

GARLANDS COUNTER CENSURE OF GOPALAN

By. S. R. Singh

NEW DELHI -- A.K.Gopalan, leader of the Communist group in the Indian parliament was "publicly" censured by the National Council of the CPI [Communist party of India], which concluded its five-day session here on October 19, on charges of "open and willful defiance and public slander of the party."

Gopalan's "crime" was that he had addressed a mass rally at Calcutta organized by the Democratic Convention [a grouping allegedly sponsored by "pro-Peking" leftists in the CPI] to demand the release of political prisoners and to protest against the "antipeoples" food policy of the Congress government. Gopalan had also charged the national leadership, which is headed by S.A.Dange, with "reformism and revisionism" and "total surrender to the Nehru government."

An earlier move to oust Gopalan from leadership of the parliamentary group and to suspend him from the National Council was given up when three major state units of the party, West Bengal, Andhra and Kerala, dominated either by leftists or centrists, threatened to split and set up a rival party. The resolution censuring him was finally carried by a majority of votes with some abstentions. E.M.S.Namboodiripad, leader of the "centrist" group, who had just returned from Moscow after medical treatment, warned the Council against any such precipitous move. He did not attend the meeting where the censure motion was carried.

Other charges of "indiscipline" levelled against Gopalan and also against the leftist leader from Andhra, P. Sundarayya, were referred to a control commission. Sundarayya, who is leader of the Opposition in the Andhra legislative assembly, publicly criticized Dange for his "surrenderist policy" in relation to the Nehru government. He had been "directed" not to make public speeches criticizing the "official" party line.

The internal struggle within the CPI, however, has not ended with the censure motion against Gopalan. It is proposed that different state units of the party take action against "dissidents," including members who participated in the activities of the Democratic Convention in West Bengal. But, faced with a possible split, the Dangeite leadership appears to have decided to slow down the disciplinary drive against its opponents. A move to legalize and perpetuate the present ad hoc "provisional" committee imposed on the Bengal party was postponed until the leaders still in jail in the state are released.

Gopalan, for his part, submitted a memorandum to the Council justifying his participation in the Calcutta rally on political grounds although he agreed that it might be construed as a "technical breach of discipline." (The CPI Central Executive had ordered him not to address the rally.) Gopalan has accused the Dangeite leadership of having failed to organize mass movements to "tackle the food problem and secure the release of party detenus in Bengal."

(Ironically enough, while the National Council was in session in New Delhi, a rice godown in Calcutta was raided by an angry mob in protest against profiteering grain dealers. The mob was dispersed by police with tear-gas shells.)

Earlier, the National Council adopted a resolution (52 for, 22 against and 3 "neutral") endorsing the stand of the Communist party of the Soviet Union in the Sino-Soviet conflict and criticizing the Chinese Communist party for elaborating a "dogmatic, sectarian and adventurist platform which is being pressed forward as the only correct line for the world Communist movement."

The resolution also said, "This alternative line, unilaterally decided by one single party runs counter to the Moscow declaration and Moscow statement, Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism."

The Council also rejected by a vote of 52 to 25 an "alternative" resolution presented by Namboodiripad criticizing both the "revisionism" of Moscow and the "dogmatism" of Peking. The resolution was supported by the entire "left." Leftists maintain that this "victory" of the Dangeite leadership was possible only because of the continued imprisonment of about 35 leftist members of the party's National Council.

As if to rebuke the national leadership, Kerala party members gave a hero's welcome to Gopalan and Namboodiripad (both are from Kerala state) when they arrived at the Trivandrum airport October 20 after the Council meeting.

The affair was described as an "unofficial" reception spontaneously organized to protest the "humiliating public censure" of Gopalan by the Council. A local party leader told a newspaper correspondent that if Dange and Govindan Nair (a Dangeite member of the Central Executive from Kerala) were to visit Trivandrum they would get "no garlands and shoes."

Both Gopalan and Namboodiripad were profusely garlanded by their supporters.