

On Unity—A Response

ASHIM CHATTERJEE

THIS is rather a late response to the appeal made in the name of Com. Khokan Mazumdar and another comrade to all the members of the Central Committee of the CPI (ML) elected at the all-India party congress held in May, 1970. In my earlier statement I was silent on the great debate concerning the party; instead, I echoed the call for unification by combating all forms of sectarianism issued by the six comrades including Com. Kanu Sanyal in their revolutionary letter from jail. This silence encouraged some to support or oppose me on the basis of wild conjectures and unfounded claims. A statement on the question as well as the wider question of bringing revolutionary unity of all revolutionary forces is necessary. In that sense, this supplements my earlier statement published in May, 1974.

At the very outset let me state it precisely that I think the formation of the CPI (ML) on 22nd April, 1969 was, in the main, correct. There had been an element of unnecessary haste and certain lack, to some extent, of ideological and political preparation as has been rightly pointed out by Com. Kanu Sanyal; but the very formation of the CPI (ML) cannot and should not be ruled out on that account. All comrades, specially those of struggling areas, felt its necessity and demanded it. As such, it was the product of objective necessity. The formation of the party was greeted with tremendous enthusiasm by the whole rank and file, and hailed by fraternal parties all over the world, including the great, glorious and correct CPC. From my personal experience, I can firmly state that without the formation of the CPI (ML) the peasant struggle in Gopiballavpur-Belga would not have been possible. Negation of the formation of the CPI (ML) is the negation of all the valuable experiences of armed struggle, both positive and negative, in the recent past gained through tremendous sacrifice, and which, if it is a betrayal of the martyrs. Next comes the question of evaluation of the eighth congress of the party held

in May, 1970. Undoubtedly, the whole congress surrendered to left-sectarian policies. Everyone present approved the line of secret assassination in the name of class enemy annihilation and none questioned even the programme of annihilation in cities and towns. That absence of any land policy or agrarian programme signifies the negation of the main content of our people's democratic revolution was not pointed out by anyone; none advocated combination with other forms of struggle. The question of mass organisation and mass movement, its relation with the formation of an army or the question of mass line was not raised by anyone. The Indian bourgeoisie as a whole was termed comprador without any protest. As has been subsequently proved by our experience, all these were grave mistakes in policies. In spite of all these, I still think that the positive aspects of the party congress far outweigh its negative ones. In the entire history of the communist movement in India, this congress has the unique glory of upholding the banner of Marxism-Leninism Mao Tse Tung Thought for the first time. The characterisation of the state power, of the four enemies of the Indian revolution, including Soviet social-imperialists, the stage and nature of our revolution was, on the whole, correct. The congress rejected the revisionist trash of 'peaceful orientation' with contempt and firmly stood for armed struggle. All these were some of the positive achievements and had deep political impact in the life of the whole country. Therefore, I recognise the eighth party congress and the Central Committee elected therefrom. One should never forget that the CPC declared the 'general orientation' of the party to be correct, after reviewing all the documents of the party congress. CPI (ML) has the glory of a message from Chairman Mao himself, "By you (in plural), India has hope".

Unfortunately, at present, the party has been divided into groups and factions because of the continuation of left-

sectarian policies for a long period. The left-sectarian deviation has now been defeated as is apparent from the fact that a vast majority of party members including all the Central Committee members have firmly rejected it. Yet, because of the absence of a full fledged positive political line and methodical, persistent, deep and all pervading ideological struggle, remnants of the old left-sectarianism and the danger therefrom persist. In different garbs, it is hindering the ideological, political and organisational reorganisation of the party.

From the platform of the tenth congress of the CPC, Chairman Mao issued the great call, "Practise Marxism, and not revisionism; unite and don't split; be simple and above board, don't conspire and intrigue". Not only the necessity of unity for practising Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-Tung Thought, but also the revolutionary method of doing it has been clearly stated here. For our party which suffered immensely because of the ideology, politics and method of work of Lin Biao, this has special significance.

Reorganisation, Reconstitution, Reunification—call it by any name, it is politically necessary. The Indian reactionaries, beset as they are with irreconcilable contradictions, are paper tigers strategically. But tactically, they should be taken seriously. To win real independence and freedom for the people is a great task. It demands that we fight social-imperialism, imperialism and domestic counter-revolutionaries. Hence all the revolutionary force that can be united should be united. Only the CPI (ML) with its sincerity, dedication, honesty, experience and, above all, ideology and political line can do it. The vast majority of the party cadres as well as the people fervently demand reunification.

Reunification is politically possible. Until now there has been no major political difference, so far as the general line is concerned, among the different groups who have discarded the old sectarian line. All the present "differences" can be discussed and resolved within the framework of a single party.

Some comrades, headed by Satya Narain Singh, have formed a "revived Central Committee". It is an undeniable

fact of party history that along with our respected martyr Comrade Sushital Roy Chowdhury. Comrade SNS initiated, however unsatisfactory, partial and incomplete a way, the fight against left sectarian deviation inside our party. It was a valiant effort to create a centre in a difficult situation. But this Committee has failed to rally the vast majority of comrades because its formation suffered from three defects:

(i) The concept of revival is not a Marxist-Leninist one. It does not denote a process. To many comrades it appears as an indirect effort to place all the responsibility for the mistakes in policy on individuals. I do not know if this concept of revival has any international precedence or not.

(ii) Ideological reorganisation at any level precedes organisational reorganisation. The policy of 'reorganisation first, then ideological struggle' is the policy of putting the cart before the horse. Reorganisation is done only on a clear ideological-political basis.

(iii) No effective initiative was taken to contact all the Central Committee members including those in jail. Naturally, the opinions of those comrades who are in jail should not count organisationally but politically it does matter.

There is another technical flaw. References are being made to my meeting with comrades SNS, Com. Gurbox, RK and Com. Mohinder. Save and except SNS I had not the opportunity of meeting any of the above comrades. Therefore my direct association with the merits or demerits of the November 7 document does not arise, though I broadly agree with the general political line.

Some comrades headed by SG, have formed a COC. The claim of this central body to act as the centre of the CPI (ML) is more dubious. The fight against any deviation is a process. One should be objective; one cannot subjectively relate the initiation of a process with one's own awakening. Moreover, the general line preached by the COC is almost identical with that of the revived Central Committee or with the line being preached and practised by Com. Khokon Mazumdar and others. Also, I think SG should categorically state to

the Party cadres his present stand regarding the national-chauvinistic position taken by him during the dismemberment of Pakistan. I hope he will not sidetrack the issue by pointing out some of my mistakes.

It is interesting to note that both the revived CC and the COC have been compelled to distort the Party history. After bitter lesson we should consciously try to fight all forms of subjectivism. Personally, I shall be happy to be able to work together with comrades SNS and SG along with other comrades again.

Our Party was like a very valuable picture placed in our custody. Because of our immaturity and lack of revolutionary vigilance and alertness, it has, as if, dropped off our hands and broken into pieces. But still it can be mended and a better picture produced. Hence, I appeal to all the comrades, particularly the Central Committee members, to take this task of reunification of the party seriously and call upon the entire party to follow this example.

Basis of Unity

What should be the basis of unity? Obviously the party programme and party constitution adopted in the eighth congress with amendments. The article 'Spring Thunder' and valuable suggestions of the fraternal Party should be the guideline. A document is to be prepared consisting of: (1) Party programme with proper amendments (and not a new programme) and the reasons for the amendments, (2) Party constitution with proper amendments (and not a new constitution). (3) Self-critical report. (4) Political-organisational report.

One should remember that the negation of the documents of the eighth congress is essentially the negation of the congress itself.

This document, prepared after due consultation and discussion, will serve as the basis of reorganisation. In the process of development the ninth congress should be convened as early as possible. The evaluation of any individual, however important, should not be made a precondition of re-unification.

Next comes the task of unity with all fraternal groups outside the CPI (ML)

who ideologically subscribe to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought and are eager to develop armed peasant struggle. This task has no contradiction with the reorganisation of the CPI (ML). It is my unfortunate experience, direct and indirect, that whenever we talk of the reorganisation of the CPI (ML), some comrades feel injured and insulted and try to invent some plot or remnant of sectarian policies. This is a legacy of the past. We had practised a policy of closed doorism dogmatically towards those comrades, treated them with contempt as almost counter-revolutionaries and behaved with them with arrogance. That was wrong. Sincere and open-hearted self-criticism on our part will clear the atmosphere and pave the way for understanding and mutual respect. A responsible leadership should be patient in resolving all honest political differences. To put politics in command means essentially to put revolution in command.

On the other hand, these comrades should be told clearly and firmly that liquidation of our Party can never be a precondition for unity with them. They should be told that they made a mistake by not joining the Party in 1969. Today we shall invite them to join the Party. The door of mutual discussion shall remain open; we shall maintain a close liaison and try to synchronise all our actions with theirs, as far as possible, keeping the independence and initiative of the Party intact.

Then there are other parties, groups and individuals with whom unity, albeit partial, temporary and relative, will be necessary. This necessity will be determined by historical conditions. The Party should lay down a policy in this respect.

We should try to unite as far as possible with all parties, groups and individuals who (1) pursue a policy of anti-hegemonism against the two superpowers; (2) stand for alliance with China and other Third World countries; (3) work genuinely for the interest of the people, particularly the working class and peasantry. In our country where armed revolution is faced with armed counter-revolution, the attitude towards armed struggle is closely linked with this criterion.

above may serve as the three
for unity at present. Why
everyone of the three criteria
is a matter of detailed dis-
cussion. Independence and initiative
any kind of united front must
be maintained. In the present interna-
tional and national situation any kind of
united front with the force of imperialism
and with the forces of social-
ism in particular is ruled out:
united front, incompatible with our
policy, is politically harmful.

In spite of all the apparent divisions
and ideological disorder, the ever in-
cessant march towards inevitable unity
of revolutionary forces is militantly
proceeding. We had no experience of a setback
in the past. Now, the Party has successfully
survived a severe one. Politically, we
are in a much stronger position at present
than any time before. We, Marxist-
Leninists, should always study all phe-
nomena in development. The present is
the tortuous but bright path of
the Chinese people—the path of liberation of
the Chinese people.