

## CPI, Communist Party (Marxist) Argue Over Brezhnev Visit

By Kailas Chandra

Bombay

To allay possible doubts entertained by any of her colleagues in the ruling Congress party, on December 19 in Delhi Prime Minister Indira Gandhi told a meeting of the Congress MPs from Uttar Pradesh that the ruling party's alliance with the Communist party of India (CPI) had "helped to contain communism" in the country and not to strengthen it.

Replying to questions from a section of the party about why the Congress party was "getting close" to the CPI, Gandhi said: "The past events had shown that the Congress had gained and not lost as a result of its alliance with the CPI. This has helped to contain communism."

According to the December 20 issue of the *Bombay Times of India*, she pointed out that the danger of communism had receded both in Kerala and West Bengal as a result of the Congress-CPI alliance. A mid-term election to the state legislative assembly is due to be held in Gandhi's home state of Uttar Pradesh, the biggest state in the country, in March, after six months of central government rule. The legislature, which had been suspended, was allowed to function again only recently. A former central minister, H.N. Bahuguna, has been made the state's interim chief minister until the election. The Congress party is seeking an alliance with the CPI in the election, ostensibly to fight right reaction, but in reality to counter the growing mass discontent in the country.

Six months ago there was a strike by the state police force demanding better living conditions that assumed the form of a virtual insurrection. It was put down with the help of the army. The CPI had lined up with the Congress party in condemning the police strike as "CIA-inspired."

The Congress has political alliances with the pro-Moscow CPI in Kerala, where the CPI's representative, Achuta Menon, acts as the chief

minister. The ruling coalition, however, has a Congress majority. In West Bengal the CPI supports the Congress government without being a part of the coalition. Gandhi has given a green light to the Congress-CPI alliance in Uttar Pradesh, although the CPI has its own reservations about the alliance.

At the Delhi meeting, however, Gandhi noted (as if to placate her allies in the CPI) that the CPI cooperated with her party only when it "suited its interests." In cases where its interests were different, as in the strike of railwaymen in some parts of the country, "the CPI did not extend such cooperation."

The CPI pursues a line of "critical support" to the Gandhi regime, which, according to their Moscow orientation, represents the "progressive national bourgeoisie" in the so-called national democratic revolution against "imperialism and the remnants of feudalism." Soviet Communist party chief Leonid Brezhnev visited India and showered praise on the leadership of Gandhi and the ruling Congress party. He said in his "keynote address" November 27 to a massive public meeting held under the ramparts of the historic Red Fort in Delhi:

"The ruling party, the Indian National Congress, has put forward an important democratic program of broad socioeconomic transformations designed to improve the life of the people. It has proclaimed socialism as its goal. Broad political and social circles in India are known to come out in favour of socialism."

Brezhnev and the Indian prime minister signed a fifteen-year agreement on economic cooperation between India and the Soviet Union that has been hailed by the CPI as "a great advance for the left and democratic forces in India." A resolution adopted by the national council of the CPI said that the Brezhnev visit was "the most important and far-reaching development in the world, signifying further success for peace, international

détente, and anti-imperialism."

Brezhnev took time off his official engagements to meet S.A. Dang, the chairman of the CPI, and other leaders, and advised them to support the Gandhi government. He wanted the CPI and its allies in the trade-union movement not to encourage strikes, but in fact to act as strike-breakers in the name of increasing production.

Moscow has agreed to provide more aid to the two major steel plants in the public sector (Bokaro and Bhilai) and to an oil refinery (at Mashura), in addition to assisting schemes for training technical and scientific personnel. On the eve of Brezhnev's arrival in India, the Kremlin had announced a loan of 2 million tons of food grains, to be repaid in kind. This was meant to bring down the soaring prices of essential commodities. But these prices are instead soaring higher each day.

*New Age*, the CPI mouthpiece, on December 19 welcomed the Indo-Soviet agreements as weapons that would create "millions of new jobs," thereby "helping to ease our explosive unemployment situation." "The agreement," added the journal in an editorial, "above all gives India opportunities to disentangle itself from the tentacles of the crisis-ridden capitalist world economy."

But at the same time the CPI journal could not ignore the hard realities of the Indian situation. In the same edition it warned that "these benefits do not flow automatically from the agreement." It stressed the need for undertaking "concomitant measures to streamline the administration, restructure the economy and democratise the public sector," if the "fruits of the Brezhnev visit are to be reaped."

"The policies pursued by the government," it complained, "are not such as to reassure the people. The line of drift and retreat before the offensive of the vested interests. Concession after concession is being given to monopolists. Multinational corporations are again being invited in."

Furthermore: "Much of the bumper harvest is being allowed to be cornered by hoarders and profiteers. The government itself is hiking up prices of essential commodities like food grains, sugar, cloth and kerosene. . . . The result of all this is aggravated by inflation, galloping prices, scarcity of daily goods and the seething discontent of the masses."

"On the top of it all," said the *New Age*, "the pro-West, pro-monopoly, corrupt bureaucracy entrenched in the government is playing havoc with the declared policies." It has also warned of the resistance put up by the "combined reaction both within and outside the Congress and its government." The *New Age* alleged that the bureaucracy would "seek all means to stall and sabotage implementation of the Indo-Soviet agreements and obstruct India's efforts to develop an independent economy and achieve self-reliance." So, according to the CPI, "all anti-imperialist, democratic and progressive forces" should forge the "broadest unity" and "move the masses into action to realise possibilities that have opened up." The CPI slogan, therefore, is "Strengthen the hands of Mrs. Gandhi to fight the combined reaction."

The CPI has entered into the public polemics with the CPI(M) [Communist party of India (Marxist)] over the evaluation of Brezhnev's Indian visit. CPI General Secretary Rajeshwar Rao, at a press conference, blamed the leadership of the CPI(M) for its view that "the visit of Brezhnev had bolstered the reactionary regime of Mrs. Gandhi." *Kalantar*, a Bengali journal of the CPI, while characterising the policies of the CPI(M) "as those of Mao Tse-tung," accused the CPI(M) of being "anti-Soviet" and of "following a policy of pretended equi-distance between the Soviet Union and China."

Clarifying the CPI(M) position, M. Basavapunniah, the editor of the party weekly, *People's Democracy*, wrote on December 16: "CPI(M) is neither against Soviet and socialist aid to India nor Indo-Soviet friendship and cooperation." He claimed that his party had welcomed the "Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace and Friendship, and that it fervently advocates increasing Indo-Soviet economic cooperation."

Basavapunniah said: "No communist or even a democrat can oppose socialist aid and friendship between the socialist world and the newly liberated countries which are struggling

to defend their national independence and lessen their economic dependence. In fact, the CPI(M) has been systematically advocating the peaceful settlement of the border dispute between India and China and reforging Sino-Indian friendship. It wants greater co-operation between India and the socialist states."

According to the CPI(M) leader, the "right-opportunist stand" of the CPI consists in "willy-nilly advocating that Soviet aid is a panacea for India's economic crisis, maintaining that it enables the so-called progressive forces in the Indian government to defeat the monopolists and their foreign collaborators and believing that Soviet aid, in good doses, gradually puts the country on the path of non-capitalism and 'national democracy.'"

Basavapunniah continued: "It is the foremost task of communists in newly independent countries not only to advocate the close economic cooperation and friendly relations between their respective countries and states of the socialist camp, but also to fight against the exploiting ruling classes for misusing such friendly economic relations and socialist aid for their narrow partisan interests, instead of using them to liquidate legacies of colonialism and to free the people from the clutches of foreign monopoly capital."

The CPI(M) thus seems to suffer from the illusion that the bourgeois regimes of "newly independent countries" like India can utilise the aid given by the workers states to "liquidate legacies of colonialism and . . . foreign monopoly capital." Gandhi, as the leader of the Congress party, has no such illusions. Her objective in seeking an alliance with the CPI and aid from the Soviet Union is to "contain communism." The Indian bourgeoisie is using the Soviet aid announced by Brezhnev to bargain for better concessions from U.S. imperialism. Immediately after the Brezhnev visit, the Indian government reached an agreement with Washington for writing off American loans in the amount of Rs 16,640 million (about US\$2 thousand million) accumulated in India under the PL 480 project. Washington showed this "concession" to New Delhi on the understanding that the American mission in India would be free to spend the balance of the PL 480 loans amounting to more than Rs 34 thousand million

(about US\$4.1 thousand million) as desired. It is well known that the bulk of these funds is used for the operation of the CIA and other U.S. secret agencies in this part of the world and for financing counterrevolutionary political parties and groups in India.

To return to the CPI(M) position, Basavapunniah took exception to the CPI leaders' "echoing the laudatory references to the Indian government made by the Soviet leaders, while woe-fully failing to discharge the tasks enjoining them to make use of such aid for achieving 'independence' from imperialism." He said, in the name of so-called proletarian internationalism and pro-Sovietism, that the CPI has abandoned the "class tasks of struggle against their own bourgeois-landlord regime, equating the internal policy of the revolutionary working class with that of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union and its ruling Communist Party." The CPI(M), he asserted, "refuses to repeat what the Soviet leaders state about the Government of India and its internal and external policies and how the Soviet aid is being utilised by the Congress Government."

The CPI(M), though brought up in the traditional Stalinist school, today tries to pursue a policy independent of both the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies. It has accused both these bureaucracies of seeking to subordinate the international working-class movement to their own "national" interests. But the CPI(M) does not accept the Trotskyist characterisation of the Soviet Union and China as bureaucratized and hence degenerated workers states.

In fact, Basavapunniah still swears by the "1960 Moscow statement of eighty-one parties" that proclaimed that "all Marxist-Leninist parties are independent and have equal rights; they shape their policies according to the specific conditions of their respective countries, etc." Basavapunniah said: "If the Indian Government gives a grand reception for the Soviet Communist leaders like Brezhnev, the same Government deals with Indian Communists fighting for the cause of the exploited workers and peasants by police batons and bullets."

The CPI(M) leader claimed that his party's pro-Moscow and pro-Peking policies follow from their fundamental

loyalty to the cause of Marxism-Leninism. But that loyalty "does not deter our party, as a Marxist-Leninist party, from differing with either of these parties regarding certain policies, if they are found to be either right-revisionist or left-opportunist. . . ."

At its ninth congress, held in July

1972, the CPI(M) adopted a political resolution that accused the bureaucracies, both in the USSR and China, of ignoring "the fact that in the former colonial countries, after independence, social contradictions develop between the ruling classes and the common people." The resolution said: "In pur-

suance of the short-term needs of their foreign policies, they seek to impose upon the Communist and workers parties in these countries such policies as lead to their liquidation and merger with the parties sponsored by the ruling regimes or virtually make them obedient adjuncts." □