



CPM's
Oppportunism
in Crisis

By

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COMMUNIST PARTY PUBLICATION

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CPM "STUDY" OF INDIAN SITUATION
SAME AS IMPERIALIST VERSION

N. K. KRISHNAN

It is a matter of common knowledge that the ideological positions taken up and policies pursued by the CPM leadership over the past ten years have steadily led to growing political isolation, demoralisation and paralysis of that party. This phenomenon has become particularly marked during the past two years of the JP-led right-reactionary counterrevolutionary movement in our country.

The CPM leadership's policy of aligning the party with the right-reactionary front, in the form of common movement in some states and convergent actions in other states, has led to largescale disillusionment among their cadres and their masses. In several states, including Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, their cadres and masses are breaking away from that party in protest against the leadership's policies and rejoining our party in a big way.

On the international plane too the rich experiences of the recent period have clearly testified to the fact that while the Soviet Union and the CPSU stand today at the head of the world anti-imperialist struggle and as firm and consistent allies of the national-liberation movements of Asia, Africa and Latin America, maoism has degenerated into becoming shameless accomplice of the most reactionary sections of imperialism in every continent. Angola and Chile have brought this out most vividly.

In particular the recent period has demonstrated most strikingly how the Leninist policy of peace and peaceful coexistence, as implemented by the CPSU, has created favourable conditions for the most unprecedented advance of the left and democratic forces in Europe and of the national-liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The bankruptcy of the international ideological positions taken

up by the CPM leadership at the time of the split is becoming more and more patent.

Faced with such a situation, one would have thought that at least some sobriety and common sense would dawn upon the CPM leaders and that they would do some selfcritical basic rethinking on policies and ideologies. Our party has been appealing to them for such a rethinking.

But, judging by the resolution on the national situation passed by the central committee of the CPM at its last session held in Madras in January 1976 and by the articles that have appeared in recent issues of *People's Democracy*, there is no evidence of any such rethinking. On the contrary, the CPM leadership seems bent on continuing its bankrupt and suicidal course.

The most outstanding feature of the situation facing India and indeed all other developing countries of the nonaligned world at present is the intensified neocolonialist drive against them by US imperialism, rendered desperate by its defeats in Indochina and Angola and debacle of its foreign policy on a wide front.

The policy of confrontation and of "destabilisation" is being applied in all spheres against these countries, against their national freedom and sovereignty and against all trends inside them towards progressive socioeconomic transformations. The CIA and all pro-imperialist political groups and parties inside these countries are being openly manipulated and used as agencies for this neocolonialist drive.

Chile and Bangladesh have pinpointed this phenomenon most vividly.

The right-reactionary movement led by JP in our country has been the agency of this US neocolonialist "destabilising" drive against India. The proclamation of emergency in June 1975 and of the 20-point programme subsequently were steps directed against imperialism and its internal agencies. That is why these were welcomed by our party and indeed by progressive opinion throughout the world, including the socialist and nonaligned worlds—and came in for bitter denunciation in the USA, Britain and West Germany in the name of "defence of democracy".

It is wellknown that during the last one year, the Jana Sangh and the RSS, the real spearhead of JP's movement, have been actively functioning underground and regrouping themselves. JP has recently

come out announcing the formation of his new party based on the right-reactionary and socialist parties.

The right-reactionary combine now banks upon capitalising on the discontent among the masses due to certain antidemocratic policies of the government and failure to effectively implement the 20-point programme. It also banks on linking up with certain anti-communist sections inside the Congress which have begun activating themselves in the recent period.

Despite the serious negative features which have appeared in Congress government's policies in recent times against which our party has been warning and fighting, none but the wilfully blind can deny that prime minister Indira Gandhi and the Congress leadership and government are on the whole standing firm in anti-imperialist positions. The ruling party has taken a number of progressive steps, political and economic, in the recent period—steps in the correct direction.

Cooperation between India and the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, between India and the progressive regimes of the nonaligned world, is being strengthened and expanded in a massive way. This is of immense anti-imperialist significance and of significance for the cause of basic internal socioeconomic transformations in our country.

It is astounding that the CPM central committee resolution on the national situation passed in January 1976 has not a word to say about the danger to India from the intensified imperialist policy of "destabilisation". It has not a word to say about the firm anti-imperialist positions taken by prime minister Indira Gandhi. It has not a word to say about right-reaction as internal agents of imperialism.

On the contrary, the CPM's assessment of the Indian situation coincides exactly with the imperialist version. According to the CPM central committee resolution of January 1976, the four months since the previous session of the central committee had confirmed what it had declared earlier, namely that "the main danger to democracy came from the Indira Gandhi government".

According to the CPM resolution, the *main enemy* to be fought by the CPM in India is the Congress Party and the Indira Gandhi government. In the fight for democracy, in the fight on mass issues and class issues affecting the living conditions of the working masses,

the CPM leadership considers as allies the proimperialist right-reactionary parties (conveniently called "opposition political parties", using the language of bourgeois parliamentarism)!

The operative part of the CPM central committee resolution of January 1976 puts forward the main tasks and campaigns of the party for the period ahead as follows:

"The September 1975 resolution of the central committee had said that the emergency had introduced a *qualitatively new feature* in the political situation: in contrast to what had happened in West Bengal in 1972, it is not the CPM alone that is under attack but a wider spectrum of Indian society and *all political parties in opposition to the government irrespective of their colour*. This, combined with the deteriorating economic situation, opens up the possibility of the widest possible democratic movement to fight the emergency and restore the rights of the Indian people facilitating the advance of the left and democratic forces...

"Even before the declaration of the second emergency, the growing attack on civil liberties and democratic rights had already raised the question of *concerted resistance*.

"In its circular on 'Movement in Defence of Civil Liberties' issued in March to all party units, the CC had noted that the demands for the restoration of democratic rights and civil liberties, for lifting of the emergency imposed at the time of the Indo-Pakistan war in 1972 and scrapping of repressive acts like the MISA had become the demands of all opposition parties, opening the possibilities for the widest mobilisation of the people around these slogans and demands. And the CC had directed all its units to make serious efforts to form committees in defence of civil liberties and democratic rights comprising of prominent individuals of *all parties* and mass and class organisations and prominent nonparty individuals from different walks of life...

"In view of the conditions created by the declaration of the second emergency, this assumes greater importance. Every endeavour must, therefore, be made by the party to set up such committees for defending civil liberties and democratic rights in order to bring about the broadest mobilisation for this common fight, while keeping in mind the caution earlier given by the CC.

"*This is one basis for the widest possible unity of broad sections*

belonging to all parties. The CC is confident that the working class will play its due role in this struggle in defence of democracy.

"Another big basis for broad mobilisation and united action of the masses under the influence of *all political parties* is taking up the issues of deteriorating economic conditions of the masses, the new legislation to enforce lower living standards and the attacks on mass organisations. Hence the utmost stress must be laid on united actions on specific issues with all mass organisations, *whichever political party lead them*, for mobilising the maximum strength...

"In pursuing this task, we bar a political front with right parties. That is why we stress on the slogan of unity of the masses from below. *This, however, should not mean that formal appeals to these parties are prohibited. Sometimes they may be necessary to draw their masses in...*

"Occasions arise in struggles on class and mass issue when many political parties support our position. In such circumstances our party should have no hesitation in having joint actions with any party that supports our position except the Jana Sangh *unless unavoidable*" (emphasis added—*KKK*).

The main emphasis in all the above is unmistakable. The "bar on political front with right parties" about which the resolution speaks is a mere figleaf to cover up the fact that in the two basic tasks of the party outlined above, in practice, door is left wide open for joining hands with the right-reactionary parties (including even with the Jana Sangh, in the name of treating it as "unavoidable") on a common basis of anticongressism.

After all this, the resolution calls upon the CPM members and cadres to "always bear in mind the party's basic concept of unity of left and democratic forces"! What this means can be explained only by E. M. S. Namboodiripad.

"Unity of left and democratic forces" remains confined to the realm of "concept". As far as the realm of practical activities and mass campaigns and movements are concerned, the resolution enjoins joint action with the right-reactionary parties on the basis of anticongressism and even emphasises the "new favourable possibilities" that have arisen for this.

In the issue of *People's Democracy* dated 23 May 1976 the CPM reaffirmed that the party "stands firm on its position" as enunciated in the January resolution of its central committee.

Life and experience have amply confirmed that in the context of the present world situation India's national freedom and sovereignty cannot be safeguarded and our economic independence strengthened without Congress-communist anti-imperialist unity and without a relentless fight to the finish against the proimperialist right-reactionary parties and forces inside the country. Likewise, the task of effecting basic socioeconomic transformation of our society and decisively defeating internal reaction cannot be discharged except on the basis of joint action by left and democratic forces, both inside and outside the ruling party, rejecting the line of blind anticongressism.

The positions on which the CPM leadership "stands firmly" are quite contrary positions.

Recently some of the CPM leaders like E. M. S. Namboodiripad have come out admitting that radical sections do exist inside the Congress. But the stand they are taking is that these radical sections must leave the Congress and join hands with them on a platform of anticongressism, in order to advance the cause of "left and democratic unity" of their concept! Such a course of action, if adopted by the radical sections inside the Congress, would only doom them to selfimmolation and political suicide and would exactly suit the books of the right wing.

The negative features which have been emerging on the Indian political scene in the recent period, and which are serious enough, cannot be fought and eliminated on the basis of the line enunciated in the CPM central committee resolution. They arise out of class factors, as do the positive features also. They can only be fought successfully on the basis of an *integrated policy* which recognises the overall positive features and builds up the widest left and democratic unity and anti-imperialist unity to strengthen and carry forward these positive features.

It may be mentioned here that it is our party which has been fighting firmly and consistently against the negative features of the recent period. And it is our party which, as a result, has to bear the brunt of attack from the anticommunists. The CPM leadership's line on the other hand has only doomed its rank and file and masses to inactivity, passivity, frustration and demoralisation.

This political blind-alley stands out stark and vivid today on the issue of implementation of the 20-point programme. While our party

through its all-India padayatra campaign has been rousing, mobilising and organising the rural-poor, agricultural labour and the working peasantry on a massive scale against the forces of feudalism and vested interests and for implementation of the 20-point programme, the CPM leadership has nothing positive to offer their ranks and masses. In many places our party comrades had the experience of seeing local CPM cadres and CPM masses responding favourably to our campaign in defiance of the instructions of their party leadership.

As on the national situation, on the international ideological problems of the world communist movement also the CPM leadership seems determined not to move basically from its positions of the past. Ignoring world developments of the past period which have shaken their cadres and masses in many places and which have brilliantly demonstrated the creative power of Marxism-Leninism as applied by the CPSU and the world communist movement and exposed the utter bankruptcy of maoism, the CPM leaders go on boastfully affirming that they have nothing to learn, nothing to forget.

People's Democracy issue dated 23 May repeats this loudly. And in the last issue of that paper dated 6 June M. Basavapunnaiah in his now familiar style has come out denouncing the 25th congress of the CPSU and Leonid Brezhnev's report for "right-revisionism".

It is quite clear from all this that the CPM leadership wants to learn nothing from life and is bent on continuing its old bankrupt and suicidal policies. The rank and file and masses of that party have to break away from these policies, if they are to find a way out of their present impasse. Our party extends its fraternal hand of co-operation to them.

BLUSTER OF BANKRUPTCY

MOHIT SEN

In its issue of 6 June the eight-page *People's Democracy* devotes six of its pages to the analysis of the 25th CPSU congress by M. Basavapunnaiiah. The article is an outrageous piece of bluster. It is bluster, moreover, of a leader who finds himself overrun by history.

It is incredibly funny but true that Basavapunnaiiah says in one place that the tremendous victories of the Soviet Union on the production, scientific, military and people's wellbeing fronts do not at all mean that the policies of the leadership of the CPSU are correct or Marxist-Leninist.

He goes so far as to state that these tremendous successes have come about even though Brezhnev and the entire CPSU leadership have followed revisionist policies!

This, by the way, is the most revisionist of statements. It means that all these tremendous successes are possible on a spontaneous basis without the leadership of the working class and the Communist Party. This is pure and simple surrender to social-democracy which asserts that neither the class character of the state nor the nature of the ideology of the ruling party is of any importance for socialism and its victories. Basavapunnaiiah has found his true home in the company of Bernstein, Kautsky and their ilk.

Incidentally, the puerile stuff put out by this politbureau member brings grist to the mill of the revisionists in another way. If the CPSU leadership is revisionist and since it has been at the helm of affairs in the Soviet Union when such tremendous victories were won, even acknowledged by Basavapunnaiiah, then what is so bad about revisionism?

After all, according to his revisionism has been the ruling ideology in the Soviet Union at least since 1956, i.e. for 20 years. And these are precisely the years of tempestuous advance all along the

front according to the figures he himself quotes. Mind you, it is not a question of a leadership following a basically correct line but making some mistakes here and there. In the view of Basavapunnaiiah the stand and policy of the CPSU leadership has been basically revisionist for the past two decades. And yet under it the Soviet Union has gone ahead with seven-league boots!

One reason, perhaps, for this particularly stupid argument is that the author has to explain to his ranks the total failure and paralysis to which the CPM has been reduced by its leadership and its opportunist policies.

He wants to say that just as the Soviet success cannot be claimed by the revisionist CPSU, the CPM's failure cannot be blamed on its leadership and its opportunism. How convenient when neither success nor failure has anything to do with the leadership and its policies!

But this crude subterfuge will not work. Just as the CPSU and its leadership can justly claim credit for correct guidance of their people which led to the stupendous Soviet success, so the wretched leadership of the CPM cannot escape blame for the pitiable state of this party.

Incidentally, there is a rather intriguing and revealing aspect to this article by Basavapunnaiiah. The 25th CPSU congress ended about three months ago. In view of its world-historic importance it was commented upon very widely and very quickly. The CPM however took all this time to put its comments on record.

Why? Will Basavapunnaiiah care to answer? Was this another example of the "firm stand and unshakable unity of the leadership of the CPM"?

Basavapunnaiiah begins his article by claiming that the CPM stands by the positions it took in 1968 regarding the controversies in the world communist movement.

Let us remind ourselves of what those positions were.

Here is what is said about the general line of the CPSU:

"The concepts of peaceful coexistence, peaceful economic competition and peaceful transition as propounded by Khrushchov at the 20th congress of the CPSU and as interpreted, elaborated and practised by the modern revisionists are, with every passing day, being rendered into a fully worked out line of class conciliation and collaboration on a global plane. Since these revisionist concepts are

advanced and practised by the leadership of a Communist Party which is leading the first socialist state which has grown economically, politically and militarily into a mighty and formidable force, its repercussions on the worldwide struggle for peace, democracy and socialism are really devastating...

"Today, this bankrupt revisionist line of the Soviet leaders has assumed such absurd proportions that it is glaringly seen and understood by every intelligent student of politics in the world, let alone the Marxists-Leninists, as more and more a line of conciliation, compromise and collaboration between the two great powers, the USA and USSR, a line which objectively preserves and perpetuates the international status quo and as a line which summarily abandons the revolutionary class struggle of international proletariat...

"The sumtotal of this right-opportunist line pursued by the Soviet leaders is that the aggressive propensities and expansionist activities of US imperialism are more and more increasing, that the danger to world peace, peaceful coexistence of states at the hands of the imperialists is daily growing and the worldwide revolutionary struggle against imperialism, for peace, democracy, independence, socialism, is disrupted and disorganised...

"It should be said that the Communist Party of China has rendered yeoman service to the world workingclass and communist movement in fighting this menace of modern revisionism and in defence of Marxism-Leninism" (*Ideological Resolution, adopted by the central plenum, Burdwan, 5-12 April 1968, pp 33-35*).

Nor was the slander against the CPSU confined to matters of international policy. It was carried forward into the sphere of internal policy as well:

"The present drive by the present leaders of the Soviet Union on the material incentives aspect, contrary to the one emphasised by Lenin, raises the legitimate question whether this would not lead to the moulding of workingclass consciousness on the bourgeois basis of personal profit, individual and selfish interests, etc.

"Theoretically speaking, either proletarian communist ideas would grow stronger and stronger and defeat and eliminate bourgeois habits, ideas and consciousness, or in its absence, the latter would invade the former and stifle its growth and development. The resort to capitalist incentives and ideas of personal profit, in the final analysis, paves the way for restoration of a new type of capitalism, and

harms the cause of socialism and communism. This danger is all the more so when the concept of material incentives is unduly emphasised in a socialist society at a stage which they claim to be fullscale construction of communism" (p 40).

These quotations prove to the hilt the basically maoist positions of the CPM leadership. Collaboration with US imperialism, abandoning of revolutionary struggle and restoration of a special type of capitalism—such is the line of the CPSU leadership, according to the CPM leadership in 1968 and reiterated by it in 1976.

If this is not the worst kind of anti-Soviet slander then what is? What remains of the legacy of Lenin and the line of Leninism if the Soviet Union is led by collaborators with imperialism and restorers of capitalism?

By repeating this basically maoist line Basavapunnaiah peddles what has been correctly described in the 25th CPSU congress report as an outlook 'directly hostile' to Marxism-Leninism.

By their anti-Soviet slander and their collusion with counterrevolution in India the outlook of the CPM leadership can be said to be directly hostile to Marxism-Leninism.

To make his meaning clear beyond any doubt, Basavapunnaiah not only states that the CPM leadership continues to stand by its 1968 revolution but adds that the CPSU leadership has also not changed.

Towards the end of his article we find him spouting: "The report of Brezhnev to the 25th congress while cataloguing the victories in the economic, industrial and material spheres of production made by the Soviet Union, tries to present the shopsoiled right-revisionist theories in slightly modified and brighter colours. On no *major* issue of ideology and policy is there any *basic* departure from the 20th, 22nd, 23rd and 24th congresses of the CPSU" (emphasis in original).

Thus it is not a question of the past two decades but right here and now the CPSU leadership is accused of revisionism, betrayal and all the rest.

While mumbling something about "new emphasis on the class meaning of detente", Basavapunnaiah concentrates his attack on the CPSU leadership for its stand on the tragedy in Chile and the developments in Egypt.

He rebukes the CPSU leadership for not categorically stating that peaceful transition was wrongly tried as a form of revolutionary advance in Chile in 1970-73. He wants the CPSU leadership to

categorically state that the tragedy in Chile proves the revisionist character of the thesis of the possibility of peaceful transition in certain countries. Unable to shed his opportunism and moral cowardice, Basavapunnaiiah does not, however, openly state that the CPSU should absolutise armed struggle as the only form of revolutionary advance.

But this is clearly his real demand.

But how can the CPSU oblige him?

After all, unlike him and his colleagues, the CPSU leadership has to adopt a scientific and responsible approach. Its every word counts. Hence the report to the 25th congress carefully notes that in Chile in 1970-73 the thesis about the different ways of revolution, including the peaceful way, if necessary conditions exist, was not invalidated.

At the same time the experience of those fateful years forcefully reminds all revolutionaries that a revolution must know how to defend itself, must exercise constant vigilance and evoke the maximum international solidarity.

What else could the CPSU have stated? Should it have said that the Popular Unity Front ought not to have fought the elections? Should it have said Allende should not have taken office as president? Should it have said that the Popular Unity government should not have nationalised copper, etc., and carried through radical land reforms? Should it have said that the only thing the Popular Unity Front should have done was to have given a call to arms from the very first day of assuming office?

For Basavapunnaiiah dialectics is a forbidden or forgotten subject. What the Popular Unity Front should have done when the counterrevolutionary coup was clearly taking shape and what it did not do with sufficient firmness, he wants them to have done from the start. If his advice had been heeded not only would counter-revolution have triumphed much sooner but the unity and mass base which the front against it is now acquiring would have been impossible.

Incidentally, why does Basavapunnaiiah not care to study and comment on the documents of the CP of Chile which have gone into the whole question at length. Since he is against the idea of a "leading party" in the world communist movement why does he address himself to the CPSU alone?

Next, about Egypt under Sadat. He thinks that the present anti-Soviet and rightist orientation of Sadat's policies prove that the non-capitalist path and national democracy are revisionist inventions intended to harm the revolutionary movement in the countries of the third world.

According to him the economies of all the third-world countries are "by and large, capitalist in strict class terms". Somalia, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Algeria, Iraq, Ethiopia, etc. are all capitalist countries! What an amazing lack of concrete analysis.

Further, what should the Soviet Union have done from the mid-1950s onwards when the conflict between the Asian, Arab, African and Latin-American countries (including in many of them the majority of the ruling class) and US and other imperialisms began to qualitatively sharpen?

Should it have decided to adopt a passive policy of so-called non-intervention? Should it, for example, have refused to help Nasser of Egypt, Nkrumah of Ghana, Sukarno of Indonesia? Whom would such a policy have helped?

Or should the Soviet Union have laid down preconditions to these leaders and states before offering them help on the basis of anti-imperialist unity. It will be remembered that the Soviet Union never hesitated to criticise publicly acts of repression against the communists and genuine patriotic forces. It did this also from the standpoint of anti-imperialist unity.

But the key thing was to strengthen anti-imperialist, democratic orientation and action of the third-world countries even where the working class was practically absent, weak and in no position to take the leading role.

What Basavapunnaiiah cannot see because he has abandoned the dialectical approach is that the noncapitalist path and national-democratic development is not free of contradictions and class struggles. It is, after all, a stage of transition to socialism and this means the inevitability of sharp struggle since the rich peasants and national bourgeoisie are not eliminated at this stage.

And in the highly complex situation in the third world setbacks and reverses are only to be expected. Long ago Lenin told us that the path of revolution was not straight like the Nevsky Prospekt.

Besides, if Sadat's Egypt is an example of a setback there are dozens of examples of advance in this very period—Angola, Mozam-

bique, Guinea-Bissau, Algeria, Iraq, Somalia, Ethiopia, Peru, Yemen, etc. What about all these?

Even in Egypt the battle against Sadat's course is taken up not in a sectarian way by the working class and other progressive forces. It is taken up under the banner of a return to the policies, programme and path of Nasser. But for Basavapunnaiyah there is no substantial difference between Nasser and Sadat.

Quite naturally, since for him and other CPM leaders there is no such thing as right-reactionary reversal and counterrevolutionary overthrow of states and governments that are not socialist but are anti-imperialist and democratic to varying degrees. It is on this basis that they justify their criminal policy of collusion with the counter-revolutionary forces and threat in India.

They are naturally driven mad with rage when they find that the CPSU and its Leninist leadership firmly oppose such opportunism and by their policies help the unification of all patriotic and progressive forces for national independence and social progress.

CPM ON WRONG RAILS AGAIN

BHUPESH GUPTA

Along with six left parties of West Bengal the CPM issued a joint statement on 28 May to announce that the recommendations of the Swaran Singh committee for constitutional amendments are "totally unacceptable". Now the CPM has issued a 20-page pamphlet elaborating its views and arguments. The views are, however, prefaced by a political harangue to provide what that party calls "background and context in which these attempts to amend the constitution are being made".

The so-called backgrounder is quite interesting. While there are the familiar tirades against Congress rule, not a word is said in the pamphlet against the rightists, communalists and fascists, of the grave threat to the country's democracy, unity and even to its independence that arose from these quarters, backed by US imperialism, only a year ago. That they have grossly misused the rights and freedoms under the constitution is again regarded as of no relevance by the CPM to the issue of constitutional changes.

Nor is there any appraisal of the manner in which the monopolists, ex-princes, landlords, blackmarketeers, tax-dodgers, smugglers and other merchants of black money have rushed to the courts to stall measures against themselves. Even the bitter experience of bank-nationalisation and privy-purses-abolition cases are all forgotten as it to refer to them would be going out of the context.

This strange approach is, however, not an intellectual lapse. It is an offshoot of the CPM's political line. For this party wants the sectarian anticongressism, lately buttressed by its new-born faith in the judiciary, to be taken as the yardstick for measuring the constitutional amendments. Indeed, in its pamphlet the CPM goes on record:

"The issue today is one of barring, to the extent possible, the dia-

bolic conspiracy to rapidly move towards the establishment of one-party rule with an authoritarian executive clothed with absolute, unlimited power."

This as we know has long been the cry of the rightists in the country—the one which we so often heard before the emergency.

To discover a "diabolic conspiracy" behind the Swaran Singh committee's proposals and not to see, in the correct perspective, the changed circumstances including the popular urge behind them is the height of subjectivism. The CPM has not recognised up to this date that there was an imperialist-backed conspiracy and bid by the rightists to seize power which necessitated the proclamation of the emergency.

All this has completely derailed the CPM in its approach to the question of constitutional amendments. This, again, is responsible for its total rejection of all that is positive in the recommendations of the Swaran Singh committee.

Not that these recommendations fully meet the requirements of the situation; nor are they comprehensive or without flaws. But most of the major amendments the committee has proposed are broadly in line with what the democratic forces in the country have been demanding. Once even those who now happen to be the leaders of the CPM were a party to the demand.

The views expressed in the CPM pamphlet would show that the party has gone hopelessly wrong in considering the urgent question of constitutional amendments. No wonder the CPM finds itself in the company of the so-called national committee for the review of the constitution consisting of well-known rightists and anticommunists which was formed in Bombay last March at a meeting which was attended by Jayaprakash Narayan.

A perusal of this committee's interim report and the CPM's pamphlet would leave one with the impression as if, at least on some very important constitutional issues, both are arguing the same brief!

It is not our purpose here to go into a detailed examination of the CPM's views and arguments. We propose to confine ourselves to a critical look at the CPM's basic understanding and approach in the matter, which is difficult to square with democratic principles.

For 17 years since the commencement of the constitution till the supreme court's notorious judgement in the Golak Nath case in 1967

no one, not even the present leaders of the CPM, raised any question about the unlettered power of parliament to amend the constitution. This power needs to be fully restored beyond all doubt and the Swaran Singh committee has made a recommendation to this effect.

Instead of welcoming this the CPM has branded it as a 'dangerous proposal' and called for its rejection. It has gone even a step further in demanding that the 24th constitution amendment which was made in 1971 to counter the mischief of the supreme court's Golak Nath case judgement putting curbs on parliament's constituent power should be repealed.

The CPM wants that limitations under article 13 which apply in the case of ordinary legislations should also apply in the case of constitutional amendments. Thus the CPM wants the curbs on parliament's constituent power which the supreme court judgement in the Kesavananda Bharathi case (1973) has imposed in the name of the unamendable basic features of the constitution to be further widened.

This is nothing but asking the country to move backward from the ruling of the Kesavananda Bharathi case and in the directions of the Golak Nath case ruling.

On the question of judicial review again the CPM is in favour of the status quo being maintained although it enables the supreme court to strike down even constitutional amendments. The CPM wants the present state of affairs to continue when even by a majority of one the judges constituting the bench in the supreme court or in a high court can invalidate any legislation on the ground of its being violative of the constitution.

The CPM bluntly says that "in the case of conflict between parliament and the judiciary regarding the constitutional validity of any measure, the judiciary's verdict must prevail until the conflict is resolved by a referendum".

Even at present parliament has power to intervene in such cases by amending the constitution as it has done on several occasions. But the CPM would like parliament to be divested of this right.

If the CPM's prescription is accepted there will be need for holding referendum every now and then, India's sovereign parliament remaining a helpless, passive onlooker. This denigration of parliament

and repudiation of its supremacy does not go well with the CPM's loud protestations about democratic norms.

The CPM's enthusiastic reliance on the judiciary would seem strange in view not only of our bitter experience with it but also of what the CPM party programme says about the judiciary:

"The judiciary is weighted against the workers, peasants and other sections of the working people. The laws, procedures and the system of justice, though holding the rich and the poor equal and alike in principle, essentially serve the interests of the exploiting classes and uphold their class rule. Even the bourgeois-democratic principle of separation of the judiciary from the executive is not adhered to and the judiciary becomes subject to the influence and control of the latter."

No wonder that with such new-found faith in the judiciary the CPM would like the high courts' sweeping powers to issue orders, directions, writs, etc. under article 226 to remain intact. At present such writs etc. can be issued not only for the enforcement of the fundamental rights but also for "any other purpose".

It will not be denied that this provision "for any other purpose" has on some occasions enabled both individuals and the democratic organisations to defend their legitimate interests and democratic rights and this must continue. But the real beneficiaries on a massive scale of this provision have been the monopolists, landlords and other exploiters.

How many among the downtrodden masses have even an access to the high courts? Why the CPM then wants this provision to continue instead of its deletion? The democratic rights of the people should be protected against the bureaucratic excesses by adding one or more new clauses to the amended article 226.

Even the Swaran Singh committee has been obliged to recommend the addition of some new clauses to this article as some sort of a safeguard against bureaucratic and other forms of excesses.

The CPM is also opposed to the Swaran Singh committee's proposal to put the disputes relating to revenue, land reforms, procurement and distribution of foodgrains and other essential commodities outside the court's jurisdiction. In the CPM's eyes "this is another proposal to clothe the executive with absolute powers".

The CPM totally overlooks the most reckless exploitation of the court's jurisdiction by the vested interests in such matters to the great detriment of the people and national interest. Even the government of India act, 1935, did not leave the revenue matters to be decided by the courts.

Many will wonder why the CPM has all of a sudden developed such a terrible confidence in the judiciary which is an organ of the state and an instrument of, to quote the CPM programme, "the class rule of the bourgeoisie and landlords, led by the big bourgeoisie"?

It seems that CPM is losing its faith in the left and democratic forces and in the potentiality of the country's democratic movement. This is something not unusual when one is blinded by sectarianism and subjectivism.

One wishes that instead of so pathetically looking to the judiciary the CPM had seen the need for a change of its line to work for the broadest unity of the left and democratic forces by shedding its anti-congressism and by severing all its links with right-reaction, which incidentally has been the most vociferous champion of the judiciary's greatness.

Is it to be believed that the interests of the toiling people, or for that matter democracy, could be safeguarded and strengthened by putting the judiciary above parliament and the state legislatures?

It may be asked what happens if parliament and the legislatures go reactionary. The remedy for such an eventuality is not to be sought in the judiciary but in the unity as well as in the struggle of the left and democratic forces on the one hand and in the decisive defeat of the reactionary forces on the other. The CPM has no stomach for either.

While trying to clip the wings of parliament the CPM's nostalgia for the so-called separation of powers would smack of the outdated bourgeois constitutionalism. No other organ of the state can be expected to be put on the same pedestal as a country's democratically-elected sovereign parliament.

When the constitution was being framed B. N. Rao made a suggestion that in the event of a conflict between the fundamental rights and the directive principles the latter should prevail. Unfortunately that suggestion was rejected and we have already paid too heavily for that.

The Swaran Singh committee has at least proposed that any law enacted by a legislature with a view to giving effect to any of the directive principles shall not be struck down on the ground that it infringes the fundamental rights.

According to the CPM the plea for the precedence of the directive principles over fundamental rights "is a spurious one" and such a change would mean an "attack on all fundamental rights". This is precisely how the vested interests argue their case to sabotage the implementation of the directive principles.

It will be noted that the CPM has not asked for the total deletion of the right to private property from the fundamental rights chapter. And yet this has been the demand of all progressive forces in the country.

It says that the Swaran Singh committee "could have straightaway come forward with an amendment confining the right to property to small property owners and abrogating it to landlords and monopolies". So all other wealthy and propertied people should continue to enjoy the right to property as a fundamental right!

Even if the right to property is modified as the CPM has suggested and retained as a fundamental right this will be fully taken advantage of by monopolists and landlords and others like them. Did we not see how the bank barons put up petty shareholders to challenge bank nationalisation?

Small property owners certainly deserve to be fully protected and their right to property must also be safeguarded. But for this you do not require the right to property to be sanctified as a fundamental right. There is hardly any country where the right to property is given this status of a fundamental right, although it exists as a right protected by law. The CPM is surely not unaware of this.

Incidentally, even the so-called national committee of the rightists could not help recommending the total deletion of the right to property from the fundamental rights chapter, though this committee has its own intentions behind this demagogic gesture.

Both the CPM and the rightists are opposed to the present Lok Sabha undertaking the amendments to the constitution. In the joint statement of 28 May the CPM said: "Moreover, the present parliament as constituted with the life of the Lok Sabha extended has no right even to propose any amendment of constitution." The so-called national committee of the rightists "is of the view that it would be

improper for the present Lok Sabha to consider or introduce any constitutional amendments of far-reaching importance".

The intention behind this logic appears to be that constitutional amendments must wait until after the non-CPI opposition has tried its luck in a fresh poll. What makes them so optimistic about it is, however, not clear.

For the CPM the Swaran Singh committee's proposal for the insertion of the word 'socialist' in the preamble has no meaning except as "demagogy". The CPM would not see that this proposal reflects the radicalisation of the masses and the advance of the ideas of socialism among them or that it would inspire and strengthen the forces fighting for socialism. However the CPM is discreetly silent on whether this word should be inserted or not!

According to the so-called national committee of the rightists, the inclusion of this word "is only a camouflage" but all the same it "agrees" to the addition in the preamble evidently to be on the right side of the masses.

One can understand the stand of the rightists. But it is unfortunate that the CPM should have taken a jaundiced and negative stand which ill-serves democracy, and that too at a time when all left and democratic forces must put their heads together to carry forward the positive trends and fight the negative ones.