

The Dange Letters

It was in this background that the revelation came about the letters which Dange wrote offering his services as an agent to the British Government while he was a prisoner after conviction in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case. The CURRENT of March 7, 1964 published the story with the text of the incriminating letter. It is a fact that some time earlier a cyclostyled copy of these letters

had come into our hands sent presumably by the same person who later supplied CURRENT with it. We did not raise the question of these letters with the Secretariat or in the CEC because we thought, considering the seriousness of the issue, it was our duty to verify whether the letters existed in the National Archives or not and if possible get certified extracts of the same. A comrade began working on our behalf in the Archives, found that the letters in Dange's handwriting existed in the files and had applied for certified copies. The publication of the material by CURRENT at that stage actually came in the way of our getting these certified extracts expeditiously.

What was most alarming was the attitude of the Secretariat after the *Current* publication. Here was no question of ideological differences, the only question involved was that of defending the revolutionary integrity of the Party. But the Central Secretariat on March 13, without even bothering to visit the National Archives, issued a statement not only labelling the letters as forgeries but charging the 'Left' with responsibility for the circulation of these forged documents.

Instead of treating the issue with the seriousness it deserved, the Secretariat through another statement on April 1, 1964, tried to blame us saying, "With the new line of open split of every Communist Party decided upon by the Chinese leadership and given expression to 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." This was the beginning of the slanderous campaign to be intensified later that we were splitting the Party at Chinese behest. The sole purpose of this campaign was to save Dange because his followers were very much conscious that only by saving Dange could their politics exist. Our hopes that there would be no controversy on such a matter and that all would support the proposal for an investigation into the letters were belied by this statement of the Secretariat followed by another one by Dange himself calling us "neo-Trotskyites" and what not.

Because of this spate of statements of the Secretariat, it became necessary again for us to come out openly stating

our position. In a statement to the press on April 6, nine members of the CEC— Comrades A. K. Gopalan, Jyoti Basu, P. Ramamurti, M. Basavapunniah, P. Sundarayya, Promode Dasgupta, Jagjit Singh Lyallpuri, Harekrishna Konar, Harkishan Singh Surjeet stated:

"In these circumstances, one would expect that the Secretariat, if it was interested in safeguarding the revolutionary honour and prestige of the Party, would take some tangible steps to investigate into the files of the National Archives situated within a couple of miles from the Office of the Communist Party of India. But for reasons best known to itself, this is exactly what the Secretariat shuns like the plague.

"After all this, the Secretariat had no alternative to calling emergent meetings of the National Council and its Executive. However, without waiting for their deliberations, the Secretariat again rushed to the press in the name of the Party, hurls abuses and charges against the so-called Left, calls them splitters and alleges that they are acting in furtherance of the call of the Communist Party of China to split the Party."

It was in this atmosphere that the Central Executive Committee met on April 9. It was an emergent meeting called to discuss the Dange Letters and connected events and this was what was most agitating Party members and friends. But in the agenda placed before the meeting by the Secretariat, the first item was resolution on the disruptive and anti-Party activities of certain leading Party members and only as the second item consideration of the alleged 'Dange Letters' figured on the agenda. We demanded that the first item on the agenda should be consideration of the Dange Letters and that while this was being considered Dange should not occupy the Chair. When this was not found acceptable to Dange and his group, Comrade Bhupesh Gupta proposed that both the items could be taken together, Comrade Jyoti Basu suggested that the meeting should be adjourned and efforts made to explore possibilities of general agreement on the agenda and procedure. All this we did so as to save Party unity but everything was rejected by Dange and his followers using their slender majority in the CEC. After this,

there was nothing else we could do but dissociate ourselves from the meeting and Comrades E. M. S. Namboodiripad, A. K. Gopalan, P. Ramamurti, M. R. Venkatraman, P. Sundarayya, M. Basavapunniah, Jyoti Basu, Harekrishna Konar, Promode Dasgupta, Harkishan Singh Surjeet and Jagjit Singh Lyallpuri along with Bhupesh Gupta walked out of the meeting and wrote a letter to the National Council which was to meet the next day explaining the circumstances which left no alternative for them but to refrain from participating in the meeting.

After these comrades had withdrawn from the meeting, the CEC took up consideration of the so-called disruptive and anti-party activities of certain comrades without even waiting for the report of the three members of the Control Commission who had been for months investigating these so-called parallel activities and in less than half an hour, the CEC adopted a resolution recommending to the NC the expulsion of seven members of the CEC—Comrades Sundarayya, Basavapunniah, A. K. Gopalan, P. Ramamurti, Promode Dasgupta, Harekrishna Konar and Harkishan Singh Surjeet. Not only was this resolution adopted but Dange and his followers were in such a hurry that they released it to the press even before placing it before the NC.

The NC session followed more or less the same pattern. When it met on April 10, we again proposed that consideration of the Dange letters should be the first item on the agenda and that Dange should not preside over the meeting when this was being discussed. Dange and his followers continued to be adamant and the NC adjourned that day after accepting the proposal that the Secretariat should have informal talks with Comrades E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Jyoti Basu and Bhupesh Gupta to find out whether any agreement could be reached on the agenda and procedure. When this proposal was originally placed it was for a committee of the Secretariat which did not include Dange to meet these comrades for consultations. Dange arrogantly remarked that nobody could deliver the goods except himself and no talks can be held without his participation. It was then that it was decided that the whole Secretariat should meet the three comrades.

It was during these consultations that Dange first raised the question of prima facie case saying that if he relinquished the chair it would mean that there was a prima facie case against him. The letters were there in the National Archives, many members of the NC had seen them. This itself constituted a prima facie case and it was for Dange to prove that the letters were not genuine. Instead of that he was demanding that without even any discussion, the NC should give him a certificate saying there was no prima facie case against him. When Comrade E.M.S. pointed this out, the Secretariat took the position that nothing can be done. And the consultations could not lead to any agreement on the agenda and procedure because of this attitude of Dange and the secretariat.

Almost all the Secretariat-members in private had admitted that the letters were genuine, but tried to find excuses for Dange that they were forty years old, etc. But they could not take this stand openly because that would do immense harm to their prestige and also jeopardise their political line whose leader was Dange. It was in defence of their revisionist line that they wanted to cover up such a serious matter as the Dange Letters. If even on an issue like this they refused to evolve an agreed method for investigation it was clear they would use all the dirty methods to keep the Party machine in their hands and prevent a democratic Party Congress. That is why they rejected all reasonable demands for a joint commission to probe the letters, the proposal for taking legal action against the CURRENT etc. So, when they took the same stand in the NC as in the CEC, 32 members of the Council could not but dissociate with its proceedings and walk out.

What happened in the NC was the culmination of the political and organisational methods which Dange and his followers had been pursuing, particularly after the crisis in October-November 1962, in complete disregard of the Vijayawada Congress decisions and the organisational resolution of the Hyderabad session of the NC.

After the walk-out of the 32 members from the NC, the Council adopted a resolution saying there was no prima facie case against Dange and hence he did not have to vacate the chair

on that count, but that he himself declines to preside over the meeting and that question of the Dange Letters and splitting activities of certain leading comrades will be taken together. The fact that Dange had to vacate the chair, the very thing that he and the secretariat had doggedly refused to do for three days showed the utter bankruptcy of the Secretariat to deal with the serious situation facing the Party. But the resolution of the Council did not provide any basis for the 32 members to go back to the Council. As a statement made by them made clear,

“.....We are of the opinion that the present resolution does not reveal a sufficient realisation of the real issues and their gravity. Although the bankruptcy of the Secretariat is patent for all to see, it still wishes to cling to its position.

“First, the Dange Letters are the most serious issue before the entire Party. Many of us who have seen these Letters and the connected papers are convinced that they are genuine not forged. The resolution seeks to commit us to the position that no prima facie case exists.

“Secondly, while the letters can be considered and discussed along with the statements issued by the Secretariat as well as other members of the NC together, it is wrong to club with them the question of what the Secretariat terms ‘splitting activities’ of some members of the NC.

“This only shows that the seriousness of the Dange Letters is sought to be minimised and drowned in a general discussion of charges and countercharges.

“We are convinced that if the Party is to be unified and brought out of the present crisis, the cloud hanging around Dange must first be cleared through a probe by an agreed committee. Having done that, the entire inner-Party organisational question should be discussed in a calm atmosphere. The aim of such a discussion should be to find ways of ensuring fuller and freer inner-Party discussion on all issues of political and ideological controversy.

“This is exactly what the resolution seeks to avoid.....”

The 32 members of the NC then discussed the whole situation and came to certain conclusions which were incorporated in the

Appeal issued by them to all Party members.

The exchange of views revealed that “we are united not only against the factionalism and anti-Party organisational methods resorted to by them but also against their political line of tailing behind the bourgeoisie through general united front with the Congress.”

Having reviewed the disruptive activities of the Dange group the appeal said, “We have now come to the unanimous conclusion that our struggle against this factional approach of the followers of Dange is an integral part of our struggle against their reformist political line. Our call to the majority of the Party members and units to repudiate Dange and his group is, therefore, a call to repudiate the reformist political line of general united front with the Congress, to repudiate the line of factional preparation for a fake Party Congress, to repudiate their efforts at whitewashing the suspicious conduct of Dange in relation to his alleged letters whose existence in the National Archives is not in dispute.”

Despite ideological and political differences among the 32, “we are all agreed on the necessity to resist the reformist political line, anti-Party factional activities and the shameless effort to whitewash Dange’s illegal conduct in having offered his services to the British”.

The 32 proposed “to have further exchange of views on the ideological and political questions that divide us” associating the entire Party membership in these discussions and “we are confident that these discussions and the active political and mass work, we propose to carry on jointly, will enable us to rally the large mass of Party members and sympathisers not only in offering effective resistance to the policies and practices of Dange and his followers but also to make the necessary political and organisational preparations for convening the Seventh Congress of our Party”.

But the appeal made clear that “if even at this stage the Dange group renounces its anti-Party organisational methods and creates in consultation with us the machinery that will ensure full and unfettered inner-Party discussions and representation to all

genuine members, we would be prepared to give our support and cooperation for its success”.

The reply of what was left of the NC after the walk-out of the 32 was to suspend all the 32 members and demand explanations from them. It was a fitting climax to all their disruptive activities that less than half the members of the NC suspended nearly one-third of its members. To avoid this truth becoming known, the Chairman did not take a positive vote on the resolution but only a negative vote.

At this meeting, the Control Commission submitted its report. Out of the five members of the Control Commission, two who were opposed to the line of lining up behind the bourgeoisie, viz., Comrade A. Halim and U. Raman were in jail and when released, were ill. The remaining three members were out-and-out supporters of Dange. The report they submitted showed that they were faithful tools of the Dange group.

Although two issues were referred to the Commission, viz., the charges of organising a parallel centre and countercharges of factionalism, the report did not contain a word about these countercharges.

Its method of investigation speaks volumes about its partisan nature. Firstly, it never made any attempt to investigate the countercharges. Second, although Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, on his own, tendered evidence regarding the charge of leakage from the Secretariat, the Commission did not so much as refer to it. Third, when Comrades like Sundarayya demanded that the evidence against them must be placed before them and they should be given an opportunity to refute the evidence, the Commission refused to place the evidence before them. Fourth, the Commission did not even make any enquiry from these comrades about whose activities it was to investigate. Thus, by handpicking some stooges and getting some statements from them, the Commission gave its report.*

*And this factional report of a faction of the Control Commission was adopted by the Dange group in the NC after the walk-out within an hour, and immediately published and released to Press. This slanderous document has also been used and quoted by Home Minister in his statement to the Parliament on Feb. 18, 1965 in justification of the detention of Communist leaders.

We, on the basis of the Appeal, organised an inner-Party and mass campaign and approached Party committees and members throughout the country. The situation was by no means normal. Among the Party ranks there was desire for unity but the majority was very critical of the revisionist line being pursued by Dange and his supporters and their disruptionist methods. Hence, in the two months that followed, with all the limitations we had because the Party machinery was firmly in their hands, we were able to rally the majority of Party members behind the Appeal of the 32.

Dange and his supporters intensified the slander campaign against us saying that we were splitting the Party at the behest of the Chinese Party. They thought that with the authority of the NC in their hands, with all the resources at their disposal and by rousing bourgeois-nationalist sentiments, they could isolate us. But what happened was just the opposite. More and more Party members began rallying against them and it was they who were getting isolated. In this background Dange made another attempt to exploit the desire of the Party ranks for unity. Utilising the situation created by Jawaharlal Nehru's death, Dange wrote a letter to the 32 suspended members of the NC. While the letter talked about the new situation, the need for unity, etc., the crucial paragraph states: "We of the Secretariat are deeply anxious to be able to place before the coming meeting of the NC a proposal that the suspension resolution against all of you comrades be immediately rescinded. But, in order to be able to do this, we would earnestly appeal to you 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."

Apart from the fact that this was an attempt to dictate terms, the whole letter was intended to cover up the disruptive organisational activities which they had stepped up. Actions galore were being taken in the States, whole committees being dissolved and they were also setting up parallel committees at various places. The NC has suspended Comrade A. K. Gopalan and asked for an explanation from him. But without waiting for

this explanation, these people who talk so much of unity, decided to remove him from the leadership of the Communist group in the Lok Sabha and wrote to the Speaker to this effect knowing full well that this would split the Communist group and enable the Swatantra Party to become the main opposition group. It was to cover up all these splitting activities that Dange wrote the letter.

When our CEC members along with the invitees from Maharashtra, UP, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir and Bihar met in Delhi in the end of May, we assessed the situation and also discussed Dange's letter. Reports from the States showed that despite everything a big majority of the Party ranks had supported us, that Dange and his supporters could claim a clear majority only in Maharashtra, Madhyapradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Delhi. It was also seen that in the major States like Kerala, Tamilnad, Andhra, West Bengal and Punjab from where the bulk of Party membership comes, we had the support of 60 to 80 per cent of the Party membership. In a State like Uttarpradesh, the response to our appeal was far more than even we had expected and it revealed to us that we also had underestimated the mood of the Party ranks. Even in a State under their control like Bihar, the leadership adopted resolutions for the withdrawal of suspension of the 32, demanding a probe into Dange's financial affairs, etc.

In our reply of May 31, to Dange's letter of May 29, which we addressed to the Central Secretariat, we reiterated our firm desire for unity and declared we would have no hesitation in welcoming and supporting all efforts which are conducive to Party unity. But, "the way in which you propose to solve the problem of Party unity will not lead us anywhere. For, the threat to Party unity arose precisely out of the policies and practices adopted by you and some of your colleagues. It is inconceivable how Party unity can be resorted without your abandoning these practices and policies. From your letter, it is clear that you are not making the least effort in this direction. On the other hand, you are dictating terms to us".

The letter again recalled the disruptive activities of Dange and his supporters—the deliberate leakage to the bourgeois press

of inner-Party news in a distorted fashion, the active association with LINK and PATRIOT despite CEC directive, the abandonment of the spirit in which the composite Secretariat had been formed in April 1962—and concluded: "we would only point out here that the present organisational position of the Party which is on the verge of final and irrevocable split is to be traced directly to the fact that you renounced the spirit of joint work and of organised inner-Party discussion."

The reply recalled the effort we had made for unity in September 1963 by 17 members of the NC, at the 1964 January session of the CEC and again in the April 1964 session of the NC before the 32 comrades walked out. All our appeals had gone unheeded, Dange and his supporters had always answered them with slanders that we were "pro-China", "neo-Trotskyites" etc.

The reply reiterated the earlier proposals in the Appeal of the 32: cancel all disciplinary actions of the last year and a half on the ground of 'disruption and splitting activities', once this is done the problem of 'rival committees' would not arise at all, they will all stand dissolved; if this approach to Party organisation is taken, the question of our "willingness to abide by Party discipline at all levels" will also not arise; agreed probe into Dange letters, and Dange's shares in the company that runs PATRIOT; abolition of the Secretariat as such including the posts of Chairman and General Secretary for the period till the Party Congress and all jobs of political and organisational guidance of the Party to be done by the CEC through some mechanism evolved by agreement.

Dange's reply to this on May 31 again evaded all the issues and said that acceptance of our proposals would paralyse the Party, forgetting that for more than a year now, the Party has been functioning without a General Secretary and equally can be the Post Chairman and the Secretariat also be abolished for a time without paralysing the Party if the CEC takes over the leadership and evolves an agreed mechanism.

The NC session which followed exposed further their talk of unity. There were three drafts before the Council on the inner-Party situation.

What became evident from the discussions on these drafts was that Dange and his supporters would not go even to the extent of rescinding the suspensions unconditionally, leave alone their approach to all the other issues. The final resolution adopted by the Council said, "The NC, however, desiring to carry forward the unity initiatives already taken and in view of the urgent necessity of Party unity in the present situation facing our country, resolves that 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 organisations set up at different levels, the suspension order against those who do so shall stand rescinded.

"Disciplinary actions by the State, district and local Party organisations for formation of parallel committees shall stand rescinded similarly as soon as the comrades concerned make similar declarations as suggested above in the case of 32 comrades."

And, "The Council authorises the Central Secretariat to take further steps to carry forward the initiative for Party unity and to hold such talks and discussions as are required for this purpose."

This resolution was adopted with the support of 40 members much less than half the strength of the NC.

In a statement on this resolution on June 15, 1964, Comrades Ramamurti, Basavapunniah and Harkishan Singh Surjeet said that it "burkes the real issues that have led to the present state and is an attempt to shift the responsibility for it".

"The NC," said the statement, "refuses to take lessons from the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Party members have supported our proposals for ensuring unity in the Party and a united Party Congress. The resolution does not contain a word about these proposals."

Referring to the NC resolution where it says that the Declaration and Statement of the Moscow Conferences of 1957 and 1960, the unanimously adopted political resolution and report of the Vijayawada Party Congress and the Hyderabad National Council resolution on Party organisation still constitute a sound basis for Party unity, the three comrades in their statement said,

"But it is the consistent and continuous violation by the majority of the NC under the leadership of Dange of the political line of Vijayawada and the organisational resolution of the Hyderabad meeting of the NC together with their thwarting of all our attempts to stop this process that has brought about the present crisis. It was with a view to avoiding a split that we have been putting forward since long concrete and definite proposals for a real democratically elected Party Congress, and for a machinery for preparing for it which would ensure full and frank discussion of all the issues facing the Party including the question of interpretation of the Declaration and Statement of the 1957 and 1960 Moscow Conferences. These proposals were rejected outright for reasons best known to themselves.

"On top of all this came the revelations about the Dange Letters and his financial affairs. Elementary norms of decency in public life required that such a person quit his office pending a proper enquiry into these affairs.

"The NC, despite the fact that it had more than two months before it, does not touch in its resolution any of these issues before the Party. Instead, it wants us to agree to dissociate ourselves from what they call parallel organisations. The fact that in most places where the majority refuses to toe their line, it is they themselves who have unceremoniously suppressed elected committees and set up parallel committees, is suppressed."

The three comrades declared they would "welcome any move that can bring about principled unity in the Party and we would at all times be prepared to talk with anyone on that question".

The urge for unity which Dange and his supporters were pretending got further exposed when they in the same NC where they talked so much of unity decided to set up a parallel State Committee in West Bengal. And after Comrade EMS had some talk with them and just before Comrades Jyoti Basu, Promode Das Gupta and Harkishan Singh Surjeet were to meet them, they issued a statement saying that whatever talks were held would only be within the framework of the NC resolution—belying hopes, if there were any left, that even at this late stage they

would make some genuine effort for restoring Party unity.

It was, therefore, not with much hope that the representatives of the 32 comrades opened talks with the representatives of the Secretariat. It was clear, that, for the Dange group, the proposed talks were nothing but a smokescreen behind which they could consolidate themselves as a faction, deceive a section of the honest Party members who were anxious for unity, and with their support to carry on their own reformist political activity and disruptive organisational methods. It was, nevertheless, thought that no avenues should be left unexplored, no possibility left unutilised for the efforts at restoring Party unity.

But, the representatives of the Secretariat in their talks with the representatives of the 32 comrades made it clear that everyone of the questions involved in the problem of Party unity—reorganisation of the Secretariat, agreed Commission to probe into the Dange Letters and financial affairs, agreed commission to prepare for the Party Congress, scrutiny of the Party membership—they had no other consideration than safeguarding their own factional interests. They were so afraid of any genuine reorganisation of the Secretariat, any addition to the Dange Letters Commission, any enquiry into the financial affairs of Dange that they gave the uniform negative answer to all proposals made by the representatives of the 32 comrades.

The most amazing part of the reply given by the Dange group was that they justified their negative stand in the talks on the basis of a so-called “principle”. That “principle” is nothing but that every question, political or organisational, must be decided by majority. They used this “principle” to oppose the proposal made by the 32 comrades that the major issues involved in the problem of Party unity should be decided by agreement. They claimed that this was “giving the minority the right of veto” and that it would result in “paralysing the party”.

The utter hypocrisy which lies behind this argument would be clear to all those who know that the present NC, the CEC, the Secretariat and the Chairman came into existence through the very principle of agreement which they were now rejecting. For, the NC was not elected by majority vote at the Sixth Congress.

Differences on the panel of names for the NC created a deadlock, which was resolved only by agreement. Those who now opposed decision by agreement as “unprincipled” did not do so then, even though for the sake of that agreement the Party Congress went out of its way to amend the Constitution without having put the question of constitutional amendment on the agenda.

Again, in April 1962, when the NC had to elect the office-bearers, the much-talked of “principle” of majority decision was given up and the much-abused one of decisions by agreement was accepted. Furthermore, agreement was arrived at by amending the Constitution (which the Council had no authority to do) in order to provide for a new post of Chairman and to expand the strength of the CEC. At this stage too, those who formed the present Secretariat and who were so indignant at the very suggestion of decision by agreement did not stand by their “principle” of majority decision. On the other hand, they used that opportunity to entrench themselves in positions of authority and then to use those positions in order to consolidate themselves as a faction.

It was thus clear beyond doubt that what the Dange group was concerned with was not the restoration of Party unity but the retention of themselves in positions of authority. Any “principle” was correct if it helped them to secure and maintain their own power. At the Vijayawada Congress and at the April 1962 meeting of the NC, they accepted the “principle” of agreement since it helped them to come to power. Agreement then was not “giving the veto to the minority”. But when the majority of Party members had expressed themselves clearly against their reformist political line and disruptive organisational methods and when, therefore, a united Congress on the basis of an agreed machinery to organise such a Congress would result in their being thrown out, they wanted to ensure that the Congress would be organised by their own faction. They were not prepared to take any risks and hence they gave up the old “principle” of decision by agreement and in its place insisted on the new “principle” of majority decision.

From the informal talks between the representatives of the 32 comrades and of the Secretariat, it thus became clear that they had agreed to the talks, only because of their growing isolation from the ranks. But they were determined to keep the Party machine in their hands, they wanted to retain their majority in the Secretariat and were against agreed committees so as to be able to use the Party press as they wanted and holding the Party Congress in such a way as to get their line endorsed. They were not prepared to have an agreed Commission to probe into the question of Dange nor remove him from Chairmanship for the period of the enquiry. They had already included Rajeshwara Rao and Dr. Adhikari in the Secretariat.

They had already split the Communist group in the Lok Sabha and were splitting the Assembly groups in the States. In Andhra, they had already removed the Leader, Deputy Leader, Secretary and Whip of the Assembly Party. They shamelessly tried to use to their advantage the Vijayawada fires. And in Trivandrum, in the municipal elections, they set up rival candidates. The Council had earlier decided to have an understanding with the RSP to fight the municipal elections. But, after they split away from the DC, while we implemented the decision and fought the election on the basis of the understanding with the RSP, they went into an opportunistic alliance with the PSP and set up rival candidates despite the fact that only a year ago, their stand was to support the Congress to defeat the PSP. In Trivandrum, the people also rejected their splitting activities, most of their candidates lost their deposits, none of them won.

The length to which the Dange group went to disrupt the organisation was seen in its dealing with the Karnataka State Council. It had not repudiated the NC as requested by the 32 NC members in their appeal. It deplored the suspensions and urged on the NC to take steps to restore unity. In September 1964, the Council passed a resolution urging that Dange should be removed from the Chairmanship in order to facilitate the reforging of unity. A minority of nine members walked out of the meeting after the resolution was adopted and formed themselves into a parallel 'secretariat'. The Dange group immediately accorded

recognition to this splint group as the 'secretariat'—a Secretariat without a Council or Executive Committee. It is noteworthy that before doing so, the Dange group did not even write to the elected State Council to find out what happened.

A similar thing happened in Gujarat also. The Gujarat State Council or the Secretariat had not defied the NC in any way. But the majority of its members were extremely critical of the political line and organisational methods pursued by the Dange group. Even this, the Dange group could not tolerate. Hence, after Comrade Dinkar Mehta, Secretary of the Council and member of the NC and others were arrested following the Statewide strike and hartal, a few followers of Dange constituted themselves into a 'secretariat' and the Centre gave it recognition as the 'secretariat' of the Party in Gujarat immediately.

While these were the organisational methods they were continuing, the political documents submitted to the NC, the discussions that were held there and the resolutions that were adopted all confirmed that they were bent on pursuing their collaborationist political line.

It was in this situation, after every attempt to restore Party unity had failed because the Dange group did not want Party unity, that we met in our Convention in Tenali and decided to convene the Seventh Congress of the Party in Calcutta so as to save the Communist movement in our country.

The talks with our representatives in the month of July 1964 by the Secretariat were only manoeuvres. They became necessary because of the widespread sentiments of unity that prevailed and found open expression even among the members and committees of the Party who supported the Dange group.

Within a few days after these talks, the Draft Programme adopted by the Dange group NC was published. The Draft Programme revealed in a flash that the Dange group had completely given up any pretence of Marxism.

This is not the place to enter into a detailed critique of Dange draft. It is enough to point out that it embodied an out-and-out revisionist ideology and tailed behind the bourgeoisie politically. *It negated the leading role of the working class in a democratic*

revolution in India and would want the people believe that the Indian bourgeoisie itself is going to lead that revolution. Fundamental teachings of Marxism on the State are given up and bourgeois-democracy is extolled to the skies. The bourgeois alliance with landlords, in collaboration with imperialist monopolists, the danger of neo-colonialism from US aid and private capitalist penetration were all so underplayed as to negate them.

The working class is asked to eschew its struggle to dislodge the bourgeoisie from its leading position. In fact, class struggle is itself sought to be given up.

Thus, the circle was complete now. What was begun in 1956 as an attempt at reassessment had ended in complete eschewing of Marxism-Leninism. The running thread of class collaboration in all their documents since Palghat Congress is there for all to see.

It is for getting the stamp of approval of the Party Congress for this out-and-out revisionist and tailist programme that the Dangeite group did not want "to take any risk of losing the majority", as was quite bluntly stated by Rajeshwara Rao in the talks referred to above. It is again for this purpose that the Dange group systematically indulged in the disruptive organisational activities already detailed. *It has come out in its true colours—revisionist in ideology, tailist in current political questions and organisationally disruptive.* It became crystal clear that there is nothing in common between us and Dange group in ideology, politics and organisational principles.

All the ideology of bourgeois planning and achievements, of the attempt to tail behind the ruling big bourgeoisie, stand in sharp contrast to the actual political-economic situation in the country. The unprecedented rise of prices during the last 18 months, the disappearance of foodgrains from the market in almost in everyone of the States including surplus States, never-ending queues before the few fair price shops in every city waiting for long hours for the meagre quantity they sell, the utter disappointment they face daily when the shops are closed without giving the majority of those who have waited patiently for hours without obtaining foodgrains, the mounting anger of the people

who in many places raided godowns and shops, the Government resorting to violence including shooting the hungry people—all these reveal the utter bankruptcy of bourgeois planning.

Rice is selling at anything between Rs. 1.50 and Rs. 2 per kilogram in the country. The rise has been more than hundred per cent since last year. Similar is the rise in the prices of wheat and even coarse grains. Not only the prices of foodgrains the prices of pulses, of edible oils have risen hundred per cent.

While the living standards of the people have been continuously falling ever since the planning began, the phenomenal rise in prices during the last 18 months have inflicted intense and colossal misery on the entire working population on a scale unknown before. The price increase is but an expression of the general crisis that has engulfed the plan and the entire economy. It brings out in a flash the real character of the Plan and the basic policies underlying the Plan.

That the prices were rising at unprecedented rates was not unknown to the Government. The mid-term appraisal of the Plan itself had pointed out in November 1963 "the rise is superimposed on the increase that had occurred in the 2nd Plan period and more important is it derives from rather big increases in the prices of essential consumer articles from the beginning of 1963. Even allowing for seasonal increases in respect of several articles, basic trend in prices remained upward and therefore has to be taken cognisance of in appraising the current situation".

Despite this specific warning, Government did nothing. 3 months later, when prices were still rising, the President, in his Address to Parliament in February, only expressed the Government's anxiety over the rise. As for action, they proposed nothing and just repeated that the ultimate solution of the problem of prices was increased production.

The prices continued to rise despite the fact that the main harvest was almost over throughout the country and despite the fact that overall foodgrain production was estimated to be 3½ million tons more than last year. A month later, the Finance Minister, in his budget speech, again contented himself with expressing "great concern".

Since then, the rise has been phenomenal. The new Food Minister admitted that the rise in the last one year was alone as much as in the entire Second Plan period. Spontaneously in many places, hungry people were surrounding foodgrains shops and effecting forced sales. In panic, Hapur market was closed for several days.

In early June, the Finance Minister again sounded the alarm. All that the Government did was to convene a meeting of the Chief Ministers. The decisions of this meeting only gladdened the wholesale merchants whose spokesmen sent messages of congratulations.

The situation worsened, Statewide hartals, strikes began to develop. Then, the Government announced maximum prices, in fact the high prices then prevailing were fixed as maximum prices.

This price fixation, far from bringing down the prices, has only resulted in still higher prices. Rice became unavailable in the open market. Orders to declare stocks, threat of action under the Defence of India Rules—nothing that the Government has done since then, has arrested this continuous growth.

The Government announced that the main cities and the whole of Kerala should be put under statutory rationing and actually fixed November 1 as the date from which it should start throughout Kerala.

The Chief Minister of West Bengal also desired statutory rationing in Bengal. However, at the last meeting of the Chief Ministers on October 27, it was decided that since the Centre could not assure supplies, it would be difficult to assume the responsibility which statutory rationing would entail. The discussion has been postponed.

All that has been decided is that an Ordinance would be issued providing for summary trial of profiteers and imposition of fine. As if any amount of fines would deter them from profiteering!

It is noteworthy that on August 7, when the Prime Minister met the Leaders of Opposition, he stated that the crisis was of a temporary nature and would last just a few months. And as soon as the short-term crop was harvested by September, he said, the crisis would be over.

Three months have passed since then. The short-term crops have been harvested in some areas. And yet, the crisis has only worsened. On October 25, the Prime Minister stated in the meeting of the National Development Council that the next five or six months would be very critical. Again, the Government is only pinning its hope on the next harvest from February and has no effective measures in contemplation.

The phenomenal rise in price has shattered the myth of so-called planning. They show the classes whose interests the Government has been advancing. As a matter of fact, price-increases are a built-in-feature of Government's plans. In the Third Plan report, discussing the proposed heavy increase in indirect taxation, it was admitted: "Indirect taxation, along these lines tend to rise prices to be paid by domestic consumers." Yet, it callously justified the taxation and said, "This is a sacrifice which has to be accepted as part of the Plan."

And yet, as against the proposal to levy Rs. 450 crores by way of additional taxation in the Second Plan, actually Rs. 1090 crores taxes were levied. In the Third Plan, too, the same callous fleecing of the common people continued. As against the target of Rs. 1100 crores of additional taxation for the entire Plan period, the taxation of the first three years alone was to fetch Rs. 1,900 crores! This was not all. Heavy deficit financing has been a feature of these plans. In the Third Plan, as against the target of Rs. 500 crores of deficit financing for the entire Plan period, already in the first three years, it exceeded Rs. 616 crores.

All the other expected resources from other sources have failed to materialise and the only source which the Government thought could be freely fleeced was the common man. When the common people have been fleeced far beyond what the Plan itself proposed, the performances of the Plans are awfully inadequate.

In the First Plan, achievements in steel, pig iron, aluminium and fertilisers never exceeded 50 per cent of the targets. In the Second Plan, too, precisely in these as well as in other important industries such as cement, dye-stuffs, caustic soda, textile machinery, cement machinery, etc., the performance was only

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fifty per cent and even less. The Third Plan report itself admitted it and stated that these “are the very industries, which are of crucial importance” and their failure had “deprived the economy reckoned on for the start of the Third Plan”. The mid-term appraisal of the Third Plan showed that it too fared no better in the first two years. The performance of the agricultural sector was a still more colossal failure, affecting the balance of payments, prices, in fact, every aspect of our economy.