightist case was presented by Ajoy Ghosh, Adhikari,

and Joshi who said the test of a country's independence was its foreign policy and India's was not only basically anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist but one of continuous collaboration with the Soviet Union and the newly liberated countries *despite occasional vacillation*. Direction and not lapses were the main thing. The quantum of foreign aid was not the issue because its proportion was shrinking from plan to plan as a result of Soviet aid and the expansion of State sector. While the dangerous political role of foreign private capital could not be overlooked the new threat to independence arose from weaknesses and shortcomings of the government's internal policies attributable to the heterogeneous character of the Indian bourgeoisie. The task was to rouse the people into action to defend strengthen and expand the sweep of the progressive aspect of policies against imperialist pressures. The national democratic front to achieve this was to cover all classes from the national bourgeoisie to the working class and include Nehruite Congressmen to communists. The front would become the government of the country and provide the answer to the question After Nehru What? In short the present bourgeois democracy was to be metamorphosed into national democracy.

The rightists won in the National Council pushing both their programme and the political resolution. They interpreted this success as "shock defeat" for the left which had banked on centrist support. But the leftists won the right to circulate their drafts for pre-congress discussion. An other document passed was Namboodiripad's organizational report which blamed the steep fall in membership and the loose discipline and the organizational weaknesses on the leadership's revisionist attitude to party forms and organization which in turn flowed from revisionist political ideas. All this had led to disunity at the top and central leadership had ceased to function as a team and had discarded democratic centralism.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Link 26 January 1961

## TWO PROGRAMME DRAFTS

The contending factions appeared set for a final confrontation at the Sixth Congress in April, which had before it two draft programmes and three draft political resolutions. The right documents (Ajoy Ghosh's political resolution and the majority report on party programme by Dange, Adhikari, and Joshi which had Ghosh's support) had an official status by virtue of the fact the last National Council meeting had adopted them.

Both the right documents conceded that Indian independence became a reality after the country had surmounted 'immediate threats' and had consolidated itself on "firm anti-imperialist foundations. Despite imperialist efforts to thwart the attempt India had built a good industrial base and to this degree the government and the class it represented were progressive. But the class character of the bourgeoisie ruled out correct policies to improve the condition of the people. Monopolist sections were stampeding the national policies in a reactionary direction and foreign private capital and its links with Indian capital sought to prop reaction. The main right reactionary trend was represented by the Swatantra Party and some of communal organizations, who together with the reactionary forces entrenched in the Congress and the administrative and economic life of the country threatened democracy. This called for a struggle against the reactionary forces through unity of the democratic forces. The strategy advocated involved a four-class front though the national bourgeoisie might not like to join it immediately. As the reactionary offensive grew and the people stepped up their pressure, this class would be drawn into the front. The significant aspect of the rightist strategy was its emphasis on the inclusion of Congressmen and at least a section of the Congress leadership in the front.

The right programme draft, its authors are known to have claimed, was based on the formulations of the 1960



Moscow statement, which had sanctified national democracy. But this formulation itself was a matter of interpretation because the leftists were to claim later<sup>11</sup> that the Moscow statement had also underscored the fact that the national bourgeoisie of underdeveloped countries tended to compromise with imperialism and domestic reaction as social contradictions developed.

The right draft to go by leftist criticism<sup>12</sup> ignored the compromising role of the national bourgeoisie justified the Congress government's dependence on imperialism in the early years of freedom and its general support to the West on all the issues that came up before the United Nations and defended the bourgeoisies running after Western economic aid using socialist aid as a lever. The draft was also silent on the extremely limited possibilities of capitalism being developed in India by the bourgeoisie without eliminating foreign capital and semi-feudal relations in agriculture. The only criticism the draft had to make of the capitalist path of development was that it was not fast enough and therefore, gave rise to contradictions.

In its application this assessment led to the recognition of the Congress as a progressive party because the most reactionary bourgeois elements had gone over to the Swatantra Party. The draft said the Congress leadership showed "more or less the same differentiation and contradictions as the national bourgeoisie itself. Though the most reactionary wing of the bourgeoisie has walked into the Swatantra Party many of its supporters are in the Right wing of the Congress and control the ministerial set up. The Left wing of the Congress is too weak and undecided. The centrists vacillated restraining the Right wing without strengthening the Left wing they think that the Congress itself provided the platform of democratic unity and calls upon others to join it." The left and centre in the Congress leadership was

<sup>11</sup> *Fight against Revisionism* p. 8

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10

to be drawn into the four-class front. The campaign for democratic unity "will lead to a situation in which it becomes a practical possibility to raise the slogan of a Government of National Democratic Front"<sup>73</sup>

The leftists challenged the basic postulates of this approach. The alternative draft (of Bhupesh Gupta and Ramamurti) urged the party to provide a 'correct alternative leadership' to the country—by uniting all patriotic and democratic forces under the leadership of the working class. To realize this it said, 'it is necessary to establish People's Democracy.' Ranadive had once described this as a "new State form of proletarian dictatorship." In his political resolution (draft by the National Council earlier), Ranadive had suggested that the right reaction was the product of the policies of the Congress and the government and the main body of forces of reaction were inside the Congress. Ranadive had called the front for building up resistance and mass upheavals against the rightist policies a "national democratic front" which in reality was to be a limited "toilers front."<sup>74</sup>

The right group won its first skirmish with the left by prevailing upon the congress to choose Dange to preside over it. The second clash was over the agenda. The left wanted the day-to-day tasks (that, is the current political resolution) taken up first so that the party could be committed to a militant line of action even before its long-term aims were discussed and a programme adopted. But the right group won again, managing to force the question of programme atop the agenda.

#### SUSLOV'S INTERVENTION

Two days of discussion on the programme and all the rightist snipings at the Bhupesh Gupta-Ramamurti draft

<sup>73</sup> Link, 9 April 1961

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

were not leading the congress anywhere. At this stage came open Soviet intervention in favour of the rightist line. Mikhail Suslov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist party of Soviet Union was heading his party's five-member delegation, the first-ever to a CPI congress at Vijavawada. His intervention took the form of a speech conveying his party's greetings to the congress. It was designed to help the rightist offensive against the left because Soviet foreign policy interests demanded support to the Nehru government and therefore a national democratic front. His speech was a round-about and involute refutation of the leftist line.<sup>75</sup>

Suslov said the CPI had to work in specific, complicated conditions. Being aware that the tasks of national revival could be fulfilled only through a determined struggle against imperialism and the survivals of feudalism, the CPI was striving to unite into "a single national democratic front all the patriotic forces of the country interested in India's path of economic and social progress."

Suslov was, in fact, throwing his weight behind the rightists who feared that the leftists would block their draft. Suslov tried to make the point that India was a free country because it had taken the road of "sovereign independent development" and had become independent "for ever." This was an attack on the leftist formulation that India was an appendage of the United States.

Suslov also took care to refer to the convergence of the Soviet and Indian State interests. "In spite of the differences in the social systems" the people of the Soviet Union and India co-operated in the struggle against war, for the final abolition of imperialism and the colonial system. India's course of neutrality and its refusal to join military blocs was appreciated in the Soviet Union.

There was also a veiled directive to the CPI to participate in the country's national reconstruction work because

<sup>75</sup> "Suslov Greet's Our Party Congress," *New Age*, 23 April 1961.

he referred to the party's struggle hand in hand with the country's other patriotic forces for elimination of economic backwardness building up a stable and independent economy. He stretched his logic further to remind the CPI of its task of national revival may be fulfilled only through a determined struggle against imperialism and the survivals of feudalism. This implied that the national bourgeoisie in India was a patriotic force which could be relied upon to complete the democratic revolution.

The Suslov intervention seemed to have confused the vacillating moderate elements and saved the rightist draft from defeat. Moderate leader Namboodirpad suggested that they should put off the debate on programme to a session of the National Council (to be elected by the congress) which should redraft it taking the two rival drafts into account. This proposal was approved by a near unanimous vote.<sup>6</sup> Meantime the party should continue its work on the basis of the Amritsar congress line of 1958. The party thus found itself divided on its long term objectives because the 1951 programme had become obsolete years ago and yet it could not give itself a new one.

The congress next took up the political resolution which dealt with the immediate tasks. There were three drafts before it. The Ajay Ghosh draft passed by the National Council in February had the official status. The Ranadive draft rejected by the National Council had been revised and 20 others had identified themselves with it since. There was the surprise third draft by Namboodirpad.

According to an account friendly to the official draft the right looked to Namboodirpad for support to their line of national democracy only to find him virtually advocating the leftist concept of people's democracy. Namboodirpad appeared confused when he qualified the term "national democracy" to mean something original—he spoke of the

<sup>6</sup> Savak Katrik. Indian Communist Party Split. China Quarterly. July-September 1963. p. 43.

"unity of the working class and the broad peasant masses (i.e. the leadership of the Communist Party)" becoming the most important factor. Such a struggle could convert the people's alliance with capitalism into an "effective" national democracy. Nimbodindipad also spoke of the reactionary role of the Congress and wanted the communists to fraternise with the progressive and democratic sections of the Congressmen and to draw the 'mass of Congressmen' and even some units of the Congress Party into the struggle against the other parties, and to force a leftward shift in the Congress policies.<sup>77</sup>

#### COMPROMISE LINE OF AJOY GHOSH

Ajoy Ghosh's speech moving the draft was in fact the General Secretary's report and this held the focus at the congress when it discussed the current situation.<sup>78</sup> He noted that taking the country as a whole the real and more immediate danger was that of a further and more pronounced shift in foreign policy (shift away from the socialist camp and towards the Western powers: perpetuation and aggravation of the Sino Indian conflict), a change in the industrial policy (to help perpetuate private capital, especially American capital), sabotage of all agrarian reforms, the undermining of parliamentary democracy and hasty help to extreme right in the Congress and outside to grow.

The task was to bring about a shift in the policies through a broad front — which was to consist of the working class, the peasantry the petit bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie which had no links with imperialist circles. Working class peasant unity was to be the core and pivot of the front.

<sup>77</sup> Link 16 April 1961

<sup>78</sup> Ajoy Ghosh *New Situation and Our Tasks* Speech as amended and adopted at the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of India Vijayawada 7-16 April 1961, Communist Party Publication New Delhi 1961

Ajoy Ghosh defined the CPI's attitude to the Congress as one of "unity and struggle". The Congress was the organ of the national bourgeoisie as a whole, including the right wing. But he warned against equating the Congress with the parties of right reaction because many of the declared policies of the Congress and some of its measures were "progressive". To go by his analysis, the party's dilemma was simple, a set of policies which affected the masses were being utilized by the right reaction to strengthen itself. These policies had to be fought. But a large part of the forces of the right reaction were inside the Congress. At the same time the bulk of the party's potential allies were also in the Congress.

It logically followed from Ajoy Ghosh's analysis that the communists could not defend the government's foreign policy, the public sector, and the parliamentary system "without forging links with Congressmen and winning their support". He summed up his political line as follows:

(1) Use progressive declarations of Congress to forge mass unity in action

(2) In agitation, keep in mind not only those who are already under our influence but also those who are not, speaking not only for those who sit "in front" and cheer every denunciation of the Congress and its government but also those who "waited on the periphery."

(3) Wage a resolute and uncompromising battle against right reaction and against parties of communalism, against the policies and their slogans. This will help draw towards us honest Congressmen.

(4) Even when opposing and fighting policies of the Congress and the government, concentrate fire wherever possible on rightist elements.

(5) Conduct patient explanatory campaign among Congressmen and Congress masses.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p. 64

## ON THE VERGE OF A SPLIT

The party could avert an open split over the programme by shelving it but it could not postpone the political resolution. The leaders and the delegations were sharply divided over the political resolution also with no agreement on any of the three draft resolutions moved. To end the deadlock the congress agreed to a compromise formula to hold the party together on the eve of the third general elections. Some of the formulations in Ajoy Ghosh's speech revealed a radical departure from those in his own draft political resolution and the draft programme earlier.

Since the speech also represented a compromise between his own draft and the leftist draft it was unanimously agreed that the two alternative drafts of Ranadive and Namboodiripad should be withdrawn and Ajoy Ghosh's draft should be amended. Ajoy Ghosh's speech itself was adopted as a supplementary resolution to provide the basis for the amendments. Ajoy Ghosh was to make the amendments and edit the resolution to bring it in line with his speech.

The amended political resolution (adopted by the National Council) turned out to be a limited victory for the left. It bore the impress of several leftist amendments to make it more radical, more anti-Nehru and anti-Congress. A leftist leader later claimed that all the basic amendments suggested by the left were accepted and the rightists did not dare oppose any of those amendments.<sup>22</sup>

The resolution rejected the rightist line of a general united front with Congress and advocated the tactic of unity with struggle. The slogan of power it gave was a government of national democracy or the government of a national democratic front. Of the two draft programmes before the congress one had called for a national democracy and the other for people's democracy. The issue remained un-

<sup>22</sup> M. Basavapunniah "Reply to Nanda—6" *People's Democracy* 23 January 1966.

resolved. But the political resolution revealed agreement on the immediate task, of a government of the national democratic front (as distinct from national democracy or people's democracy). It called for a countrywide mass campaign to realize the goal.

If such a campaign conducted in co-operation with patriotic elements in every party is sufficiently broadbased, militant and powerful it will bring about changes in government's policies: defeat and isolate reaction and shift the balance of forces in favour of the democratic forces, then a situation may arise when it becomes a practical possibility to raise the slogan of the establishment of a government of the national democratic front—a government representing the fighting alliance of all democratic forces in the country and pledged to carry out a genuine national democratic programme.<sup>81</sup>

The resolution represented a compromise "centrist position". It called for a struggle to defeat the reaction and to force a shift to the left in the policies and for a change in the correlation of forces. The government of national democracy was to be "an organ of struggle against reactionary forces" which were out to scuttle the progressive national policies and it was also to be the instrument of carrying forward the development of the non-capitalist path, though the term was not actually used in the resolution.

It was an opportunist compromise because much as the left succeeded in preventing a shift in the line further to the right (towards a general Congress Communist united front), the resolution preserved intact all the central elements of the rightist line complete with its reliance on the non-capitalist path of development. The ideological and political differences in the party remained unresolved. There was a

<sup>81</sup> *New Age*, 7 May 1961. Also in pamphlet form, *National Democratic Front for National Democratic Tasks* Communist Party of India, New Delhi 1961.



patch work unity over the immediate tactics for the general elections to take place in about eight months

#### DEADLOCK OVER NATIONAL COUNCIL

The left, which perhaps could not force the issue because the moderate elements vacillated, made a futile bid for control of the organization when the elections were held at Vijayawada for the new National Council. The leftist charge later was to be that the Dange group tried to conduct it on "factional lines"<sup>52</sup> deviating from the usual practice. The Central Executive Committee used to allot the number of seats for various States and get the State delegations proposals for the panel. The recommendations from some of the States upset the Dange group which it is alleged, "manoeuvred to put up a new panel," disregarding the recommendations of the delegations.

But the rightist version later was to be very different. Charging the left group with the use of the "anti-party tactic of blackmail through threatened walk-out and split" the National Council recalled that at Vijayawada, "finding themselves in a minority, these Left leaders and their followers threatened to walk out of the Congress unless they were given more representation than they could legitimately claim on the new National Council. They did not hesitate to precipitate a crisis in the presence of delegations from several fraternal Communist Parties"<sup>53</sup>.

It was another opportunist compromise over the composition of the National Council when its strength was raised from 101 to 110 to accommodate more representatives of the left group. The National Council however, could not elect the Central Executive Committee or the Central Secretariat thanks to the organizational deadlock.

<sup>52</sup> *Fight against Revisionism* p. 11

<sup>53</sup> "Resolution of the National Council 15 April 1964" *Resolution on Splitters and Other Documents of the National Council of the Communist Party of India* New Delhi 1964 pp. 12

The CPI barely survived a split at the Vijayawada congress by averting its gaze on the political deadlock which telescoped into an organizational deadlock. Neither the Sino-Indian border conflict nor the Sino Soviet ideological dispute adding to differences was the principal issue at Vijayawada. At best they were peripheral issues because the fight was over a programme and a tactical line for the party. Nevertheless faint echoes of the Sino Soviet ideological dispute could be heard at Vijayawada. Neither Suslov's speech nor his party's message he conveyed to the congress referred to socialism as the task of the Indian communists. The message merely referred to the task of India "advancement along the path of democracy and social progress"<sup>84</sup>. But the Chinese party's message (there was no delegation from China at the congress) was explicit about socialism when it wished its Indian comrades success in their task of 'strengthening the unity of all democratic and progressive forces of India and promoting the cause of the Indian people for defending world peace and safeguarding national independence and for democracy and socialism'<sup>85</sup>.

Again while the Soviet message was silent about the revisionist danger, the Indonesian party chairman, D N Aidit in his message underlined the fight against this trend as one of the tasks. We are convinced that your congress will further consolidate your party in the ideological, political and organizational fields and will further consolidate the communist ranks against modern revisionism which is still the main danger for the world communist movement and against the danger of dogmatism and sectarianism"<sup>86</sup>.

But there is no reason to believe that the differences in the international communist movement was the principal factor in the CPI rift at Vijayawada. At best the right group tried to interpret the Moscow Statement of 1960 to

<sup>84</sup> New Age, 23 April 1961

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

defend its slogan of national democracy against the leftist alternative of people's democracy

#### SUSLOV'S ROLE IN AVERTING SPLIT

When Suslov found the leftist challenge to the dominant rightist leadership was strong he was anxious to avert a split at Vijavawada. It is widely believed among the leftist leaders now that the original Ajoy Ghosh draft for the political resolution with its eulogization of the Nehru policies had been decided upon in consultation with the Soviet leadership and with Suslov in particular but when it was found that the leftist challenge was formidable Suslov was for a radical revision of the formulations in the official (Ajoy Ghosh) draft to accommodate the leftist viewpoint to the extent possible but strictly within limits set by the Moscow Statement of 1960. This is the explanation generally given by leftist leaders for the noticeable shift in Ajoy Ghosh's line, between the drafting of the political resolution and his own speech at Vijavawada in April.

The Soviet leadership obviously did not want to force a split in the CPI at this stage much as it was anxious to prolong the detente between the Nehru government and the communists. Suslov by throwing his weight behind the rightists helped tilt the balance against the leftists but not before the left had succeeded with some of its amendments. The left was not inclined to force a showdown over the political resolution and agreed to a compromise to avert an open split.

It is significant that up to this point, there was no evidence of any Chinese attempt to influence the CPI's political line. No Chinese delegation attended the Vijavawada congress and no section in the CPI seems to have looked to the Chinese for guidance. The right group in the CPI has not charged the left with acting under Chinese influence at the Vijavawada congress where the objective conditions for a split were present. On the other hand,

there is evidence to suggest that Suslov and his delegation intervened to avert a split at the Vijayawada congress and prolong the rightists control of the party. The right group had already committed the CPI to pro-Soviet positions in the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute but this was not the issue dividing the CPI at Vijayawada. The Sino-Soviet dispute in any case, had not reached the point of no return. So there was obvious Soviet anxiety to avert a split in the CPI and Suslov acted to this end. In the face of a powerful leftist current the most he could achieve was a compromise, by persuading the right group to give in but without prejudice to the Soviet requirement of a national democratic front to back the Nehru government.

The political resolution was by no means a defeat for the Soviet line for the CPI. It was victory for Suslov to the extent it refused to equate the Congress with right reaction. The resolution sought to strengthen the "progressives" in the Congress to force a Congress offensive against the growing challenge of the rightist parties (the Swatantra Party and the Jana Sangh) and the CPI was reluctant to meet the rightist challenge on its own. The national democratic front the resolution envisaged was an imaginary combination of mythical forces and as it turned out the political resolution was so vague in its formulations that the right could stretch it later to rationalize a line of a general united front with the Congress taking advantage of the Sino-Indian border war. The opportunism at Vijayawada testified to the demoralization and disintegration overtaking the CPI and its failure to work out a line of its own.

## *The Broken Front*

SOON AFTER the Sino Soviet ideological conflict broke out in the open the Communist Party of India had committed unqualified support to the Soviet positions in the dispute. But in the complex pattern of differences in the party over programme and tactics the Sino Soviet differences were of secondary importance. There was no serious attempt yet on the part of the left group to challenge the dominant right group's arbitrary endorsement of the Soviet positions in the dispute.

Nevertheless the Communist Party of India (CPI) like most other third parties found itself in a dilemma at the Twenty second Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which witnessed an open Sino Soviet confrontation. The ideological dispute had transcended the stage of a bilateral controversy and surrogate polemics and Khrushchev launched a public attack on the Albanian party and leadership and denigrated Stalin. Even the parties which had taken pro Soviet positions in the dispute were called upon to demonstrate their loyalty to Moscow anew by endorsing the attack on Albania and the denigration of Stalin. In the Chinese view the congress marked a new low in the Soviet effort to oppose Marxism-Leninism and split the socialist camp and the international communist movement.

According to the Chinese Khrushchev had gone to the extent of calling for the overthrow of the Albanian leadership and thus established a vicious precedent of a party congress being used for public attacks on fraternal parties.

The renewed denigration of Stalin was intended to pave the way for a repudiation of the 1957 Declaration and the 1960 Statement and "pursue a systematically revisionist line"<sup>1</sup>

The CPI was already in crisis when this major development in the international communist movement overtook it. The political organizational deadlock at Vijayawada had made effective functioning impossible. The National Council had met after the Vijayawada Congress and elected an executive and a Secretariat. But the new bodies were by no means representative because three prominent leftists P. Sundarayya, Jyoti Basu and Harkishen Singh Surjeet had kept out of them. All that the Council could do was to work out the party's tactics for the general elections a few months away.

#### STORM OVER DENIGRATION OF STALIN

Amidst the deadlock, the left group would have found an opening to isolate the right dominated leadership had it taken a *pro Soviet stand on Albania and Stalin*. Even those generally regarded as *pro Soviet* in the party were incensed over the denigration of Stalin. This perhaps accounted for the reluctance of General Secretary Ajoy Ghosh, who had led the CPI delegation to the Soviet party congress, to endorse Khrushchev's attacks on Albania and Stalin. He did not join the chorus against Albania. But he did not deplore it either. This was hardly surprising because many parties which had taken *pro Soviet positions* in the past were neutral on Albania. But the denigration of Stalin was a bigger shock to many, including the CPI. The 1956 revelations on Stalin had nearly convulsed the party. Ajoy Ghosh was conscious of the possible damage the latest denunciation of

<sup>1</sup> "The Origin and Development of Differences Between the Leadership of the CPSU and Ourselves—Comment on the Open Letter of the Central Committee of CPSU," *Peking Review*, 13 September 1963.

Stalin would cause to the morale of the Indian communists who despite all their factional differences had grown up in their unquestioned faith in Stalin's infallibility. It is on record that the CPI delegation protested to the Soviet party against the renewed denigration of Stalin. Ajoy Ghosh reported later. It is a fact that a big majority of members of our party and many others too have been deeply hurt by the decision to remove Stalin's body from the mausoleum. Many have communicated their sentiments to us. What our delegation felt on this issue we have conveyed to the CPSU.<sup>2</sup>

Even before the CPI delegation returned from Moscow there was a storm in the party more particularly in the left dominated States of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal over Soviet attacks on Albania and Stalin. Ajoy Ghosh tried to dissociate the CPI from these attacks at least for the time being. He preferred to leave it to the National Council to decide the party's stand on Albania though personally he was with the Soviet party because he thought that the Albanian attacks on Soviet foreign policy and the Twentieth Congress decisions were not in order.<sup>3</sup> Ajoy Ghosh anxious to preserve his own positions as the General Secretary of a deadlocked party wanted to avert a right left confrontation over Albania. But a number of developments sharpened the differences between the right and left groups.

#### AJOY GHOSH ATTACKS CHINA

Late in 1961 the lull on the Sino Soviet border was broken and each side was charging the other with intrusions. Ajoy Ghosh openly criticized the Chinese government on 21 November when he demanded that China should put an end to incursions and ensure that they did not occur again.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *New Age* 10 December 1961

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *New Age* 26 November 1961

He had taken the veracity of the Indian Government's versions for granted and that invited a blistering attack from the Chinese — their first ever on the CPI or its leaders. A *People's Daily* comment charged Nehru with whipping up a hate campaign against China to promote his party's chances at the general elections and had a broadside on Ajoy Ghosh who had trailed behind Nehru and hurriedly issued a statement in condemnation of China without bothering to find out the truth or to look into the rights and wrongs in the case.<sup>5</sup>

The Sino Soviet ideological dispute was intensifying with the Soviet Union severing relations with Albania and moving closer to Yugoslavia. These developments had their impact on the Sino Indian border conflict and on the CPI. The differences in the CPI which could not be reconciled at Vijawada surfaced after the third general elections a year later. The issue once again was the same against whom should the CPI direct its main attack — the Congress or its opponents from the right? One view at the post election National Council meeting reflected the party's alarm at Congress losses to the parties of the right and wanted the communists to seek allies (obviously inside the Congress too) to change the alignment of forces against the right. Unity of the so called middle of the road forces to fight right reaction communalism and separatism was to be the immediate task. The other view was that the danger from these forces cannot be met by strengthening the Congress because the discontent among the masses on which the reactionary forces grew was the result of Congress policies and practices.<sup>6</sup>

The National Council found itself divided on its election review which had to be put off to another meeting. But it issued a short statement on the elections rejecting the line of united front with Congress but reiterating the Vijaya

<sup>5</sup> *People's Daily* 7 November 1961

<sup>6</sup> *Fight against Revisionism* Calcutta, 1965 p 134



wada line of efforts to build a national democratic front ?

The next meeting of the National Council had before it a resolution of the Central Executive Committee reviewing the elections. The resolution was a rebuff to those who wanted to jettison the Vijayawada line because it reiterated the old approach of striving to build the unity of all democratic and popular forces in the struggle against right reaction and of directing into popular channels the discontent of the masses against the policies of the government which hit the people rather than allow the force of right reaction to take advantage of this to consolidate themselves should be carried forward.<sup>1</sup> Unnerved by the support the resolution found S. A. Dange and others prevailed upon the National Council to shelve it pleading that a post mortem examination of the elections was unnecessary.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL CRISIS

The death of Ajoy Ghosh in January 1962 had worsened the organizational crisis in the National Council which had to decide the leadership issue at its April meeting. Majority in the council favoured E. M. S. Namboodirpad as Ajoy Ghosh's successor. But the right group wanted the post of a chairman created and Dange installed in it as the price of support to Namboodirpad's election. Reluctant to force a contest the left group agreed to changes in the party constitution to create the post of a chairman. A composite Secretariat with a Chairman and a General Secretary and Bhupesh Gupta, Z. A. Ahmad, M. N. Govindan Nair, P. Sundarayya, Jyoti Basu, Harkishen Singh Surjeet and Yogindra Sharma as members was set up as a result of the agreement. The Central Executive Committee was expanded to include Sundarayya, Jyoti Basu and Harkishen Singh Surjeet who had stayed out of it earlier. But the right group

<sup>1</sup> *New Age* (monthly) May 1962.

<sup>2</sup> *Fight against Revisionism* p. 14.

offset this by forcing the inclusion of three of its nominees Dange is reported to have assured the National Council that he would not interfere with the working of the Secretariat and the General Secretary would continue to be the party's spokesman<sup>9</sup> The 'composite Secretariat' represented a balance between the right and left groups and functioned smoothly for over five months until the Sino Indian border war wrecked it

#### TENSION ON BORDER

When the National Council met in Hyderabad in August the Sino Indian border was live and tense each side trying to outflank the other The party had to decide whether it should support the government's defence measures against a socialist country or not The National Council pledged support to Nehru's efforts 'to bring about a peaceful negotiated settlement of the border question even while taking measures for the defence of the country'<sup>10</sup>

But the situation deteriorated in the weeks that followed There were more clashes on the eastern border The Central Secretariat met in New Delhi in the middle of October and found itself divided on the stand it should take The resolution (which was not unanimous) said the situation was all the more alarming because only a few weeks ago, there were strong hopes that the climate for negotiations was being created and preliminaries for a meeting between the two sides were in the offing What surprised the executive was that new tensions had developed on the eastern border which had been relatively free from tension in the past and where the McMahon Line existed as a 'virtually demarcated border line' between India and China The operative part

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid* p 16

<sup>10</sup> *The India China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India*, Communist Party Publication (for members only), New Delhi 1963, pp 59-60

of the resolution said "Reports of the Government of India show that the Chinese forces have crossed to the south of the McMahon Line and thus violated the Indian territory, though the Chinese deny this. The Communist Party of India has always maintained that the McMahon Line is the border of India. Hence all necessary steps to defend it are justified."

"The National Council Resolution of our Party at Hyderabad lent its support to the Government's efforts at negotiations, while taking necessary steps for the defence of the borders."<sup>11</sup>

The party had already held in October 1959 that the area south of the McMahon Line was part of India and should remain in India.<sup>12</sup>

#### SECRETARIAT DIVIDED

An account of the controversy in the Secretariat, published in a pro Moscow journal, gives a fair idea of the right group's bid to quarantine the left by denouncing it as "pro Chinese." The account is no doubt biased against the left as evident from epithets like 'left adventurists' used to describe the dissenters in the Secretariat. Bhupesh Gupta said he was not prepared to believe all that the "bourgeois" government was saying about the border events. Jyoti Basu dismissed reports about Chinese aggression in NEFA as 'filthy bourgeois lies' and called Ahmad, who termed it aggression a 'bourgeois nationalist.' Bhupesh Gupta, Jyoti Basu, Sundar-ayya and Harkishen Singh Surjeet did not believe the Chinese had gone back on their assurance to CPI leaders two years ago that they would not violate the McMahon Line.

The four leftists wanted disciplinary action against Ahmad for his press interview holding Chinese guilty in NEFA. Dange, Yogindra Sharma, M. N. Govindan Nair, and Ahmad

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 77 612

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p 15

opposed the demand on the ground that no violation of party line on the Sino Indian border dispute was involved. Namboodinpad, the ninth member, was neutral. To end the stalemate (four for, four against, and one neutral), Bhupesh Gupta suggested action on the basis of discussions on the border situation. Again there was a stalemate when the proposition was put to vote.<sup>13</sup>

A resolution on the border situation sponsored by rightists Ahmad, Yogindra Sharma, and Govindan Nair said the Chinese had violated the McMahon Line and they should go back to 8 September positions. It supported the government's defence measures and welcomed President Radhakrishnan's appeal to political parties to unite for defence. During the heated debate Namboodinpad proposed deletion of the reference to Dr Radhakrishnan's appeal and wanted the resolution to state that the Chinese had denied crossing the McMahon Line.

Namboodinpad, who held the decisive ninth vote in a body of nine seems to have held out the threat that he would line up with the left if his amendments were not accepted. The right had to compromise but not the leftists. Surjeet walked out in a huff, Bhupesh Gupta did not vote, while Sundarayya and Basu opposed it. The others, including Namboodinpad voted for the amended resolution. The differences among the leaders could no longer be concealed. While explaining the resolution to newsmen, Namboodinpad gave his interpretation of the resolution.<sup>14</sup>

Within hours of the release of the resolution, three rightist members, Ahmad, Yogindra Sharma, and Govindan Nair jointly asked the General Secretary to issue an "explanation" of the statement along the lines suggested by them. When the General Secretary and another member, Bhupesh Gupta said such differences in interpretation could be resolved only by a plenary meeting of the Secretariat, the

<sup>13</sup> Link, 21 October 1961

<sup>14</sup> *Fight against Revisionism*, p. 23

three threatened to issue their own statement<sup>15</sup> Thereupon, Dange issued a statement to interpret the Secretariat statement, without the knowledge of the General Secretary or Bhupesh Gupta It aimed at showing the minority in the Secretariat as belonging to the "pro-China" faction

Dange's explanation covered the four points in the resolution McMahon Line "is our border" and was a "virtually demarcated line" Chinese forces had crossed the McMahon Line violating the Indian territory and the party took the Indian Government reports as true in this respect To point out that the Chinese denied these reports did not mean, as some critics alleged, that the party believed in the Chinese or put both on the same level All steps necessary to defend the line were justified "If there had not been violation of our territory, we need not have talked of defence" The resolution reiterated the party's support to the policy of defence and negotiation Dange also said 'Someone asked me why I do not say that we should throw out the Chinese from our area? My answer is What else is the meaning of defence? Does it mean letting them in?'<sup>16</sup>

Dange's statement (in consultation with three right group members of the Secretariat) interpreted defence to mean throwing the Chinese out of the areas south of the McMahon Line The leftist charge later<sup>17</sup> was to be that Dange and his group had begun functioning as a separate faction in the party

#### RIGHT OFFENSIVE AGAINST LEFT

The right group's drive against the left acquired new momentum after the Secretariat's resolution and the divergent interpretations on it The Maharashtra State Council

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid* p 23

<sup>16</sup> *The India-China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India* p 63

<sup>17</sup> *Fight against Revisionism*, p 23

branded it 'ambiguous, dishonest and unsatisfactory' and there was a demand for the expulsion of leftist B. T. Rana from the party. Bihar, Tamil Nadu, and Madhya Pradesh passed similar resolutions. The Punjab and West Bengal contended that since the National Council was due to meet in any case, there was no need for the resolution.<sup>18</sup>

Amidst a frenzied campaign outside the party (abetted by the right) to brand the left group a pro-China lobby, the Sino-Indian border tension exploded into a military conflict with the Chinese troops crossing the McMahon Line on 20 October. This helped the right group to mount new pressure against the leftists. By the time the National Council could meet to determine its stand, the rightist members of the Secretariat had virtually committed the party to what the left termed a 'bourgeois nationalist' line. The National Council faced a *fait accompli*.

The leftist charge was to be that between Dange's 19 October statement and the National Council meeting (31 October-2 November), the Dange group in the Secretariat and the Central Executive Committee residing in Delhi had functioned as a faction within the party's central office and tried to exercise control over the General Secretary on the ground that they represented the majority in the National Council.<sup>19</sup>

The Sino-Indian border war (which began on 20 October) and the Cuban missile crisis which synchronized with it (beginning on 22 October) together mark the point of no return for the CPI as well as the world communist movement. Both moved closer to an open split.

#### FATEFUL MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL

The issues before the National Council were clear: can the party continue to stick to the Hyderabad line of negotia-

<sup>18</sup> Link, 28 October 1962.

<sup>19</sup> Fight against Revisionism, p. 25.

tions for a settlement even while strengthening defence? Some thought the border clashes since 20 October had caused a qualitative change in the situation and when the Chinese had pressed deep into Indian territory there was no point in talking of negotiations. Others thought the Chinese military push made it all the more necessary to stress the need for an ultimate settlement and that defence measures which undoubtedly were necessary should not substitute a political settlement but supplement it.

The Council had Dange's draft and two alternatives to it by Namboodirpad and Bhupesh Gupta and by Ramamurti and others. According to a left version later, there was no difference between the majority and the minority over the need for defence because all the drafts had stressed this point<sup>20</sup>. Dange admitted this later while replying to the Chinese attack.

It must be noted with special emphasis that at the time of the NC [National Council] meeting in November when this resolution was adopted no one had yet been arrested and everyone of the leading comrades were present. The alternative resolutions moved were in addition to the majority resolution. One of these drafts said

The NC pays its homage to the memory of those who have fallen in the defence of our borders. The CP has always stood for the defence of the country, including the strengthening of defence of our borders. In today's conditions there is no question of any unilateral ceasefire by India. There is no question of surrender to superior might."

We are sure this was truly and sincerely meant. The other draft said

The Council pays its humble tribute to officers and jawans of the Indian Army who have had to face heavy odds in defending the country. It salutes the *memory of*

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

those who have given their precious lives in fighting for the defence of the soil. It conveys its heartfelt sympathy to the families of those who had thus to lay down their lives.

"The NC at its Hyderabad meeting, expressed the Party's support to the policy of the Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, of making all efforts to bring about a peaceful negotiated settlement of the border question even while taking measures for the defence of the country.

'Basing itself on that declaration of the Council, the Central Secretariat stated on 17th October that all measures which Government take to defend the territory south of the McMahon line are justified. Now that the Chinese armed forces are well within the territory south of the McMahon Line and are advancing both in NEFA and in Ladakh, the Council all the more extends its support to the Government in all its requisite measures.

"The Council hopes that every step will be taken to improve the defence position consistent with the dignity, independence and the basic policies of our country."

This too was truly and sincerely meant.

Thus in the National Council no one at that time had any difference of opinion on the correctness of the slogan of defence. The NC was unanimous on the slogan of defending the country. Does it mean that the NC was unanimously giving an alibi to reaction, absolving them of their responsibility or was not emphasizing or had given up the slogan of peaceful negotiations? Nothing of the kind.<sup>21</sup>

The differences related to issues other than national defence and as recounted later by a prominent leftist leader were

<sup>21</sup> S. A. Dange, "Neither Revisionism Nor Dogmatism Is Our Guide" *The Great Debate*, New Delhi, 1963, pp. 341-2.



First, we opposed our party being committed to the line of bellicose propaganda against China, inflaming public opinion as proposed by Dange

Secondly, we opposed our party becoming committed to any one rigid pre-condition to start negotiations, as insisted by Dange that there can be no negotiations until both the armies retreated to the respective positions held before 9 September 1962

The third issue on which we differed with the stand of the Dangeites was regarding "imperialist military aid" They welcomed military aid with a proviso that it should be on commercial terms We opposed it and insisted on pointing out the inherent dangers in such "aid" to our national independence and sovereignty<sup>22</sup>

#### CPI BRANDS CHINA AGGRESSOR

The rightist draft, as adopted by the National Council, titled "Unite to Defend Our Motherland Against China's Open Aggression" branded China aggressor because the crossing of the McMahon Line under "any excuse or pretence" was aggression It supported Nehru's position and conditions for opening the negotiations, backed the Indian Government's suggestion of return to the 8 September positions and rejected the Chinese characterization of Nehru as an agent of U.S. imperialism, leader of "reactionaries" and an expansionist of the Indian Government acting as a tool of U.S. imperialism, to secure more dollar aid

The resolution also said the CPI never expected a socialist country to settle the dispute with India by force of arms and make astounding claims against a country which is engaged in peaceful consolidation of its newly won independence which belongs to the peace camp, which follows a foreign policy of nonalignment The party pledged support to unity of all patriotic forces in the national emergency

<sup>22</sup> M. Basavapunnali "Reply to Nanda-6," *People's Democracy*, 23 January 1966

'The Communist Party of India is not opposed to buying arms from any country on a commercial basis. But it is opposed to the import of foreign personnel to man the defences of the country.'<sup>23</sup>

The adoption of the resolution disrupted the "composite Secretariat" arrangement agreed upon in April. Three of its leftist members resigned complaining that it was impossible to have any frank discussion in the Secretariat because its proceedings were being systematically leaked to the bourgeois press.<sup>24</sup> General Secretary Nambudiripad and another member Bhupesh Gupta also resigned but agreed to continue on request by the majority.

The majority stand at the October-November National Council was the logical culmination of the right-left conflict in the party. The majority used the opportunity provided by the border war to push the party to the right, extend *uncritical and unqualified support to the Nehru government on the border war*, and in practice repudiate the Vijayawada line and isolate the left by suggesting that they were anti-national and pro-Chinese and ultimately to work out its own tactical line of general united front with the Congress in the name of defending the country's sovereignty.

Both the groups had agreed that aggression had taken place and there was no difference over defence against aggression. But the right pressed its offensive to the point of associating the party with the anti-China hysteria worked up in the country even in opposition to the government's proclaimed desire for a peaceful settlement. The majority was not for a negotiated settlement with China except on the basis suggested by the Indian Government, namely with drawal of both sides to 8 September positions. Ironically, while the majority vetoed the minority's suggestion for a *more scientific approach here the Indian Government resiled*

<sup>23</sup> *The India-China Border Dispute and The Communist Party of India* pp 64-70

<sup>24</sup> *Fight against Revisionism*, p 25

on this 18 months later to modify the formula. The majority also supported Western military aid for India if it were on commercial terms while the minority thought such aid even on commercial terms would make India dependent on the imperialist powers.

The majority also utilized the occasion to isolate the left on the ideological issues before the world communist movement. A vital paragraph in the resolution was withheld from the public but was conveyed to Nehru<sup>25</sup> for his personal edification. The suppressed paragraph should have greatly pleased Moscow because it assailed the Chinese stand on peaceful coexistence and the role of newly liberated non-aligned countries as being in conflict with the 1960 Moscow Statement.

The behaviour of socialist China towards peace loving India has most grossly violated the common understanding in the communist world arrived at in the 81 Parties Conference in 1960 in relation to peaceful coexistence and attitude to newly liberated countries and the question of war and peace. Socialist China has fallen victim to narrow nationalistic considerations at the cost of the interests of world peace and anti-imperialism in its attitude towards India.<sup>26</sup>

According to a leftist account in the original draft this paragraph had referred to a 'peasant mentality' of the Chinese along with their nationalism but in the amended draft it was dropped though Dange harped on it while replying to the discussion.<sup>27</sup>

With the leftist elements in jail the right gained control of the party organization even in leftist strongholds. The

<sup>25</sup> Link 25 November 1962

<sup>26</sup> *The India-China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India* p. 67

<sup>27</sup> *Fight against Revisionism* p. 20

Chinese charge was that the Indian Government acted on the list of names previously furnished to it by Dange.' It said 'The Dange clique exploited the situation and sent their trusted followers, on the heels of the police to take over the leading organs of the Party committees in a number of States. The purpose of these actions of the Dange clique was to reconstitute the Indian Communist Party and wreck the Indian revolutionary movement so as to serve the ends of the big bourgeoisie.'"

Whether the Indian Government was acting on lists furnished by Dange or not there was little doubt that the night was jubilant over the arrests despite all the feigned indignation. For instance when members of State Councils criticized the National Council resolution their names reached the newspapers contrary to the party norms and this indeed helped the police to draw up the lists.

#### LETTER TO FRATERNAL PARTIES

The night group went about canvassing the Indian Government's case among fraternal parties. On 20 November a letter<sup>29</sup> from the Central Secretariat to fraternal parties explained the National Council resolution at length, defended the Indian government's stand including its acceptance of arms supplies from the West and took serious exception to the Chinese attack on Nehru in the form of a *People's Daily* editorial 'More on the Philosophy of Nehru in the Light of the Sino-Indian Boundary Question'<sup>30</sup>

The letter said the *People's Daily's* assessment was "grossly subjective, perverse, full of falsehood and misstatement and it has nothing to do with any Marxist Leninist analysis."

<sup>29</sup> *People's Daily* 9 March 1963

<sup>30</sup> *The India-China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India* pp 70-88

<sup>31</sup> *People's Daily* 27 October 1962. For a detailed CPI refutation of the attack, see "Realities of the Indian Situation" *New Age* (monthly) November 1962, pp 11-36

The letter posed a question "Is it permissible for a Communist Party to indulge in any such assessment of the internal situation of another country in total disregard of what the Communist Party of that country has had to say? Does it conform to the norms of relations between Communist Parties as enunciated in the Moscow Statement or is generally accepted in the relations between Communist Parties?" The *Peoples Daily* had also attacked Dange and some others without naming them, as "self styled Marxist-Communists" and the letter took exception to this.

The letter, which sought the intervention of the fraternal parties with the Chinese leadership before it was too late to make them rectify their "serious mistakes," was signed by Dange, as Chairman, Namboodirpad as General Secretary, Bhupesh Gupta, Z A Ahmad, M N Govindan Nair, and Yogindra Sharma as secretaries (members of the Secretariat) <sup>21</sup>

Dange was to follow this up with a visit to Europe to lobby with the parties there. A suggestion that Namboodirpad should go with him was rejected. There was another move, to send Bhupesh Gupta and Jyoti Basu with him. But according to a pro Dange version <sup>22</sup> "none of the three could speak on behalf of the party." Even two of the secretaries who had signed the appeal to fraternal parties were not trustworthy in right groups view.

The immediate impact of the one month border war on the Sino Soviet dispute was significant. According to an authoritative Chinese version (which has not been contradicted by the Soviet side) as early as 8 October a Chinese leader told the Soviet Ambassador in Peking that China had information about India's plans for a massive attack along Sino Indian border. Should that happen, China could resolutely defend itself. He also pointed out to the Amba-

<sup>21</sup> *The India-China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India* p. 85

<sup>22</sup> *Look* 25 November 1962

sador that Soviet made helicopters and transport planes were used by India on the border

Again, on 13 and 14 October, Khrushchev told the Chinese Ambassador in Moscow that the Soviet information about Indian preparation for a border attack tallied with the information the Chinese had. If they were in China's position, they would have taken the same measures. A neutral attitude to the question was impossible and if anyone attacked China and the Soviets said they were neutral, it would be an act of betrayal<sup>33</sup>

According to the same Chinese account, India launched the attack on 20 October. The Eastern German party chief Walter Ulbricht was the first communist leader outside India to charge the Chinese with attacking India and that his party (and presumably also the Soviet party) was not informed about it<sup>34</sup>

#### INITIAL SOVIET NEUTRALITY

The immediate Soviet reaction to the flare up came in the form of a *Pravda* editorial on 25 October, reproduced in the same issue of the CPI journal which reported the National Council resolution branding China aggressor. *Pravda* said the Sino Indian border question was a 'legacy of the times when the British colonialists held sway on British territory, arbitrarily cutting and recutting the map of Asia'. The "notorious McMahon Line which has never been recognized by China was imposed upon the Chinese and Indian peoples". The Soviet people were worried about the developments on the Sino Indian border and the Soviet Government people have always advocated peaceful settlement of

<sup>33</sup> "The Truth About How the Leaders of the CPSU Have Allied themselves with India against China" *People's Daily*, 2 November 1963

<sup>34</sup> *Neues Deutschland*, 16 January 1963, quoted in William E. Griffith, *The Sino-Soviet Rift*, London 1964 p 99, *New Age*, 20 January 1963

the dispute through negotiation. *Pravda* also published (in the same issue) a statement of the Chinese Government which said that it was 'absolutely impossible to imagine the solution of the border question with the help of armed force'

*Pravda* backed the three point Chinese plan for negotiations and observed that the conflict brought "grist to the mill not only of imperialism in general but also of certain reactionary circles inside India most intimately associated with foreign capital and imperialist forces inimical to the Indian people". The Soviet people took the Chinese statement as an expression of serious concern for its relations with India and of its desire to end the conflict. The proposals were a 'constructive' and acceptable ground-work for negotiations.<sup>25</sup>

The Chinese were obviously satisfied with the initial Soviet stand while the CPI leadership was displeased. But the Soviet stand shifted gradually to coincide with the Indian government's. On 5 November immediately after the National Council's resolution *Pravda* wrote another editorial which indicated the shift. Reiterating its call for a negotiated settlement it now said 'the Soviet people feel that in the present situation nothing should be done to aggravate it but it is necessary to ceasefire and sit down at the round-table to negotiate without setting any terms'.<sup>26</sup>

This indeed was open criticism of the Chinese and therefore most welcome to the right faction in the Indian party. A prominent right leader G. Adhikari was to interpret this later as a vindication of his party's stand. Refuting the charge that the party had rejected the warning of the 25 October editorial that reactionaries in India were raking up war hysteria and wanted the progressive forces to fight it and strive for negotiations he says

<sup>25</sup> Reprinted in *New Age* 4 November 1962

<sup>26</sup> Reprinted in *New Age* 11 November 1962

But the article left many things unsaid. It had not a word to say against the disastrous Chinese invasion which in fact had created the soil for the reactionaries to sow war hysteria. That is why our party rightly ignored it. We had no reason to regret it either. Subsequently, it was the CPSU which had to change and had to do the same open criticism of the Chinese party we did earlier.<sup>37</sup>

#### SHIFT IN SOVIET STAND

The initial Soviet neutrality on the Sino Indian border flare up obviously determined by the compulsion of the Caribbean crisis, displeased the CPI. But the National Council's 1 November resolution, patently in conflict with the Soviet stand, appeared to have exerted pressure on the Soviet policy and forced the shift.

To follow this up, the right leadership of the Communist Party of India began a lobbying campaign to explain the Nehru government's stand against China to the fraternal parties and to secure their support for it. But even before the Party's Secretariat addressed the famous letter to other parties and Dange left on a mission to Moscow, the changed Soviet stand was influencing several parties into taking a position favourable to the CPI.

Early in November, at the congress of the Bulgarian party in Sofia, the chief Chinese delegate Wu Hsiu chuan attacked the host party for "repeating the vicious (Soviet) practice" of criticizing the Albanian party and for not supporting the Chinese line against India. According to a pro Moscow account, while there was no public reference to the National Council resolution condemning China it was clear from behind the scene discussions that it had created a good impression. Had it come a fortnight earlier, a number of parties would have been spared the embarrassment of having

<sup>37</sup> G. Adhikan *Communist Party and India's Path to National Regeneration and Socialism*, New Delhi, 1964, p. 47



to back out on their initial support to China<sup>28</sup>

Soon after Dange's visit to Moscow an authoritative Soviet pronouncement confirmed a further shift in policy according to the Chinese Khrushchev went back on everything he had said only two months ago when he made the following insinuation at the Supreme Soviet on 12 December

The areas disputed by China and India were sparsely populated and of little value to human life. The Soviet Union could not possibly entertain the thought that India wanted to start a war with China. The Soviet Union adhered to Lenin's views on boundary disputes. Its experience over 45 years proved that there was no boundary dispute which could not be solved without resorting to arms. Of course it was good that China had unilaterally ordered a ceasefire and withdrawn its troops but would it not have been better if the Chinese had not advanced from their original positions?<sup>29</sup>

Thus at last the attitude of the CPI and the Soviet party and government to the Sino Indian border dispute were in focus with the Nehru government's

The CPI leadership had formally proclaimed its support to the Soviet positions in Sino Soviet ideological dispute soon after the Rumanian party congress in Bucharest (September 1960). The weeks following the Caribbean crisis and the Sino Indian border war (November December 1962) had witnessed fierce attacks on the Chinese at the congresses of various European communist parties (Bulgarian, Hungarian Czechoslovak and Italian) followed by Khrushchev's attack in his 12 December address to the Soviet Supreme Soviet. There was a general intensification of the Sino Soviet polemics during December 1962 March 1963

<sup>28</sup> Link 18 November 1962

<sup>29</sup> 'The Truth about How the Leaders of the CPSU have Allied themselves with India against China' Peoples Daily 2 November 1963

## CPI ENDORSES SOVIET GENERAL LINE

The CPI had to restate its position in the light of all this. When its Central Executive Committee and the National Council met in New Delhi early in February 1963 amidst raging Sino Soviet polemics the main business before it was the Sino Soviet ideological dispute. But as was to be expected the dominant pro Soviet leadership seized the opportunity to attempt the isolation of those opposed to the Soviet position by labelling them 'pro Peking elements'. Such labelling in India could have sinister implications in the context of the Sino Indian border war because even broad support to Chinese ideological positions could be mischievously interpreted to mean unpatriotic and anti national support to China against India in the border war.

A polarization has been going on in the party on the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute and a 10 man commission set up to prepare a document on it had two alternative drafts, one by Nambudiripad and another by Sardesai, before it. Nambudiripad's thesis, *Revisionism and Dogmatism in the CPI*, said little about the ideological dispute but was devoted to an analysis of the party's zig zags between revisionism and dogmatism during the last 20 years and detailing his differences with the National Council's resolution, the chauvinism of which was the culmination of the mistakes. He had also submitted a brief resolution on the Sino Soviet dispute proper. The substance of the resolution was that the Indian party should not and need not take sides in the dispute between the giants when it had not reviewed its own past.<sup>40</sup> Against this the Sardesai draft took an unambiguous position attacking the Chinese on ideological and political grounds. But later, at the National Council meeting, there was another draft by Dange which was more a chronological compilation of Chinese mistakes than an analysis of the respective ideological positions.

<sup>40</sup> Link, 10 February 1963

The National Council did not accept any of the three. But since Sardesai's thesis had the majority backing it was decided that it needed rewriting. A committee of three—Sardesai, N. K. Krishnan, and Bhupesh Gupta prepared the agreed draft which was passed unanimously.<sup>41</sup> The CPI committed its unqualified and uncritical support to the Soviet stand on the issues dividing the international communist movement. The party's last resolution on the subject was in September 1960, when the Central Executive broadly supported the Soviet positions without direct references to the Chinese positions or attacks on them. But now it was an open attack on China.

The resolution said the present differences and conflicts in the international communist movement had arisen "primarily from the violation by the Communist Party of China and the Albanian Party of Labour of the common understanding" of the movement as contained in the Moscow Declaration of 1957 and the Moscow Statement of 1960. These violations involved both ideological principles and practical questions relating to war and peace, peaceful co-existence, forms of transition to socialism, and the role of newly liberated nonaligned nations. They also involved the questions of relations between the socialist countries and nonaligned nations in the common struggle for world peace, national liberation and against imperialism. These violations and incorrect positions were the result of dogmatic and one-sided understanding of the definition of our epoch, the resolution said, reiterating support to the Soviet general line.<sup>42</sup>

The resolution was largely influenced by a subjective factor, namely, the Chinese attitude to its border dispute with India. The resolution made this the litmus test of the correctness of the Chinese positions on ideological issues.

<sup>41</sup> Link 17 February 1963.

<sup>42</sup> *The India-China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India* pp. 114-21.

It enthusiastically endorsed Khrushchev's proposal for cessation of polemics as the first step towards a world communist conference to resolve the differences. The Indian communists had reason to be happy about the proposed conference because their Central Executive had suggested such a meet as early as December 1962.

The split in the CPI was now complete. The November 1962 National Council resolution accentuated the differences in the party over its attitude to the Nehru government. With the leftists herded into jail in the wake of the border war the rightist leadership used the resolution to pledge the party's unqualified support to the government in the name of national defence. In effect it meant a general united front with the Congress contrary to the Vijayawada line of April 1961. The party was split on its political line but now the rightist leadership completed the split by superimposing a pro-Soviet polarization on the existing pattern of disunity. The Soviet general line was endorsed by the National Council without a complete inner party discussion on the alternative general line proposed by China. In fact the Chinese side of the case had not been made known to the party ranks and therefore there was no question of any discussion. This in a way was true of all decisions of the party on international issues because they were taken by the top level party committees (be it on the 1957 Declaration 1960 Statement or the decisions of the Twenty second Congress of the Soviet party). Besides many decisions on these questions had been taken amidst sharp divisions in the committees concerned and far from unifying the party this had aggravated the differences.

With the February resolution of the National Council the differences in the party extended to two issues—the current political line and the ideological question.

#### MIRROR FOR REVISIONISTS

The Sino-Soviet exchanges of February-March 1963 marked an unprecedented intensification of polemics forcing most

Asian communist parties to give up their neutrality and take open pro-Chinese positions in the dispute. But the dominant leadership of the CPI had already identified itself with the Soviet positions and was utilizing Soviet support as well as its new equation with the Nehru government to push the leftist minority to the wall.

The provocative 12 February attack of the Dange leadership on Chinese ideological positions<sup>43</sup> with the accompanying charge of Chinese violation of the 1957 Declaration and the 1960 Statement broke the relative Chinese silence. The reply came in the form of the famous *People's Daily* attack on Dange, *A Mirror for Revisionists*<sup>44</sup> on 9 March the day the Chinese Communist Party replied to the Soviet Party's letter of 21 February.

The *Mirror* was a thundering denunciation of the revisionist clique headed by Dange which had embarked on the road of national chauvinism and class capitulationism<sup>45</sup> with the intention of turning the party into an appendage of India's big bourgeoisie and big landlords and externally to serve the aims of United States imperialism which is prompting neo-colonialism in India.<sup>46</sup> By supporting the Nehru government's defence effort against China the Dange leadership was assisting the Indian bourgeoisies drive to sabotage the working class movement. A more serious charge against the Dange leadership was that it tried to split the party with the help of the Nehru government. After China had declared a unilateral cease fire and withdrawn from the areas it had occupied the Nehru government acting on a list of names previously furnished to it, made nationwide arrests throwing into gaol eight or nine hundred members and leading cadres of different levels of the Indian Com

<sup>43</sup> On Certain Questions affecting the Unity of the International Communist Movement," CPI National Council Resolution *New Age* 17 February 1963

<sup>44</sup> *People's Daily* 9 March 1963 *Peking Review* 15 March 1963 *New Age* 31 March 1963

munist Party who are loyal to the cause of the proletariat and people'

The *Mirror* was suggesting that the Dange leadership was behind the wave of arrests and stood to gain by them. While 'calling on all members of the party not to be provoked by the arrests but carry out the policies of the party with calm and cool determination' the Dange group exploited the situation and sent their trusted followers, on the heels of the police" to seize the party machinery in a number of States.

The climax of the attack was the comparison of Dange to Tito—as providing the second mirror for revisionists. The Indian party like the Yugoslav party was the litmus test of Marxism Leninism. The *Mirror* said

The Tito clique provides a mirror. It reveals how a group of renegades following a revisionist line corrupt a party and cause a socialist country to degenerate into a capitalist country.

The Dange clique provides another mirror. It reveals how the leaders of a Communist Party in a capitalist country take the road of revisionism, slide down it and end up as the servants and the tail of the bourgeoisie.<sup>45</sup>

Before Dange could reply to the attack the Chinese published another broadside on the Nehru government and the Dange leadership. A commentator said Nehru's socialist pattern was nothing but a capitalist society which while assimilating the method of planning preserved the basic characteristics of capitalism and developed bureaucratic comprador monopoly capitalism. But "some revisionists in India' had been asking people to rally around Nehru without reservation.

Without exposing Nehru's "socialism" for what it is, they ask the Indian Communists and the Indian people to

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*

believe that Nehru is following the policy of socialism and to support him unconditionally. By so doing they help the reactionary bourgeoisie to erode the proletariat and attempt to replace proletarian socialism with bourgeois socialism within the workers movement<sup>46</sup>

Dange in his lengthy reply (about 90 printed pages) summarized the known positions of the party on various issues and defended himself against the Chinese attacks. He charged the Chinese leadership with having virtually given a call for a split in his party and traced the root cause of the Sino Indian clash to the Chinese leadership's changing approach to the basic problems confronting the present epoch and manner of solving them.

The Chinese Communist Party has gone into a head on clash with the majority of the Communist parties of the world the common understanding that bound them all. The India China issue became only an incident in the world controversy. From a local affair it has been lifted into a question affecting the whole world communist movement and the Chinese way of thinking and action in world politics<sup>47</sup>

The Sino Indian border dispute had now become a part of the larger ideological issue and was being debated in the world communist movement thanks to the intensified Sino Soviet polemics.

#### SINO SOVIET BORDER DISPUTE

Another concomitant of the developing polemics was the new phase in the Sino Soviet border dispute which perhaps

<sup>46</sup> "What Kind of Stuff is Nehru's Much Advertised Socialism?" *Red Flag* 1 April 1963

<sup>47</sup> "Neither Revisionism Nor Dogmatism Is Our Guide" *New Age* 21 April 1963

prompted the Soviet Union to identify itself more and more with the Indian stand in the Sino Indian border dispute and step up military aid to India. The inevitable result of all this was sharper Chinese attacks on Nehru's China policy, in turn followed by a Soviet attack on the Chinese attitude to the border dispute with India, thus demonstrating to the world that a major Sino Soviet difference of principle related to India.

The Sino Soviet border dispute was mentioned openly for the first time by the Chinese on 7 March 1963 while replying to an attack by the United States Communist Party. The United States party's statement showered lavish praise on Khrushchev for his correct handling of the Caribbean crisis to save world peace and to vindicate peaceful coexistence and peaceful competition as also protect Cuba's right to determine her own way of life and her own social system. The statement said that in contrast, 'the pseudo left dogmatic and sectarian line of our Chinese comrades dovetails with that of the most adventurist U S imperialists and gives the latter encouragement'<sup>45</sup>. It was widely believed at that time that Khrushchev was answering by proxy (through a statement of the United States Communist Party) the Chinese party's charge of a Soviet sell out on the Cuba's missile crisis.

Part of Khrushchev's self justification by proxy was his taunt at the Chinese over Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao which invited a biting reply bringing the Sino Soviet border dispute into the open. The Chinese reply, which insinuated that Khrushchev was behind the attack, said

With an ulterior purpose, the statement of the CPUSA referred to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao. It said that the Chinese comrades were "correctly, not following the adventurous policy in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao

<sup>45</sup> The Worker, New York, 13 January 1963, New Age, 20 January 1963



that they advocate for others. Why this double-standard approach?"

We know from what quarter they have learned this ridiculous charge. And we know, too, the purpose of the person who manufactured it. \*\*

We know very well, and you know too that you are, to put it plainly, bringing up the questions of Hong Kong and Macao merely as a fig leaf to hide your disgraceful performance in the Caribbean crisis. \*\*

—

The Chinese reply listed all the "unequal treaties" forced on China by imperialist and colonial powers before the victory of the Chinese revolution. These included treaties which Russians Czars annexed Chinese territory which now form part of the Soviet Union. The reply hinted that China would reopen all these treaties and would "recognize, abrogate, revise or re negotiate them according to their respective contents. But in this respect the Chinese policy made a fundamental differentiation between socialist and imperialist countries. With regard to outstanding issues they should be settled peacefully through negotiations and pending settlement, the status quo should continue. The reply retorted with biting scorn this time.

Why is it that after the Caribbean crisis this correct policy of ours suddenly became a topic of discussions among certain persons and a theme of their anti-China campaign?

These heroes are apparently pleased with themselves for having picked up a stone from a cesspool, with which they believe they can instantly fell the Chinese. But whom has this filthy stone hit? \*\*

\*\* "A Comment on the Statement of the Communist Party of the USA." People's Daily 8 March 1963

\*\* Ibid.

\*\* Ibid.

The Chinese turned the tables neatly against Khrushchev and warned the Soviet leadership that they intended to present their claims at the appropriate moment to the territory now with Soviet Union

You are not aware that such questions as those of Hong Kong and Macao relate to the category of unequal treaties left over by history treaties which the imperialists imposed on China. It may be asked. In raising questions of this kind do you intend to raise all the questions of unequal treaties and have as general settlement? Has it ever entered your heads what consequences would be? Can you seriously believe that this will do you any good?<sup>52</sup>

This warning appears to have hardened Soviet support to India in the Sino Indian border dispute

#### SOVIET AID TO INDIA

But long before the Sino Soviet border dispute was brought into the open the Chinese had made Soviet support to India and supply of arms an issue. The *People's Daily* joined issue with the French Communist leader Maurice Thorez and others on this. The charge of Thorez and others about China's lack of 'minimum of goodwill' for a settlement of the dispute was termed 'ludicrous'. At the moment the situation on the border had begun to relax, as a result of the Indian defeat in late 1962 and the ceasefire and withdrawal the Chinese forces had effected on their own initiative "after having fought back successfully in self defence". The three years and more of the dispute had proved conclusively that China had been "absolutely right" in its "necessary struggle against the reactionary policy of the Nehru government. But what surprised China was

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*

when a fraternal socialist country was facing the Nehru government's provocation and attacks, certain self-styled Marxists Leninists should abandon the principle of proletarian internationalism and assume a 'neutral' stand. In practice they have not only been giving political support to the anti-China policy of the Nehru government but have been supplying the government with war material. Instead of condemning these wrong actions Thorez and other comrades have described them as a sensible policy.<sup>53</sup>

Beginning with this the Chinese kept a steady barrage of attacks against Soviet arms aid to India taking care to paint the Nehru government as reactionary and pro-American.<sup>54</sup> They tried to develop the theme that Soviet and American interests were converging on India and Nehru was trying to use the border dispute with China to widen Sino-Soviet differences and nonalignment as a lever to secure more arms from both the super powers.

Typical of the Chinese attacks was the comment by an "Observer" who said the Nehru government had made an important aspect of its foreign policy to make use of the dispute to widen the Sino-Soviet rift. He quoted Nehru as saying that Indo-Soviet friendship was worth 20 divisions and that Soviet neutrality in the conflict was of greater help to India than all the military aid received from the West in those days. He said Nehru had donned the "non-alignment" cloak to bluff to the world and gain advantage.

<sup>53</sup> "Whence the Differences? — A Reply to Maurice Thorez and Others" *People's Daily* 27 February 1963.

<sup>54</sup> See "Emergency for What?" *Peking Review* 1 March 1963. "Negotiations for More Arms" *Peking Review* 26 July 1963. "Indian Reaction Exploits Situation to Cadge Arms from West and USSR" *Peking Review* 2 August 1963. "Soviet Helps Military Build up" *Peking Review* 23 August 1963. "Statement by the Spokesman of the Chinese Government" *Peking Review* 6 September 1963.

from both the United States and the Soviet Union, and using Soviet aid to cover up the fact India was a United States protege<sup>55</sup>

This was followed by another article attacking the reported United States India agreement on joint air defence exercises 'Under the pretext of opposing China, the Indian Government has agreed to US military forces using India as a base to carry out war preparations, in an attempt to revive tension in the Sino Indian border areas This fact itself is proof of the Indian Government's rejection of a peaceful settlement of the Sino Indian boundary question'<sup>56</sup>

The next comment also designed to influence Soviet attitude to India attacked Indian propaganda about Chinese troop movements on the border and turned to growing Indian Soviet cordiality after the signing of the Moscow test ban treaty One after another, Nehru's personal envoy, his daughter, Madame Indira Gandhi, the Indian National Defence Delegation, and others went to Moscow The Indian reactionaries' intention was to ally with the Soviet Union'<sup>57</sup>

The Chinese saw in Soviet military aid to India a "new chapter of collaboration between the Soviet Union and US imperialism to ally with India against China" The attack quoted Dange's statement in New Delhi on his return from Moscow on "disinterested assistance of Soviet Union' and called him a lackey of Nehru'

The famous 9 September 1959 Tass statement was still an irritant When a capitalist country was making provocations against a socialist country, the Soviet government without making any distinction between right and wrong

<sup>55</sup> "The Indian Reactionaries in the Anti China Chorus," *People's Daily*, 16 July 1963

<sup>56</sup> 'US India Air Defence Agreement is a Grave Step Menacing Asian Peace' *People's Daily* 28 July 1963

<sup>57</sup> "No one can save Indian Reactionaries from Political Bankruptcy (Khrushchev has Deserted International Proletarianism)," *People's Daily*, 22 August 1963

had expressed "regret" over the border incidents. The Chinese also alleged that in the three years that followed, whenever Nehru wanted support to enlarge the border dispute, Soviet leaders went to India "to bolster him up." Soviet Union aided "Indian reactionaries" politically and stepped up assistance "economically and even militarily." During the 1962 border war, India had used Soviet equipment against China, together with the United States equipment. But significantly the editorial did not refer to the Soviet offer to supply advanced type MiG aircraft to India and a plant for their gradual manufacture in India.<sup>58</sup>

#### SOVIET COUNTERATTACK

Chinese attacks aimed at proving an India-Soviet Union-United States collusion against China and the Soviet counterattack came on 19 September in the form of a *Pravda* editorial which called for an end to the Sino-Indian border conflict which had already caused "great damage to the unity and cohesion of the Afro-Asian countries in their joint struggle against imperialism and colonialism." The reactionary forces in India were using the conflict "to step up chauvinism, to attack the progressive forces of the country, to push India off the road of neutralism and to draw her into Western military-political blocs." *Pravda* blamed China for not accepting the Colombo proposals and for standing in the way of a settlement and said "it is difficult to believe the sincerity of Chinese leaders who make assurances that they were striving to achieve a peaceful settlement with India."<sup>59</sup>

This was followed by a Soviet Government statement on 21 September blaming the Chinese policy of provocation of

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>59</sup> "A serious Hotbed of Tension in Asia," *Pravda*, 19 September 1963 reproduced in *New Age*, 29 September 1963

border disputes, first with India and then with the Soviet Union<sup>60</sup>

The reply to the *Pravda* article constitutes the most comprehensive Chinese polemic on the Soviet attitude to India. It charged the Soviet leadership with bringing the Sino Soviet differences on India into the open. It collected all possible information dating back to 1959 in an effort to prove Soviet support to India against China. By publishing the 19 September article, the Soviet leaders had "discarded all camouflage and openly sided with the U S imperialists in supporting the Indian reactionaries against socialist China."

The main points made were that the border dispute with India was a major one involving 124,000 square kilometres and China was defending socialist territory from the imperialism of bourgeois reactionaries. But the Soviet leaders had failed to recognize that the responsibility for the armed conflict was entirely India's. India provoked China emboldened by the prospect of Soviet and Western imperialist support and adherence to peaceful coexistence by China in these circumstances would have amounted to capitulation. The crowning charge was that the Soviet Union did not want a negotiated settlement of the Sino Indian border dispute and this was evident from Moscow's statements blaming China and its military aid to India. The Soviet leaders were also charged with exploiting the Sino Indian dispute to 'sow dissension between China and other Asian-African countries, divert the people in Asia and Africa from the struggle against imperialism, and cover up the U S imperialist aggressive and warlike activities'.

A report in a pro Moscow Indian weekly, *Blitz*, was cited in support of the Chinese charge. *Blitz* had reported that *Pravda* had openly condemned China and blamed it for tension on the Sino Indian border and that the Soviet Union had taken upon itself to do the explaining in Afro-Asian

<sup>60</sup> Excerpts of the statement published in *New Age*, 6 October 1963

countries which China claimed were critical of India's stand on the border issue<sup>41</sup>

#### TWO DISPUTES TELESCOPE

It was obvious that the Soviet Union was launching a diplomatic offensive on India's behalf to isolate China. The reason is not far to seek. Chinese pressure on the Soviet border was stepped up in 1962 as a Soviet Government statement on 21 September 1963 suggested. The tension on the Sino-Soviet border was building up even as the Sino Indian border situation was aggravating to culminate in a border war in October-November, 1962.

The Sino-Soviet border dispute got enmeshed with the Sino-Indian border dispute. The basic issues were the same. Chinese firmness and belligerence over the Indian border was perhaps calculated to let the Soviet Union know that the border would be an issue sooner or later. Even before the Chinese made an open (if indirect) reference to the dispute in March 1963, Soviet Union seems to have realized that India was the best stand in against China. Soviet support to India over the border dispute had hardened even before the 1962 war but the war itself should have confirmed Soviet fears and prevailed upon it to commit more and more military aid to strengthen India's defence potential in its confrontation with China. At least it was in Soviet national interests to support India's stand in the border dispute because a negotiated settlement of the Sino-Indian border dispute would mean the end of the "Asian confrontation" and China would turn next to its border dispute with the Soviet Union and press for a settlement.

<sup>41</sup> "The Truth about how the Leaders of the CPSU have Allied themselves with India against China" *People's Daily*, 2 November 1963

## CHAPTER FIVE

# *Open Split*

By September 1963 the Sino Soviet ideological conflict had reached the point of no return and was heading towards a showdown. Soviet leaders were planning a world conference to excommunicate the Chinese and retain their hegemony of the world communist movement. The Soviet Yugoslav rapprochement, the Soviet decision to sign the test ban treaty ignoring Chinese opposition and the failure of the Moscow talks early in July between the Soviet and Chinese parties led to a marked deterioration in Sino Soviet relations at all levels. The border dispute between the two countries had become a serious factor in this deterioration. In 1962 alone there had been 5,000 incidents from the Chinese side according to the Soviet government<sup>1</sup>.

Soviet attitude to the Sino Indian border dispute had transcended the stage of neutrality and was now one of open support to India's case. This eased the pressure on the Communist Party of India whose leadership was now citing Soviet support to India to rationalize its own support to the Nehru government in the name of national defence. Amidst a worsening of its relations with China, Soviet Union was anxious to stabilize the CPI on its side in the ideological dispute. The CPI was politically important to the Soviet party because it could keep steady pressure on the Nehru government to confront China. But the CPI's strategic importance to Soviet interests was greater because attitude to India was one of the issues in the Sino Soviet conflict. The

<sup>1</sup> Soviet government's statement of 21 September 1963, *Pravda*, 21 and 22 September 1963.



ascendency or the triumph of the left group in the CPI would weaken the Soviet position in the conflict

So the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the Soviet government had a special reason to force the pace of the CPI right group's drive to isolate the left group and secure its liquidation through an organizational crisis. The CPI's dominant leadership found a political *alibi* for its offensive against the left in the CPSU's *Open Letter* to its ranks on 14 July 1963. The letter climaxed the Soviet polemical offensive because it directly charged the Chinese with splitting the international communist movement. It was an obvious rejoinder to the letter of the Communist Party of China (CPC) dated 14 June expounding its alternative general line and assailing the Soviet domination of other parties. The *Open Letter* said "The Chinese leaders are undermining the unity, not only of the socialist camp but also of the entire world communist movement trampling underfoot the principles of proletarian internationalism and flagrantly violating the standards governing the relations between fraternal parties"<sup>2</sup>

The specific charges against the CPC included "organizing and supporting various anti party groups of renegades who are coming out against the Communist Parties in the United States, Brazil, Italy, Belgium, Australia, and India." Significantly, the letter made no reference to the New Zealand party, openly pro Peking since 1960. Detailing the charge, the letter said that in Belgium the Chinese were supporting the Grippa group, in the United States the "left opportunist" Hammer and Steel group, and, in Brazil, the factional groups expelled from the communist party. The CPC Central Committee was accused of trying to organize splitting activities against the Communist Party of Australia and its leadership. In Italy, the Chinese representatives were charged with encouraging a group of former officials

<sup>2</sup> "Open Letter from the CPSU Central Committee to the Party Organizations and All Communists of the Soviet Union" *Pravda* 14 July 1963

of the Padua federation of the party. The letter also levelled the vague charge of subversive activities by the Chinese in the communist parties of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Another vague charge was 'Glorifying outcast and renegades who have found themselves outside the ranks of the communist movement: the Chinese leaders reprint in their newspapers and magazines slanderous articles from the publications of these renegade groups directed against the policy of the CPSU and against the course of the entire world communist movement'. Ceylon was singled out for special reference and for the first time the Chinese were accused of maintaining links with a Trotskyite faction of the Fourth International.

But certain aspects of these charges are intriguing. The letter grouped India with the countries where the Chinese were accused of 'organizing and supporting various anti-party groups of renegades'. But the version of the letter published by the CPI<sup>4</sup> did not use the term *renegades* in this context but had replaced it by a milder word, *dissenters*. Secondly, before the CPI had said anything about its dissenters, the CPSU had branded them 'anti party' groups organized by the Chinese. Thirdly, while the letter detailed alleged splitting activities of the Chinese in several countries, it gave no details of any such activity in India. All the same India had been listed along with the United States, Brazil, Italy, Belgium, and Australia. At this point, no CPI member of prominence had been expelled from the party or had left or formed a rival group.

Even the CPI leadership could not have believed what the letter had to say about India. Nevertheless, it readily welcomed the letter published 'at a moment when the splitting activities of the dogmatic leadership of the CPC have reached their zenith both in the international Communist movement and individual Communist parties'. It also supported the CPSU's general line but made no refer-

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *New Age* 21 July 1963

ence to splitters or Trotskyites if any in its own ranks<sup>6</sup>

The CPI faced no danger of a Chinese engineered split. But its right group was forcing the party to the brink by leading a stampede in support of the Nehru government to complete its identification with what the leftists called bourgeois nationalism. The November 1962 resolution of the National Council on the Sino-Indian border war provided the alibi for this.

When the Central Executive Committee met (29 November—1 December 1962) some four weeks after the fateful National Council resolution many members termed the 21 November cease-fire proposals of the Chinese treacherous and diabolical though the Chinese had unilaterally declared and implemented the cease fire and had begun pulling out of NEFA<sup>7</sup>. The executive ventured to suggest that the Chinese had designs on the rich oil fields and tea gardens of Assam when they advanced in NEFA<sup>8</sup> a suggestion even the Nehru government could not have believed. Again the executive had no independent stand on the Colombo proposals and would not support them until after the Nehru government had decided to accept them and began insisting that China also accept them in toto<sup>9</sup>.

The party's surrender to "bourgeois nationalism" inevitably resulted in class collaboration most evident on the trade union front. After the November resolution S. A. Dange as General Secretary of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) offered industrial truce to the government and asked for a tripartite conference which was called in November. Without consulting the trade unions Dange committed himself to industrial truce and confronted the AITUC with a *fait accompli* a fortnight later.

<sup>6</sup> "Statement of the Central Secretariat of the CPI. *New Age* 28 July 1963.

<sup>7</sup> *Fight against Revisionism* Calcutta 1965 p. 26.

<sup>8</sup> *India-China Border Dispute and the Communist Party of India* (for party members only) New Delhi, 1963 pp. 89-94.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 124-7.

The leftists were to charge Dange later with "betrayal of workers and abject surrender to the bourgeoisie" when the employers flouted the truce obligations, prices rose, real wages fell and hundreds of strike actions took place in spite of the AITUC leadership's attempts to discourage them. For example at the Indian government's instance Dange asked the union to withdraw the Goa port strike but the union continued the strike defying Dange. The government tried to break it by rounding up its leaders and workers under the Defence of India Rules. When this effort failed, the government was forced to negotiate a settlement. In Coimbatore a textile town in South India 20 strikes took place in three months in spite of the AITUC. When the Socialist led Hind Mazdoor Sabha unions called a general strike in Bombay against rising prices Dange suggested its postponement. When he found his gratuitous advice rejected he declared the AITUC's support to the strike at the last moment. The Congress led Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) had led more strikes than the communist led AITUC during this period.

Other instances of surrender to the government's policies were when the Uttar Pradesh government raised land levy by 25 per cent even the ruling Congress Party opposed the measure but the CPI leader, Dr Z A Ahmad, supported it, when the annual budgets of the central and State governments brought additional tax burdens totalling Rs 250 crores the CPI did not oppose the new levies and A K Gopalan's suggestion for a campaign against these burdens was turned down by the leadership.

Another charge was that the CPI leadership had abetted the campaign in the bourgeois press to brand those who opposed the 1 November resolution in the National Council as being "pro Chinese" and when the government detained hundreds of members, the party did not campaign for their release but in practice abetted the repressive measures. When General Secretary Namboodirpad, as the editor of the party journal wrote an editorial in January 1963 demanding release of the detenus, two other members of the

editorial board by a majority decision had the relevant paragraphs dropped. The party would not campaign even for ending the State of Emergency which had armed the government with draconian powers.

#### SUPPORT TO CONGRESS IN BY ELECTIONS

When the by-elections to Parliament (Lok Sabha) from three constituencies (Amroha Rajkot and Farrukhabad) were announced the Central Secretariat directed that wherever the party had no support and did not put up its own candidate it should support the Congress candidate against other parties. The local units interpreted it to mean general support to the Congress as happened at the Assembly by-elections three in Tamil Nadu and three in Kerala.

Other examples of right deviation and general united front with the Congress cited by the leftists are the party's somersault on the no confidence motion in Parliament in August 1963. The leadership was shocked by the Congress debacle in the three Lok Sabha by elections which underlined the mass discontent with the Nehru government's policy in spite of the emergency situation. The CPI was now anxious to demonstrate its anti Congressism through a no confidence motion in Parliament. Having sponsored one it did not seek the support of other opposition parties though it was obvious that the communists on their own strength cannot get the House to discuss the motion. The resolution was quietly allowed to lapse. But to its surprise the party found that another no-confidence motion by Acharya Kripalani had mustered requisite support and was coming up for discussion. To wriggle out of the awkward situation the CPI moved an amendment to the motion to demand the resignation of two ministers S. K. Patil and Morarji Desai considered pro American by the party but significantly the Home Minister who had ordered the arrest of left group communists was not to be one of the targets.

## EQUIVOCATION OVER NO CONFIDENCE MOTION

Dange's explanation of his party's decision not to pursue its original no-confidence motion was amusing. Notice had been given of a no-confidence motion over the controversial deal with the US government to set up Voice of America transmitters on Indian soil. But Nehru had admitted that the deal violated his government's nonalignment policy and therefore CPI was now content to censure the government through an adjournment motion over joint air exercises with Western countries etc. By our censure motion we are not asking for the resignation of Pandit Nehru. We have put forward the demand that the two Ministers namely Morarji Desai and S. K. Patil who are directly the most responsible for the anti-people measures of taxation and food failures be removed from the government and that the Prime Minister so reorganize the government that no room is left for Right-wing reaction to blow up the basic policies of the country's public sector and weakening the health of the private sector by anti-national concessions to private capital.<sup>9</sup>

But as it happened the speeches of the party spokesmen refrained from attacking the continued operation of the national emergency and the Defence of India Rules or the government's deviation from the policy of nonalignment.<sup>10</sup> An article by P. C. Joshi in the party journal hailed the exit of Morarji Desai and Patil under the Kamaraj Plan to revitalize the Congress Party and warned of a national counter-offensive of the right following its fiasco over the no-confidence motion against the Nehru government. Joshi took care to point out that his party had 'sharply demarcated itself from it with a motion of its own in which the criticism of the government was exactly the opposite

<sup>9</sup> Report of Dange's 11 August press conference in *New Age*, 18 August 1963.

<sup>10</sup> See *New Age* 25 August 1963 for reports of speeches by A. K. Gopalan and Hiren Mukherji and *New Age*, 1 September 1963 for Renu Chakravarty's speech.

of the rightists <sup>11</sup>

Unnerved at the popular mood against the growing burdens on them the CPI sought to recover some of its lost influence by launching a 'Great March' on Parliament to submit the 'Great Petition' on 13 September. The demands in the petition aimed at strengthening Nehru's hands and Dange would not include the release of communist detenus among the demands <sup>12</sup>

While claiming that the Great March was a vindication of his line, Dange discouraged militant working class actions in discussing about a "Bharat Bundh" and an All India strike action, etc., without seriously meaning them, according to his leftist opponents

#### POLITICAL-ORGANIZATIONAL CRISIS

Through its distorted interpretation of the Vijayawada line to facilitate a united front with the Congress, the rightist majority tried to force a political ideological crisis in the party and convert it into an organizational crisis. Most of the leftist leaders were absent from the scene (40 of the 110 National Council members were in prison following the Sino-Indian border clash) and this helped the right to isolate the left leaders who were not in jail

Among the organizational steps which intensified the party crisis, according to General Secretary E. M. S. Namboodirpad, were

The 'spontaneous' demand voiced by several leading members of the party for stern measures against 'pro-China elements' which followed the publication of the Chairman's statement dated October 19, 1962, the very circumstances in which that statement came to be issued,

<sup>11</sup> New Age 1 September 1963

<sup>12</sup> New Age, 15 September 1963, devoted to the Great Petition (signed by 10 members) and the March, see New Age, 22 September 1963 for detailed report on the march

the hurry with which the resignation of three members of the Secretariat was accepted on November 1, 1962, the manner in which the Bengal and Punjab units of the Party were reorganized, the treatment meted out to the General-Secretary between November and February meetings of the National Council, the obviously discriminatory character of the decision not to accept his resignation from the Secretariat by the very Council which hurriedly accepted the resignations of the three members of the Secretariat earlier, the witch-hunt launched against Comrade A K Gopalan and others who were accused of organizing an "anti party group," while the Secretariat itself was functioning as a faction — all these transformed the inner-party crisis from one of an ideological-political to that of an organizational character<sup>13</sup>

After the crucial October-November 1962 session of the National Council, three members of the Secretariat—P Sundarayya, Jyoti Basu, and Harkishen Singh Surjeet—resigned, and the "composite Secretariat" arrangement made at the earlier (April 1962) National Council meeting ended with it. General Secretary Namboodirpad and Secretariat member Bhupesh Gupta also wanted to be relieved of their posts but were prevailed upon to continue<sup>14</sup>

With most of the leftists members in jail, the rightist majority had no difficulty in pushing its political resolution through. The resolution largely reiterated the November call of the National Council against Chinese aggression, welcomed the Colombo proposals for ending the border conflict, voiced anxiety over unhelpful Chinese response to the proposals and attacked the Western plan for an "air umbrella" to protect India<sup>15</sup>. The lone dissenting voice

<sup>13</sup> E. M. S. Namboodirpad, *Note For the Programme of the CPI*, New Delhi, 1964, pp 82-3

<sup>14</sup> *Fight Against Revisionism*, Calcutta, 1965, p 25

<sup>15</sup> Link, 17 February 1963, text of resolution in *New Age*, 24 February 1963



was that of Namboodiripad who pleaded unsuccessfully that the party should launch an agitation against the continued State of Emergency which had given the government sweeping powers suspending normal rights of citizens

Namboodiripad's thesis, *Revisionism and Dogmatism in the CPI*, appended to his letter resigning his General Secretaryship, was an open challenge of the dominant leadership's policy of surrender to the national bourgeoisie. His main target was the November resolution of the National Council which was "fundamentally wrong" and stemmed from an 'alien class outlook'. Behind the anti-China war cry before and after the November resolution lay a 'a fully worked out ideological political line, the line of attuning the working class and peasant movement to the requirements of the bourgeoisie'. The resolution, he said, was the product of 'the revisionist assessment of the character of the Nehru government,' which led the majority in the National Council to give up the path of negotiation and adopt the line of bellicose anti-China campaign, going to the extent of welcoming imperialist aid against China". In result the party became in every sense of the term a tail of the Government of India—a tail of even such reactionary, Communist baiting and China baiting forces" as the Jana Singh and others.

Namboodiripad was more bitter about the "totally wrong and disruptive attitude towards inner party relations," a completely anti-Leninist attitude towards comrades who hold the minority view" that had revealed itself in the organizational measures of the rightist leadership.

The stand taken by the majority in the National Council on Chinese aggression was the logical culmination of the revisionist right opportunist outlook and the attitude referred to above. Not only was the content of the resolution incorrect from the ideological political standpoint. The way in which it came to be pushed through the National Council, and subsequently sought to be implemented, was highly disruptive, from an organizational point of view. The result, as we see today, is that the

unity of the party has been completely broken. We are in the midst of the most serious inner party crisis in history<sup>16</sup>

The outgoing General Secretary attacked the majority component of the National Council for calling the minority "pro China" and anti patriotic and denounced its failure to campaign for the release of detenus. Namboodiripad's thesis was rejected by vote. Some members wanted him to be removed from General Secretaryship instead of accepting his resignation. Ultimately, his resignation was accepted by vote<sup>17</sup>

#### SUPPRESSION OF WEST BENGAL COUNCIL

The National Council was alarmed at the leftist revolt in the West Bengal unit and decided to liquidate the errant State Council. The ground on which it was done being that it did not endorse the 1 November National Council resolution<sup>18</sup> but merely passed a resolution to implement it. The text of the resolution was not even published in the party journal *Swadhinata* while the alternative draft resolution of P. Ramamurti, rejected by the National Council, was widely distributed. The dissolved State Council's place was taken by an organizing committee of seven, which went about taking disciplinary action against the leftists, suspending and expelling members and dissolving committees<sup>19</sup> to convert the rightist minority into majority.

In the Punjab, taking advantage of the arrests, the minority called a conference to replace the State Council. In

<sup>16</sup> E. M. S. Namboodiripad *Revisionism and Dogmatism in the CPI, 1963* (typescript)

<sup>17</sup> Link, 17 February 1963

<sup>18</sup> For a pro Dange version of the revolt, see Link, 10 February 1963, 'Central Control Commission's Report to the National Council' included in *Resolution on Splitters*, New Delhi 1964, p. 36

<sup>19</sup> *Fight against Revisionism*, p. 39

Andhra Pradesh, the Secretariat was reconstituted and the reason given was that those who had opposed the National Council resolution before it was adopted had no place in it even if they were for implementing the resolution after it had been passed. In Bombay, the committee was reconstituted dropping seven members within three days of their arrest.<sup>20</sup>

A. K. Gopalan leader of the party in Parliament, was barred from addressing meetings in some of the States by the respective State secretaries and was censured by the National Council for demanding the release of detenus at a Calcutta mass rally. The right group in effective control of the party machinery used the journals to propagate the one-sided and factional view in the ideological debate as can be seen from the large number of anti-Chinese articles published during this period.

When the National Council met again in June-July 1963, the leadership asked the Control Commission to inquire into the alleged existence of a anti party group. But even before the Commission could go into it, Dr Z. A. Ahmad, M. N. Govindan Nair and Yogindra Sharma (members of the Secretariat) moved a draft resolution which according to the leftists, 'could only be written by police agents' because it made wild allegations that the leftists were circulating Chinese documents, carrying on propaganda inside the party for China etc., and demanded stern disciplinary action.<sup>21</sup> This resolution, not meant for publication, was later quoted by Home Minister G. L. Nanda in his statement in Parliament justifying the arrest of over 900 leftists.<sup>22</sup>

#### LEFT PROPOSALS TO AVERT SPLIT

Shortly after the July meeting of the National Council, leftist leaders of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>21</sup> *Fight against Revisionism* p. 41

<sup>22</sup> *Anti National Activities of Pro-Peking Communists and Their Preparation for Subversion and Violence*, Ministry of Home Affairs statement laid on the table of Parliament 15 February 1965

and some States had been released from prison. Seventeen of them headed by M. Basuapunniah, submitted to the October meeting of the National Council a document entitled *The Threatening Disruption and Split of the Party—How to Avert the Disaster*<sup>23</sup>

The 17 National Council members noted that during the nine months since Namboodirpad's document *Revisionism and Dogmatism in the CPI* (which had warned that the party was on the verge of complete disruption and split), nothing effective had been done to arrest the deterioration in the inner party situation. On the contrary, the attitude of the central leaders and their action had only added to the crisis. 'As a matter of fact, looked at from the angle of political ideological and emotional unity our party is already split. The apparent and formal organizational unity that still exists is also hanging by a thin thread'<sup>24</sup>

Differences, which dated back to the Second Party Congress, had been piling and got accentuated to make division and disruption the chronic malady of the party. The controversy and conflict that had engulfed the international communist movement was now being superimposed on a divided party. The immediate task was to stop further deterioration and a step by step approach to complete political ideological unity. Any unresolved issue could be deferred for the future but a working agreement had to be reached immediately.

On the ideological differences in the international movement, the 17 members had proposed an independent decision through democratic party discussion and, pending this,

<sup>23</sup> Later published by the CPI for party circulation under the title *Threat to Party Unity—How to Avert it?* (which also includes Dange's reply to the document), after the document had got into unauthorized circulation in the party. The other signatories to it were N. Sankarajah, A. K. Gopalan, E. K. Imbichu Bava, C. H. Kanaran, V. S. Achutanandan, E. K. Nayanar, P. Sundarayya, M. Hanumantha Rao, N. Prasada Rao, T. Nagi Reddy, Vajubhai Shukla, Mohan Punamija, and R. P. Saraf.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p. 3

the party should not resort to open criticism or attacks on the positions of either the Soviet or Chinese party. On the Sino Indian border dispute the document underlined the need for a campaign for a negotiated settlement instead of contenting itself with support to the Nehru government's declared intentions of a peaceful settlement. Such a campaign could also lead to unification of the party.

The document opposed attempts to force the Vijaya wada line as interpreted by the dominant leadership through organizational methods such as disciplining individual leaders for their political views, dissolution of elected committees and appointing organizing committees in the place. Such measures will not pave the way for either effectively implementing the line or keeping the party united, leave alone helping the process of further unification."

In view of such specific directives of the Party Constitution and the critical inner party situation prevailing now, we should concentrate on the pressing and urgent problems of mass movement and desist from attempting to rush through political ideological decisions arrived at under conditions of sharp differences and divisions.

While abiding by and implementing the political line as adopted at Vijayawada, we shall have to organize inner party discussion on the following subjects without delay:

(a) reassessment of the Vijayawada line in the light of developments since then and particularly during the last one year.

(b) National Democratic and non-capitalist path as applied to Indian realities and

(c) the Party Programme<sup>25</sup>

The document did not try to blame any group, faction or leader for the continuing political ideological crisis but offered a set of proposals to resolve them. The National Council should set up a representative committee of seven to

conduct organized and principled party discussion on the ideological questions of the international movement and the problems connected with the revolutionary movement in the country. Pending final decision by party conferences and the party congress the party press should not act as a vehicle to propagate the views of the section controlling it. The party press should defend communists against "slandering attacks of the bourgeois press which constantly vilifies some as 'pro Peking' and 'anti national,' urges on the government to arrest them, appeals to the Central Party leadership to expel them etc."

To restore confidence and promote unity the document proposed review and revision at the centre and in the States of certain organizational measures. In effect it wanted the dissolved West Bengal State Council and the old Punjab State Council (replaced unconstitutionally by the rightists) restored. The enquiries against P. Sundarayya, A. K. Gopalan, and others on charges of indiscipline should be stopped. Membership rolls on the basis of which the Vijayawada Congress was held should form the basis of the next congress, all members should be given the opportunity to renew their cards and wherever new recruitment had taken place, the membership should be sanctioned by agreed sub-committees.<sup>26</sup>

#### DANGE REJECTS PROPOSALS

But Chairman Dange's attitude to the proposals was clear indication that the dominant leadership was out to force a split and was in no mood to attempt resolution of the differences. Dange maintained that while differences did no doubt exist, the overwhelming majority had firm faith in the party's ideological positions. Nor was the party so divided as to be completely paralysed because it had been leading struggles and the Great Petition and Great March of September was proof of its capabilities and strength "despite

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44-5

attempts of some sections which worked against that great mobilization. Dange rejected all the proposals outright, terming them "vital demands on the majority in the National Council" by the minority which had failed to assume any single obligation on their part." Moreover, he tried to brand the minority "pro China."<sup>27</sup>

After the October session of the National Council, the right group pressed its offensive further and committed the party to the Soviet positions on the ideological issues. Gopalan was censured and Sundarayya was asked to explain some of his speeches at party meetings. The drive against the left group was followed up after the National Council session. In Andhra Pradesh a string of charges was hurled against P. Sundarayya, M. Basavapunniah, M. Hanumantha Rao, T. Nagi Reddy, and other left leaders and circulated to the ranks, forcing a reply from these members. Demands were made in Andhra Pradesh for the expulsion of Sundarayya and in Tamil Nadu for the expulsion of Ramamurti and others. In the Punjab, the State Council decided to suspend Harkishen Singh Surjeet from primary membership for six months and to expel Desh Raj Chadha. In Bombay, a number of partymen were singled out for charge sheets and notices.<sup>28</sup>

#### SOVIET BACKING FOR SPLIT

The right group was acting rightly or wrongly in the belief that the Soviet leaders were determined to call a world communist summit to excommunicate the Chinese and therefore a split to eliminate the left group was quite in order. The CPSU in the bitterest attack ever on the Chinese leadership indirectly denounced as splitters all the parties or groups in parties which had not backed the Soviet general line. "The fraternal Communist Parties have angrily cen-

<sup>27</sup> S. A. Dange, "A Reply to the Statement of Comrade M. Basavapunniah and Others on Party Unity," *ibid.* pp. 17-30.

<sup>28</sup> *Fight against Revisionism*, pp. 45-6.

sured the so called general line the Peking leaders are attempting to thrust upon them and their schismatic undermining activities in the Communist movement' <sup>29</sup> The Soviet leaders speaking for all the faithfuls for the first time made a specific claim about the number of parties on their side. Up to the present time 65 Communist Parties have condemned the views and actions of the Chinese schismatics and have expressed complete solidarity and support for the principled CPSU position in its struggle for the ideological purity of revolutionary theory and unity within communist ranks <sup>30</sup>

The Soviet leadership was counting the CPI among the sixty five which had backed its "general line" unreservedly in the polarization that had already taken place. India, Ceylon and Outer Mongolia were the only three major Asian parties to fall in line with the Soviet party. Like the CPI the Ceylon party had been directed from Moscow almost since its inception. Outer Mongolia being the first to come under Soviet hegemony heavily dependent on the Soviet Union could not have taken any other position.

Significantly about the same time the right group intensified its offensive in CPI the leftists the pro Soviet leadership of the Ceylon party expelled two Politbureau members who took nine others of the 35 member Central Committee with them. A rival party was formed three weeks later <sup>31</sup> Other Asian parties had either moved closer to the CPC (North Korean North Vietnamese Japanese and Indonesian) or aligned themselves openly with it (Malayan Thai and Burmese). But none of these parties could be deemed neutrals in the dispute because they were not backing the Soviet line.

Soviet bitterness at this polarization found expression in an *authoritative article which presumed the imminence of*

<sup>29</sup> Marxism Leninism is the Basis for the Unity of the Communist Movement. *Kommunist* 18 October 1963

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>31</sup> Kevin Devlin. Schism and Secession. *Survey* January 1965



an open world wide split and that an attempt was being made in Peking to "knock together an international bloc out of groups and groupings" or comprising largely people who have been expelled from the Communist Parties and "all possible unprincipled and corrupt elements"

No longer shy the Chinese leaders admit they support and will continue to support these people, whom they call "true revolutionaries" In other words they will openly place them in opposition in the world Communist movement They are already gathering all these renegades under their aegis regarding them as their agents in the struggle against Marxist Leninist cadres that have been tempered in the class battles against imperialism<sup>22</sup>

The CPSU leadership was perhaps unnerved at the growing leftist challenge to the Dange leadership and thought that an immediate split was the only method of carrying the majority CPI wing on its side even if it meant the formation of a rival party by the leftists Significantly, the Soviet leadership did not attempt to promote a split in the Indonesian party which had taken pro-Chinese positions on the Sino Indian border the Cuban missile crisis and the test ban treaty issues

#### LEFT NOT KEEN ON SPLIT

Soviet intolerance was greater where a party had officially committed support to the Soviet position in the dispute but a section was holding out In India unlike in Ceylon the left group had not taken any position and was still neutral between Moscow and Peking when the split was forced A report hostile to the left group suggested that the leftists were not keen on forcing a split at least not this stage According to the report when the National Council censured

<sup>22</sup> Marxism Leninism is the Basis for the Unity of the Communist Movement *Kommunist* 18 October 1963

A K Gopalan for alleged indiscipline, the "sectarian group" backed him in an effort to gather their strength and emerge as a distinct political entity. But the sectarian leadership did not consider it wise to organize a rival party though it was determined to set up an autonomous "underground" inside the CPI and take their rival politics to the people.<sup>33</sup> Another account in the same journal of a "conclave" of the leftists in December, suggested that the left group was divided on the proposal for an open split. The Australian and Ceylonese parties had already split and some wanted such a split in India. But the timid' cited the Indonesian example which held a lesson for India: the communist parties whose leadership had gone completely revisionist should split forthwith but those which had a fair number of "revolutionaries" even at the top should be seized through dogged struggle. Those who wanted an immediate split thought the argument of the "go slow" group was unrealistic and the strength of the left in the party had been overestimated. But the go slow group argued that the left was already functioning as a party within a party, with its own journals and even if they proved wrong and lost at the party congress, they could go out of the party and form a new one.<sup>34</sup>

A section of the left group, the "centrists" (Namboodiripad and Jyoti Basu), did not attend the meeting. Without the support of Namboodiripad, neither side could have won and the discussion was inconclusive. Thus, even the journal which was later charged by the leftists with disrupting the party unity did not suggest that the left group, divided as it was about an immediate open split, was acting under Chinese direction.

This was the situation when the Central Executive Committee met in January 1964. Once again the left group appealed for unity. *Ten of its members said in a document* that the ideological political organizational line of the Dange

<sup>33</sup> Link, 8 December 1963

<sup>34</sup> Link, 29 December 1963

threatened the party's unity and suggested measures to reunite the party.<sup>25</sup>

#### DEMAND FOR PARTY CONGRESS

The nature of its proposals suggested that the left group wanted an end to the rightist offensive and steps for an early party congress perhaps in the hope of gaining control of the party. The Central Executive Committee members issued a warning. Any continuation of the attitude that since one is in a majority one can go ahead and do whatever one wants any attempts to mechanically impose discipline in this situation where we are preparing for a party congress will only lead to further worsening of the situation.<sup>26</sup>

But even the demand for an early party congress was rejected as also the proposal regarding membership (made earlier by 17 members of the National Council in October 1963). According to the left group this left out 30 per cent of the membership converting the right minority into majority. The right group used its majority even in deciding the personnel to prepare documents for the party congress. Namboodirpad and the three other leftists in the 11 man commission (Jyoti Bisu, Ramamurti and Basavapunniah) did not participate in its work and it was alleged that the left group was circulating alternative documents. The leftists admit they had prepared their own documents for the congress to be placed before the National Council and the lists of these documents had been circulated to leading members of the leftist view in the States with a proposal that they should be finalized at a meeting in April (to precede the National Council meeting in April).<sup>27</sup>

#### CHINESE REPLY TO CPSU

The right group was quick to raise the bogey of split under direction from without. What came in handy was a report

<sup>25</sup> *Fight against Revisionism* p. 46

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p. 45

delivered by D N Aidit chairman of the Indonesian party, at Djakarta on 29 September 1963. He had said that the 'Dange clique was acting as spies of Nehru' spoken about "Nehru Dange prisons' and of genuine communists being "hunted down by Nehru Dange'. But the Chinese had said all this before.

Aidit also called for firm unanimity and unity of genuine Marxist Leninists in India to end the 'vacuum of leadership, the vacuum in the vanguard, the vacuum in the general staff'. He characterized the party as 'fully controlled by revisionists from which genuine Marxist Leninists have been expelled' and the Indonesian party would 'give a good reception to the genuine Marxists Leninists so expelled'.<sup>38</sup>

The Central Committee of the Indonesian party endorsed Aidit in a communique summarizing his report: 'At present, the leadership of the Communist Parties in certain countries is in the hands of revisionists who expel from the party ranks true Marxist Leninists and the latter are compelled to organize Marxist circles or new Communist Parties and the Communist Party of Indonesia will establish contacts with them'.<sup>39</sup>

But the Central Executive Committee of the CPI interpreted these statements to mean a call for a rival party in India. A resolution drew the attention of fraternal parties to the Indonesian leader's conduct and 'open and defiant calls for the formation of a rival party'. It also cautioned its members and supporters against attempts to split the party "in response to the open directives of Chinese or Indonesian Party leaderships".<sup>40</sup> Within three weeks of the resolution came the celebrated *Seventh Comment* of the CPC<sup>41</sup> which was to be denounced by the CPI later as an "undisguised call for a formal split' through a 'fully worked

<sup>38</sup> *New Age*, 19 January, 1964

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>41</sup> "Leaders of the CPSU are the Greatest Splitters of Our Times—Seventh Comment on the Open Letter of the CPSU of 14 July 1963," *Red Flag* 4 February 1964

out theory for splitting the world movement as also the parties with which it disagrees' <sup>42</sup>

The comment refuted the charge of being anti Soviet, of frustrating the will of the majority, of violating international discipline, and of supporting anti party groups in fraternal parties. It developed the logic of 'unity struggle or even splits'. Consistent with its theory of temporary minority becoming majority.

If the CPSU leaders insist on marking off the 'majority' from the 'minority' then we should like to tell them quite frankly that we do not recognize their majority. The majority you bank on is a false one. The genuine majority is not on your side. The real majority are the revolutionary Marxist Leninist parties and the Marxist Leninists who represent the fundamental interests of the people, and not the handful of revisionists who have betrayed these interests <sup>43</sup>

The comment tried to rebut the Soviet charge that "the CPC leadership was organizing and supporting various anti party groups in the communist parties of United States, Brazil, Italy, Belgium, Australia and India" <sup>44</sup>. Charging the Soviet leadership with presenting a distorted picture of the struggles within these parties, it said the struggle turned on "whether to follow the Marxist Leninist line or the revisionist line, and whether to make the Communist Party a genuine vanguard of the proletariat and a genuine revolutionary, proletarian party or to convert it into a servant of the bourgeoisie and a variant of the Social Democratic Party" <sup>45</sup>. About Chinese support to the dissenters, the com-

<sup>42</sup> *For the Unity of the Party and the International Communist Movement* Communist Party of India, New Delhi 1964, pp 34

<sup>43</sup> "Leaders of the CPSU are the Greatest Splitters of our Time" loc cit

<sup>44</sup> See n 2

<sup>45</sup> "Leaders of the CPSU are the Greatest Splitters of our Time," loc cit

ment was clear beyond ambiguity — they had never concealed their position

We support all revolutionary comrades who adhere to Marxist Leninism

In the international communist movement we have contacts with revisionists, why then can we not have contacts with Marxist Leninists?

The leaders of the CPSU describe our support for Marxist Leninists in other countries as a divisive act. In our opinion, it is simply a proletarian internationalist obligation which is our duty to discharge.<sup>46</sup>

The comment charged the CPI with supporting Nehru government's defence budget, sabotage of the August 1963 Bombay strike against the tax burdens, blocking Calcutta campaign for release of communists, frenzied anti-Chinese activities and support to Nehru government's "expansionist policy" and of following Nehru government's policy of lining out to US imperialism. It said

As their renegade features are revealed, Dange and Company meet increasing opposition and resistance from the broad rank and file of the Indian Communist Party. More and more Indian communists have begun to see clearly that Dange and Company are the bane of the Indian Communist Party and Indian nation. They are now struggling to rehabilitate the Party's glorious tradition. They are the genuine representatives and the hope of the Indian proletariat and the Indian people.<sup>47</sup>

The comment cannot be said to have accelerated the split in the CPI because the left group's preoccupation was with organizing an inner party struggle over the programme and policies and attempt overthrow of the right leadership at the

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

next party congress. If Chinese attacks on the Dange leadership either directly or as part of the Sino Soviet polemics were to be interpreted as calls for a split and if the left group was taking directions from Peking a split should have occurred as early as March 1963 when *Peoples Daily* published the *Mirror for Revisionists*. Far from a leftist attempt to split the party the months that followed witnessed a rightist offensive against the left.

Even CPSU secretary Mikhail Suslov who launched a bitter counter attack on the *Seventh Comment* within a few days did not have evidence to charge the Chinese with attempting to split the Indian party though his report mentioned such attempts in other countries. "To date anti party groups of renegades and splitters have been set up with the help and support from Peking in Belgium Brazil Australia Ceylon Britain and some other countries."<sup>48</sup>

This is in contrast to the specific reference in the CPSU's *Open Letter* of 14 July 1964 to India as one of the countries where the Chinese were supposed to be organizing anti party groups of splitters and renegades" though the charge was not substantiated.

#### DANGE LETTERS

The right faction was once again raising the bogey of a Chinese inspired split" citing the *Seventh Comment* as evidence while the left group was quietly going about its plans to seize control of the party at the next congress. At this stage the Dange Letters exploded like a bombshell. An anti communist weekly *The Current* published a sensational article alleging that Dange when he was a prisoner after his conviction in the Cawnpore conspiracy case wrote

<sup>48</sup> *Struggle of the CPSU for Unity of the International Communist Movement* Report of Mikhail Suslov at the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU 14 February 1964 Moscow 1964

<sup>49</sup> Romesh Chandra "Defend Unity of Party against Chinese Leadership's Call to Split CPI" *New Age* 9 February 1964

to the British Viceroy of India (the Governor General in Council) in 1924 offering his services in return for pardon. The article was based on a number of letters alleged to have been written by Dange during the period and the text of the incriminating letter was also published along with the article<sup>50</sup>

The Central Secretariat of the CPI, on 13 March, termed the Dange Letters a deliberate forgery and charged the left group with responsibility for the circulation of these forged documents<sup>51</sup>. The Secretariat obviously had no time to check on the authenticity of the papers which were in the National Archives in New Delhi but was content to proceed on the basis of Dange's denunciation of these letters as 'forged and planted'<sup>52</sup>.

The Secretariat charge later, was to be that the Dange letters were the climax of "splitting activities of the left faction which was out to slander and abuse the leadership especially the Chairman through a campaign carried on in collusion with party's worst enemies". For the last several months the left faction had "worked with the help of certain pro China and pro American elements" to gather evidence to prove the Chinese charge that Dange was a "renegade" and a hireling of imperialism. The Secretariat also alleged that the left group had been circulating the Dange letters among its supporters for some three months and tried to get it published in the press but no paper except the 'pro US anti Communist rag Current published them'<sup>53</sup>.

The left group admits knowledge of the letters even before they were published in *The Current*<sup>54</sup>. As to the leadership's point that Basavapunniah, who claimed to have possessed these letters even three months ago, should have placed it before the Central Executive Committee meeting

<sup>50</sup> *The Current* 7 March 1964

<sup>51</sup> *New Age* 22 March 1964

<sup>52</sup> 'From Parallel Centre to Rival Party,' *Resolution on Split* New Delhi 1964 p 20

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p 25

<sup>54</sup> *Fight against Revisionism* p 49



in January, his reply was that it would have been 'highly irresponsible' to have raised the issue without verifying their existence or otherwise in the National Archives and without ascertaining the authenticity of the documents. It would have amounted to slandering his colleagues if the letters happened to be somebody's invention. He was 'completely correct in not raising it at the January Central Executive Committee and patiently trying to get the truth before we raised it'<sup>55</sup>

The most significant aspect the entire Dange letters controversy<sup>56</sup> was that the left group should have launched a campaign over it in the party and outside only after the exposure in *The Current*. The first shot in the campaign was a letter to the National Council members by Basavapunniah and Ramamurti on 25 March,<sup>57</sup> followed by a statement by them at a press conference in New Delhi. The statement joined issue with the Central Secretariat's statement of 13 March, and asserted that the existence of the incriminating letters in the National Archives was a fact and denounced Dange<sup>58</sup>

Thereafter, it looked a concerted campaign to isolate Dange. On 27 March Sundarayya and Nagi Reddy held a press conference in Hyderabad to make a similar statement and three West Bengal leaders, Promode Das Gupta, Harekrishna Konar, and Muzaffar Ahmed, issued a statement along the same lines on 29 March in Calcutta followed by a statement by Gopalan on 29 March. In a letter to the

<sup>55</sup> M. Basavapunniah preface to *Dange Unmasked—Repudiate the Revisionists*, New Delhi, 1964, p. xi.

<sup>56</sup> For the Dange Letters and connected papers see *Dange Unmasked—Repudiate the Revisionists*, New Delhi 1964. For the right group's defence of Dange see Iershlita (pseudonym) "X-raying Basavapunniah," *Mainstream*, 11 April 1964, which has a full discussion (four articles) on various aspects of the controversy.

For Dange's own refutation, S. A. Dange, "Splitters Arsenal of Falchhood," *New Age* 17 and 24 May 1964.

<sup>57</sup> *Dange Unmasked—Repudiate the Revisionists* pp. 20-2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-6.

Central Secretariat on 29 March, Namboodirpad demanded that the minimum it should have done before dismissing the Dange letters as forgery was to have called a meeting of the Central Executive Committee, place all the facts before it, and suggest that a commission should go into the National Archives to determine the genuineness of the letters

#### ATTACK ON LEFT GROUP

But the Central Secretariat went about the whole job rather cagily. In another statement on 1 April the Secretariat renewed its attack on the left group without facing the issues raised by the Dange letters. 'With the new line of open split of every Communist Party decided upon by the Chinese leadership and given expression in their February 4 article, the supporters inside our own party of the ideological positions of the Chinese leadership have evidently now decided to split the Indian Party also'<sup>59</sup> The statement was meant to queer the pitch for the left group because there was no need to charge it with attempting to split the party on Chinese orders when the higher bodies [the Central Executive Committee and the National Council] were to meet in a few days to discuss everything including the Dange letters

#### MOSCOW'S PLAN FOR SPLIT

On the eve of these meetings, the right group seemed to have "inside" knowledge from Moscow (Dange was there when Basavapunniah released the incriminating letters to the press on 26 March) of the Soviet plan for final confrontation with the Chinese and to force a split in the international communist movement. For, a pro Soviet journal reported that CPI leaders believed that Sino Soviet relations would reach the nodal point in July. The Soviet party, its patience exhausted, was in fact scheduled to launch a "counter offensive" in March with the publication of the

<sup>59</sup> *New Age*, 5 April 1964

Suslov report but the Rumanians had asked them to give them a chance to plead with the Chinese. But Moscow did not expect success for the Rumanian delegation due to visit Peking shortly because the Chinese leaders had advanced too far on the road to splitism to retreat. Moscow seemed to favour a decisive confrontation at a world conference in July or August.<sup>60</sup>

Knowledge of the Soviet plans seems to have emboldened the right group in its attempt to force a showdown at home. On the eve of the emergency Central Executive Committee (9 April) and National Council (from 10 April) meetings the left group was holding a conclave in New Delhi from 2 April. The Secretariat characterized this meeting as a conference of seceders from the party, a conference to set up a new rival Communist Party. What was so long functioning as a faction virtually a party within a party has now proclaimed itself as open conference of seceders and splitters.<sup>61</sup> But the left group's explanation was that the meeting was held to finalize its draft documents for introduction at the National Council and not to form a rival party. It had been decided that the alternative drafts it had prepared should be circulated among their followers in the States and finalized at a meeting in New Delhi in April.<sup>62</sup>

The Secretariat had already branded the left group splitters and the Dange group seemed to have decided to expel them. Dange said on the eve of the executive and National Council meetings that he was not afraid of an inquiry into the alleged letters. Let the National Council decide. The hysterical threats of a few neo Trotskyites are not going to succeed in preventing me from demanding their expulsion.<sup>63</sup>

The Tamil Nadu State Council was setting the pace for the excommunication of the left group by requesting the

<sup>60</sup> Link 1 March 1964

<sup>61</sup> New Age 12 April 1964

<sup>62</sup> Fight against Revisionism p. 48

<sup>63</sup> Neo Trotskyites Must Be Expelled Statement of 6 April New Age 12 April 1964

National Council for suitable action against disruptors' (P Ramamurti, M Basavapunniah, and P Sundarayya were identified as leading them) This was anticipating the Central Executive's decision on 9 April to recommend expulsion of seven leaders from the party <sup>64</sup>

#### LEFT GROUP'S WALK OUT

When the emergency meeting of the executive was called on 9 April, the first item on the agenda was not the Dange letters but a resolution on the disruptive and anti party activities of certain elements Dange letters stood second <sup>65</sup>

The leftist demand that the second item should be taken up first and that Dange should not preside over the meeting when he was the subject of discussion was opposed by the Dange group Bhupesh Gupta suggested that both the items should be taken together and Jyoti Basu suggested that the meeting should be adjourned so that an agreement on the agenda could be worked out But the Dange group used its majority to reject the suggestions forcing Namboodiripad Gopalan, Ramamurti, Venkataraman, Sundarayya, Basavapunniah, Jyoti Basu, Harekrishna Konar, Promode Das Gupta, Harkishen Singh Surjeet, Jagjit Singh Lyallpur, and Bhupesh Gupta to walk out of the meeting After the walk out, the executive disposed of the first item on the agenda in less than half an hour and dispersed without taking up the Dange letters issue Without so much as waiting for the report of the control commission due to be presented the next day to the meeting on the National Council meeting it decided to recommend to the National Council the expulsion of seven of the 12 who had walked out Sundarayya, Basavapunniah, Gopalan, Ramamurti, Promode Das Gupta, Harekrishna Konar, and Harkishen Singh Surjeet and the resolution on expulsions was rushed to the press even before it could be presented to the National Council

The next day's National Council session turned out to

<sup>64</sup> New Age, 12 April 1964

<sup>65</sup> Fight against Revisionism, p 50

be the breaking point in the drama of the split. The previous day's pattern repeated itself. After a deadlock on the agenda and procedure, the council adjourned for the day so that a committee of the Secretariat could hold informal talks with Namboodirpad, Jyoti Basu, and Bhupesh Gupta and attempt an agreement. The committee was not to include Dange. But on Dange's insistence, it was decided that the whole Secretariat should hold the talks.<sup>66</sup>

Dange raised the question of a *prima facie* case and said if he did not preside over the session, it would amount to admitting there was a *prima facie* case against him. The left group's representatives argued that the letters were in the National Archives for all to see and that was a *prima facie* case. It was for Dange to prove that the letters were not genuine. There was no agreement. The left group's version is that "almost all the secretariat members in private had admitted that the letters were genuine, but tried to find excuses for Dange that they were 40 years old, etc. But they could not take this stand openly because that would do immense harm to their prestige and also jeopardize their political line whose leader was Dange."<sup>67</sup>

Thirty-two members dissociated themselves from the proceedings of the National Council and walked out on 11 April.<sup>68</sup> After the walk-out, less than 50 members of the National Council adopted a resolution and adjourned on Bhupesh Gupta's suggestion.<sup>69</sup> The main points of the

<sup>66</sup> *Fight against Revisionism*, p. 51.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* p. 52.

<sup>68</sup> P. Sundarayya, M. Basavapunniah, T. Nagi Reddy, M. Hanumantha Rao, D. Venkateswara Rao, N. Praxada Rao, G. Bapanayya, E. M. S. Namboodirpad, A. K. Gopalan, A. V. Kunhambu, C. H. Kanaran, T. K. Navanar, V. S. Achutanandan, E. K. Imbicha Bava, Promode Das Gupta, Muzaffar Ahmad, Jyoti Basu, Abdul Halim, Harekrishna Konar, Saroj Mukherjee, P. Ramamurti, M. R. Venkataraman, N. Sankarsh, K. Ramani, Hanakishen Singh Surjeet, Jagjit Singh, Lallpur, D. S. Tapalia, Dr. Bhag Singh, Sheo Kumar Misra, L. N. Upadhyaya, Mohan Punamya, and R. P. Saraf.

<sup>69</sup> Statement by 32 National Council members, New Delhi, 12 April 1964 (mimeographed).

resolution were since the National Council has not yet heard Dange and the Secretariat or those who hold that the letters are genuine the question of a *prima facie* case did not arise. Dange need not vacate the chair. But he should step down for other reasons. Dange has declined to preside (for other reasons) and the question of the letters and that of splitting of some National Council members should be taken up together. The statements of the Secretariat as well as the walk out of the 32 from the National Council meeting the previous day and their subsequent statements would form part of the letter.<sup>19</sup>

The 32 said the National Council resolution did not reveal sufficient realization of the issues and their gravity. The resolution sought to commit them (the 32) to the position that no *prima facie* case existed on the Dange letters. While the Dange letters could be discussed with the statements issued by the Secretariat as well as by other members of the National Council it would be wrong to club them with the question of what the Secretariat termed "splitting activities" of some members of National Council. Dange should clear himself first through an inquiry by an agreed committee after which the entire organizational question should be discussed in a calm atmosphere to ensure fuller and freer party discussion on all political and ideological issues in controversy. The 32 found no reason to reconsider their stand

#### CALL TO REPUDIATE DANGE

After two days of consultations the 32 issued another statement which claimed they were united not only against the factionalism and anti party organizational methods of the leadership, but "also against their political line of tailing behind the bourgeoisie through a general united front with the Congress. Their struggle against Dange and his followers was also a struggle to repudiate their reformist political line of a general united front with the Congress and the line of

\* Ibid

factional preparation for a 'fake party congress' and their attempts at white washing Dange over the letters. Despite ideological and political differences the 32 were agreed on immediate tasks.

Exchange of views on the questions dividing them was to continue along with mass work. The entire party membership would be associated with the discussions on the four documents to be circulated to members and sympathizers: the draft programme which was provisionally accepted by the left members, Nambudiripad's draft on the party programme and the draft on ideological questions prepared by M. Basavapunniah and another draft on ideological questions by Jyoti Basu and others.<sup>11</sup>

The left group was set to go ahead with the Seventh Party Congress by declaring itself the real Communist Party of India. But it was still prepared to retract if the Dange group gave up its organizational methods and created some machinery to ensure full and unfettered intra party discussions and representation to all genuine members.

It was a split already. The National Council (less than half of the membership of 110 present) decided to suspend the 32 (which was about a third of the total membership). It was not a positive vote on the resolution but a negative vote and there was no way of knowing how many favoured the suspensions.<sup>12</sup>

#### CONTROL COMMISSION REPORT

The right group's determination to liquidate all opposition if necessary through an open split was evident from the one faction nature of the Control Commission report accepted by the National Council and rushed to the press. In July 1963 the National Council had asked the commission to look into two issues—the activities of the alleged parallel party centre and the charges and countercharges made in the papers referred to the Council. In October 1963 one more

<sup>11</sup> "Platform of Splitters" *New Age*, 19 April 1964

<sup>12</sup> *Fight against Revisionism* p. 55

issue—reports of Sundarayya's speeches to party general body meetings in Andhra Pradesh was referred to the commission.

Of the five member commission, both the left group members (Abdul Halim and Uddaraju Ramam) were in jail and, when released were ill. So the report was drawn up by the three right group members (S V Ghate, its chairman Hajrah Begum and P Narayanan Nair). The Commission's findings on the first issue were after the 1 November resolution of the National Council. Left group members of the Central Executive Committee met in New Delhi and decided on a political and organizational line of action entirely different from that of the National Council.<sup>73</sup>

There was no suggestion of Chinese direction to the left group at this stage. According to the commission this group thought the Nehru government depending more and more on imperialist economic and military aid, would turn semi fascist or fascist and the CPI would be forced to function semi legally or illegally. To work out the political and organizational line for the anticipated situation and to ensure its implementation an all India directing centre was set up in New Delhi and apparatus organized in the States. The revolts in the West Bengal and Punjab State Councils were traced to the direction of the parallel centre which functioned in the initial stages in a "most secret and underground" manner.

Between December 1962 and April 1963, the parallel centre is alleged to have issued several circulars asking the ranks to repudiate the National Council's authority and with distributing a large volume of literature on the Sino Indian border dispute, popularizing the Chinese stand. But the list of objectionable documents included what the CPI had already published (*A Mirror For Revisionists* from *People's Daily* of 9 March 1963), articles like R P Dutt's "Notes of the Month" in *Labour Monthly* December 1962, or such dated material as the letter of Premier Chou

<sup>73</sup> Control Commission's Report to the National Council, *Resolution on Splitters*, New Delhi 1964, p 35



En la to heads of African States 'Background Facts About India China Border' "Why does Nehru Refuse to Negotiate" from *People's Daily* of 7 December 1961, and an unofficial Bengali pamphlet *Let People Ponder*. Another objectionable document listed was portions of Namboodiripad's document *Revisionism and Dogmatism in the CPI* circulated to National Council members in February 1962.

The activities of the parallel centre were 'most pronounced' in West Bengal where the National Council had replaced the rebel State Council by a Provincial Organizing Committee. The parallel centre in the State was functioning under the code name of PCZ. Similar parallel centres had come into being in several States.

When the emergency conditions were relaxed a little in April 1963 the activities of the all India parallel centre became more open. After a review of the situation in April, the parallel centre is alleged to have issued a document, whose operative part reads as follows:

Wherever we are in a position to unleash activity by ourselves we should start it. Where we are not in such a position and where we can mobilize the party ranks to put pressure on the leadership to force them to take up such campaign it should be our job to do this. In the campaigns launched by the present leadership we should be the most active so as to win over more and more of the party ranks and isolate the present leaders.<sup>74</sup>

All it meant was the left group should take the initiative for launching people's movements and where the right group had launched such movements the left group should participate in them actively. This could not be held anti party activity in any sense because the left group merely wanted militant action. Another finding of the commission was that the leaders of the left group undertook extensive tours of the States arranged by the parallel centre and not by the State or district council concerned to carry on parallel work,

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid* p 40

and that four weekly journals were launched during the period to serve as the organs of the parallel centre in different languages (*Janasakti*, Telugu from Vijayawada, June 1963, *Icekkadir* Tamil from Madras June 1963 *Chinta Malayalam* from Kozhikode August 1963 and *Desh Hitarshi*, Bengali from Calcutta August 1963)

When the ideological debate among the various communist parties reached its climax the CPI had published some of the theoretical and polemical material. But the commission charged the parallel centre "with circulating the material not for the purpose of controlled and principled inner party discussion but for consolidating its alternative platform". Of the five documents listed in this connection three had been published by the party officials in their English versions but the parallel centre had brought out English versions or their translations in Indian languages ("Unity of International Working Class against Common Enemy," from *Red Flag* in Malayalam "Whence the Differences — Reply to 'Thorez' in English and Telugu, 'More On Differences Between 'Lughathi and Us' in English, Telugu and Malayalam. The other two documents were 'On the Seventieth Birthday of Stalin' speech by Mikoyan in Telugu and "The Split in the Socialist Camp," from *New York Monthly Review*.)

The commission also held that taking the cue from the Chinese press and radio calls for revolt by 'genuine Marxists' against the CPI leadership the parallel centre propagated among the ranks slogans like

Discipline of party committees can be accepted on mass campaigns but not on ideological and political issues

Today's minority will be tomorrow's majority hence majority decisions can be discounted

Ideal is the aim, unity and means. What is the good of means if aim is not achieved

There is not a single party, only two factions, and, therefore, there is no party line to be accepted<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p 45

From September 1963 the activities of the parallel centre came very much into the open<sup>76</sup>

The report which went against the left on all the three issues was undoubtedly partisan in approach. According to a leftist account the commission never made an attempt to investigate the counter charges. The report made no reference to Gopalan's charge of leakage of Secretariat discussions though Namboodiripad had given evidence on it. Sundarayya and others demanded that the evidence against them be made available to them that they could refute it but the commission did not meet this request. More the commission did not care to make enquiries from the leaders whose activities it was to investigate<sup>76</sup>

#### SPLITTING ACTIVITIES

There is reason to believe that the report biased as it was was written to suit the dominant leadership. It was drawn up on 8 April for the meeting of the National Council beginning 10 April. But on 9 April the Secretariat made its report to the Central Executive Committee on the latest phase of splitting activities inside the party. The title of the report *From Parallel Centre to Rival Party* suggests that the Secretariat had taken the existence of a parallel centre (a matter to be investigated by the Control Commission) for granted. The report said the conference of leading members which was holding a session in New Delhi from 2 April had been called by the left leaders because the parallel centre, the shadow central committee, the shadow State committees were no longer enough to meet the needs of the splitters; an open separate party was necessary to challenge the credentials of the Communist Party of India at the coming World Conference of Communist Parties<sup>77</sup>

The Secretariat was proceeding on the assumption that the party had already split as part of a world wide split

<sup>76</sup> *Fight against Revisionism* p. 55

<sup>77</sup> *Resolution on Splitters* New Delhi: 1964 pp. 16-21

This assumption seems to have conditioned its attitude to the left group on the eve of the April meeting of the National Council. It said the leftist conclave

must be seen in the background of a number of actions by the conference sponsors which are part and parcel of the new line of open split the new period during which the splitters have decided on an international plane that all the adherents of their ideological positions must move ahead from their parallel centres groups rival papers etc to open rival parties.<sup>78</sup>

Cataloguing some of the recent "splitting activities" the Secretariat mentioned the setting up of a candidate against the CPI's official nominee at the Rajya Sabha election from Andhra Pradesh defiance of party directives in Punjab attempt to prevent the re-election of Bhupesh Gupta member of the Secretariat to the Rajya Sabha from West Bengal and defiance of party directives, general opposition to mass movements sponsored by the right leadership in States, public campaign against the party leadership and open campaign for a rival political line in Kerala, setting up of a party within the party in Tamil Nadu and the launching of rival party journals in several States. The climax according to the Secretariat came with the Dange letters. The Secretariat was trying to fit all this into the general matrix of a world wide schism and cited in support the Suslov report<sup>79</sup> which "throws a searching light on the pattern of split which is being followed in so many countries of the world."

#### CPSU BACKS RIGHTIST EFFORT

The CPSU was quick to supplement the effort of the CPI's to fit the revolt into the general pattern of the international

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p 19

<sup>79</sup> See n 54

split and trace it to the activities of Peking Splitters. The CPI journal reprinted from the Soviet journal *Partinya Zhizh* an article denouncing the splitter groups as composed of diverse renegades Trotskivites and adventurists attempting to come to top on the dirty foam of Peking's factional struggle against the Marxist Leninist parties. Among them are quite a number of morally corrupt people.<sup>80</sup>

The CPI was one of the parties subverted by the CPC and compelled to divert its attention from the most urgent problems before it and put in a difficult position. Starting with the outbreak of the Sino Indian border conflict in 1959 the splinter elements in the Communist Party of India have ceaselessly abused the policy of that party attempting to force upon the party their own incorrect appraisal of the international situation in India and to force upon it adventurist tactics.<sup>81</sup>

The CPSU was thus going farther than the CPI in its attack on the left group by suggesting that the splitting activities dated back to 1959 and enthusiastically endorsing the National Council's decision to suspend 32 members.

Though a minority in the National Council the 32 seemed confident of support from majority of party ranks had they directed their appeal downwards directly to the party committees and ranks. They could never hope to capture the leadership at the top but they could wrest control of the party at the base. Immediately after the suspensions Basa vapunniah said they would form their own party committees hold district and State conferences leading to a party congress.<sup>82</sup> But there was some confusion because while Basa vapunniah and Sundarayya had decided that they should function as a separate party the moderates among the left group especially Namboodirpad thought that there were still chances of bringing about unity if disciplinary proceedings

<sup>80</sup> Against the Splitters for Unity in the Communist Movement reprinted from *Partinya Zhizh* (Party Life) No 11 Part I in *New Age* 5 July 1964

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid* 19 April 1964

were withdrawn and a unanimously elected commission prepared the documents for the Seventh Congress<sup>83</sup>

#### SPLIT IS COMPLETE

But there was no let up in the war of attrition. The majority expelled the minority until the split was organizationally complete from top to bottom. The right group appeared to be a little unnerved at the strength of the splitters which it had underrated. In the wake of Nehru's death (on 27 May 1964), Dange wrote to the 32 suspended members on 29 May appealing to them to return to the party's fold and to take the obvious steps of dissolving the rival committees you have set up, and declaring your willingness to abide by the decisions of the party bodies at all levels, in return for which the resolution suspending them would be resumed'<sup>84</sup>

But strangely enough the appeal came when the right group was continuing its vindictive war against the leftists at all levels. Even State committees were being dissolved and parallel committees were being set up wherever the left was in majority. The National Council had suspended A K Gopalan leader of the party in Lok Sabha, and without waiting for his reply, the party had written to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha to say that he was no longer the leader. This was calculated to split the CPI group in Parliament.

Some of the leftist leaders, who met in New Delhi to review the situation and discuss the appeal from Dange found that the majority of ranks were behind them and the right group could command majority only in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh Bihar, Orissa, and Delhi. In the CPI's major bases like Kerala Andhra Pradesh West Bengal and the Punjab, which accounted for bulk of its strength, the left group had the support of the 60 to 80 per cent of the membership<sup>85</sup>

The left group's reply of 31 May to Dange's letter reiterated

<sup>83</sup> Link, 4 May 1964

<sup>84</sup> *Fight against Revisionism*, p. 56

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56-7

rated its desire for unity but wondered if it could be restored unless the Dange leadership abandoned its undemocratic practices and policies. "From efforts in this direction, on the other hand, you are dictating terms to us," the reply said. It charged Dange and his supporters were deliberately leaking out information about party affairs to the bourgeois press in distorted form, the continued association of Dange with the *Link* weekly and *Patriot* daily despite the Central Executive Committee directive, the abandonment of the spirit of the 'composite Secretariat' and blamed Dange for the situation.<sup>88</sup>

#### LEFT GROUP'S TERMS FOR UNITY

Besides, in the past all the efforts of the left group for unity had gone unheeded (the appeal of 17 National Council members in October 1963 and the effort during the April meeting of the National Council) and had been met with slanders that they were "pro China," and "neo-Trotskyites," etc, the letter said. It reiterated the proposals in the appeal of the 32, namely, revoking of disciplinary actions of the last 18 months for 'disruption and splitting activities'. Once this was done, the problem of rival committees would not arise at all because they would stand dissolved. If this approach to party organization was accepted, the question of the left group's 'willingness to abide by party discipline at all levels will also not arise'.

But among the new conditions the left group now laid was an agreed probe into the Dange letters (the National Council had already instituted a one faction probe) as also in Dange's controversial financial dealings with the company that runs *Patriot* daily (an allied publication of *Link* weekly). The new demands on the organizational side were the abolition of the Secretariat including the posts of Chairman and General-Secretary for the period preceding the party congress with all the talks of political and organizational guidance

left to the Central Executive Committee <sup>87</sup>

But the right group appeared keen more on protecting the supremacy of the National Council (in which it had clear majority) than on restoring party unity. Dange had evaded all the issues raised by the left group and his letter turned down the proposal for winding up the Secretariat and entrusting the CEC with task of guiding the work. The National Council meeting in June set a condition for rescinding the suspensions "as soon as the 32 comrades or any of them intimate their willingness to return to the NC, abide by the decisions of the NC, dissolve or dissociate themselves from all parallel party organizations set up at different levels, the suspension order against those who do so shall stand rescinded" <sup>88</sup>. A similar condition was attached to withdrawal of disciplinary action taken by district and local party organization for the formation of parallel committees.

#### LAST ATTEMPT TO AVERT SPLIT

The last attempt at unity was at a meeting between the representatives of the 32 (Jyoti Basu, Promode Das Gupta, and Harkishen Singh Surjeet) and the representatives of the Secretariat (Rajeswara Rao, Adhikari, and Bhupesh Gupta) in New Delhi on 4 July 1964, immediately after the National Council resolution. From the record of the talks, it is evident that the left group contended that it had majority in the ranks while the right had majority in the National Council and, therefore, things must go by agreement because the primary thing was not a majority decision but a decision that would restore the party's unity.

HSS In the past in spite of our differences we had submitted to the majority decisions. We can do so in the future also. But no decisions on fundamental questions by majority and minority.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*



J B What difficulty will you have if you do not say anything for some time on some issues

HSS May I understand that the National Council has rejected all our points?

RR Yes \*\*

The left group's proposals besides agreed decisions in the place of majority decisions included reorganized Secretariat, agreed commission to inquire into the Dange letters and his financial transactions especially relating to *Link* and *Patriot* journals, an agreed commission to prepare for the party congress and scrutiny of party membership. But the Secretariat rejected all these. The following portion from the record sums up the Secretariat's attitude:

P D G If we accept Dange as the Chairman are you prepared to restore the old Secretariat with Com I M S as the General Secretary?

RR No That balance has gone now. Positions have been changed now. We are not prepared to restore the same balance. National Council majority will have the majority in the Secretariat. Old Secretariat will tilt that balance. It does not represent the National Council.

J B How is the balance tilted? Where do you count Bhupesh?

RR Politically he is with us. Organizationally we are not sure. Sometimes he takes sides with you. We do not want to take risk.

B G Let the old Secretariat be restored minus me. It will give the National Council clear majority.

RR No. There are some neutrals also they will have to be represented in the reorganized Secretariat.

J B It means you do not accept any of our proposals. You say that you accept the authority of the elected

\*\* Report on Unity talks unpublished document (Mimeographed). The record refers to the participant by their initials—Harkishan Singh Sijpet (HSS), Jyoti Bani (J B), Rajeswara Rao (RR), Promode Das Gupta (P D G) and Bhupesh Gupta (B G).

National Council but you do not accept the unanimously elected Secretariat

R.R. Yes That is the position There is no mutual confidence We want to be sure of our majority<sup>90</sup>

The right group was out to exploit its majority in the National Council to keep the left group at bay and was afraid of losing its majority to the left in a changed situation. On every question, political or organizational, the right group insisted on decision by "majority". But the National Council itself had not been elected by vote at the Vijayawada Congress but by agreement. Nor were the Central Executive Committee or the Chairman. The decision to expand the CEC and to create the post of a Chairman to provide a position for Dange were taken by agreement and no question of majority arose. But once the right group found itself controlling the National Council and the truncated Secretariat, it wanted to preserve its dominant position in these bodies and was against restoring the "composite Secretariat" of April 1963 which had worked successfully until the leftists resigned from it.

#### FINAL CONVENTION NEW PARTY IS BORN

A week after the abortive unity talks left group communists from all over India met in Ranchi and the conference styled itself the Convention of the Communist Party of India. The convention attacked the "unity talks" as a smokescreen behind which the Dange group tried to consolidate itself as a faction. The convention resolved that "the time had come to put into practice the plan mooted by the 32 comrades in their April 14 statement that if the Secretariat and its supporters persist in their attitude we will have to appeal to the entire party membership to join us in convening the Seventh Congress"<sup>91</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Ibid

<sup>91</sup> Resolution on Party Unity and Seventh Congress Adopted by the Convention of the Communist Party of India Ranchi 11 July 1964 (Mimeographed)

The split was formal final and complete at last because the convention called upon all party members and supporters to help us in reorganizing the Communist Party making it a strong united party of the working class in the revolutionary traditions of the Indian people<sup>22</sup> The most significant decision of the Tenth convention was the one excluding the ideological question from the agenda of the proposed foundation congress<sup>23</sup> This was an obvious concession to the moderates like Nambudiripad who had all along pleaded that the CPI should not take sides in the Sino Soviet ideological dispute until it had sorted its own ideological problems out The decision aimed at dissociating the new party in advance from either of the two extreme positions and to leave the issue open for the present Because there were serious differences on the unit The official report on the convention says

Our party as an independent sovereign unit of the communist movement shall arrive at its own independent decisions after a full democratic discussion in the entire party No question of either pro Peking or pro Moscow shall arise whatever our enemies shout to slander the cause of communism We should not resort to open criticism and attack either on CPSU or CPC until our party concludes its inner party discussions and arrives at its own conclusions<sup>24</sup>

The convention's stand on the party programme was equally flexible—it decided to circulate the draft programme produced by the extreme left leaders (Basavapunniah and others) for discussion which meant room was being left for compromise with the moderates led by Nambudiripad The difference here related to the role of the national bourgeoisie and nature of the front they would like to build Unlike the extremists Nambudiripad thought that the big bourgeoisie still had a vital role to play in the front

<sup>22</sup> *Ib id*

<sup>23</sup> *Link* 19 July 1964

<sup>24</sup> H K Suresh Tenth Convention of CPI (Mimeographed)

## "SPLITTERS TROTSKYITES"

In official CPI's view these two decisions represented opportunist compromises on the part of the extreme left to secure the support of the moderate left represented by Namboodirpad and Jyoti Basu. Even on the eve of the Tcnali convention, the right group had launched an attack on the "splitters" over the ideological issue. A prominent theoretician, Mohit Sen, answered at length a reader's question in *New Age*. 'Why should the splitters be called Chinese agents? In the same way cannot the majority be called Soviet agents?' The answer was 'the CPI had never called the splitters Chinese agents, nor does it think that they are.' Mohit Sen suggested that the "splitters" tried to evoke pity and a sense of martyrdom by claiming that the CPI was hounding them out as Peking patriots and this was a 'crude tactic.' The "splitters" were in 'sixes and sevens' about the attitude to the controversy of the international communist movement. To get over the difficulty of being political divided and factionally united, as Dange put it, the "splitters" were trying to put across the slogan of "neutrality" in the contest of the giants. Charging the "splitters" with ideological affinity with the CPC, Mohit Sen insinuated that the neutrality was a manoeuvre of the pro China elements to line up all the "splitters" behind the Chinese line. "Not able to immediately swing their entire group to line up with the CPC, the vanguard of the splitters want right away to commit the vacillators in their midst to a repudiation of their previous position. Later they feel, the logic of their commitment will push the hesitant also to full support of the CPC's ideological line"<sup>95</sup>

The same writer said elsewhere that the left communists interpreted independence of thinking to mean independence from the "creative" Marxism represented by the CPSU. He traced the inspiration for the split to the "neo Trotskyism" represented by the CPC line. "The Left Communists are

<sup>95</sup> *New Age*, 14 June 1964

essentially the representatives of the neo Trotskyite ideology, political and organizational methods. The terrorist side-current in our national movement has transformed itself into the new born neo Trotskyite party. The class link is the common impoverished under developed petty bourgeois intelligentsia.<sup>96</sup>

But he conceded a vital fact: the left communists would never have contemplated a split whatever their ideology had they not possessed a mass base. A sober estimate would put their strength at some 35 per cent of the entire CPI membership. Their mass following would not be less than 30 per cent of the CPI's. The Trotskyites who broke from the Third International were small vociferous groups without any mass base, but the position of the neo Trotskyites was different. Not only is the influential prestigious and massive CPC leading them but in Japan, Indonesia and in India they have a substantial mass following and leaders with prestige and mass influence.<sup>97</sup>

After the Tenali Congress it was a race between the left and the right groups for holding the rival party congresses. The left beat the right to it, holding the Seventh Congress of the party at Calcutta in October/November 1964 (and thus staking its claim to the 40 year communist legacy in the country) and retaining the name Communist Party of India<sup>98</sup> and the flag of the CPI in bid to strengthen its claim to legitimacy. But the new party's constitution was different from that of the CPI. It went back to the familiar Stalinist forms complete with a Politbureau while the CPI had abandoned these forms at its Amritsar Congress in 1958 when it converted itself into a mass party.

The CPI trailing in the race was in a dilemma. Either

<sup>96</sup> Mohit Sen, 'The Left Communists', *Mainstream* 8 August 1964.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>98</sup> It was not until it had to contest the mid term elections in Kerala in early 1965 that it was forced to call itself Communist Party of India — Marxist to distinguish itself from the CPI which enjoyed the recognition of the Election Commission even after the split.

it could duplicate the Seventh Congress by holding its own version of it or organize itself into a new party. It chose to stage its own Seventh Congress, in December 1964, in Bombay.

#### BATTLE OF PROGRAMMES

A comparison of the draft programmes of the rival parties circulated on the eve of the rival congresses provide interesting contrasts. The left draft was written by Bisavapunniah and had been finalized by an informal conference of the left group even before the split whereas the right group's draft was prepared by Dange and placed before the National Council in June 1964 and later adopted at its congress in Bombay.

The two drafts reflect two distinct trends on important questions like the stage of the revolution, the strategy of the party and the nature of the alliances.

While the right draft saw in India's Independence (15 August 1947) "a historic event not only for our people but for all mankind" and believed that India was now on the "path of independent development" the left draft saw in the transfer of power a mere "settlement" between British imperialism and the Congress and the Muslim League. Subsequent economic development in India was an attempt of the bourgeoisie to strengthen itself "not by decisively attacking imperialism and feudalism by eliminating them, but by attacking the people and compromising with a conciliating imperialism and feudalism."

On economic development, the right draft held that, while growth had been insufficient, Indian economy did not present a picture of stagnation or a growing dependence on imperialism but one of "consolidation of political independence and a step forward to economic regeneration." The left draft thought that no kind of planning was possible under capitalism and Indian planning was wholly subordinated to profit motive of the Indian and foreign exploiters.

On the character of the Indian State, the right draft

thought it was "the organ of the class rule of the national bourgeoisie as a whole" But the left draft had a different evaluation It was the organ of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and the landlords led by the big bourgeoisie The right draft attached much importance to the existence of a parliamentary system while the left did not But both the drafts believed in peaceful transformation to socialism

The right draft's estimate of India's foreign policy as "in the main a policy of peace, nonalignment, and anti-colonialism" was vitiated sometimes by lapses and compromises The draft was forthright in its condemnation of the Chinese aggression and noted that India's nonalignment had survived 'severest crisis it ever faced' But the left draft's view on the foreign policy was different It was one of "opposition to as well as of compromise and conciliation with imperialism" and beginning with 1958 it had objectively facilitated the "US designs of neo-colonialism and aggression" which "leads to India's isolation from the powerful currents of peace, democracy, freedom, and socialism and as such harmful to our interests" The left draft did not charge China with aggression against India but chose to refer to the Sino-Indian border dispute leading to a border war which had further accentuated a shift in the Indian government's policy of nonalignment

The right draft's slogan of power was a national democratic front and a national democratic government for a state of national democracy through peaceful means The front was to include all patriotic forces including the working class, the entire peasantry, the intelligentsia, and the bulk of the non monopolist bourgeoisie The left draft was sanguine that the path of national democracy was barred for India because the bourgeoisie had compromised with imperialism and therefore, had no progressive role to play The slogan of power was people's democracy and the people's democratic front to achieve it was to be a 'coalition of all genuine anti feudal and anti imperialist forces headed by the working class'

## TWO STRATEGIES TWO PARTIES

The battle for programmes in the Indian communist movement culminated in two programmes two strategies — and two communist parties<sup>99</sup> The split was not the result of any Sino Soviet polarization in the party because its origins date back to 1955, much before the 20th Congress of the CPSU, the Moscow Declaration of 1957 or the Moscow Statement of 1960 As Basavapunniah sums up 'The sharply polemised, openly stated and publicly discussed issues of the debate would convince anybody that the differences that arose were of fundamental nature concerning mainly the Indian situation'<sup>100</sup>

The differences related to class character of the Congress government the Congress Party assessment of the five year plans national and international policies of the party, and immediate and long term programmatic tasks of the party "Agreed resolutions by majority vote did only provide a working basis and by no means solved the basic theoretical ideological and political differences"<sup>101</sup>

In the battle for the programme that preceded the split, the international ideological issues played a very insignificant role The right leadership of the CPI had already endorsed the Soviet positions in June 1964 and this line was endorsed at the Seventh Party Congress of the CPI<sup>102</sup> But this did not lead to polarization at the other end If anything the polarization was between the right group which had declared uncritical support to Soviet positions and the rest which wanted a fuller discussion so that the party could arrive at

<sup>99</sup> For a detailed discussion of the two programme approaches, see Analyst, "Battle of Programmes," *Mainstream*, 18 July 1964 "Which Road to Socialism?" *Mainstream*, 25 July 1964

<sup>100</sup> M. Basavapunniah, "Reply to Nanda — 6," *People's Democracy*, 23 January 1966

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>102</sup> *For the Unity of the Party and the International Communist Movement*, Approved by the National Council session 7 — 17 June, 1964, for the Seventh Congress of the party, New Delhi, 1964



its own decision. Though the left group was circulating its own draft document on the ideological debate<sup>103</sup> assailing revisionism it did not pledge uncritical support to the Chinese position. This document was ready as early as April 1964 before the walk out of the 32 members from the National Council. The left group had decided at Tenali to keep the issue open and therefore the ideological question was not part of the agenda for the new party's foundation congress. While the CPI had endorsed the Soviet general line the new party was not supporting the Chinese general line. It had no doubt serious reservations about the Soviet line but was not united behind the Chinese general line.

The Sino-Soviet differences superimposed on the existing pattern of differences in the CPI did add to the crisis in the party and the international schism robbed the Soviet party of its position as the sole legitimizing authority of the international communist movement. The left group's opposition to Soviet intervention could at best have hastened the split just as the Sino-Indian border dispute sharpened the divisions in the party by complicating its short-term strategy and its attitude to the Indian government and the Congress Party running it.

The CPSU leadership raised the bogey of a split in the CPI long before the dominant right group of the CPI came across any evidence of it. It was in the Soviet interest to avert a split at the Vijayawada congress in 1961 and Suslov worked for a compromise. But in 1964 the CPSU seems to have felt that if a split was not forced immediately there was every chance of the whole party going over to the left group at the next party congress. Secondly, the CPSU leadership seems to have equated all opposition to the Dange

<sup>103</sup> *A Contribution to Ideological Debate* by P. Sundarayya, M. Basavapunniah, N. Prasad Rao, A. K. Gopalan, Harkishen Singh, Surjeet Jagjit Singh, Lyallpuri, P. Ramamurti, M. R. Venkataraman, Joti Basu, Harekrishna Konar, and Niranjan Sen. New Delhi, April 1964. Also in the same volume another draft entitled "On Some Questions Concerning the Ideological Controversy within the International Movement" by Joti Basu, Niranjan Sen, and others.

leadership and its rightist political line with support to the Chinese line without realizing that there was a fragmentation in the left group. As early as 1961 at the Vijayawada congress Suslov was surprised at the left group's strength and is known to have remarked to a CPI leader: there is a lot of Chinese influence in your party while in fact the leftist opposition to the right group's programme and political resolution drafts had nothing to do with the Chinese influence.

The CPSU's support to the right group in the CPI was a decisive factor hastening the split. In the absence of the international communist schism the rival group might have looked to the CPSU's intervention to clinch the issues or continued fighting each other as they did after the Vijayawada congress. But once Moscow had ceased to be the sole legitimizing authority in the world communist movement a split was inevitable especially when Moscow thought that all opposition to the CPI's right wing leadership was Chinese engineered and wanted to hasten the split and fit it into a world wide matrix.

Soviet support to the Nehru government on the Sino Soviet border issue largely conditioned by the implications of the Sino Soviet border dispute provided the right group in the CPI the political *alibi* for branding the left group pro Peking. The government in turn helped the process of the split by imprisoning those opposed to the right group. The October November 1962 border dispute provided the occasion for the arrests.

Thus the split was over fundamental issues and programme strategy and tactics of the Indian communist movement and a number of factors hastened and formalized it — the Sino Soviet ideological dispute the Sino Indian border dispute the Sino Soviet border dispute and the Nehru government's anxiety to placate the pro Moscow wing of the Communist Party and use it as a lobby to influence communist countries over the border dispute.

*Maoism Returns*

IT IS HARD to place the breakaway wing of the Indian communist movement — the Communist Party of India (Marxist) as it chose to call itself later — in the broad spectrum of the international pro Chinese tendency resulting from the Sino-Soviet ideological conflict. Closest to the Chinese Communist Party were the two other ruling communist parties in Asia (of North Korea and North Viet Nam) and one ruling party in Europe (of Albania). Then came a group of Asian communist parties which were wholly with the Chinese party to begin with (of Indonesia, Japan and Malaysia being the more important ones in this category) and the New Zealand party (the only white party besides the Albanian party to support Chinese positions unreservedly). The Communist Party of India (Marxist) — CPI(M) for short — which began with a considerable mass base was so variegated in its composition that it was at best an ally of the CPC rather than its partisan. The breadth of its base at the time of its formation, the strategic importance of the pre-split Communist Party of India (CPI) to the Sino-Soviet ideological conflict and Sino-Indian border dispute (which became one of the issues in the Sino-Soviet conflict) vested the split in India with a unique significance. The CPI(M) was a category by itself in the spectrum which had at least three other categories to the right of the CPI(M) — groups or splinter parties in semi-colonial countries as also in Europe resulting from the main party's alignment with the Soviet party groups in favour of Chinese positions still continuing in pro-Moscow parties and nuclei and cadres in revolutionary movements in colonial countries particularly

in Africa who favoured Chinese positions

The CPI had already committed itself to Soviet positions in the ideological debate and was therefore the sole legitimate party in India in the Soviet eyes. The breakaway wing formed a rival party on the basis of an agreed programme but not on the basis of an agreed ideological stand. The issue was left open because the new party comprised moderate and extreme leftists who had serious differences on the international general line. The split in the CPI did not represent a clear Sino-Soviet polarization. A few months after the CPI(M) had come into being the CPI asked it a leading question: are you neutral on questions of ideology? It also insinuated that if the CPI(M) had taken up the ideological issues for serious discussion at its foundation congress it would have broken up then and there.<sup>1</sup> The CPI was suggesting that the new party was following the Chinese line in spite of its formal neutrality.

Reacting to this the CPI(M)'s acting General Secretary E. M. S. Namboodiripad betrayed his anxiety to steer clear of both pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese positions. He said it was an incontrovertible fact that his party had not taken any position on the questions in dispute in the international communist movement. There was an explicit resolution of his party to that effect. He added:

The Rightist leadership however is anxious to deny that fact. In their eagerness to prove that although claiming to be undecided on such issues our party is in actual fact following the Chinese line, they refer to some of the organs of my party which have allegedly expressed themselves on the lines of the Chinese views.

My answer is that our party members and sympathizers knew very well that the party having taken no stand on these issues whatever views are expressed by individual leaders and members of their party are their own.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Editorial in *New Age*, 11 July 1965

<sup>2</sup> Statement 14 August 1965 text in *People's Democracy* 29 August 1965

There was little doubt that the new party had not taken any position in the Sino Soviet dispute. The split in 1964 was not directly related to the dispute as far as the break away wing was concerned though the majority right wing utilized Soviet support to fight the left wing. The CPC's silence over the April 1964 walk out of 32 leftist members from the CPI's National Council (which began the process leading to a formal split) the Genli convention later in July and the foundation congress of the new party in November cannot be dismissed as insignificant. Again when China carried out a nuclear explosion in 1964 the breakaway group did not greet the CPC while pro Chinese parties of Nepal and Ceylon sent messages of greetings.

The CPI(M) was to regret its opportunist procrastination later faced with an open revolt by its Andhra Pradesh unit against the ideological line decided by it the CPI (M) leadership admitted that

the non committal stand of the Central Committee on the ideological issues in the international dispute until they were discussed and rejected by the party was in reality utilized by this section of comrades more and more to commit themselves to each and every Chinese position. Positions were taken convictions were formed and confirmed—and what remained was to carry on the inner party struggle for the victory of these positions.\*

#### SWOOP ON LEADERSHIP

The blame for this does not lie entirely on the leadership. The party was barely seven weeks old when 900 of its leading functionaries including almost its entire leadership were held in an all India swoop directed by the federal government. The Politbureau had just gone into session on the

\* Peking Review 30 October 1960

\* Central Committee Why the Ultra left Deviation? Calcutta 1968 p 44

eve of the first meeting of the party's Central Committee when the arrests were made on 29-30 December 1964. The government was not obliged to try the detenus on specific charges because the arrests had been made under the emergency powers which it had assumed under the Defence of India Act. In a broadcast to the nation, Home Minister G. L. Nanda made the vague and incredible charge that the CPI(M) was preparing for armed revolution and guerrilla warfare to synchronize with a fresh Chinese attack, destroying the democratic government of India through a pincer movement which was hoped for but could not materialize in 1962.<sup>5</sup>

Nanda, in a statement to Parliament later, charged the CPI(M) with supporting China over Tibet and the Sino-Indian border question, disloyalty to the country during the Chinese invasion, dissemination of pro-Chinese and anti-national documents, splitting the CPI at Peking's call and preparation for subversion and violence.<sup>6</sup> But there was no evidence to substantiate these charges serious as they were.

The statement as well as his speech in Parliament on 12 March 1965 sought to establish that the CPI(M) did not support the government's stand on the border dispute with China because it had not called China aggressor and was agitating for a peaceful settlement through Indian initiative and that the party did not believe in social transformation through parliamentary and peaceful means and wanted to reverse the will of the people through violence. In an attempt to make these charges credible, a string of specific allegations was contrived to suggest that the CPI(M) had shown consistent loyalty and devotion to Peking, had split the CPI at Peking's bidding and 'as a requital' Peking had through out put the party in large funds through various clandestine channels, and that the party was preparing a

<sup>5</sup> All India Radio, 1 January 1965. Text of broadcast in *The Times of India* Bombay edition 2 January 1965.

<sup>6</sup> *Anti National Activities of Pro-Peking Communists and their Preparation for Subversion and Violence* Statement laid on Table of Parliament 18 February 1965.

Telengana like armed struggle to coincide with an anticipated Chinese invasion to catch the Indian government in a pincer movement.<sup>7</sup>

The charges were not proved and the Chinese attack never came but the detenus languished in prison for 17 months. Meanwhile, Nanda gave voters of Kerala State a chance to disown the left communists when he permitted detenus too to contest the mid term elections for the State Assembly. The CPI rejected an alliance with the CPI(M) but the latter emerged the single largest party (40 members in a house of 133) while the CPI ended with a miserable three seats.<sup>8</sup> With 28 of its legislators in jail without any prospect of release the State Assembly was deadlocked and had to be dissolved without even being convened. A CPI(M) led ministry with the participation of the Muslim League (16 seats) the Samyukta Socialists (13 seats) and Independents (11 seats) would have been possible but for the continued detention of the CPI(M) legislators who had won the election from prison.

The 1964 arrests were selective and appeared designed to promote a rift between moderates and extremists in the party. The two moderate members of its Politbureau Namboodiripad and Jyoti Basu were not arrested and Namboodiripad became the acting General Secretary because Sundaravva had been arrested. But the hard core left functioning from underground was trying to control the two Politbureau members who had been left free according to a report. An underground apparatus had started functioning and circulars purporting to be from the Party Centre challenging the right of the truncated Politbureau to conduct the party's affairs.

*Ib id.* For the CPI(M)'s refutation of the charges see Sundaravva Answers Nanda" *People Democracy* 12 and 19 September 1965.

<sup>8</sup> Press Information Bureau Government of India New Delhi. At the time of the split the CPI had 19 legislators the CPI(M) 10 legislators and one was uncommitted in the Kerala State Assembly.

were going out to the ranks<sup>9</sup>

The Central Committee met at Tenali in June 1966 after the release of detenus and reviewed the developments since the founding of the party. The resolution on the political report noted that in the wake of the "difficult situation" created by the arrests in 1964, those who had to shoulder the responsibility in the new situation and to regroup and reorganize the party, face hostile propaganda, and deal with complicated problems arising out of the Indo Pakistani conflict (September 1965). In addition, they had to face attacks from the CPI. The resolution was happy at the rising tempo of the mass movements amidst an all round crisis created by the policies of the ruling classes and the fiasco suffered by the CPI. It also saw in the developments a vindication of its stand on the Sino Indian border dispute and the Indo Pakistani conflict and demanded that the Indian government take the initiative for settling the disputes with neighbour<sup>10</sup>

#### IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES PUT OFF AGAIN

The Central Committee tried to come to grips with the ideological problems because several Politbureau members in prison were worried about some of the international developments and the CPC's stand on them. They had communicated their "sharp reactions" to some of the CPC's positions and steps to the Central Committee outside. On the release of detenus, the Politbureau initiated a discussion on the ideological issues at the first Central Committee meeting. But several members were not inclined to clinch the issues immediately and were critical of the Politbureau's draft note. In the light of the Central Committee discussions and in view of the proximity of the general elections, the Politbureau proposed deferring the issue until after the elections but

<sup>9</sup> Link, 25 April 1965

<sup>10</sup> Resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India, Calcutta, 1966, pp 4-15. The CPI(M) was still calling itself the "Communist Party of India."

<sup>11</sup> Central Committee, *Why the Ultra "Left" Deviation?* p 45



wanted to initiate a party discussion on the issues meantime, as promised at the Calcutta congress in 1964

The discussion could not be initiated because the Central Committee did not favour it immediately. It, however, noted that during the 18 months since the party congress "divergent views have been expressed by some fraternal Communist Parties of various countries on the Indian situation". But what had been said in the CPI(M)'s programme had been proved correct and sound and the party should be guided by the programme. All views divergent or deviating from it should be rejected. The State Committees were directed to 'publish the authoritative pronouncements of fraternal parties' but in doing so, it should be made clear that our party is not committed to any of them. Care should also be taken to avoid as much as possible the publication of such material as undermine faith in the socialist system.<sup>12</sup> It was not until after the Andhra revolt in 1968 that the Central Committee realized how complacent it had been in assessing the inner party ideological situation.<sup>13</sup>

The CPI(M)'s immediate preoccupation was the country's Fourth General Elections where it could demonstrate its strength and prove it was the country's real communist party. At the June meeting of the Central Committee, there was a large volume of opposition to the concept of united action and electoral fronts with the CPI. But the Central Committee rejected this argument and wanted the Congress reduced to minority alternative governments formed wherever possible, defeat of Congress in as many constituencies as possible and enhanced CPI(M) and democratic representation in Parliament and State legislatures. The defeat of the Congress was the foremost political task at the elections and it pledged to strive for alliances with all democratic parties.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India pp. 26-7

<sup>13</sup> Central Committee 'Why the Ultra-'Left' Deviation?' p. 46

<sup>14</sup> Resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India p. 25

## THE FOURTH GENERAL ELECTIONS

The pattern of the contests and the results reveal a determined CPI bid to disrupt the CPI(M) chances in its own mass bases and strongholds. The motive was to establish that the CPI(M) was not the major communist party. The CPI, with its unlimited financial resources, ran a large number of candidates out of proportion to its actual strength to increase its aggregate vote and to emerge the first of the two communist parties. Except in Kerala where the CPI(M) had taken the initiative for a seven party front against the Congress to bid for power and in tiny Tripura the two parties fought each other.

The results in the major communist bases provide an interesting commentary on the pattern of the split and the strength of the respective parties. In Andhra Pradesh, the CPI(M) had claimed only 65 Assembly seats for itself of which 45 were in the central districts and had conceded an equal number of seats to the CPI including 25 in the central districts. But the CPI insisted on 23 of the CPI(M) seats and the negotiations broke down. Both the parties extended their contests, the CPI(M) to 87 seats (including some contested by independents with its backing) and the CPI to 102. The CPI(M) lost deposits in 27 seats, the CPI in 50. The CPI(M) caused the defeat of nine candidates of the rival party while the CPI was responsible for the defeat of 16 CPI(M) candidates. For the Lok Sabha the dispute was over one seat but the CPI extended the contest to 8 new seats when talks broke down and the CPI(M) to three more seats. The CPI caused the defeat of the rival party in four seats, and the CPI(M) was responsible for the defeat of the CPI in two seats.

In West Bengal, the CPI(M) claimed 115 Assembly seats and offered the CPI 35 seats and suggested the seats other non Congress parties should contest. The deadlock was over 28 seats but the results proved the CPI(M) right. It turned out that the CPI had no right to contest the 28 seats it was claiming. It lost deposits in 12, surrendered four

seats to other parties, and polled fewer votes than the CPI(M) did in four others. In the remaining eight seats, the performance of both the parties was even in four while the CPI won four.

The CPI(M) was heading the United Left Front while the CPI became the junior partner in the People's United Left Front sponsored by Bangla Congress, a party of Congress defectors. The two fronts clashed with each other in 78 seats. The United Front was responsible for Congress victory in 21 seats and the Peoples United Left Front, in 37 seats.

The party strength in the assembly (of 280 seats) was Congress, 127, CPI(M) 43, Bangla Congress, 34, CPI, 16 Forward Bloc, 13, Samyukta Socialist Party, 7, Praja Socialist, Party 7, and others, 33. The CPI thus found itself the fourth party with 15.36 per cent of vote against the CPI(M)'s 17.77.

In Kerala, after its debacle in 1965, the CPI was in a chastened mood and could not disrupt the United Front. The CPI(M) emerged the first party with 54 of the 133 seats and the CPI found itself on par with the Samyukta Socialist Party with 20 seats.<sup>15</sup>

For the State assemblies, the CPI(M) won 127 seats in the country (out of a total of 3,487 seats) and the CPI, 122. In terms of votes the CPI(M) contesting fewer seats than the CPI secured 45.55 per cent against the CPI's 42.3 per cent.

But the CPI(M), with its intensive gains in West Bengal and Kerala, emerged the second party in one State and the first party in another. In the 1969 mid-term poll the CPI(M) emerged the first party in West Bengal. The CPI is not even the second party in any State. The CPI(M) is the dominant partner of the non-Congress coalition ministries in West Bengal and Kerala while the CPI is just a hanger-on.

<sup>15</sup> Central Committee Election Review Communist Party of India (Marxist), Calcutta 1967.

## VISION OF 'POLITICAL CRISIS'

The CPI(M) leadership was awed by the stunning Congress rout at the polls and the emergence of non Congress ministers in eight of the States, covering over half the country's population. The CPI(M)'s own sweep to power in West Bengal and Kerala left the leadership dazed as the gushing optimism of its election reverses would suggest. It said:

The maturing economic crisis, as the post election political scene evidently demonstrates, has passed into the political sphere, ushering in a political crisis, which was directly connected with the crisis of world capitalism. Our party, as the Marxist Leninist party of the Indian working class, can ill afford to be oblivious to this changed situation if it is to play its vanguard role in shaping the events and leading the struggle'<sup>16</sup> The imminence of a fancied political crisis, the possibility of non Congress governments in the States, and the ultimate prospect of a non Congress democratic coalition government at the Centre compromised the CPI (M)'s fight against revisionism.

The Central Committee's review of April 1967 noted a deepening of the world capitalist crisis and the resultant sharpening of the world contradictions. The contradiction between national liberation movement and imperialism, symbolized by Viet Nam, was the focus of all contradictions at the present time<sup>17</sup>. In India, the deepening economic crisis has set in motion a political crisis which was still in its initial stages but was sure to mature. This opened up new prospects for the party. The contradiction between foreign imperialism and the country as a whole and its intensification would have its impact on the situation in India<sup>18</sup>. In the face of the crisis and the upsurge, the immediate task was to win allies through determined struggle, to defend unity and the United Front governments of West

<sup>16</sup> *New Situation and Party's Tasks*, Calcutta, 1967, pp 4-6

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p 13

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p 14

Bengal and Kerala and fight for alternative policies<sup>19</sup> Carried to its logical end, it meant exploring the possibilities of a minimum agreed governmental programme at the Centre for the democratic and left parties

The party's programme had recognized the need for interim slogans to meet a changing situation. While fighting for the long term objective of a new democratic State and a government based on the alliance of the working class and the peasantry the party was to strive for "governments pledged to carry out the modest programme of giving immediate relief to the people and thus strengthen the mass movement"<sup>20</sup>

#### CENTRE STATES ISSUE

But the 1967 review of the Central Committee made a significant departure from this position when it raised non-Congressism and non-Congress governments to the level of a philosophy. The Centre was still in Congress hands and the federal equation in the Indian Constitution is weighted in favour of the Centre. But the CPI(M) was trying to suggest that the non-Congress governments in States (at least five of the eight were rightist dominated combinations of opportunist elements and the CPI(M) was supporting three of the six while playing the dominant role in two) were playing a key role in challenging the Centre. Commenting on the question of Centre States relations, the review said

If it is a question of some sort of "truce" that is being proposed between the Central Government and the non-Congress governments, one can understand it and decide one's attitude to it. It is also because the ruling party in power at the Centre has ceased to be that strong, powerful and holding monopoly sway as to frontally and imme-

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid* pp 601 and 78

<sup>20</sup> *Programme of the Communist Party of India* Calcutta, 1965, p 53

diately challenge the opposition parties and their non Congress governments in eight States the opposition parties, too have not acquired the requisite strength and necessary mass sanctions to frontally and immediately challenge the authority of the Central Congress Government Both mark time avoid head on conflicts for the present and move cautiously with circumspection in formulating and practising the respective government policies<sup>21</sup>

It also implies that the Centre State relations were an antagonistic contradiction an extension of the class struggle and two warring camps (the Centre and the non Congress States) were observing a period of truce Centre State tension no doubt surfaced with the emergence of non Congress governments in some of the States but the conflict was sought to be pictured as the very epitome of the political crisis the party was talking of 'the second important manifestation of the developing political crisis, which has come to the forefront with the election results, is what is now a days frequently and commonly talked of as Centre State relations'<sup>22</sup> And further 'In other words the crisis that has gripped the capitalist path of development in India has now projected itself into the political superstructure namely the Federal Structure of the Indian Union A stage is reached when the struggle from the economic sphere has passed into the political sphere'<sup>23</sup>

The result of this distorted understanding was the series of "shadow confrontations" between the Kerala and West Bengal governments and the Centre on peripheral issues to divert the attention of the people from the failure of the State governments The fight for greater autonomy for States degenerated in practice into cheap sloganeering

<sup>21</sup> *New Situation and Party's Tasks* p 65

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p 47

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p 49

## MORATORIUM ON CLASS STRUGGLE

The CPI(M)'s participation in the united front governments of Kerala and West Bengal was rationalized in abstractions. "In clear class terms, our party's participation in such governments is one specific form of struggle to win more and more people and more and more allies for the proletariat and its allies in the struggle for the cause of People's Democracy."<sup>1</sup> But in practice this became the sole form struggle. The party was leading a motley combination of political adventurers and opportunists and as it turned out the record of the two ministries was depressingly poor. Running these ministries at all costs became the preoccupation of the party because the line had been set by the Central Committee. "Hence it is imperative that our party realizes that its immediate future, in no small way depends on how it plays its worthy part in running the two state governments of Kerala and West Bengal."<sup>2</sup>

The party seemed to have staked everything on the two ministries and class struggle took the back seat. "Since the fortunes of the entire party at the present stage of development, are closely linked with the successful running of these ministries and the role our party plays in them, the whole party throughout the country will have to be mobilized to back the agreed programmes of these two non-Congress ministries and to see that they are earnestly implemented."<sup>3</sup> In effect it meant a moratorium on struggles even in the States where it was not in power. Being in power in two States and in opposition in the rest and in opposition at the Centre imposed peculiar constraints on the party's style of functioning. An agitation on a set of demands in a State where it is not in power might result in the Congress Party launching an agitation on the same set of demands in the States where the CPI(M) is in power. To this extent, the party's participation in the two ministries compromised its

<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 70

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p. 67

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

position elsewhere

The party's premium was no longer on extra parliamentary struggles based on mass action. A short cut to power at the Centre obviating the need for class struggle was implied in the line 'It is this struggle of the democratic parties and groups in different legislatures and among the people in Parliament and in States with non Congress democratic governments that alone can pave the way for consolidating and widening the unity achieved by the democratic forces and open the prospects of realizing the slogan of a non Congress democratic government at the Centre'<sup>27</sup> The two non Congress ministries in Kerala and West Bengal were to be the principal instrument in the hands of the people in the revolution to come.

#### DRIFT TO PARLIAMENTARISM

Thus the CPI(M) had settled for respectable parliamentarism by bringing its tactical line in focus with that of the 'revisionist' CPI. Both the parties had settled for peaceful transition. It would be of interest to recall the assertion of a top CPI(M) theoretician back in 1966 to the effect that there was no basic difference between his party and the CPI on this issue. Replying to the charge of the Home Minister G. L. Nanda, that the CPI(M) did not believe in the 'new orientation' in the international communist movement regarding peaceful transition to socialism, M. Bisavapunniah wrote from prison that as Nanda stated there has been a new orientation in the world communist movement on this question and the same had been incorporated in the Moscow Declaration of 1957, the Moscow Statement of 81 Parties in 1960 and such other documents.

It is precisely on the basis of this new assessment that we have introduced this new concept of peaceful transition to socialism in our party programme. The formulation

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79



of this concept as well as the general warning against the dangers of violence usually unleashed by the ruling classes is exactly similar to the one put forth in the programme of the Dangeites. Then where does the question of our opposition to the "new orientation" and some other supporting it arise? It is an outright slander."<sup>8</sup>

#### EXTREMIST CHALLENGE — NAVALBARI

Even as the Central Committee was reviewing the election results and drawing up its resolution *New Situation and Party's Tasks* the party's programme, political line and its participation in the ministries was coming under a two-pronged attack — from an extreme left group in West Bengal within and from the Chinese party from without. The Central Committee decided to take action against the ultra-left faction which had attacked the party leadership for participating in the coalition government in West Bengal and practising "Dange revisionism without Dange". This phenomenon was not confined to West Bengal and similar extremist trends were present in Kerala, the Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.<sup>9</sup> The Central Committee was still discussing this trend when Radio Peking quereered the pitch for the leadership by declaring that there is no Communist Party of India. There are only certain individual communists.<sup>10</sup>

Some left extremist elements in West Bengal who had been defying the party for nearly two years now had been guiding the local party units and organizing a peasant movement in Navalbari area for quite some time. Soon after the United Front ministry had assumed office in West Bengal in February 1967 these extremists called a peasant conference in March and came to the conclusion that the United Front cannot solve any of the land problems and the new

<sup>8</sup> M. Basavapunnal, Reply to Nanda 7, *People's Democracy* 30 January 1966.

<sup>9</sup> *Link*, 23 April 1967.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*.

government could at best give some relief to the working class. They called for seizure of land, the setting up of liberated areas.<sup>31</sup>

Needless to say, the CPI(M)-dominated United Front ministry of West Bengal was put to utmost embarrassment. Stern repressive measures to crush the uprising would expose it to the charge that it was no different from any bourgeois landlord government and by joining the ministry, the CPI(M) had compromised on class struggle. Failure to put down the minuscule revolt would provide the Centre an alibi for dismissing the ministry on the ground that it had failed to maintain law and order, which was a State subject. The CPI(M) leadership was facing its moment of truth. Its entire tactics of the united front with other parties and the party's participation in the ministries were being challenged. The party was being forced to declare clearly whether it believed in armed struggle as a tactic or not when it had just settled for peaceful parliamentarism and was entertaining hopes of participating in a non-Congress coalition (democratic government) at the Centre. The Naxalbari revolt was crushed in no time but the challenge from the extreme left grew and Naxalbari had acquired a certain symbolism.

The Chinese read great revolutionary significance in the Naxalbari struggle and called for overthrow of the Indian government. On the eve of the general elections in February 1967, Peking had seen the "storm" of the mass struggle "making a violent assault on the rule of the Indian reactionaries."<sup>32</sup> After the elections, Peking saw the Indian government becoming "more reactionary than ever" and "still more subservient to U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionism." But in several States, the one-party rule of the Congress had ended, rendering the Congress "ineffective in the face of people's resistance." Peking also attacked the "Dange clique" and the CPI(M) and said the Kerala and West Ben-

<sup>31</sup> "The Growth of Adventurism in West Bengal," Central Committee's Information document, *On Left Deviation*, Calcutta 1967, p. 36.

<sup>32</sup> *Peking Review*, 24 February 1967.

gal governments were being used by the Indian government to contain an oncoming revolution<sup>23</sup> An earlier Peking commentary was more explicit in its attack on the CPI(M)'s participation in the two ministries and its support to three other non Congress ministries and the CPI's participation in five

#### MAOIST LINE FOR INDIA

A broadcast titled "The Dange Clique's Intrigue to Sabotage the Indian People's Revolution Will Fail," said that Kerala and West Bengal 'are also components of the State apparatus of Indian big landlords and big bourgeoisie. As long as they are under direct control of the Central government there can be no essential reformation and the capitalist and feudal relations of production can in no way be fundamentally shaken." The broadcast observed that the Centre can topple these ministries any time, as it did in Kerala in 1959. The revolutionary line for India was laid down clearly "These facts prove that without a people's revolution, without a seizure of political power by violence, without smashing the old State apparatus there can be no change whatsoever in the social system nor in the nature of the real social reform."<sup>24</sup>

In June, as the Naxalbari campaign was gaining momentum, Peking renewed its call for armed struggle to "overthrow" the government and "forcibly seize power." The call came through a *People's Daily* article credited to a "Red Guard," and repeatedly broadcast by the Radio Peking.<sup>25</sup> This was followed by warm applause for the "revolutionaries of the CPI(M) who had deserted the united front government' in West Bengal which had become a "tool of Indian reactionaries." A more elaborate exposition of the Maoist line for India was available in the *People's Daily* article on the significance of Naxalbari poetically captioned 'Spring

<sup>23</sup> *Peking Review*, 14 July 1967

<sup>24</sup> *Radio Peking*, 11 May 1967

<sup>25</sup> *Radio Peking* 10 June 1967 (and subsequent transmissions)

"Thunder over India" Navalbani was the 'prelude to a violent revolution by hundreds of millions of people throughout India but to achieve it, the Indian revolution must take the road of relying on the peasants, establishing base areas in the countryside persisting in protracted armed struggles and using the countryside to encircle and finally capture the cities' The specific feature of the Indian revolution, like that of the Chinese revolution, was armed revolution fighting armed counter-revolution, which was the only way for complete revolution Since the "reactionary forces were temporarily stronger than the revolutionary forces," the Indian revolutionaries must use "the whole set of flexible strategy and tactics of people's war' and persevere in protracted armed struggle"<sup>36</sup>

Chinese commentaries on India also maintained an intermittent attack on the "revisionist" lapses of the two communist parties, openly calling for revolt against their leaderships An attack on the CPI(M) said it had betrayed the Telengana struggle of 1946-51 and was about to betray the Navalbani struggle Namboodinpad, Chief Minister of Kerala, was a special target The Kerala communists "babbled" much about the 'parliamentary road" but in fact stood "firm against the peasant armed struggle" Hankering after office and seeking to get themselves elected, the Kerala communists through the State government were enforcing "the fascist rule of the Central government" The Kerala government was only part of the State machine "operating in the interests of the landlords and the bureaucratic comprador bourgeoisie" which also flirted with US imperialism Namboodinpad was "an apologist and protector of the international agents of the US imperialism"<sup>37</sup>

#### CALL FOR A NEW PARTY

The climax was a call for a new party of genuine Marxism-Leninism guided by Mao's thought A commentary titled

<sup>36</sup> People's Daily, 5 July 1967, Peking Review, 14 July 1967

<sup>37</sup> Peking Review, 8 September 1967

Let the Red Flag of Navalbhai Ily Still Higher' urged the "revolutionaries in the Indian Communist Party" and "the revolutionary people of India" to draw a line between themselves and the revisionist line politically, ideologically and organizationally and to wage "a resolute struggle against modern revisionism centred on Soviet revisionist clique"<sup>28</sup>

#### CPI(M)'S RESPONSE

The CPI(M) leadership responded to the twin challenge with two separate documents adopted by the Central Committee, taking care not to suggest that the extremist trend in the party was not directly inspired by the Chinese. The resolution on left deviation endorsed the line given in its documents and tactics about elections and functioning of the ministries and rejected the formulations of the 'left opportunists' which challenged the entire party line, 'its basic programmatic assumptions its organizational principles and substitute in its place a federation of autonomous groups each having the right to advocate and start any form of struggle when it likes'. But the Central Committee could not help admitting the seriousness of the challenge.

The left deviation is not just confined to a few cussed individuals. It is an ideological disease of frustrated individuals and it affects also young militants whose militancy is not tempered by the fire of class struggle and disciplined outlook. Inside our party there are many militant honest members who are drawn towards the pseudo revolutionary line because it appears to be militant.

But the main cause of the attraction is due to the growing economic crisis and desperation, impatience and frustration growing and the mass struggles as yet have not developed to the pitch where they could be seen as the effective means of fighting the present regime. Lack of

<sup>28</sup> People's Daily, 7 August 1967, Peking Review, 11 August 1967.

Marxism Leninism, failure of the party to transform the militancy into revolutionary fervour—all create a situation in which the appeal of left doctrinarism remains<sup>39</sup>

#### DIFFERENCES WITH CHINESE PARTY

The more significant of the two was the resolution setting out the party's differences with the Communist Party of China on certain fundamental issues of programme and policy. At this stage, the CPI(M) was still to decide its position on the ideological issues but the Chinese assessments of the Indian situation and their repeated attacks on the CPI(M) called for a reply.

The CPI(M)'s analysis of the Chinese pronouncements revealed serious differences with the Communist Party of China (CPC) "on a number of issues connected with the Indian revolution"<sup>40</sup>. The Central Committee thought the CPC practically believed that the CPI(M)'s programme was fundamentally wrong in its vital aspects, that its assessments of the Indian situation and political tactical line worked by it was wrong and reformist, that the CPI(M) was not a genuine communist party while the extremists expelled from it were the real revolutionaries, and that the CPI(M)'s political line was to be denounced openly.<sup>41</sup>

The differences between the CPI(M) and the CPC related to three issues: the first was programmatic, namely, the class character of the Indian State and government, the role and character of different sections of the Indian bourgeoisie and its attitude to imperialism, etc., second, to the actual economic-political situation in the country, the nature of the class contradictions and the tactics to be employed, and

<sup>39</sup> "On Left Deviation or Left Opportunism," Central Committee Resolution adopted at Madurai 18-27 August 1967, *On Left Deviation*, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Calcutta, 1967.

<sup>40</sup> Central Committee, "Divergent Views Between Our Party and the CPC on Certain Fundamental Issues of Programme and Policy," *Central Committee Resolutions*, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Calcutta, 1967, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*.

third to the question of fraternal relations that should govern two communist parties

According to the Central Committee the CPC thought the Indian bourgeoisie was a parasitic class fostered by the British and represented the comprador bureaucratic capital in India and the Congress government was the chief instrument and mouthpiece of this comprador bureaucratic monopoly capitalist class For some time after independence Nehru had to a degree acted on behalf of the non comprador non bureaucratic and non monopolistic sections but of late had gone over to imperialism as a result of the sharpening of internal class contradictions as Chiang Kai shek had done in 1927 This suggested that the revolution in India should be aimed principally against the British and American imperialism though the struggle against feudal landlordism was fundamental

But the Central Committee thought that contemporary Indian capitalism and the Indian bourgeoisie was very different from the pre liberation capitalist development in China and the Chinese bourgeoisie<sup>42</sup> Besides the place and role of the comprador bourgeoisie and its bureaucratic capital in pre liberation China was different from the role and place of the big bourgeoisie in contemporary India Bureaucratic capital was a specific feature of the Chiang Kai shek regime Though bureaucratic capitalist tendencies were present in India they were by no means the principal characteristic of the situation it argued

The Central Committee defended the assessment made by the party programme — that the Indian government was a bourgeois landlord government led by the big bourgeoisie which was compromising and collaborating with foreign monopoly capital and that being by its very nature counter revolutionary the bourgeoisie had no place in the people's democratic front in spite of the occasional contradictions it had with foreign monopolies

Another point of difference here related to the appraisal of the Nehru government prior to 1957 The Central Com

<sup>42</sup> *Ib id* p 4

mittee did not agree with the Chinese view that the Congress government (that is the Nehru government) represented the non big Indian bourgeoisie till 1959 but became an instrument of the big monopolists thereafter

The fourth point of difference related to the factors making for the change in the Nehru government's foreign policy after 1959. The Chinese assessment was that the Nehru government, representing the non big bourgeoisie interests and therefore playing an anti imperialist role up to 1959, had amidst sharpened internal contradictions become the representative of the anti national big bourgeoisie and the big landlords and a lackey of imperialism.

The Central Committee disagreed with both these premises. The government was not a "stooge," "lackey," or "puppet" of imperialism. Briefly, while the CPI(M)'s programme characterized the Indian State as one of the bourgeoisie and the landlords, led by the big bourgeoisie and pursuing a path of development in collaboration with foreign monopoly capital, the Communist Party of China thought it was a puppet government led by bureaucratic capitalism and run by it mainly in the interests of imperialism and reconciled to parasitic existence on the crumbs thrown by foreign masters.

On the current political situation in India, the Central Committee found that the Chinese assessment was totally at variance with the CPI(M)'s contained in the resolution *New Situation and Party's Tasks*. 'It is virtually negating our premise of a deepening economic crisis and the initial stages of a political crisis, and in its place substitution of the premise of an already matured revolutionary situation and a revolutionary crisis, demanding the highest revolutionary forms of struggle.'<sup>43</sup>

#### RESENTMENT OVER INTERFERENCE

The Central Committee objected to this "utter violation of every Marxist Leninist tenet" on the question of assessing

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p 15



a given political situation and the tactics to be adopted and was advocating armed struggle in India 'This stand of theirs is neither theoretically correct nor tallies with our experience in our movement in our country' <sup>44</sup>

The Chinese party's failure to discuss these differences on a party to party to level before expressing them openly was considered extraordinary by the Central Committee which also objected to Chinese attacks on the CPI(M)'s leadership and support to groups and individuals against whom disciplinary action had been taken for anti party activities. Particularly objectionable to the Central Committee was the Chinese support to the expelled extremists of the Navalbani movement.

#### DRAFT ON IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES

Technically, the CPI(M) had not taken its stand yet on the ideological questions dividing the international communist movement. But the Central Committee was joining issue with the CPC on some of them. The Central Committee also adopted a draft document for the ideological discussion. This draft was adopted by a special plenum of the party at Burdwan in April 1968.

The Central Committee's draft revealed the CPI(M)'s agreement with the CPC up to the point the latter attacked "modern revisionism" on issues like war and peace, peaceful coexistence, peaceful economic competition, peaceful transition, Stalin, concepts of party of the people and the State of the whole people, the principle of independence of communist parties and non interference in each other's affairs. In fact, the draft changed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) with responsibility for the prevailing disunity in the world communist movement while 'hailing the CPC's yeomen service' in fighting the "menace of modern revisionism and in defence of Marxism Leninism" <sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> *Central Committee's Draft for Ideological Discussion*, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Calcutta, 1967, p. 35.

But the CPI(M) disagreed with the CPC positions on issues before the world communist movement as well as on the Indian situation. For instance, the CPI(M) did not agree with the CPC's outright rejection of unity in action between different socialist States and world communist parties against imperialism. Again the CPI(M), while denouncing the class collaborationist and revisionist policies of the CPSU leadership, did not endorse the CPC's charge of US-Soviet collaboration for sharing world hegemony and perpetuation of world domination. The CPI(M), through a separate resolution, had already expressed disagreement with the CPC's assessment of the Indian situation.

#### DEMARCATON FROM SOVIET POSITIONS

Though it took the CPI(M) three years to initiate a discussion on the ideological questions, its 1964 programme had to take positions on ideological questions connected with the Indian revolution. Recalling this, the draft claimed that the CPI(M) had demarcated itself "from the crassest class collaborationist and utterly revisionist line" of the CPI on every issue relating to the stage and strategy of the Indian revolution. But the CPSU leadership's positions on all the basic questions of the Indian communist movement coincided with those of the "Dangeite revisionists" and this was corroborated "by a spate of statements, articles, and writings in the Soviet press" and "by a series of steps and actions of the Soviet government regarding Indian affairs, by the massive demonstrative support display at the CPI's Seventh Congress by 'host of fraternal delegates from abroad under the leadership of the CPSU'". Also, these delegates had endorsed the CPI's programme and policy resolutions as "Marxist-Leninist and proletarian internationalist". (In all, 24 fraternal parties were represented at the CPI's Seventh Congress and the CPSU delegation was led by B. N.

Ponomarev, Secretary of the Central Committee)<sup>47</sup>

The CPI(M) was suggesting that it had no outside guidance in drawing up its programme and it was now projecting its "correct understanding" to the remaining ideological issues in debate and to arrive at its own conclusions. The Central Committee drafts stand on the various issues is summed up below

New Epoch "the international socialist system is becoming the decisive factor determining the course of world development' in the epoch of "national liberation and socialist revolutions rapid decay of disintegration and colonialism titanic class battles between forces of moribund capitalism and of socialism collapse of imperialism and the final victory of socialism and communism on a world scale" Imperialism had weakened on a world scale and the forces of revolution (including countries of the socialist system) were powerful enough to defeat imperialism and its allies. But the process of mobilizing and uniting these forces involved "a revolutionary combination of socialist diplomacy, calculated to isolate the most reactionary imperialist groups, with the use of the armed might of socialist camp against such reactionary powers as resort to aggression on peace loving countries or try to down the national liberation movement in blood' This also required unity of the international communist movement"<sup>48</sup> The CPI(M) was demarcating itself from the Soviet general line which did not consider imperialism a serious danger any more

*On Contradictions* The draft deprecated the "un Marxian and opportunist tendency to treat the contradiction between the socialist camp and imperialism as almost the only contradiction' and overlooking or underestimating the other contradictions, and also the advocacy of readymade and stereotyped methods of solving the fundamental contradictions, i.e. the contradiction between the socialist and imperialist camps, the method of peaceful transition to solve

<sup>47</sup> *New Age*, 20 December 1964 and 3 January 1965

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid* ११ 8-9

the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and the like”

The draft identified the contradiction between the camp of socialism and the camp of imperialism as the central one among the fundamental contradictions. But notwithstanding this, another contradiction, between imperialism and the oppressed nations had got accentuated and assumed the acutest form and the modern revisionists did not realize this.<sup>49</sup>

*On War and Peace Lenin's Thesis of Imperialism* “The radically changed correlation of forces on a world place in favour of socialism and against imperialism in the present epoch has certainly opened the possibilities of preventing, averting, and postponing a particular war, or a war with a particularly destructive technique and preserving peace to that extent. But wars can be eliminated and lasting peace secured only when imperialism is eliminated. As long as imperialism exists, there will be soil for wars of aggression.”<sup>50</sup> This again was an attack on the Soviet position.

*On Disarmament and Banning of Nuclear Weapons* The draft assailed the “pacifist, non class and revisionist concept of disarmament” implied in the Soviet attitude to test ban treaty, proliferation of nuclear weapons and banning of nuclear weapons, and the “perfidious” refusal of atomic know how to China. Soviet leaders “risked a rift and even a split in the socialist camp over the issue.” Soviet attitude was based “on the unwarranted premise that their collaboration with the Anglo American imperialism” was a greater guarantee of peace than the unity of the socialist camp, its strength and its struggle against imperialism.<sup>51</sup>

*On Peaceful Coexistence* “The interpretation of the concept of peaceful coexistence between socialist and imperialist States is reduced by the revisionists to mean that the chief struggle between the two systems is in the main peaceful economic competition and thus conceal the truth that

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, pp 9-10

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p 17

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, pp 19-21

the struggle between the two systems comprises every field of economic, political, ideological, and military nature" But no Marxist Leninist can accept "such an opportunist interpretation and practice of the concept of peaceful coexistence, since it seeks to conceal the constant imperialist aggression and to appease the aggressor, and it disarms the revolutionary proletariat of the world in its uncompromising fight against imperialism — economic, political, ideological, and military"<sup>52</sup>

*On Forms of Transition to Socialism* The draft gave qualified support to the concept — "there is no denying the fact that the proletariat would prefer to achieve the revolution and win power by peaceful means" and the CPI(M)'s own programme had incorporated it — but thesis advocated by the 'modern revisionists' had nothing in common "with either Marxism Leninism or its tested method of examining the question concretely, i.e. the relation of the State and its police military apparatus. The enunciation and advocacy of this utterly revisionist thesis is nothing but giving encomiums to the bourgeoisie and its peace loving and democratic character, intended to ideologically disarm and disorientate the revolutionary proletariat, and a downright betrayal of Marxist Leninist teachings on the State and revolution"<sup>53</sup>

*The Concept of National Democracy and Non Capitalist Path* — the thesis of the so-called non-capitalist path and National Democracy — as a new transitional form for socialist revolution — negates the concept of proletarian hegemony and advocates joint hegemony alongwith the bourgeoisie to effect socialist transition — distorts Leninist concept regarding the new possibilities of skipping the stage of capitalist relations for backward countries, to reach socialism" The thesis of non capitalist path paints Soviet assistance to capitalists of newly liberated countries as aid for the non capitalist path, compromises the principle of proletarian hegemony, and advocates the "opportunist concept of the joint hegemony of workers and the capitalists — some-

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p 24

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p 30

times even the hegemony of the capitalists. The CPI(M) programme had already rejected this<sup>54</sup>

*On the Trio that Works out into a Full Fledged Line of Class Collaboration* The bankrupt revisionist line of the Soviet leaders has assumed such absurd proportions that it is glaringly seen and understood as more and more a line of conciliation, compromise and collaboration between the two great powers, a line which objectively preserves and perpetuates the international status quo and as a line which summarily abandons the revolutionary class struggle of the international proletariat.

However, our criticism of the compromising and collaborationist policies pursued by the revisionist leadership of the CPSU and the Soviet State does in no way imply the totally erroneous idea that the Soviet Union has become an ally of US imperialism or is working for sharing world hegemony with American imperialism and for the division of spheres of influence in the world. As this is tantamount to nothing short of placing the Soviet Union outside the socialist camp<sup>55</sup>

#### BETWEEN MOSCOW AND PEKING

The draft dealt with the issue of the people's State and people's party in the Soviet Union, the issue of material incentives in the Soviet Union, the issue of Stalin and the cult of personality and Yugoslav revisionism (attacking the CPSU's positions) before dealing with the slogan of unity in action.

The draft said that ruling out in principle the slogan of unity in action with political parties or States on the ground the parties or States in question were headed by revisionists restricted the scope of unity with all those with whom it was possible to unite while singling out and isolating the most immediate and hated enemy. So the draft wanted the CPC to test the Soviet *bona fides* by agreeing to unity in action.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid pp 31-2

<sup>55</sup> Ibid pp 33-4

in Viet Nam because "outright rejection of the slogan unprincipled on the ground it implies unity between revisionists and Marxist Leninists is objectively, tantamount to making a present of that State and its people to the revisionists instead of isolating the revisionists"<sup>56</sup>

On the issue of correct relations between fraternal parties, the draft expressed resentment at the tendency of the "big parties" to subject some other parties to the reactionary slander of being "led" either by Peking or Moscow and to try to impose a political tactical line on them. The sound proletarian internationalist principle of non interference in the internal affairs of other parties was being violated by 'big parties,' "either under the pretext of some creative Marxism of theirs or under the totally erroneous notion that they alone can think, not only for themselves, but for all other parties of the world" the draft said, identifying the CPSU and the CPC directly as the errants in this connection<sup>57</sup>. The Central Committee rounded off its draft with a call for simultaneous struggle against revisionism and left sectarian deviation<sup>58</sup>.

#### ANDHRA PLENUM REJECTS DRAFT

The Central Committee's draft was the basis of the debate which culminated in the all India plenum at Burdwan in April 1968. But serious organizational irregularities had preceded the plenum. The Central Committee had released the draft to the press before it was made available to the party for discussion. State level plenums to discuss the draft were held only in Andhra Pradesh, the Punjab, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Jammu and Kashmir, and West Bengal. Only nine of the 16 districts had held district level plenums and no State plenum was held possibly because the leadership feared defeat. The Tamil Nadu plenum had passed the draft by nine votes and the Kerala plenum by 12 votes while the

<sup>56</sup> Ibid pp 47-8

<sup>57</sup> Ibid p 51

<sup>58</sup> Ibid pp 52-4

Andhra Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir plenums had rejected it outright<sup>59</sup>

In Andhra Pradesh, it was not mere rejection of the official draft. Contrary to the Central Committee's directive against reopening debate on the party programme or the tactical line,<sup>60</sup> the Andhra Pradesh unit challenged not only the ideological draft but, as the Politbureau later noted, was declaring its fundamental opposition to "a whole series of basic questions concerning the Indian revolutionary movement as well as the international communist movement"<sup>61</sup>

The Andhra Pradesh plenum, held in January 1968, threw the official draft out 158 votes to 52, eight staying neutral. It demanded that the Central Committee should prepare a new draft on the basis of the general line proposed by the Chinese party in its letter of 14 June 1963 and its nine comments on the CPSU's Open Letter of 14 July 1963 and also on the basis of the two resolutions placed before it by T. Nagi Reddy and C. Pulla Reddy, and Kolla Venkiah.<sup>62</sup>

The resolution of the Andhra Pradesh plenum was based on an examination of all the issues related to the Indian revolution from the standpoint of the general line proposed by the CPC. It said the Central Committee's draft did not try to expose the "treacherous character of the Soviet revisionist leadership," which had weakened and disrupted the international communist movement, the socialist camp, the liberation movements, and the world working class struggles and "has thus become a counter revolutionary force." The draft tried to find 'non-class reasons' for Soviet revision-

<sup>59</sup> Link, 12 April 1968

<sup>60</sup> *Central Committee Draft for Ideological Discussion*, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Calcutta 1967, p. 1

<sup>61</sup> *Politbureau Letter to Andhra Comrades*, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Calcutta 1968, p. 1

<sup>62</sup> *Andhra Plenum Rejects the Neo-Revisionist Ideological Draft*, Vijayawada, 1968, p. 3. This collection contains text of the Andhra Pradesh Plenum's resolution as well as the two resolutions submitted by T. Nagi Reddy and C. Pulla Reddy, and Kolla Venkiah.



ism without going into the class roots of the Soviet leadership

The resolution also said the draft had failed to notice the Soviet leadership's effort "to destroy socialism and to restore capitalism" and "to convert the Soviet State into an ordinary bourgeois State and the Soviet Communist Party into an ordinary bourgeois party" The Soviet leadership was functioning "as the political representative of the new capitalist forces having special rights and as political representative of this privileged stratum"

Because of this newly acquired bourgeois character, the Soviet leadership has been working as the enemy of the socialist system of the socialist camp and the world communist movement and as an ally of the imperialists The Soviet leadership was implementing its line of collaboration with American imperialism on a world scale against the revolutionary movements, against China and the world working class movement and was thereby colluding with American imperialism for world hegemony and for sharing spheres of influence

The role of national liberation movements was the focal point of the Andhra Pradesh plenum's attack on the official draft which had "refused to see neither the decisive role of the national liberation struggles in the new epoch nor the truth that to make these national liberation struggles achieve complete success, People's War is the only form and that there is no other way" The plenum supported the Chinese rejection of the slogans of "common programme" "common unity," and "unity in action" which were part of a deceitful Soviet move "to enter into the ranks of Marxists Leninists and in the ranks of National Liberation struggles so as to carry out greater disruption" The CPC was in the 'vanguard' of the struggle against imperialism and modern revisionism and through its cultural revolution was trying to enrich and complete the socialist revolution the Chinese people's Republic was functioning as the revolutionary centre of the world communist movement but the draft did not recognize this the resolution said

## PROGRAMME, POLITICAL LINE REOPENED

The two resolutions placed before the plenum, by T Nagi Reddy and C Pulla Reddy, and by Kolla Venkiah, covered the same ground and did not differ in essentials. Both of them subjected the Central Committee's draft on ideological questions to elaborate criticism and extended the debate to cover ideological positions on which the party's 1964 programme, its political line enunciated in the review *New Situation and Party's Tasks* (April 1967) and the Central Committee's resolution on differences with the CPC (August 1967) were based. In sum the two resolutions endorsed the CPC's assessment of the Indian situation and the path of people's war based on an application of the Chinese experience to India.

The Nagi Reddy Pulla Reddy resolution for instance suggested that the Indian big business was 'acquiring a marked comprador nature'<sup>63</sup> and challenged the Central Committee that the comprador bourgeoisie occupied only a minor place in the set up and it was "the industrial bourgeoisie which today has emerged as a powerful force holding the leading position in the State and government and not the comprador element'

The Andhra leaders questioned another formulation of Central Committee—that though the Indian bourgeoisie was making concessions to imperialism, "every concession and each step of surrender should not be equated with "final surrender" and that the Indian big business had strength to resist imperialist pressures. The document *New Situation and Party's Tasks* had spoken of "big socialist investments, especially from the Soviet Union, the offer of still larger aid and other trade and economic relations developed between the Soviet Union and the Indian big bourgeoisie" as 'important factors to reckon with' and that "at least in the immediate future," the Indian bourgeoisie "may acquire added vigour against increasing US pressures and stave off econo-

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p 48

mic crisis' This was a departure from the understanding of the party programme which had noted growing dependence of the economy on Western assistance, particularly US assistance despite socialist aid

The conflict here was over the attitude to the Soviet aid to India The draft had defended Soviet economic aid to newly liberated countries in the name of non capitalist path as aid to build capitalism But the Andhra leaders thought this description was misleading because it gave the impression that Soviet aid played an anti imperialist role by helping the capitalists of these countries to resist imperialist pressures In fact Soviet economic aid had been used to build "a so called public sector subservient to the growth of monopoly capitalism More, Soviet aid was buttressing "reactionary governments as in Indonesia Bolivia and India" and was being used to create spheres of Soviet influence in backward countries and to 'gang up reactionary governments" against China<sup>64</sup>

The Andhra leaders also thought Indian independence was becoming formal, with the growing dependence of the Indian economy and its internal and foreign policies on US imperialism<sup>65</sup> This has been the Chinese assessment of the post 1959 situation rejected by the CPI(M) already

But the most important part of the Andhra leaders' criticism related to the tactical line, the perspective of armed struggle The leaders saw in the *New Situation and the Party's Tasks* a revisionist compromise with parliamentary methods and participation in united front ministries run in coalition with "reactionary elements" and the consequent failure to unleash mass struggles out of a fear that the ministries might break up They said "We feel, the party has to seriously think whether our work in the united front ministries with bourgeois sections and revisionists has not resulted in blunting the edge of the people's struggles against the policies of bourgeoisie landlord government"<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p 16

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p 51

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p 58

## PERSPECTIVE OF ARMED STRUGGLE

The crucial section of the resolution drafted by the Andhra leaders reads

We are not only failing to unleash mass struggles on an extensive scale in the present period we feel also that the party is working without a clear cut perspective of the path of the Indian revolution

We feel that the rich experience of the Chinese revolution and the recent experience of the liberation struggles in the backward countries have shown that people's war prolonged agrarian armed revolution is the only path left open to all backward countries for social emancipation. We feel that the path of people's war taking our own particular objective conditions of our country into consideration, is the only path of revolution<sup>67</sup>

About the relationship between people's war and preparation for it, the two leaders declared unequivocally

The question is often posed in our press and resolutions, as between those of armed struggle wallahs, the ultra revolutionaries and those who want to mobilize the majority of the people behind the party before thinking of any armed struggle

We categorically say that in all backward countries, winning the majority of the people building mass organizations and party building is closely linked with armed struggle<sup>68</sup>

It would be well to remember here that in contrast to the Chinese assessment and that of the Naxalbari group in West Bengal that the situation for immediate armed struggle, obtained in India, the Andhra leaders did not believe that it was an immediate possibility "Of course, we do not

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p 59

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, pp 59 60

mean to say that such a struggle could be started tomorrow. The whole point is the party has no perspective of this and no conscious preparation towards this direction — political organizational ideological — is being undertaken.<sup>69</sup>

The central point that two leaders tried to make was that the party was expounding the perspective of long legal and illegal work parliamentary work coupled with mass agitation and mass struggles to a limited extent and endlessly remaining waiting for an insurrection taking place in our industrial centres which will thence lead to the socio economic emancipation of the country." And if they waited for such a development we will be faced suddenly with the fate of the Indonesian Communist Party.<sup>70</sup>

#### ANDHRA CHALLENGE AT BURDWAN

The storm signal had been hoisted in Andhra Pradesh when the all India plenum of the party met in Burdwan to clinch the ideological issues. Despite its spectacular successes at the 1967 elections the party's morale was drooping as evident from the slump in membership. Against an enrolment of 172,000 in 1967 the party now claimed only 76,000 of which 52,000 were 1968 renewals.<sup>71</sup> A 60-40 polarization of the membership between the official line and that of the extremist dissidents was also reported. Amidst serious differences in the Politbureau — Sundarayya and Basava purniah wanted a soft line towards the dissidents while Promode Das Gupta Ranadive and Harkishen Singh Surjeet were hard on the dissidents and wanted a more critical attitude towards the CPC. Namboodiripad Jyoti Basu and Ramamurti were against driving the dissidents out while A. K. Gopalan's position was vague.<sup>72</sup> The confrontation was between the younger Andhra Pradesh leadership and the party's old guard.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid* p. 60

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>71</sup> *Link* 21 April 1968.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*

Much as the leadership would have liked to limit the discussion to the ideological questions, a debate on the entire range of issues could not be helped. As the Politbureau admitted in its report on discussions in the States, the Andhra Pradesh Plenum had set the pace for a discussion covering even the programme and other Central Committee documents like *New Situation and Party's Tasks* despite the directive against reopening settled issues. Delegates at the Andhra Pradesh plenum challenged all these documents and the Politbureau members present were helpless when the 'overwhelming majority' challenged the programme and other decisions on the ground that the programme had a certain ideological basis and all other Central Committee decisions following the party programme were to be changed"<sup>3</sup>. According to an 'inside' report of the Burdwan proceedings, an Andhra leader ridiculed the analysis made by *New Situation and Party's Tasks* (the economic crisis leading to initial stages of the political crisis) and said the slogans based on the analysis were exactly the same as offered by Ajoy Ghosh at the Third Congress at Madurai in 1953 and recorded in its political resolution. Instead of using the non Congress governments as instruments of struggle, mass struggles have been subordinated to the preservation of united front governments. Mass struggles were breaking out again throughout the country, in spite of the formation of non Congress governments and these were being met by intensified repression. Instead of rousing the masses and preparing the party ideologically, politically, and organizationally to resist the repression, the leadership was restricting the scope and intensification of mass struggle in the name of preserving the legality of the party. He also said

Comrades we have not raised the perspective of the path of struggle from the point of academic discussion. Our movement in Srikakulam, Nalgonda, Warangal, Khammam are being subjected to intensified repression from land-

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *Liberation*, May 1968, p. 13

lord-goonda police combine . The question of resistance to this depression have come to the forefront. Because of lack of clear perspective of the path of struggle, the leadership is not able to gear the party and the masses for resisting this repression, and take the movement to a higher level.<sup>74</sup>

The frustration of the militant Andhra Pradesh leadership stemmed largely from the restrictions the party's current political line imposed on the agrarian struggles they were leading in the tribal tract of Srikakulam district and in some of the Telengana districts. These struggles were growing into armed clashes but the party's all India leadership had settled for peaceful parliamentarism. Any identification with these movements might cost the party its legality.

#### CONTRADICTION WITH REVISIONISM "ANTAGONISTIC"

Andhra Pradesh delegates to the Burdwan plenum had also pointed out that the contradiction between Soviet revisionists and the peoples of the world, including the Soviet people, was an antagonistic one and, therefore, any unity of action between the Soviet and Chinese parties was impermissible.<sup>75</sup>

The plenum had before it two alternative documents to the official document, one by Nagi Reddy and Pulla Reddy and another by Kolla Venkiah and both of them were rejected (22 for, 158 against, and 13 abstentions). Among the major amendments pressed and lost was one deleting the entire section of unity in action (43 votes for and 153 against) one stating that revisionism in an accentuated form in all actions of the CPSU was endangering world revolution (52 for and majority against) and one seeking deletion of the

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 156. It was not until after the revolt at Burdwan that the General Secretary P. Sundarayya's letter to Prime Minister, "Savage Terror Against Tribals in Srikakulam," *People's Democracy*, 19 May 1968.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in *Liberation*, May 1968.

reference to Soviet Union as "not an ally of U S imperialism" (37 for and majority against) <sup>76</sup>

The leadership could not overlook the dissident strength and tried to move its own amendments to the draft sharpening criticism of the Soviet leadership and hailing China's role in the fight against revisionism. The amendment to the section on unity in action was more explicit in its condemnation of the Soviet initiative for united action in Viet Nam as a "manoeuvre to avoid isolation from the currents of anti-imperialism" <sup>77</sup> in contrast to the mild reference in the original draft which did not question Soviet sincerity. Secondly, the amended version did not advocate unity in action as such but only said it was wrong in principle to rule out such action on the ground the Soviet Union was headed by a revisionist leadership.

The leadership's effort to sharpen the anti-Soviet tone of the draft through official amendments was a sop for the extremist sentiment. The depth of anti-Soviet feeling among the delegates seemed to have unnerved the leadership and even a moderate in the Politbureau, Namboodiripad effected a *volte face* by confessing that he had not understood the "grossly revisionist positions of the Soviet leaders in 1964" nor had he realized the greatness of the Chinese leadership's role in the fight against revisionism. But he disagreed with the Chinese assessment of the Indian situation <sup>78</sup> as other leaders did.

The CPI(M) was trying to assert its independence of both the CPSU and the CPC but in its anxiety to demarcate itself from the Soviet ideological positions (the fight against the CPI at home might have been the compulsive factor here), it subjected to investigation only the Soviet positions. The only exception here was the CPI(M)'s attitude to the question of unity of action on which it examined the CPC's position in detail. In the final analysis, the CPI(M) rejected most of the Soviet positions as anti-revisionist and

<sup>76</sup> *People's Democracy*, 21 April 1963

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>78</sup> *Link*, 21 April 1968



declared its own positions without examining the Chinese positions. Many of the CPI(M)'s "independent" positions, examined from the CPC's positions, might still be on the side of revisionism. The CPI(M) thus opted for anti revisionism sans Maoism. In the early sixties, several Asian parties had tried to adopt 'independent' positions by refraining from criticizing either the CPSU or the CPC in the hope a rapprochement was possible. But the independence the CPI(M) tried to assert was different. It was one of criticism of both, to begin with.

*The Prospect*

THE WHEEL had turned full circle. The Andhra communists who had invoked Mao Tse tung's teachings as early as 1948 to challenge the all India leadership's understanding of the stage strategy, and tactics of the Indian revolution were once again in revolt. The Maoist trend in the Indian communist movement suppressed through Soviet intervention in 1951 to get the Telengana partisan warfare stopped was reasserting itself in a changed situation after 17 years.

Hitherto the leadership of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) had to contend with sparse nebulous groups of extremists led by "ultras" expelled from the party. The largest concentration of these groups was in West Bengal and with the Naxalbari uprising crushed they were no more than pressure groups. But the revolt in Andhra Pradesh was qualitatively different. The CPI(M) had one of its most powerful mass bases in the State and the extremists led by T. Nagi Reddy had succeeded in winning over at least 60 per cent of the membership and could claim majority in the State Committee and in 11 of the 14 District Committees. In West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu extremists inside the party were in a position to challenge the official leadership but were not in majority.

The revolt in Andhra Pradesh called for a political approach and not strong-arm disciplinary action against the leaders. In the wake of the Burdwan plenum the Politbureau sent its two members from Andhra Pradesh P. Sundarayya, and M. Basavapunniah to the State to win the rank and file back to the official line. But it was a shattering experience for the two. Sundarayya returned to the

party headquarters to demand organizational measures to contain the revolt<sup>1</sup>. He then went back to his home State to nominate two of his supporters to the State Secretariat and four to the State Committee to bring a majority for the official line.

The four extremists in the State Committee against whom the measures were aimed (T. Nagi Reddy, D. Venkateswara Rao, C. Pulla Reddy and Kolla Venkiah) hit back resigning from the State Secretariat. They complained that they had been barred from reporting to the district committees on the Burdwan plenum and prohibited from addressing public meetings. The State Committee's decision placing these restrictions on them was taken by a thin margin (12 to 10) made possible by the nomination of four members to tilt the balance against the extremists. The Politbureau had in the meantime addressed a letter to the ranks in Andhra Pradesh charging the four leaders among other things with advocating immediate armed revolution in the State. The leaders retaliated with a call for revolt against the Politbureau line and to resist the disruptive organizational methods of the leadership and to demand withdrawal of its letter, reversal of the organizational decisions and restoration of the old State Committee and Secretariat. They also demanded a party congress to decide the ideological line.

The Politbureau's Letter to Andhra Comrades insinuated that the extremists were staging the revolt under Chinese directions when it said the programme and the general political line of the party had not met with opposition from any unit or leading member until the draft ideological document was released in August 1967. The big shift in the political ideological position of these left critics began in mid 1967 after the Chinese press and radio had openly denounced the CPI(M) and its political line as neo revisionism.

<sup>1</sup> Link 23 June 1968.

Statement of T. Nagi Reddy, Devulapalli Venkateswara Rao, Kolla Venkiah and Chandra Pulla Reddy, Vijayawada 15 June 1968.

ist, the letter also said<sup>3</sup>

Defending the party's positions on ideological issues, its programme and tactical line, the Politbureau said the "grossly subjective and left infantile attacks' could be traced to the fact that "some of our comrades, in their immense hatred for revisionism and innate urge for militant struggle against the exploiters rule, have lost their Marxist Leninist bearing and slipped into petty bourgeois revolutionism"<sup>4</sup>

#### ANDHRA LEADERS' OPEN LETTER<sup>5</sup>

The four extremist leaders, expelled from the party for their 'anti party activities, subverting all discipline and deliberately pursued to compel the party's hand,'<sup>3</sup> replied to the Politbureau through their *Open Letter to Party Members* Reiterating the charge of the leadership's compromise with revisionism, they denied that they were acting on the Chinese Communist Party's call. At the 1964 Calcutta party congress, the "Naxalbari comrades" had proposed many amendments on the ideological issues to the programme draft. At the Andhra Pradesh conference preceding it an amendment which characterized India's foreign policy as one of "fake nonalignment" and of subservience to United States imperialism was carried but was defeated at the Calcutta congress. Earlier, at the Tenali convention, some members had pointed out that it would be wrong to decide on the party programme without deciding the stand on ideological issues. Later in 1965 during their detention in jail they held serious discussions with Politbureau members on the anti China attitude of the Central Committee.<sup>6</sup>

The *Open Letter* charged the Politbureau with making

<sup>3</sup> Politbureau Letter to Andhra Comrades, Calcutta, pp 29-30

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p 35

<sup>5</sup> 'Party Will Emerge More United and Stronger,' *People's Democracy*, 23 June 1968

<sup>6</sup> Tarimela Nani Reddy, Devulapalli Venkateswara Rao, Kolla Venkiah, Chandra Pulla Reddy, *Open Letter to Party Members*, 1968 pp 21-2

the false claim of a simultaneous fight against revisionism of the Soviet leadership and the adventurist and dogmatic policies of the Chinese party. The middle course was a myth and a cover for its neo revisionist line" of united front with the CPSU revisionist leadership and enmity towards CPC" and united front with Dange revisionists and enmity towards Marxist Leninists and love for the parliamentary path and opposition to militant struggles.<sup>7</sup>

#### ORGANIZATIONAL IRREGULARITIES

Some of the organizational irregularities disclosed in the Open Letter were serious even before the party had taken a decision on ideological issues. Politbureau members and the Central Committee had adopted an anti China line. In 1965 during the Indo Pakistani war Politbureau members in prison and outside had carried on an anti China campaign causing serious party disputes. General Secretary Sundarayya while in Moscow for medical attention had come to terms with the Soviet party leadership on national and international issues and had written letters from Moscow expressing his views. The letters had got into the bourgeois press. A Politbureau member had written from prison to Home Minister Nanda that his party's programme was not different from the CPIs on the question of peaceful transition. In the course of the party debate on the ideological draft the leadership had used the party press against those who had opposed the official line. In violation of the rights conferred on members by the party congress the Central Committee had declared the Madurai draft a policy statement refused to circulate any alternative draft and had placed restrictions on free and full discussion.<sup>8</sup>

The split became formal and the Andhra Pradesh Co ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries formed in July 1968 declared that it was the duty of all genuine Marxist Leninists to co ordinate their activities and struggles

<sup>7</sup> Ibid p 23

<sup>8</sup> Ibid p 24

and through such struggles build a party based on Marxism Leninism and Mao Tse tung's thought'

#### ALL-INDIA CO-ORDINATION OF MAOISTS

When India's most powerful and best organized Maoist formation, in Andhra Pradesh decided to break off from the CPI(M), an all India co-ordination of Maoists of several States was already functioning. The All India Co-ordination Committee of the Revolutionaries in the CPI(M) had been set up in Calcutta in November 1967 to co-ordinate the activities of revolutionaries in the country and to go ahead step by step with the formation of a Maoist party<sup>10</sup>. Its sponsors wanted to advance towards the formation of a party and a programme through a process of revolutionary struggles. The co-ordination was, therefore, not a party or even the nucleus of a party. It included many Maoists still in the CPI(M).

Shortly after its formation the Andhra Pradesh co-ordination affiliated itself to the all-India co-ordination. The majority of CPI(M) membership had gone out of the party in Bihar, Orissa, and Uttar Pradesh. In the Andhra Pradesh, the entire party broke off with the CPI(M). (The Jammu and Kashmir unit had already severed links with the CPI(M) even before the Burdwan plenum.) A pro Moscow assessment said the extremists were claiming about a third of the CPI(M)'s membership and gave the following State-wise break-up: 9,000 in West Bengal, 10,000 in Kerala, 7,000 in Andhra Pradesh, 3,000 in Tamil Nadu, 1,500 in Uttar Pradesh, and 1,000 in Assam<sup>11</sup>. Hitherto, the extremists had not had a leader of stature but now they had one in 50 year-old T. Naga Reddy. The formation of a third communist party was not an immediate prospect but the most militant cadre inside the CPI(M) holding key posi-

<sup>9</sup> Resolutions of the Andhra Pradesh State Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries, Vijayawada, 1968, p. 25

<sup>10</sup> *Liberation* Calcutta, May 1968, p. 18

<sup>11</sup> *Link*, 23 June 1968

tions in mass organizations were awaiting the event and the revolt in Andhra Pradesh raised their hopes of a new party.

Soon after the Burdwan plenum the All India Co-ordination Committee met in May 1968 to review the year since Naxalbari and renewed its call for building a true communist party in the course of Naxalbari type struggles, "for revolution cannot be victorious without a revolutionary party"<sup>12</sup> The co-ordination which changed its name to All India Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) said Naxalbari was the "turning point of the Indian revolution" and the "burial ground of parliamentarism" in the country and called for boycott of elections. The negative slogan of boycott was to be followed by positive action to draw the people into revolutionary class struggles "under the banner of Chairman Mao's thought" and to build Naxalbari type movements leading to a people's democratic revolution.<sup>13</sup>

#### SLOGAN OF STATE POWER

Charu Mazumdar the principal theoretician of the Naxalbari movement, ventured a controversial pronouncement. Reviewing the year since Naxalbari he said the struggle held out one main lesson militant struggles must be carried on not for land crops etc. but for seizure of State power.<sup>14</sup> But he was not sure the time had come for the formation of a new party to achieve the goal of State power. "The primary condition for building up a revolutionary party is to organize armed struggle in the countryside," he wrote. A Maoist party cannot be formed merely by gathering together "the various so-called Marxists who profess the thought of Chairman Mao Tse tung and revolt against the leadership of the party." Further

<sup>1</sup> Debates of the All India Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries. *Liberation* June 1968

"Resolution on Elections" *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Charu Mazumdar "One Year of Naxalbari Struggle," *ibid.*

the old political cadres will no doubt be in such a party. But basically, such a party will be formed with the youth of the working class, the peasantry and the toiling middle class, who not only accept the thought of the Chairman in words but also apply the same in their own lives, spread and propagate it among the broad masses and build bases of armed struggle in the countryside. Such a party will not only be a revolutionary party but it will at the same time be the people's armed force and the people's State power. Each and every member of such a party must participate in struggles in the military, political, economic and cultural spheres<sup>15</sup>

Mazumdar was more in the nature of pontifications of an arm chair theoretician because the numerous agrarian movements led by Maoists in various parts of India had nothing to do with seizure of State power. The most powerful movement was on in a 700 to 800 square mile tribal belt in Srikakulam and in some of the Telengana districts of Andhra Pradesh. In Srikakulam district the movement had been built over years among the tribal people who were being gradually dispossessed of their land by moneylenders and traders from outside. The movement, begun in 1959, had grown into mass actions in November 1967 and into armed clashes soon after. In some of the Telengana districts, communist revolutionaries had been organizing similar agrarian struggles. The rest of the country knew precious little about all this while the miniscule revolt in Naxalbari was given a big press build up and all communist extremists were vulgarly labelled Naxalites. There were movements on a smaller scale in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh and all that the leaders of the All India Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries did was to claim credit for what they were not leading. There was no agrarian movement worth the name in West Bengal led by these

<sup>15</sup> Charu Mazumdar, "The Indian People's Democratic Revolution," *ibid*



theoreticians who spoke incoherently of seizing State power through peasant struggles

The AICCCR met in October 1968 and discovered that the Naxalbari struggle had entered the second stage of guerilla warfare in various parts of India during the last six months. Armed struggles of the peasantry had broken out under the inspiration of the Naxalbari struggle and the thought of Mao Tse tung (a doubtful claim this) while the reactionary ruling circles of India their hirelings revisionists and neo revisionists are clamouring for the counter-revolutionary suppression of these struggles and are at the same time trying to strengthen parliamentary illusions with vengeance. The time had come to build revolutionary bases in the countryside. This is our major task, basic task. Other tasks, developing class struggles among other sections of the people are undoubtedly important but they should be contributory and subordinate to this basic task.<sup>16</sup>

Kanu Sanyal a Naxalbari who was held went into revolutionary ecstacy, reporting on the peasant movement in the Terai region. The struggle of the Terai peasant acted as midwife in the revolutionary situation prevailing in India. That is why a single spark of the Naxalbari struggle is kindling widespread forest fires everywhere.<sup>17</sup>

The struggle in Terai Sanyal wrote was not for land but for State power. This is a fundamental question and the revisionist thinking which has been prevailing in the peasant movement for the last few decades can only be combated by solving this question. As it grew more intense the struggle would have to encounter direct opposition of imperialists. All the anti-imperialist strata and classes will then naturally join the alliance of the workers and peasants.<sup>18</sup>

All this was mere theorization unrelated to the situation because the peasantry was fighting for its own basic demands under the leadership of dedicated communist revolution.

<sup>16</sup> *Ib id*

<sup>17</sup> *Ib id*

<sup>18</sup> *Ib id*

anes but certainly not for State power. It was clear that while various Maoist groups in the country were agreed on the general line and the broad strategy of the Indian revolution, there were sharp differences in their approach to tactics. The AICCCR, dominated by the Naxalbari group, did not devote any attention to dispassionate discussion towards an agreed tactical line which was a pre condition for revolutionary action on a large scale.

#### ALL-INDIA CO ORDINATION CRACKS UP

The first crack in the AICCCR came in February 1969 following differences between itself and the Andhra Pradesh unit. It decided to disaffiliate the Andhra Pradesh unit while treating it "as friends and comrades" outside its fold. The differences related to three issues: "first and foremost to the question of loyalty to the Communist Party of China" and the main charge here was that Nagi Reddy and the Andhra committee had denounced the armed raids on two police posts in Kerala in November 1968 allegedly by "Naxalites" as the handiwork of agent provocateurs. They would not revise this view even after the CPC had hailed these raids as revolutionary action. The second issue related to attitude to armed struggle. The Andhra unit, instead of owning the Srikakulam struggle and glorifying it, was "almost lukewarm" in its support according to the AICCCR. But this was contrary to facts because the Andhra unit was providing direct help to the Srikakulam struggle and had no hesitation in owning it up. The writings in the Andhra unit's weekly *Janasakthi*, edited by Nagi Reddy, would testify to this. The third issue related to boycott of elections. The more specific charge here was that Nagi Reddy had not resigned his membership of the State Assembly before October 1968 as directed by the AICCCR. But Nagi Reddy did resign later and several communist revolutionaries had resigned their membership of all elected bodies including municipal councils and panchayats. In fact the Andhra Pradesh unit had called for boycott of the State wide panchayat elections due

shortly Nevertheless, the AICCCR unilaterally disaffiliated the Andhra unit but the relationship was to be a "non-antagonistic" one<sup>19</sup>

The real differences, in fact, related to the tactical line The Andhra co ordination, while advocating the Maoist strategy of people's war and armed struggle of the peasantry, did not consider India ready for armed revolution It had serious reservations even about its participation in the AICCCR because the bona fides of many of its leaders had not been established beyond doubt and a frank discussion on the tactical line was not possible in these circumstances Some of the State units of the AICCCR were defunct and existed only on paper or comprised elements of doubtful antecedents So the Andhra co ordination's exit from the AICCCR was not a surprising development But what was surprising was the decision of the AICCCR to go ahead with the formation of the third communist party, contrary to its own decision earlier against any hasty step in that direction

#### MAOIST PARTY COMES INTO BEING

The AICCCR's resolution in February 1969 said the experience of the last one year had proved that an excellent revolutionary situation existed in India and there was growing unity of revolutionary ranks But the political and organizational needs of a fast developing struggle can no longer be met by the co ordination committee because "without a revolutionary party, there can be no revolutionary discipline and without revolutionary discipline the struggles cannot be raised to a higher level"<sup>20</sup>

Rationalizing its volte face on its earlier stand against the immediate formation of a new party, the AICCCR said the idea that a party should be formed only "after all the opportunist tendencies alien trends undesirable elements have been purged through class struggles is nothing but subjective

<sup>19</sup> *Liberation*, March 1969

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*

idealism. To conceive of a party without contradictions, without the struggle between the opposites, i.e. to think of a pure faultless party is to indulge in idealist fantasy."<sup>21</sup>

India's third communist party — and the first Maoist one — was formed on 22 April 1969, Lenin's hundredth birthday, without any fanfare. But the announcement was made at a May Day rally in Calcutta.<sup>22</sup> The new party, styling itself the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) claimed to be based on the thought of Mao Tse-tung. Its political resolution identified the principle contradiction in India as between feudalism and the masses of the peasantry and the immediate task as people's democratic revolution, the main component of which was an agrarian revolution to abolish feudalism. Comprador bureaucratic capitalism and United States-Soviet imperialism were the main props of feudalism and had to be fought too.

Its rejection of parliamentary methods demarcated the new party from the existing two which not only believed in parliamentary forms but were participating in coalition governments in West Bengal and Kerala. These "lackeys of imperialism and domestic reaction" were creating illusions among people about the united front governments "to blunt their revolutionary consciousness and divert them from the path of revolutionary struggle." These governments were in essence "the answer of the reactionary ruling classes to the challenge thrown out by the people."<sup>23</sup>

The class strategy of the Maoist party was "a revolutionary front of all revolutionary classes," which indeed was vague.

If the poor and landless peasants, who constitute the majority of the peasantry, the firm ally of the working class, unite with the middle peasants, then the vast section of the people will be united and the democratic revolu-

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>22</sup> *The Statesman*, Calcutta edition 2 May 1969, for a detailed report on speeches at the rally.

<sup>23</sup> "Political Resolution of the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist)," *Liberation*, May 1969.

tion will inevitably win victory. It is the responsibility of the working class as the leader of the revolution to unite with the peasantry—the main force of the revolution—and advance towards seizure of power through armed struggle. It is on the basis of the worker-peasant alliance that a revolutionary united front of all classes will be built up.”<sup>4</sup>

In the classical communist view this would amount to denial of proletarian hegemony in the worker-peasant alliance. The Communist Party as the party of the working class was to organize the peasantry and this did not imply the hegemony of the working class. On tactics, the resolution commends Mao's theory of people's war as ‘the only means by which an apparently weak revolutionary force can wage successful struggle against an apparently powerful enemy and win victory. The basic tactic of struggle of the revolutionary peasantry led by the working class is guerilla warfare. We must bear in mind the Chairman's teaching

Guerilla warfare is basic but lose no chance for mobile warfare under favourable conditions”<sup>5</sup> The resolution also mentioned Lin Biao's tactics in this context (*you fight in your way we fight when we can move away when we cannot*) and commended Mao's thought and style of work for the party.

The resolution traced the history of the Indian communist movement and its analysis has a bearing on its attitude to the two existing communist parties. Indian communist history showed that “the leadership has always acted as conscious traitors to the revolutionary cause of our people,” it said.<sup>6</sup> Among the landmarks mentioned was the Second Congress of the Communist Party of the India in 1948 which witnessed the revolt against betrayal by the revisionist leadership” which had acted as the “lackey of imperialists and domestic reactionaries” when imperialism struck a deal with the Congress which represented the comprador capital

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

and feudalism. The Secretariat of the Andhra Committee which was leading the Telengana people had correctly pointed to the Chinese path but the "Ranadive clique" opposed this and adopted the "Trotskyite thesis" of both democratic and socialist revolutions at one stroke and diverted the attention of the ranks from agrarian revolution. But the present revolution in Telengana did not deviate from the path of struggle. The leadership was forced to abandon its line in the face of a revolt by the ranks. The "just intervention of the international leadership" also helped this but the same "treacherous policy" was restored in the 1951 programme.

The 1951 programme and tactical line, according to the new party, was based on the understanding that the Indian big bourgeoisie had a dual character—anti imperialist role as well as proneness to compromise with imperialism. The Communist Party of India had put forward the theory that the Indian government was that of landlords and big bourgeoisie closely linked with imperialism and that big bourgeoisie was the most powerful element in the combination and this was building the Indian State into an independent bourgeoisie State. Feudalism no longer existed and capitalism had developed in agriculture, in the eyes of the "Dange clique". So a national democratic front in alliance with the bourgeoisie and Soviet aid was the means of securing freedom for India. The leadership had forced the Telengana peasantry to surrender and had "stabbed struggles of the peasants in the back" wherever they occurred. After the 1962 revolt in the party, the "Ranadive clique" had once again seized leadership in 1964. The programme of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) had depicted India as an independent State and declared that Soviet economic aid would safeguard India's freedom and lead to sharpening of contradictions with United States imperialism. The CPI(M) was merely resorting to "trickery" when it substituted the "socialist revolution" concept in the 1948 *Political Thesis* to the concept of the second stage of people's democratic revolution of India.<sup>27</sup>

The new party though claimed to be based on Mao's thought did not represent the whole of the Maoist movement in the country. The biggest and the most well organized formation in Andhra Pradesh had ceased to be part of the all India co-ordination which converted itself overnight into a party. The manner in which the new party was formed has caused resentment among several Maoist groups in West Bengal and outside which have chosen to keep out of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). These groups feel that the formation of a party must be preceded by a thorough ideological discussion based on an analysis of the concrete situation. Apart from harping on the theme of people's war the leaders of the CPI(ML) have not made a systematic analysis of the situation. Moreover Maoist groups outside its fold feel that a party should be formed from the base the revolutionary cadres engaged in struggle in different strata of society coming together to formulate a strategy and a tactical line.

#### DIFFERENCES OVER TACTICS

The differences among the numerous Maoist formations in India relate mainly to the tactical line. There is general agreement on the stage of revolution—people's democratic revolution. The first point of difference on the tactical line is over the principal contradiction in India—whether it is between the people and imperialism or between the peasantry and feudalism. The CPI(ML) seizes upon the latter as the principal contradiction and thinks the completion of the democratic revolution is the first task. Completion of the anti-feudal task seems to amount to capturing the countryside. Other groups do agree that the contradiction between peasantry and feudalism is the principal one but the CPI(ML) seems to regard this as the *only* contradiction. Some others think that imperialism is the main enemy and feudalism and comprador bourgeoisie survived only with the help of imperialism. The countryside being the weakest link in the chain must be the main area of struggle but this

should be linked up with the struggles of the working class and petit bourgeois elements against comprador bourgeoisie and imperialism in the cities

The second difference, an offshoot of the first relates to the form of struggle. Specifically it involves three issues: is guerilla warfare the only form of struggle to be waged by the communists at the present stage in India? What is the role of the mass organization in the struggle? And should the party be a mass organization?

The theoreticians of the CPI(ML) rely on guerilla warfare by the peasantry against the landlords the sole form of struggle for India in the present stage. Their thinking is closer to Che Guevara's than to Mao's. They are opposed to any mass organization (including trade unions) and have an obsessive predilection for a secret party. This runs counter to Mao's teachings because giving up legal forms of struggle democratic or economic issues would mean abandoning the urban centres and working class to the revisionists and the creation of a terrorist organization isolated from the masses.

Judging from the pronouncements of its leaders the CPI(ML) is aiming at a revolutionary clash through a handful of individuals without class struggle or class organizations. It ignores or denies the role of the working class and other struggles in cities in the name of building revolutionary bases in the countryside and regard the cities as areas of white terror. It is against participation in trade union work and in class organizations in the name of shedding economism. It regards the conduct of guerilla warfare through a secret organization the only form of struggle. Taken as a whole, the CPI(ML)'s thinking reveals a distortion of Mao's thoughts to fit into middle class revolutionism.

The CPI(ML) provides one focus of Maoism in India while the Andhra Maoists led by Negr Reddy provide the second alternative focus. While the theoreticians of the CPI(ML) have not thought of a creative application of Mao's theories to the Indian situation the Andhra leader



ship has shown a greater sense of realism. The CPI(ML) leadership, dominated as it is by the leaders of the flash-in-the-pan Naxalbari revolt, has very little revolutionary experience but the Andhra leadership which directs the Andhra Pradesh "Revolutionary Communist Committee" has behind it the rich experience of conducting a sustained guerrilla struggle for years over a large area in Telengana. More, the Andhra extremists were the earliest Maoists in India, seeking the application of Mao's teachings to India even before the Chinese revolution was completed.

The Andhra extremists who believe that revolutionary action should precede the formation of a revolutionary party are likely to provide the leadership for a second—and possibly larger—Maoist party in India. Only a minority of Indian Maoists are in the CPI(ML). The new party (the fourth one, when formed) is likely to have a larger and better organized following consolidating the numerous Maoist groups scattered all over the country. The hard core of the CPI(ML) is from West Bengal and yet most Maoists in the State are outside the party's fold and have a wide area of agreement with the Andhra unit.

In contrast to the middle class revolutionism of the CPI(ML), the Revolutionary Communist Committee of Andhra Pradesh has demonstrated a better sense of realism and a more pragmatic application of Maoism in their understanding of the situation and in their operational style. Two unpublished documents provide an insight into the thinking of the Andhra Pradesh leadership. They do not have a party yet but have been functioning on the basis of an 'Immediate Programme,' adopted in April 1969, which seeks the completion of the Indian revolution in two stages—the stage of New Democracy and the stage of socialist revolution. 'Today we are in the stage of New Democratic Revolution. The task of New Democratic Revolution is to destroy Imperialism, Feudalism, Comprador bourgeoisie and the Bureaucratic Capitalism, i.e. the big bourgeoisie and then to establish New Democratic State. The task of the Socialist Revolution is to abolish private property and to establish

Socialists Society <sup>28</sup>

Unlike the CPI(ML) which is groping for a programme after its inception the Andhra leadership is seeking to implement a programme of New Democracy and in the course of its implementation build a party. The programme includes the replacement of the State of big bourgeoisie (which is comprador and bureaucratic in nature) and feudalism by a new democratic State abolition of feudalism takeover of foreign capital in industries and banks the capital of the collaborating comprador bourgeoisie and that of bureaucratic capital and a foreign policy based on a united front against world imperialism which includes the Soviet social imperialist clique.

The revolutionary line to achieve the task of New Democracy is Peoples War. The essence of the line is establishing guerilla bases in rural areas to encircle and liberate the cities and ultimately to emancipate the whole country. The task of the revolutionaries is to implement the peoples war in the Indian Revolutionary practice. The united front to achieve New Democracy would be aimed against imperialism feudalism and their collaborators the big bourgeoisie. Under the leadership of the working class this Front constitutes workers peasants middle class and the National Bourgeoisie. As against the Revisionist Electoral Front our Front will be the action front in Revolutionary struggles and Armed Liberation Movement.

The immediate programme being implemented in Andhra Pradesh includes an agrarian programme in co-ordination with guerilla struggle and other forms of struggle which eschew parliamentarism and nowhere is it claimed these struggle are for State power. This is a fundamental point of difference between the Andhra Maoists and the CPI(ML). The agrarian programme is to be implemented through village committees and village soviets and these committees form the foundation for New Peoples Democratic Revo-

<sup>28</sup> Revolutionary Communist Committee of Andhra Pradesh Immediate Programme Vijavavada 1969 unpublished (Mimeographed)

lutionary State in villages. They would also act as united front committees and would be dominated by the leadership of the revolutionaries and participation of agricultural labour and poor peasants and as the agrarian revolution progresses a few other especially rich peasant representative may be taken in. Opportunists power mongers and poor representatives of rich classes are not to be allowed into the committees.

Unlike the CPI(ML) the Revolutionary Communist Committee of Andhra Pradesh has devoted attention to towns

to liberate first villages and then towns is our path of Peoples War. While we have to work in towns towards this goal even from now on and we have to thwart in every detail plans of our enemy to suppress the present armed struggle. We also have to prepare the party and people to capture political power by the time towns were to be liberated. With this view we have to plan our work in towns.<sup>20</sup>

While the CPI(ML) has been extolling armed raids by Maoist groups without any relation to mass revolutionary movement (the All India Co ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries hailed the two attacks on police posts in Kerala in November 1968 as revolutionary action) the Revolutionary Communist Committee of Andhra Pradesh has denounced such attacks as actions opposed to Marxism Leninism Mao's Thought. Its premium is on mass action and not on individual acts of terrorism. One of its documents underscores this. We want to make it clear that these attacks carried on without any relation to mass revolutionary movement cannot enable us to dissolve feudalism and carry forward mass revolutionary movement. Only through mass revolutionary rallies revolutionary organization and mass armed struggles we can dissolve the present big

<sup>20</sup> *Ib id*

landlord, big bourgeois imperialist system'<sup>30</sup>

In short, while the CPI(ML) swears mechanically by Mao's thought and acts on un-Maoist lines (a secret party with a mobile rural headquarters to give it a touch of Che Guevaraesque romance, lack of faith in mass organization, support to acts of individual or group terrorism and the total abandonment of towns) the Andhra Maoists seek a creative application of Mao's teachings to Indian conditions, as their documents repeatedly point out "We will apply Mao's thought (which guided the Chinese people towards the victory of their great revolution) to Indian conditions and in its blaze achieve the victory of the Indian Revolution'<sup>31</sup> The Andhra Maoists believe in mass organization, in work in urban areas in the leadership of the working class and in mass armed struggle. Thus to begin with, there are two shades of Maoism in India

#### TWO STREAMS

The Indian communist movement now comprises four segments — two non-Maoist parties — the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India (Marxist), a Maoist party — the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), and a potential Maoist party which can consolidate the numerous Maoist groups which have chosen to keep out of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)

But whatever the number communist parties India is likely to have in the future, it is certain that it will have two distinct streams — a Maoist stream and a non-Maoist stream and the contradiction between them will be an antagonistic one barring unification. The non-Maoist parties will be the parties of *status quo*, functioning within the framework of the Constitution and believing in transition to socialism through peaceful, parliamentary methods. The Maoist

<sup>30</sup> *On Armed Struggle in Andhra Pradesh*, Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Committee, July 1969, unpublished (Mimeographed)

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*

stream will function outside the parliamentary system and will comprise parties or groups committed to armed revolution

The contradiction between the two non Maoist parties is a non-antagonistic one. The CPI is the only legitimate party in Moscow's view at present while Peking does not recognize either of them. The CPI(M) which has tried to demonstrate its independence of both the Soviet and Chinese ideological positions has been trying to move closer to the Soviet bloc of parties in an effort to gain international legitimacy. The differences between the two non Maoist parties have been narrowing down since the 1967 general elections and objectively there is no basis for their independent existence. Their proximity to political power in the States of Kerala and West Bengal has brought them together at the all India level though the war of attrition might continue at the lower levels. The Communist Party of India has an extensive base and controls key positions in the mass organizations. In contrast the Communist Party of India (Marxist)'s strength is intensive. It is at best a regional party a party of the coastland with its strongholds limited to the two far removed States of Kerala and West Bengal where it is the first party. The CPI is not even the second party in these States. As the dominant partner in the non ideological coalition ministries in Kerala and West Bengal the CPI(M) holds the whip hand vis-a-vis the rival party which is content to play the role of an expendable junior partner. After the 1967 elections the CPI(M) found itself sharing power in these two States and supporting opportunist non ideological coalition governments in Bihar Uttar Pradesh and the Punjab without participating in them. The CPI was sharing power in all these coalition governments.

After the CPI(M) had demonstrated its strength in 1967, there has been a perceptible Soviet effort to neutralize the party and bring about a rapprochement between the rival parties. Today the CPI(M) is technically neutral in the sense it has not accepted either the Chinese or the Soviet ideological positions unreservedly and is critical of both. But

in practice, it is closer to the Soviet positions than it is to the Chinese positions. In the process, it has moved closer to the CPI.

The immediate reaction of the two Indian communist parties to the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968 provides an interesting contrast. The CPI(M) promptly backed Soviet action<sup>32</sup> while the CPI was divided and had to equivocate for a long time. The CPI(M) could prove that it was a better friend of the Soviet party than the CPI was.

The CPI(M) is not merely non-Maoist but has been becoming more and more anti-Maoist. Its Eighth Congress at Ernakulam in December 1968 rejected an amendment to the political resolution, requiring the party to accept Mao's thought as the Marxism-Leninism of the present epoch<sup>33</sup>. More, the political resolution as passed was completely in line with the Moscow Statement of 1960 as interpreted by the Soviet bloc of parties. Later, on the eve of the June 1969 world conference of communist parties in Moscow, the CPI(M) once again tried to demonstrate its independence of the Chinese ideological positions. The Politbureau analyzed the report of the Ninth National Congress of the Chinese party and found nothing common between its class analysis of the contemporary world made in the famous 14 June 1963 letter to the Soviet party as its alternative general line, and the one expounded in the report. In effect the Politbureau suggested that the latest Chinese analysis had nothing to do with Marxism-Leninism<sup>34</sup> and indulged in denigration of Mao Tse-tung.

The Soviet party has fewer reservations about conferring the status of a parallel party in India on the CPI(M) and the CPI would have to reconcile itself to the prospect. Under obvious Soviet pressure, the CPI had to initiate talks with

<sup>32</sup> Politbureau statement in *People's Democracy*, 25 August 1968; editorial *People's Democracy*, 1 September 1968.

<sup>33</sup> C. Rajeswara Rao, "Ernakulam CPI(M) Congress, Step in the Right Direction," *New Age*, 26 January 1969.

<sup>34</sup> *People's Democracy*, 1 June 1969.

the rival party in June 1969 to explore avenues of united action though the first 'summit' did not yield spectacular results<sup>35</sup>

The CPI(M) has been trying to find for itself a place in the bloc of 'independent' parties in the communist world (like the North Vietnamese, the North Korean, the Cuban, and the Rumanian parties) and thereby secure international legitimacy. The CPI (M) has no fraternal relations with any other communist party in the world. In its anxiety to overcome this isolation the CPI(M) invited the four parties it considers itself close to—the parties of North Viet Nam, North Korea, Cuba and Rumania to send delegates to its Eighth Congress. But none of them responded to the invitation. There were no messages of greetings from them, either.

The Rumanian party has been the CPI(M)'s only bridge with the international communist movement. Its leaders have been visiting Rumania in recent years. On the eve of the June 1969 world communist conference in Moscow two of its Politbureau members, B. T. Ranadive and Harkishen Singh Surjeet were waiting in Bucharest in the hope the Rumanian party's intervention would secure the CPI(M) an invitation to attend it as an "observer". But the invitation did not come. Though Soviet mass media now refers to the CPI(M) as a parallel communist party in India and not as the "splitters," the time is not yet for any formal recognition of a second party in India. During the Moscow conference, CPI Chairman S. A. Dange told a press conference in Moscow that the Rumanian party chief Ceausescu had asked him if he would mind Rumanian mediation to bring the two Indian parties together and that he (Dange) had no objection to it. In August 1969, a CPI(M) delegation (General Secretary P. Sundaravya and Andhra Pradesh State Committee Secretary M. Hanumantha Rao) participated in the congress of the Rumanian party.

<sup>35</sup> The joint communique on these talks (24-26 May 1969) was published in *New Age*, 1 June 1969, and *People's Democracy*, 1 June 1969.

A rapprochement between the two non Maoist parties (if not their outright merger into a single party) cannot be ruled out because the contradiction between the two is non antagonistic. But the non Maoist stream as a whole would have to meet a serious challenge from the Maoist stream which at present comprises the CPI(ML)<sup>36</sup> and the numerous Maoist groups and individuals yet to form a party. A rapprochement between the two non Maoist parties is likely to result in the exodus of extremist elements from the CPI(M). Whatever the number of parties in the Maoist stream (two or more) the contradictions between or among the parties would be non antagonistic and their ultimate unification into a single party is not impossible.

The non Maoist stream would be quantitatively larger of the two because it comprises the parties of status quo. The Maoist stream would comprise parties that do not believe in the parliamentary system and its strength cannot be measured in terms of voting strength. The quality of the Maoist cadres will be far higher than that of the non Maoist cadres. Through their extra parliamentary struggles the Maoists might build a powerful mass movement that could overtake the non Maoist parties and rediscover for the Indian communist movement some of its lost radical class. The Maoist challenge in India will be real.

<sup>36</sup> The Chinese Communist Party conferred recognition on the CPI(ML) when its journal *People's Daily* published excerpts from the new party's political resolution in its issue of 2 July 1969.



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