

INDIAN COMMUNIST PARTY OPPOSITION HOLDS CONVENTION

By A. Raheem

MADRAS -- The left-wing leaders who are opposed to the opportunist leadership of S.A.Dange in the Communist party of India [CPI] began a six-day convention July 7 in Tenali, a district town in Guntur (Andhra state), amidst indications that they would decide to form a new Communist party. Nearly 130 delegates were attending.

The largest contingent came from Andhra, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nad, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. The convention was called after hectic earlier attempts in Delhi at a rapprochement between the two rival factions had failed.

Hoisting a red flag at the opening of the meeting, Muzaffer Ahmed, a veteran Communist leader from West Bengal, gave the call for formation of a new party. "Let us begin a new chapter in the life of the Communist party of India with the hoisting of this red flag," he said. "Let us start the real Communist party of India."

The prolonged and warm applause which greeted this brief speech pointed to the outcome of the convention.

On the first day the delegates were given four documents as the basis for discussion: (1) A draft programme for the party drawn up by 31 members of the national council who had been suspended by the Dange leadership. (2) A note about the programme by E.M.S. Namboodiripad. (3) A paper on the movement prepared by 11 leftist leaders, including A.K.Gopalan, Sundarayya and Basavapunniah. (4) Another paper prepared by Jyoti Basu (Bengal).

Namboodiripad, in his note, warned the party that unless it firmly adhered to the political line adopted at Vijayawada (1961), based its ideological work on the Hyderabad resolutions (1962) and reoriented the party's activities on the India-China border question, "the enemies of the party would deal devastating blows first on one faction and then on the other. The responsibility for these developments rests on the majority as well as on the minority of the national council."

He said that factionalism in the party could not be abolished by calling the left wingers an "antiparty group" or by calling the majority "revisionists."

The document prepared by the 11 left leaders charged the official leadership with deliberately committing the party "in an uncritical and factional manner to all positions taken by the Soviet Communist party."

The signatories to the paper said they had differences with both the Chinese and Soviet positions on the present Indian state, the nature of the government and its leadership. They said they were opposed to "a vulgarisation of the issue by both sides."

Jyoti Basu's paper said that from the latest developments in the world Communist movement it appeared that both revisionism and left sectarianism were dangerous. It said that as an independent unit in the world movement, the Communist party of India could not "remain idle in the great debate."

While the Soviet Union could not be said to be "in league with U.S. imperialism," as alleged by the Chinese, neither was the "Chinese party showing a Trotskyite turn." China might adopt "a posture of revolutionary impatience or left sectarian attitude," but it was "a force to contend with in Africa, Asia and Latin America."

The convention elected a three-man presidium consisting of A.K.Gopalan (Kerala), Jyoti Basu (Bengal) and Siva Kumar (Tamil Nad).

The presidium submitted resolutions condoling the death of Nehru and hailing the martyrs of the Communist party of India.

Harekishan Surjit of Punjab then made a report on the talks that Jyoti Basu and Promode Das Gupta had with the committee on party unity appointed by the official secretariat of the CPI.

The convention next heard reports from delegates from various states on the present standing of the leftists as a result of the situation created by the expulsion of 32 members of the national council.

A convention spokesman told newsmen that according to reports received from Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nad and Madhya Pradesh, the leftists had a support of 70% in Andhra and Tamil Nad and 80% in Kerala. In Madhya Pradesh, where the entire leadership was with the rightists, the rank and file had revolted.

On the second day of the convention, the left CP leaders claimed overwhelming support for their faction in the CPI and openly spurned unity proposals from the official "rightist leadership."

P. Ramamurthi, Tamil Nad Communist leader, described the rightist proposals for unity as a "manoeuvre" to win hitherto uncommitted members to the rightist side. They were "foredoomed to failure like earlier proposals," he added.

This was a clear indication that vacillating "centrist" leaders like Namboodiripad and Jyoti Basu, who had favored unity talks with the official leadership, had been won over to the idea of forming a new party.

Ramamurthi said that Namboodiripad had reported to the convention on the recent unity talks with the rightist leaders. According to him, it was clear that the official leadership did not want to have a real and democratic party congress at which issues would be decided by majority verdict.

He said that this was proved by the manner in which the central secretariat dealt with the 1961 membership issue (the Dangeite leadership had been charged with deliberately padding membership rolls) and the probe into the "Dange letters" episode (Dange's letters to British officials in 1924 allegedly offering to serve as an agent).