

INDIAN COMMUNISTS SCHEDULE RIVAL CONGRESSES

By A. Raheem

MADRAS -- The convention of the "left Communists," held early in July at Tenali (Andhra), decided to hold a rival Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of India [CPI] next October.

The convention elected a 50-member Central Organising Council, a 15-member Central Executive and a five-member Secretariat of the new party. M. Basavapunniah of Andhra was elected as convener of the Secretariat.

Meanwhile, the S.A.Dange leadership convened the "official" Seventh Congress of the CPI for November. It will be held in Bombay.

Both factions in the CPI claim the allegiance of the majority of the 160,000 members of the party. The leftists claim the support of 100,000 members.

The Dangeite group's version is that nearly 40,000 members dropped out during the last three years; therefore it has a majority of the "live" members.

The state units of the Communist party in West Bengal, Andhra and Kerala, which have a real mass following, are well known to be controlled by leftists who include both uncritical supporters of the Peking line as well as "centrists" like E.M.S.Namboodiripad (Kerala) and Jyoti Basu (Bengal).

These claims to a majority of the membership are used by both sides to bolster their arguments in the big debate taking place in the party ranks, for the first time in thirty years, on the two documents now in circulation representing the two conflicting points of view.

Ultimately a regroupment of members of the Communist party in India will take place around these two documents which outline two divergent and conflicting "roads to socialism" -- one, "peaceful" and parliamentary; the other, revolutionary class struggle; one, compromise with the national bourgeoisie; the other, irreconcilable struggle against the bourgeois state.

The document released by Basava Punnaiah in April on behalf of the left faction [see World Outlook June 12] will be the basis of discussion at the left CPI gathering scheduled for October.

The National Council of the CPI (the Dangeite leadership) adopted a draft programme at its June meeting for discussion in the party and this will be the basis of discussion at the congress convened by the official group in November.

How the Kerala Ministry Was Dismissed

Some hitherto unknown facts about how the Communist party in Kerala, headed by E.M.S.Namboodiripad, was dismissed by the Congress Government at the Centre and Presidential rule imposed on the state in 1960 have been revealed by Rajeswar Rao, a member of the CPI Central Secretariat.

Rajeswar Rao, who is a staunch Dangeite, a supporter of the Khrushchev line, said that "the Communist Ministry was dismissed at the request of the leadership of the CPI itself."

Rao made this disclosure in one of the rightist faction meetings held in Calcutta recently. Probably this was aimed as a factional gibe at the leftists with whom Namboodiripad is associated at present;

but it offers another case of the traditional Stalinist technique of deceiving the masses to serve an immediate objective of the party.

He said that when the situation in Kerala got "completely out of hand," the CPI leadership "in desperation" decided to approach the then prime minister Nehru with a request to impose President's rule on the state. The Congress and other reactionary parties had launched the so-called "liberation struggle" against the CP Ministry to demand its dismissal by the Centre. The CP Ministry, instead of enlisting the support of the masses to carry out certain anticapitalist reforms, which it had promised the people, courted unpopularity by resorting to shooting at demonstrators and strikers in some parts of the state.

Nehru, according to Rajeswara Rao, was at first reluctant to dismiss the Namboodiripad Ministry as he thought it to be "undemocratic." Nehru reportedly suggested mid term elections in the state. The CPI leaders did not agree to this suggestion and they ultimately "succeeded in persuading Nehru to impose President's rule."

These behind-the-scene activities did not, however, prevent the CPI leaders, according to the same informant, from expressing their indignation at the Congress Government when the CP Ministry was dismissed. Rao goes so far as to suggest that despite some unfavourable reaction at home and abroad, Nehru chose not to disclose that he had "conferred" on the CPI a "favour" sought by its own leaders!

The decision was taken at an emergency meeting of the Central Executive meeting of the CPI which had been called to discuss the Kerala situation. According to Rao, some members had favoured the continuance of the Ministry but the majority felt that in the event of the Communist Ministry having to resort to stern police action this would incur a blot on them.

Rao's complaint was that Namboodiripad did not give an opinion on either course though he was the Chief Minister. The Central Executive Committee accepted the majority opinion and authorised the late Ajoy Ghosh, the then General Secretary of the CPI and A.K.Gopalan (leader of the "left" Communist group in the Lower House of Parliament at present) to contact Nehru.

Although this version of how the Communist Ministry in Kerala was dismissed has been published by all the newspapers in India, its authenticity has not been questioned either by the official leadership or by the leftists in the CPI.