

PRO-MOSCOW INDIAN COMMUNISTS REFURBISH DANGE

By Kailas Chandra

BOMBAY -- The Seventh Congress of the Communist party of India (right-wing Dange faction) which concluded its ten-day session in Bombay on December 23 pledged itself to build "national democracy," within the capitalist framework of capitalism, in India "as a stage in which the growth of capitalism will be progressively restricted and the prerequisites created for putting the country on the road to socialism."

The "new programme" adopted by the party congress "clarified" the "dynamic process by which the National Democratic Front will emerge, and the vital role to be played by the working class in alliance with the peasantry and the revolutionary middle class, in leading the front in which the patriotic section of the national bourgeoisie will also find a place."

"On assuming power and forming the National Democratic Front," said an official press release summing up the "programme," "the Front will see to it that the octopus grip of foreign monopoly and Indian monopoly combines is eliminated, that all necessary land reforms are fully carried out and democracy is extended and strengthened."

Thus, the building of capitalism and not socialism is the immediate programme of the "Dangeite" wing of the CPI which draws its inspiration from the broad strategy of "peaceful coexistence" pursued by the Soviet bureaucracy in international politics. There were indeed amendments moved to the programme, suggesting that the character of the Indian revolution is "peoples democratic" under the "hegemony of the working class" (on the lines of the programme adopted by the left CPI at its Calcutta congress in October); and some amendments even characterised the revolution as "socialist." But all of them were defeated.

There was also a "supra-right" tendency as represented by a former general secretary of the CPI, P.C. Joshi, who advocated a "formal alliance with the ruling Congress Party and a virtual merger with it," perhaps as a logical culmination of the steps to build "national democracy" in India. This tendency was also defeated.

The outcome of the deliberations was a "personal triumph" for S.A. Dange. Not only has he been re-elected as the chairman of the CPI but he managed to "rehabilitate" his prestige, which had been badly damaged by the controversy raised over the "letters" he wrote from prison forty years ago to the then British Viceroy of India "offering" his services to British imperialism. (Dange said that they were "forged.")

A great deal of money was spent by Dange to make a spectacular show of the congress. Boris Ponomaryev, secretary of the Central

Committee of the CPSU, led a big delegation which participated in the congress and it was even rumoured that the delegation stayed till the end to see that Dange was re-elected as chairman, not to give a sense of surrender to the left CPI which had made an issue of the letters. Ponomaryev also refused to meet an informal delegation of the left CPI.

Fraternal delegates from twenty-four Communist parties, all known for their pro-Moscow sympathies (including the CP's of Italy, France, Argentina, Canada, Australia, the United States, Belgium, Ceylon, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Mongolia, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Uruguay and Yugoslavia) attended and messages were received from thirty-five pro-Moscow Communist parties.

The pro-Chinese parties, including the CPC, the Indonesian CP, the Japanese CP and parties of Albania, North Vietnam and North Korea were not invited for obvious reasons.

Although the Cuban United Party of Socialist Revolution was invited it sent neither a fraternal delegate nor a message.

It was indeed an "impressive" show, intended to make up for the lack of revolutionary fervour among the participants in the deliberations, in contrast to what was witnessed at the left CPI congress at Calcutta (which was preceded by a series of arrests of prominent CP leaders of West Bengal). Dange and his colleagues also carefully planned the selection of delegates and observers to the congress to ensure smooth sailing.

Some interesting statistics were provided by the credentials committee of the congress. Of the 581 delegates, 229 represented party bodies, 140 were from trade unions and 100 from the Kisan front. Out of these, 443 were "whole-time functionaries." Naturally their votes could be counted on as safe, since they would not oppose the leadership employing them.

There were other interesting details: of the total number of 593 delegates elected to the congress, 581 attended (because their travel expenses had been met). Some 40 per cent belonged to the age group of 35 to 55. In the age group above 55, there were only 30 delegates. While 296 delegates joined the party before independence, 24 were members with over 30 years' standing. There were also 187 observers at the congress.

There were some talks during the congress about Dange stepping down in favour of a less controversial leader, Dr.G.Adhikari, the theoretician of the party. But the new national council of 101 which was elected by the congress decided that he should continue. C.Rajeshwar Rao of Andhra (who was the general secretary of the "united CPI" for a brief period in 1951) was elected as the general secretary. P.C.Joshi, who was the subject of a great deal of criticism at the congress for being a "tailist" of the Congress party was

dropped both from the 11-member secretariat and the 25-member central executive committee although he finds a place in the national council. In the new leadership, Dange and his faction have made common cause with a relatively "left" tendency associated with Bhupesh Gupta (who campaigned for rapprochement between the two CP's in India) and Rajasekhara Reddy of Andhra.

The leadership cleverly manoeuvred to see that a report submitted by a seven-member special commission on the "Dange letters" was not presented to the congress. The report was considered by the outgoing national council which seemed to have given a certificate of good conduct to Dange. It was well known that the special commission was divided on the authenticity of the letters attributed to Dange. Although the majority of five had absolved Dange of the charge that he had worked for the British government (while not going into the question whether the letters were forged or genuine) two of its members (Bhupesh Gupta and Sohan Singh Josh) had in a dissenting note said that the letters were "not proved to be forged." The "letters" issue was brought before the congress at the fag-end of the 11-day deliberations, during a night session, and the congress adopted -- despite some opposition -- a national council resolution that the letters were "not genuine."

An attempt was made by Sohan Singh Josh to get the post of chairman eliminated -- as a move to oust Dange from the leadership -- when the congress was discussing amendments to the party constitution; but his move was defeated. P.C. Joshi, it would appear, submitted a charge-sheet against Dange but the charges were never discussed.

On the organisational questions, the CPI congress did take some positive decisions, demonstrating that it was breaking from its old bureaucratic practices perhaps as a concession to the social democracy. The newly amended constitution seeks to give the CPI the character of a "mass party," to "extend democratic functioning inside the party" and generally "tone up discipline and collective bargaining."

A provision has also been made to launch an internal bulletin, in various languages, and to start a central school for training cadres. There was a great deal of debate on the organisational structure of the party and the concept of inner-party democracy, especially in the context of the "post-Stalin" developments in the Soviet Union. This was possibly an indication of the growing ferment inside the right CPI on organisational questions, although the party ranks have not shown a similar vigilance on the question of the strategy and tactics of the Indian revolution.

All the foreign fraternal delegates, except the Yugoslavs, avoided any direct reference to the Chinese CP and some of them, including the Soviet delegation, called for "normalisation of the situation in the communist movement. . . [to] facilitate the end of open polemics, especially in the forms it was waged so far." The Yugoslav

delegate, however, declared himself against the "hegemonistic, dogmatic, sectarian and tearing policies of the Chinese leadership."

The CPI congress, in its key document on the "ideological controversies in the international communist movement," however, did not fail to open a broadside against the Chinese CP leadership for bringing the "international communist movement almost to the brink of a split." The document also emphatically expressed the CPI's disagreement with the positions taken by the Chinese leadership on all vital questions, "namely, the character and significance of the new epoch, war and peace, peaceful co-existence, national liberation movement, national democracy, forms of transition to socialism, cult of personality, and the unity of the socialist camp and world communist movement."

On the eve of the congress there were some vague talks about the possibility of a re-union between the right and left CP's in India, in the context of the changes in the Soviet leadership. A section of the "centrists" attached to both parties sought to bring about some understanding; but at the CPI congress itself no initiative to that effect was mooted, except to the extent of suggesting the creation of a united front of all left parties in Kerala (including the left CP, Revolutionary Socialist party, etc.) to fight the coming mid-term elections in the state scheduled in February. Even this limited united front between the two CP's appears to be difficult.

For all practical purposes the two Communist parties, one wedded to the pro-Moscow policy of class collaboration in relation to the Indian bourgeoisie, and the other inspired by the Chinese line of thinking and advocating the necessity of militant class struggles to overthrow the present bourgeois-landlord regime of the Congress party, have come to stay, to serve as two poles of the working-class movement in India in the coming period.