

HAS COMMUNIST PARTY CHANGED ITS LINE?

BY MOHIT SEN

Some of the top leaders of the Communist Party (Marxist) are trying desperately to make out that, for opportunist electoral reasons, the CPI has made a basic change in its line. Speaking in Andhra Pradesh after the Tenali meeting of their central committee, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and M. Basavapunniah took up this theme, though in characteristically different ways.

Namboodiripad welcomed these 'changes' but invited the CPI to 'confess' its past 'mistakes'. Basavapunniah, however, tried to be witty and original. He said that the CPI leadership had 'stolen the signboard' and now it was trying to 'steal the slogans'!

B. T. Ranadive has also joined the fray with talk of 'debacle' for the CPI.

Leaving out the question whether such an attitude helps the building of a broad, democratic, militant united front of struggle against the anti-people and anti-national aspects of the policies of the congress government which is the need of the hour and the supreme desire of our toiling people, other aspects of this slander campaign have to be examined.

Let us, first, take up the question as to whether the CPI has changed its line.

The 'change' mentioned by the CP(M) leaders refers obviously to the Hyderabad National Council Resolution of the CPJ announcing the Great March to Delhi to demand the resignation of the Indira Gandhi government. Is this decision inconsistent with the previous understanding and policy pronouncements of the CPI?

Take the following passages from the Programme of the CPI adopted in December 1964 at the Bombay Party Congress. After noting the advance along the road of independent industrial growth, the Programme states:

'Development has been a slow, halting process, extremely painful for the masses in terms of their suffering and result in a miserably low rate of economic growth which compares unfavourably with that of many other underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa which gained their independence after India won hers.

'The obstacles that stand in the way of India's achieving full economic independence and national prosperity cannot be swept aside precisely because of the compromising and reactionary features of the capitalist path.'

It had correctly warned: 'The huge rupee account accruing from the sale of the imported foodgrains from the USA under PL 480 is operated in a manner which is a menace to our independent development, as huge sums are left to be used by the US Embassy as it pleases, while still larger are channelled, "by agreement", into the private sector as foreign investments and for collaboration deals.

'So long as foreign private monopolists are allowed to maintain their entrenched positions in our economy in this manner and are given more concessions India cannot develop fully a self-reliant economy. Nor can the country's political life be made safe from the pressures, interference and blackmail by the imperialists who function closely linked with the reactionary circles within the country....

'One of the most striking results of this path of capitalist development is the concentration of capital and economic power in the hands of a few big monopolists who seek to enrich themselves at the expense of the people and broader sections of the national bourgeoisie to the detriment of the country's national economic independence'.

Developing the point about the emergence of the monopoly groups in the Indian bourgeoisie the Programme had gone on to state: 'Their growing grip over the economic political life of the country is coming in conflict with the vital interests of the masses, harming the interests of broad sections of the national bourgeoisie and endangering India's march towards economic independence itself.

In the economic sphere, they seek to annul the dominant role of the public sector, so essential for the development of national economy; they facilitate the penetration of foreign monopoly capital through anti-national collaboration agreements. They aggravate the economic crisis by fostering price rise, corruption, hoarding and blackmarketing through their hold over the banking system and close ties with mercantile capital.

'In the political sphere they seek to consolidate the right reactionary forces in the country, to bolster up the right-wing in the ruling party, they unleash an offensive against all progressive and national policies and organise an anti-communist offensive to defeat and disrupt the democratic forces.

'They seek to subvert the foreign policy of non-alignment and peace and give it a pro-imperialist orientation.

'Such are the contradictions and crises which the capitalist path of development pursued by the ruling national bourgeoisie engenders, proving every day its bankruptcy to the masses.'

The Programme had made clear that the conflicts and contradictions of the path of capitalist development 'condemn our country to a low rate of economic growth, to stagnating agriculture, to growing inequalities of income, to continuing low standards of living of the broad masses. They also lead to the growing power of monopoly groups which, in alliance with feudal elements and in collaboration with foreign monopoly capital, are presenting an increasing

threat to India's independent economic development itself.'

Thus, in the most fundamental document of the CPI a ruthless analysis has been made of the capitalist path of development followed by the congress government by giving concessions to imperialism and compromising with feudalism. There was no question of the CPI having any illusions that the capitalist path followed by the Congress could bring either economic swaraj or prosperity to the country.

It has pointed out that this path of development not only heaps misery upon the people but hampers the attainment of the economic independence of our country. Its reactionary features are, therefore, not only anti-people but anti-national.

Hence the need to reverse this process, to replace it by an alternative path of national democratic non-capitalist development. Such a path would be based on anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and anti-monopoly economic and political structural changes.

It is regrettable that some of the leaders of the CP (M) deliberately overlook this basic analysis and seek to hide it from their audiences.

By this dishonest method they hope to create a certain amount of confusion and bring grist to their propaganda mill that the CPI has a policy and programme of collaborating with the Congress in order to build capitalism in India together with the US imperialists.

It is quite characteristic that these leaders of the CP (M) shun the Programme of the CPI. And yet it is these basic formulations in the CPI Programme that are the foundation of the present line of the party.

POLITICAL RESOLUTION

The Bombay Party Congress did not merely confine itself to programmatic statements. It adopted a Political Resolution dealing with certain immediate trends of development

and outlining a certain tactical line for the immediate period ahead.

While noting that the economic base of our national freedom had been strengthened, it added that 'the policy of capitalist development, pursued by the ruling party, not only heaps misery and burdens upon the people but hampers the very process of full national rebirth.'

It noted: 'Monopoly groups have availed of every opportunity to put pressure on the Shastri government to change the character and direction of economic planning and remould it to their own interests, disregarding the interests of the nation as a whole. Yielding to their pressure, Prime Minister Shastri had raised the slogan of pruning new projects of heavy industry in favour of giving priority to agriculture and production of consumer goods.'

It noted that 'in the recent period, foreign private monopoly capital has increased its penetration and the Government of India is creating favourable conditions for its further growth, not hesitating to violate its own industrial policy resolution in this regard... Increased reliance on PL 480 and other forms of western imperialist "aid" is a menacing feature of the situation....

'Concentration of wealth and economic power in the hands of a microscopic minority has accentuated, the collaboration between the foreign and Indian monopolies has increased very often at the expense of small industrialists.

'Corruption spreads like an evil cancer growing at the roots of our nascent democracy. "Black money" abounds; tax evasion proceeds apace; speculation and hoarding increase. Thus, the economic base of right reaction has been strengthened.'

The Political Resolution noted the 'serious weaknesses and vacillations' which had developed in the foreign policy of the government, 'especially in the direction of soft pedalling the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism, in refusing to energetically protest against the provocative

manoeuvres of the US Seventh Fleet in the Indian Ocean and the open US intervention in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and the Congo.'

The CPI correctly set its face against the unwarranted and defeatist approach that the then Shastri government had already in December 1964 reversed all the positive features of the policies of Nehru and gone over to American imperialism, becoming a complete tool of right reaction and an agent of the neo-colonialists at the beck and call of US imperialism.

NO DEFEATIST APPROACH.

The CPI noted in its Political Resolution that the Shastri government 'carries forward the positive as well as the negative aspects of the policy in general. But there has been a change in the internal situation for the worse. Under the mounting pressure of right reaction, both inside and outside the Congress, the government has made dangerous anti-people concessions on issues of food and price policy, suppression of democratic rights etc.'

It further noted that 'the contradiction between the democratic masses and the ruling class, including its government has sharpened in the recent period and the prospect is of its further sharpening, as the crises of people's suffering born out of capitalist development unfolds itself more and more. The differences inside the Congress party are also beginning to grow'.

Paying due tribute to the mighty campaigns and struggles of the democratic movement which had compelled the 'right to retreat and forced the government to give concessions to the people,' it, however, warned that 'the situation may deteriorate further unless popular democratic forces are able to check and reverse it through determined struggles'.

Anybody who reads these and other passages of the Political Resolution passed at the Bombay Party Congress without prejudice, will come to the conclusion that the CPI

correctly assessed the situation prevailing at that time with all its positive and negative features.

It also correctly noted that likely trends of development, that is, of a further deterioration, of more and more concessions to imperialism by the congress government and increasing burdens on the people.

It noted that the contradiction between the democratic masses and the ruling party would further sharpen. Hence, it underlined both the necessity and possibility of urgent, broadbased and militant intervention by the democratic forces.

It is an absurd concoction of some of the leaders of the CP(M) that all this analysis was simply singing hymns to the Congress expecting a smooth passage of sunlit days. On the contrary, the immediate perspective was pointed out as grim but at the same time full of potential for advance.

The perspective was of sharp mass movements and struggle and sweeping class battles. The need was to develop all this to the maximum to prevent a drift to the right and bring a shift to the left.

But the CPI refused to go in for pessimism, refused to become a prisoner of circumstances and a passive recorder of the growing deterioration of India's situation. Marxist-Leninists do not stand around, chanting in a chorus that all is gone, all is lost, or that the more the people suffer the more communist movement can advance.

The CPI never has reconciled and never will reconcile itself to the pernicious theory that it is all to the good if there is famine, all to the good if the US imperialists rule the roost in India, all to the good if democracy is murdered since all this will 'expose' the Congress and 'automatically' bring the masses to the positions of revolution.

The CPI—as a Marxist-Leninist party—condemns this 'theory' as the ideological-political disarming of the masses, as outright surrender to anarchist expectations of catastrophe and chaos as the way towards deliverance of the masses by a chosen band. It condemns this 'theory' as preaching sheer economism and political passivity.

The CPI noted the possible further deterioration and immediately issued a call to battle, a summon to struggle against this dangerous drift and for a shift to the left. This energetic response to a situation of danger by the widest possible mass movement and action is characteristic of all Communist Parties worth the name.

POSSIBILITY OF WIDE FRONT

While issuing this call for action against the imperialist pressures and the drift of the congress government to the right, for a reversal of its anti-people policies and for a shift to the left the CPI in its Political Resolution—as also in its long-term strategy outlined in its Programme—referred to the need and possibility of drawing the congressmen, congress supporters and the masses generally under congress influence into such actions.

It pointed to the growing difference in the Congress on policy issues as the capitalist path unfolds its contradiction.

The Political Resolution of the Bombay Party Congress stated that 'all the rightist forces both inside and outside the Congress are being more and more consolidated.... At the same time, the democratic forces in the Congress have become more vocal and active, advancing alternative democratic slogans.... They are groping towards internal unity as well as joint activity with other sectors of the democratic movement.'

It also stressed that 'the sentiment for unity of all the forces of the left has acquired new impetus and is exerting its beneficial influence on the organised forces and parties of the left.

'It appeals to all the left parties, to all progressive forces and personalities, including democratic congressmen, to join together to discharge this sacred national task at this moment of peril and promise.'

Those leaders of the CP(M) who charge that only today and for opportunist electoral reasons the CPI is bringing to the forefront the menace of US imperialism as well as the

reactionary features of the Congress government and its policies are thus sinning against the facts.

The CPI's policy has always been remains a three-pillared one:

First, sharply criticising and exposing the wholly inadequate, pernicious, anti-people nature of the capitalist path pursued by the Congress, and pointing out how this path hampers the advance of our nation to economic freedom, giving scope for monopoly growth and imperialist intervention.

Second, advancing an alternative path of development, that is, the non-capitalist, national-democratic path to socialism. At the same time, the CPI advances a concrete minimum programme to meet the needs of a particular situation as well as for discussion by other left and democratic parties, forces and personalities.

Third, advancing a national-democratic alternative to the present congress monopoly of power as well as to right reaction. In this the CPI stresses both the importance of left unity as well as that of drawing in democratic congressmen, congress supporters and the broad masses following the Congress into the front of struggle against the imperialists, the anti-people and anti-national aspects of congress policies as well as for a shift to the left.

In the period since the December 1964 Bombay CPI Congress, the party has been consistently implementing this three-pillared approach.

In the April 1965 meeting of the National Council it was pointed out that 'not only the reactionary policies pursued by the government have not been reversed, but some of them, in fact, have further intensified. Although the basic policies have not been abandoned or reversed, certain very serious shifts have unfortunately taken place within the broad framework of these policies.

'In the context of the increased imperialist and reactionary pressures on the government which relies more on

conciliation with reaction than on the masses of the democratic movement, the danger of a general shift to the right is more real and threatening than ever before.'

It was also pointed out that the 'difficulties and the crisis in the economic field, which arise out of the capitalist path of development which the ruling party is pursuing, are sought to be overcome not by turning away from that path, not even by honestly implementing even the moderate measures put forward in their own Bhubaneswar resolution, but by even more concessions and surrenders to Indian and foreign monopoly capital.

'These dangerous trends and developments of the last few months, if not resisted and reversed, will instead of solving the difficulties worsen in the long run the conditions of the masses and endanger even the gains our economy has made.'

Concretely the resolution pointed to the following danger signals of a drift to the right.

—Failure to condemn US aggression on Vietnam.

—Wide concessions to foreign and Indian monopoly capital.

—Increasing reliance on PL 480 imports.

—Opening the public sector to participation of foreign private capital.

—The arrest of the CP(M) leaders under the DIR, the increasing resort to this infamous 'law', the throwing overboard of the Indian Constitution in refusing to allow the CP(M) to form a government in Kerala.

MASS ACTIONS

Once again the resolution stressed the supreme urgency and importance of sweeping mass actions and campaigns as well of the political intervention of the democratic forces, including progressive congressmen.

It pointed to the lag and failure in this respect. 'What is necessary in the present situation is to mobilise the potentially far stronger forces of the masses into concrete mass actions in defence of the interests of the people of the country.'

In the next few months these mass actions burst out in various states throughout the country, apart from dogged battles on a local scale. The high point of these actions was reached in the glorious August 1965 movement in Bihar following the bandh actions there.

It is universally acknowledged that it was the CPI which stood in the forefront of this historic struggle, acting as the initiator and leader and bearing the brunt of the lionine fury of a desperate congress government.

In West Bengal the people, under the leadership of the united left front and others, began to demonstrate in a big way against increase in tram fares and prices and against food scarcity. Two persons were killed, scores injured, over four thousand people arrested as the repressive machinery of the government moved into action.

In Maharashtra and in Kolhapur, massive lathi charges and firings did not daunt the thousands demonstrating against the rise in prices and the food scarcity, under the auspices of the Anti-Starvation Committee organised by the CPI and three other opposition parties. Six people were killed, hundreds injured and 250 persons, including opposition leaders, put under arrest and detained under DIR.

Against this background of worsening conditions, of further deterioration in the policies of the government and rising militant actions, in which the CPI had played a leading role, the August 1965 meeting of the National Council of the CPI decided to launch an all-India food movement from 10 to 12 September of that year.

DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE

Working out a democratic alternative to the government's nationally humiliating and economically disastrous depen-

dence on PL 480 imports, the CPI called upon its units to use all forms of actions from satyagraha to demonstrations, to coordinate with the all-India action of the workers to be launched under the leadership of the Rashtriya Sangram Samiti and to move unitedly with other parties where possible and on its own where necessary.

Those leaders of the CP(M) who are trying to make out that the CPI has all on a sudden decided to take a 'tough attitude' towards the government in view of the coming elections, will have to answer:

Did or did not the CPI warn again and again that a general shift to the right was coming on the agenda?

Did or did not the CPI call again and again for united intervention against this danger by all the democratic forces?

Did or did not the CPI play a leading role in initiating and participating in the sweeping mass battles of that period?

Did or did not the CPI chalk out a plan for a militant nationwide mass action on the central political economic problem of the day—food—a good ten months ago?

These leaders have to answer yet another question. It is true that during this period most of the leaders of the CP(M) were under detention. But E.M.S. Namboodiripad was out and there was a committee functioning on behalf of its central committee. In their recent Tenali session the CC of the CP(M) has more or less endorsed and applauded the line and action of these leading comrades of theirs who were outside jail.

Can these leaders point out a single example and instance when the then CP(M) leadership proposed some action against government policies which the CPI leadership turned down?

Can these leaders point out a single instance when the then CP(M) leadership proposed some more 'militant' slogans or forms of action which the CPI leadership turned down?

Can these leaders provide a single case where the CP(M) on its own went ahead with some mass actions on burning issues because the CPI leadership did not want to join it?

It can be confidently asserted that there are no such examples, otherwise the CP(M) leaders would by now have shouted themselves hoarse about it.

Thus whether it is a question of policy or of mass movement the CPI has acted with a consistency which the CP(M) leadership would do well to emulate. At the same time, it has reacted realistically to important shifts in the situation. The CPI does not believe that tactics have to be unalterable or that policy changes are to be ruled out when the situation changes. Lack of flexibility in tactics is one sure work of dogmatism.

PAKISTANI AGGRESSION

One such shift, certainly, was the US-inspired Pakistani aggression against India which engaged the attention of the whole world from the end of August to the middle of September last year. The CP(M) has accused the CPI of indulging in 'rabid chauvinism' and 'abandoning mass struggles in the name of national defence' during the Indo-Pak war.

The CPI did support the national defence efforts at the time. It viewed the Pakistani aggression in the larger context of the Anglo-American imperialist strategy in Asia, for the carrying out of which the Ayub regime is backed by them militarily and in every other way. The US imperialists hoped to humiliate India and draw it into its neo-colonialist parlour.

The CPI did all in its power to rally and rouse the people in the cause of defence of the territorial integrity and honour of our country. It backed the heroic battle of the Indian Army and Air Force against the Pakistani aggressors, who were using Patton tanks and Sabre jets provided by the Americans. The CPI fully shared the thrill of the entire

nation at the success attending the armed defence of our country.

As part and parcel of the national defence efforts, the CPI stressed and vigorously campaigned for secularism and communal harmony.

It again and again emphasised that India was fighting the aggressive policies of the Ayub regime and not the peace-loving democratic people of Pakistan. It expressed its warmest solidarity with the Pakhtoons, East Pakistani and other democratic forces of Pakistan.

It called upon the government to meet the legitimate and most urgent demands of the people, provide food and other necessities at prices within the reach of the vast masses, penalise blackmarketing and strictly control prices.

It also demanded that the government immediately release the thousands of political prisoners belonging to the CPI, CP (M), SSP, RSP, FWP and Republican Party detained under DIR or other laws. It stressed that their continued incarceration violated all canons of democracy and prevented them from extending active cooperation to the defence efforts of the nation.

CHINESE ULTIMATUM

The CPI sharply condemned the opportunist and incendiary approach of the leadership of China which announced full support to Ayub, tried to egg him on, issued ultimatums to India and did all in its power to support the very same Pakistani aggression which was being conducted with the help of US tanks and planes and at the instigation of the US imperialists.

The CPI welcomed the efforts of friendly powers, above all, Soviet Union, in trying to bring about a cessation of hostilities through bilateral talks. At the same time it warned the government and the nation against the imperialist plot to use the cease fire efforts as a pretext to push in a so-called 'peace keeping' armed force into our subcontinent.

It emphasised that a real and lasting peace between India and Pakistan, so essential for the well being and prosperity of both the peoples and for which the CPI has all along striven, can only be achieved through the renunciation of the resort to force in the relations between the two countries and the signing of a no-war pact. (see the CPI's Central Secretariat statements of 17 August, 3, 6 and 9 September, 1965).

It should be noted here that Namboodiripad fully supported the national defence efforts on behalf of the CP (M). He praised the valour and skill of the armed forces as well as of the 'political authorities' directing the operations. A. K. Gopalan and H. K. Surjeet, Politburo members of the CP (M), wrote from jail supporting the statement of Namboodiripad. P. Sundarayya (in his private capacity) wrote that the Government of India had done a correct thing by carrying the war into Pakistan so as to better defend Kashmir. He criticised the Chinese ultimatum.

The CP (M) leaders and cadres working outside rightly demanded that they should be represented on the various defence committees that were set up to mobilise the people against Pakistani aggression.

Indeed in Kerala Namboodiripad was a member of the State Defence Committee. The Kerala state committee of the CP (M) had earlier passed a strong resolution in support of the national defence effort.

The CP (M) leadership quite correctly agreed, along with the CPI and other left parties, to withdraw the call for a National Action Day given by the Sangram Samiti prior to the outbreak of hostilities.

And during the period from the outbreak of war till the cease-fire was stabilised nowhere and nobody from the CP (M) ever put out a statement that the war between India and Pakistan was a war between two bourgeois landlord states in which the toilers of India were not interested. Their demand for inclusion in the defence committees showed that they considered the toilers were vitally interested in national defence.

On the contrary, various leaders of the CP(M) insisted very correctly that all the CP(M) leaders and members should be released so that they could play their due role in national defence. None of them proposed that mass struggles should be launched against the government during the period of Indo-Pak hostilities.

Of course, nobody among these CP(M) leaders ever proposed that since the war was one between two reactionary governments, therefore, the peoples of India and Pakistan should, first and foremost, use the war to settle accounts with their own respective governments.

This stand was, on the whole, correct. It was, on the whole, a stand not very different from that of the CPI since the basis was the same—support of the national defence efforts. Thus, if the CPI is now accused of 'chauvinism' and 'class collaboration', the same charges can be applied to the official stand of the CP(M) also at that time.

MARXISTS' SILENCE

There were two very serious defects, however, in the stand of the CP(M)—defects which differentiated it from that of the CPI. The first and most serious defect was the criminal silence on the part of the CP(M) leadership against the US imperialist support for and instigation of Pakistan.

When huge sections of our people were furious with the US and British imperialists, it was more than odd that the leadership of the CP(M) maintained a discreet silence! It was a very strange silence as well since the CP(M) always claims to be a champion fighter against US imperialism and accuses the CPI of not branding it as the main enemy of India.

The second defect was the failure of the CP(M) leadership to criticise the utterly harmful and provocative role of the Chinese leadership during this period. Apart from some extreme ambiguous statements by Namboodiripad, the CP(M) leadership chose to maintain official silence on the question.

It was these two defects that differentiated their stand

from that of the CPI and made their position suspect in the eyes of the broad masses.

What about their stand on negotiations? The CP(M) leadership is making the tall claim that it was their insistence on negotiations that led to the Tashkent Agreement! This is the height of absurdity.

First, without the defeat of the Pakistani aggression and the imperialist strategy behind it no Tashkent would have been possible. When Pakistani tanks were pushing ahead in the Chamb sector the main question would not be negotiations but rather proper military decisions and mass support for the army. The CP(M) leadership does not seem to be willing to recognise this fact.

Second, without the position and influence that the Soviet Union has come to possess as a result of its wise policy of peaceful coexistence, friendship and economic aid to India—policies which the CP(M) leadership attacks in various ways—no Tashkent would have been possible.

The Soviet Union is a friend of India—this fact has become a part of the national consciousness, however much the right and some 'left' personalities dislike it. From Lal Bahadur Shastri to the common peasant everybody, therefore, appreciated the Soviet initiative as the noble effort of a good friend.

SLOGAN OF NEGOTIATIONS

As for the slogan of negotiations, long before Namboodiripad began to talk about it the Central Secretariat of the CPI had issued the call for a no-war pact. Tashkent and the Tashkent spirit essentially means that a big step has been taken in that direction. There is no difference at all between the CPI and CP(M) that our dispute with Pakistan has to be settled by peaceful means and not by arms.

It was not the stress on negotiations that differentiated the position of the CP(M). It was the ambiguous nature of their proposals for negotiations.

Namboodiripad after being pulled up, perhaps, by some

of his comrades for his earlier correct statements, began to harp on the 'special status' of Kashmir. In the beginning it was not clear what he meant by this 'special status'. Later it came to mean 'special status' within the Indian Union. This was the sole 'contribution' of the CP (M) to the problem of negotiations.

The whole approach was preposterous. It was not the status of Kashmir within India that sparked off the conflict. It was Pakistan's bid, instigated by the imperialists, to annex Kashmir by armed force, that was at the root of the war. Namboodiripad's speeches deliberately evaded this key point and, therefore, his talk of negotiations became suspect in the eyes of the patriotic and democratic masses.

As a matter of fact, the CP (M)'s awkward silence, its ambiguous proposals and its vacillations would have spoilt, to some extent, the atmosphere for a peaceful settlement were it not for the fact that the CP (M) was largely paralysed during this period and hardly conducted any mass activity though statements to the newspapers appeared in great profusion.

The Tenali resolution of the CC of the CP (M) continues this ambivalent approach. It talks of the war between India and Pakistan but ignores the point as to who was the aggressor as well as the question of what should have been the correct attitude towards national defence.

It talks of national chauvinism but keeps quiet about the role of the US imperialists and of the Chinese leadership. It makes no evaluation of the earlier statements of Namboodiripad pledging full support to national defence. Obviously the CP (M) leadership is more than usually confused on the question.

WHY CONFUSION?

It gives itself away, however, in the following sentence in the Tenali CC resolution dealing with the Indo-Pak war: 'Added to this was the fact that the party itself was not free from confusion.' What was this confusion? And

who was confused? How was this confusion cleared up? The thunderous 'revolutionaries' are eloquently silent.

Since we are on the question of negotiations we might as well take up the problem of the India-China conflict.

The CP (M) leadership first of all utters a monstrous lie when it says that the CPI considered China as the main enemy of India. As in the case with the Goebbelsian technique, a simple assertion is made without a single supporting statement or fact.

When China crossed the MacMahon line in October 1962 the entire, united party, including the leaders of the now CP (M) called for support to national defence. Obviously, the national defence in question was against Chinese troops and not some abstract, imaginary aggressor. The CP (M) has not repudiated this position.

If this is meant as considering China as the 'main enemy' at that time the new leadership of the CP (M) is also committed to that stand. Or does the CP (M) now want to make self-criticism on the point?

The CPI, and incidentally the CP (M) also, is further of the opinion that if China should commit aggression again it will join fully the national defence efforts. Several editorials of *People's Democracy* during the Indo-Pak war made this point.

As for the rest, it is simple concoction. Again and again the CPI has pointed out that the chauvinist and anti-socialist position of China on the India-China border dispute objectively helps right reaction in India, and facilitates the imperialist strategy vis-a-vis India. In other words, the tactics of the Chinese leadership objectively helps the main enemy of India, that is, imperialism and domestic reaction.

Does the CP (M) disagree here? Does it feel, perhaps, that the tactics of the Chinese leadership help the anti-imperialist and progressive forces in India? Let them give a straightforward answer.

Further, the CPI is of the view that these tactics are not an isolated accident. They are part of the entire general

line of the Chinese leadership which the overwhelming majority of the world communist movement has sharply criticised.

DISRUPTION BY CPC LEADERSHIP

The criticism is that the Chinese leadership's general line disrupts the world anti-imperialist front and objectively facilitates the accomplishment of the aims of the main enemy of all mankind, that is, world imperialism headed by the US imperialists. A glaring case is the disruptive Chinese stand on the question of militant solidarity with Vietnam.

The CP (M) has chosen to 'postpone' considering this problem as it wants to maintain, for an undefined period, a 'neutral' position on the question. It should then talk less about 'revisionism', 'anti-internationalism' and the like.

What about the Colombo proposals? It should be remembered that these proposals were an important initiative made in January 1963 to stabilise the cease-fire between India and China. Ceylon, Indonesia, Ghana, Burma, Cambodia and the UAR made certain proposals which they urged both India and China to accept so that immediate tension could be removed and a proper atmosphere created for negotiations on the boundary dispute itself.

Despite fierce opposition from the reactionary forces in India, Jawaharlal Nehru accepted the Colombo proposals in toto. To begin with China signified that it made a 'positive response' to these proposals and accepted them 'in principle'.

Later it came out with certain 'reservations' regarding posts in the demilitarised zone in Ladakh. Still later Nehru accepted some changes in this regard on the basis of proposals made by Bertrand Russell's envoy who had had talks in Peking with Chou En-lai.

During this period China made the astounding statement that the Colombo powers had given it a 'different interpretation' of these proposals. This statement was authoritatively

contradicted by the official spokesman of the Colombo powers. Eventually China refused to open talks with India on the basis of the Colombo proposals.

This important Afro-Asian initiative to try to settle a conflict between two major Afro-Asian powers could not but be welcomed by progressive forces in India and throughout the world. Indeed, it can be said to have been a precursor to the Tashkent initiative of Soviet Union. It is characteristic of the chauvinism and sectarianism of the Chinese leadership that it rudely repudiated this initiative.

The undivided CPI wholeheartedly welcomed these proposals and urged China to accept them just as the Indian government had. Since the split the CPI continued to emphasise that the Colombo proposals afforded the best basis for breaking the deadlock. It sharply criticised the Chinese obstinancy in this regard.

Will Namboodiripad be kind enough to tell us if it was wrong for the CPI to urge negotiations on the basis of the Colombo proposals? Will he also tell us if it was correct for the Chinese leadership to reject these proposals?

The CP (M) has never previously repudiated the Colombo proposals but it had always been lukewarm about them. At its Calcutta congress it urged the Government of India to break the deadlock on the basis of Nehru's modification of the Colombo proposals or on any other basis. It also urged the Chinese government to take initiative in the matter. In other words, the CP (M) had no concrete proposals to break the deadlock between India and China.

Since then the deadlock, caused by China's opposition to an Afro-Asian initiative embodied in the Colombo proposals, has persisted and much has happened. The Colombo powers themselves have significantly changed. Ghana and Indonesia have seen drastic and reactionary alterations of government. Ceylon is ruled by the UNP which is a rightist party, following the defeat of Sirimavo Bandaranaike's coalition. Obviously the Colombo powers as now constituted can take no initiative in the matter. To that extent the Colombo proposals have become defunct.

Further, despite an uneasy situation continuing a de facto cease-fire line has been stabilised over the past three years. It is now both necessary and possible to urge for a fresh initiative.

That is why in September 1965 the Central Executive Committee of the CPI—that is, ten months ago and just after the Indo-Pak war—stated that ‘though all our efforts to settle the border disputes with China have failed, India should continue its efforts for a peaceful and honourable settlement with the good offices of friendly powers.’

Naturally enough no reference was made to the Colombo proposals. The new point was to utilise the good offices of friendly powers—the UAR or Rumania, for example.

Following the Tashkent Agreement, the National Council of the CPI stated in January 1966: ‘In the wake of the great successes at Tashkent, which has heightened India’s prestige and generally improved the climate for peaceful approach to border problems the National Council is of the opinion that notwithstanding the wholly negative attitude of the PRC in regard to the peaceful settlement of India-China problems and her provocations on the frontiers, the new atmosphere should be used by the Government of India for fresh initiatives with the help of the good offices of friendly powers for a peaceful negotiated settlement with the People’s Republic of China, on a principled basis and consistent with India’s national interests and integrity.’

This understanding, in which again no reference was made to the Colombo proposals, was carried forward in the June 1966 resolution of the National Council which stated: ‘Despite the continued hostile attitude of China, it is in the interest of the Indian people and country as a whole to explore all avenues for a peaceful settlement with China either directly or through the good offices of friendly neutral powers. Pending settlement of the border issue, India should make an offer of entering into a no-war pact with China’.

It has to be stated that the CPI has all along worked and

campaigned for a peaceful settlement of the border dispute with China. But it has also all along pointed out that the biggest stumbling block has been the outlook and policy of the Chinese leadership.

Despite this attitude the CPI has been urging the Government of India to take fresh initiatives since the interests of India and the world anti-imperialist front demanded it.

CP (M)'S ABSTRACT CAMPAIGN

The CP (M)'s abstract ‘campaign’ for a settlement with China, its studied refusal to criticise the wrong positions of the Chinese leadership and its failure to make any concrete proposals to break the deadlock have only helped those who are against a peaceful settlement of the border dispute.

It would be better for the prospects of a peaceful settlement if the CP (M) gave up its refusal to criticise China and made concrete proposals to break the deadlock acceptable to our country as well as China. Otherwise, we have to come to the conclusion that it is the CP (M) which is not genuinely anxious to break the deadlock.

Nambooditipad has posed some questions in this regard (*People’s Democracy*, 17 July). It is highly regrettable that he has indulged in statements which are very far from the truth.

First, contrary to his charge, the CPI has never advocated the taking of territory in Aksai Chin or anywhere else by the force of arms. Will he be kind enough to produce a single resolution or statement where the CPI has asked for a military offensive against China?

The CPI has always and everywhere stressed defence of India’s territory and settlement of disputes by negotiations where India should press her claims and be ready for compromise. Is the CP (M) against defence and against India pressing her claims at the negotiating table?

Second, the CPI has never asked for, let alone welcomed, military ‘aid’ from western imperialist powers.

Time and again in resolution after resolution the CPI has stressed that India's defence is the affair of the Indian people and no imperialist arms 'aid' 'umbrella' or 'advisors' are necessary. On the contrary, these, it was pointed out, are highly dangerous and would sap India's freedom.

What the National Council resolution of November 1962 did say was 'the CPI is not opposed to buying arms' on commercial basis from any country. But it is opposed to the import of foreign personnel to man the defence of the country. The people and armed forces of India are capable enough to defend their country once they organise and move in their millions as a solid united force.' Where is the 'welcome' to western military 'aid' in all this?

Namboodiripad evidently hopes that his readers have short memories or that he can play upon their prejudices by complete distortions. What he wants to hide is that the CPI has advocated and still advocates first and foremost self-reliance in matters of national defence.

What he wants to hide is that the CPI was opposed and is opposed to any type of 'aid' in military matters from the imperialists. What he wants to hide, finally, is that there is a total gulf between accepting 'aid' and commercial purchase. For example, nobody objects when China buys arms on a commercial basis from imperialist West Germany.

He asks: 'Do you admit that it was wrong on your part to have welcomed military "aid" from the Western imperialists to resist the Chinese aggressor as you did in November 1962?'

We are happy that Namboodiripad has at last called the Chinese aggressors in November 1962 and that the vigilant editors of *People's Democracy* have let it pass!

As for the rest, we would put a counter question to him: 'Do you admit that you are not telling the truth when you say the CPI welcomed western imperialist military "aid"? Do you admit that falsehood is not the best way to conduct discussions or even polemics? Are you willing to admit your mistake here, deliberate or otherwise?'

Third, the CPI is asked whether it is not critical of the Government of India's stand on Tibet and its conduct of the dispute with China. Despite his great rhetorical flourish, Namboodiripad is knocking at an open door.

The CPI had denounced unequivocally and unanimously the GOI's stand on Tibet when it was undivided. The CPI resolutely adheres to that stand and sharply opposed the recent action of the GOI in supporting the raising of the so-called 'Tibet issue' in the UN by some reactionary powers.

NAMBOODIRIPAD AND BORDER DISPUTE

Nor does the CPI believe that the GOI is doing all it can to settle the dispute with China. That is precisely why it calls upon the GOI to take fresh initiatives.

As for the stand of the CPI on this issue prior to the split or sharp division in the party (that is, prior to November 1962) these were endorsed by the National Council as a whole. Does Namboodiripad and other CP(M) leaders have second thoughts on these issues now? If so, he should tell us what these thoughts are and make some self-criticism.

We might remind him that he was part of the delegation, along with P. Ramamurti, to the 1960 Moscow Conference where Ajoy Ghosh made a sharply critical speech against the Chinese stand on the border dispute. This speech represented the agreed views of the entire delegation. Do they stand by the speech now?

We might remind him that he together with other CP(M) leaders voted for the National Council resolution on the India-China border dispute passed in August 1962 where it is stated, 'the National Council of the CPI supports 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 necessary measures for the defence of the borders of the nation.'

Do they now have second thoughts about the vote now? Do they want to make some self-criticism about it?

We would request Namboodiripad to take some time off and read through the resolutions of the National Council of the CPI prior to November 1962, up to which time he and other CP(M) leaders were in full agreement with the stand of the CPI on the border dispute with China.

We would request him to ponder over the following statement of his made on 28 February 1963: 'I am fully convinced that the Communist Party of China have done damage to the cause of freedom, democracy and socialism throughout the world by launching the massive offensive which they did on October 20 and by their earlier armed actions. Under these circumstances it was correct and necessary, according to me, to join hands with other patriotic elements in the country in defence of the territorial integrity of the nation.'

This was no statement made under the compulsions of party discipline. It was a statement explaining his resignation from the posts of general secretary and editor of the party organ. Where does he stand now in relation to that statement? Namboodiripad of all persons should have hesitated before embarking on asking the CPI questions about the India-China conflict!

Finally, what about the stand of the CPI towards the congress government? Why does it now call for its resignation?

Here again the CP(M) dishes out distortions. Where have they found any statement of the CPI hailing Indira Gandhi as a great progressive? All that the CPI stated was that Morarji Desai represented the forces of the ultra-right and therefore his defeat was to be welcomed as the defeat of yet another open bid of the ultra-right to gain full domination over the central government.

Here again it may be recalled that Namboodiripad writing in *People's Democracy* at the time made a similar distinction.

At the same time, the CPI is of the view that the devaluation decision, coming as the culmination of a series of surrenders to the US imperialists and domestic reaction, 'denotes a dangerous turning point'.

These, in their totality, 'constitute the biggest blow to India's basic policies of independent development and non-alignment. They may well, if not halted by the joint efforts of all progressive and patriotic forces, prove to be the beginning of wholesale reversal of all positive gains of the country and the Indian people, opening the gateway to full fledged neo-colonialist drive in our economic and political life'.

Therefore, the National Council of the CPI calls for a qualitative intensification of the intervention of all the democratic forces, including democratic congressmen.

It proposes also to launch mass actions jointly with other parties as also on its own initiative.

It advances from its own platform the slogan for the resignation of the congress government and proposes a March to Delhi on 1 September around this slogan.

It appeals to all democratic forces to take the political offensives, defeat the turn to the right and bring a shift to the left.

Only the prejudiced among the CP(M) leaders will see any 'revision' of the CPI's line in all this. All those who are honest and unprejudiced will see in this a continuity as well as a sharp stepping up, in consonance with the swift movement of the political situation. An added urgency and a fresh emphasis has been given to the basic line of the CPI which life itself has confirmed.

If proof were at all needed we would ask the CP(M) leaders to remember the bandhs in Kerala, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Maharashtra in the past few months. We would ask them to remember the initiative as well a leading role that the CPI played in these struggles. We would ask them to remember the repeated and persistent efforts

made by the CPI to forge a left democratic alternative to the Congress in the elections starting from the middle of 1965 itself.

We would appeal to the leaders and the members of the CP(M) to remember the fact that in different states all over India joint mass actions by the two CPs as well other left parties are going ahead against savage repression and with glorious heroism.

We would appeal to them to remember that our toiling people and the very destiny of our nation demand united, sweeping mass political battles against the congress government, to take India in the direction of the completion of the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and democratic revolution.

The CPI and the CP(M) have very serious ideological political differences on national and international issues. The differences will continue and can only be settled by the passage of time and the test of life.

Yet the call of struggle rings out to both CPs. Let us debate our differences, if debate we must, in a spirit of fraternity, with respect for facts and for each other.

Let us unite, even as we debate, for sharp clashes loom ahead and the toilers of India look expectantly for our joint lead.