

COMMUNIST AICC MEMBERS' ANSWER TO WORKING COMMITTEE CHARGES

I. INTRODUCTION

WE APOLOGISE TO YOU FOR THE DELAY IN SENDING the answer. All of us are sunk in our practical tasks of the moment, and that is why we were unable to send our answer earlier.

Before you sent the charges to us we knew your views through the daily press in which you had already expressed yourselves against the policy of our Party. But we were frankly unprepared to receive charges which were nothing more specific than the word, "people's war." We would not be honest to ourselves nor to you if we did not tell you that we found reading your Sub-Committee's report a painful task ; the author could hardly conceal his sneering attitude towards our Party. From the leaders of our common organisation we expected a sober and serious treatment, if not fraternal, at least not patronising.

From the contents of your report and the very quotations you give it is clear enough to us that none of you made any serious effort at all to study carefully and with an open mind our policy documents. Some of our opponents (we will come to them later) have supplied you with ready-made quotations and you have strung them together in the report.

Your Charges Against Us

The report which reveals your own political attitude and is the basis of the charges you have made states or suggests the following :

(1) At one time we called the war an "imperialist war."

(2) We suddenly began calling it a "people's war."

(3) Nothing had happened in our own country that should have made us change our policy except that the Soviet Union had been attacked. We therefore stopped the battle for our own liberation and thought of saving the Soviet.

(4) And finally, now that Britain was an ally of the Soviet, we went over to "the other side" and went against the Congress.

In other words, we betrayed our own country for the sake of the Soviet Union.

The criticism that Communists decide their policy not in the interests of their own country but in the interests of the Soviet Union is neither new nor original. It has been an old, very old gibe of the reactionary parties and their scribes the world over. In our own country, in the earlier days of our Party, this used to be the line of the Anglo-Indian press against our Party. This was the main political theme the British Prosecutor played up against us in the Meerut Conspiracy Case to which you refer, in which you helped our defence, which we gratefully acknowledged and took as our due from you.

If 17 years later you make the same suggestion against us we cannot but ask you :

Is it worthy of you ?

Are you not wittingly or unwittingly casting aspersion on our devotion to our country ?

Communist Parties exist in every country of the world and this is the cheapest gibe in which our opponents have indulged. All our brother parties had to live down the slander through their work among their own people and prove to them in practice that our first love was to our own people, our daily work in their own interest and our first aim the freedom of our country and happiness in our own homes. If in the world of today there is

any single political force that has grown it is the Communist movement and if any banner that has lost it is the bankrupt banner of blind anti-Communism.

When you, the leaders of our greatest people's organisation, ask us questions behind which looms the same traditional reactionary imperialist misrepresentation of our policy, we tremble about the fate of our common people and ask you : Was it at all necessary to have gone that far ?

Criticism, Not Hostility

You have taken our sharp criticism of the policies advocated by you (we are not going into their merits now) as evidence of being anti-Congress. For a leadership to identify criticism of its policies with hostility to the national movement or even to the organisation as such, is not a very desirable method of conducting or facing political controversies nor even of coming to a correct evaluation of different trends and policies. Such an attempt can only harm the movement ; by stifling criticism, it leads to the growth of authoritarianism in the leadership, servility in the loyal followers while the common movement is divided up into warring factions.

This danger has always faced the Congress at every turning point in its career but it has till now been strong and vital enough to overcome it. The same danger faces it again because it has now seriously to review the last few most critical years in our national history, the war years, and honestly to estimate the results of the policy it pursued and the role of different groups within it, their criticisms and suggestions.

In this period the main criticism of your policies has come from us and we have also been the main target of criticism. You want to begin the new post-war period and conclude the war-period by facing us with a charge-sheet !

You mis-state our policy and ask us to answer. We shall make the test of loyalty to the Congress even more straightforward and direct than the test that you have suggested in your report,

viz :

"Freedom in discussing the policy to be laid down and

when that policy had been determined to adhere to it as closely as possible and certainly not to oppose it in any way. Without that strictness of uniformity in the field of action the Congress would have faded away as a militant organisation and become an ineffective motley crowd pulling in different directions and wholly incapable of action."

With a clean conscience we ask you to apply the following test to our policy, by which we stand and which you criticise.

Did our policy aim at the achievement of freedom for our country or did it take the country away from it?

Did we hope to achieve it through the strength of our own people or did we rely upon other non-popular undemocratic forces?

Did we serve or betray the daily interests of our people in the pursuit of our policy?

The above have been our own guiding lines and we have suffered from no qualms of conscience and we have no regrets for what we did except for what we failed to achieve.

Shortest Path To Freedom

It is not only the battle for the aim of freedom and the interests of our people, as stated in the Congress resolutions and as they live in its great tradition that bound us to the Congress. Our own understanding is that even our war policy for both the imperialist and people's war periods, of which you have tried to make fun, cannot be legitimately taken exception to by the Congress. On the other hand our case is that in both the periods the attitudes towards the war which the Working Committee and the A.I.C.C. decisively rejected were the ones we doggedly opposed as anti-national, e.g. in the first phase of the war period the attitude of unconditional co-operation taken by Gandhiji or M. N. Roy and in the second phase of the war the attitude of unqualified hostility to the war taken by the C.S.P. and Forward Bloc.

We also think that the main characterisation of the war made in the official Congress resolutions is nearer what we desired

it to be, rather than its opposite. We remained in the Congress with a good conscience because we could honestly interpret our characterisation as being in line with the official Congress declaration and where we differed we were being only more logical, more consistent, more realistic. We will endeavour to prove it when we compare the Congress policy and ours in both the periods, as we shall do later.

Please do not misunderstand us as under-estimating our differences in practice. They arose from the fact that though the Congress leadership adopted in *general words* the main attitude we ourselves were advocating, it made concessions *in practice* to the opposing point of view.

This was necessitated, in your own mind, by the need of keeping up the unity of the leadership.

During the course of controversies that took place and when the policies were formulated and the practical course adopted or eschewed, it became clear to us that our practical differences were arising from the two different historic trends that you and we represented within the Congress itself.

You looked *primarily* to the British Government for conceding our national aim, because Britain's need for Indian co-operation was great.

We relied *primarily* upon the people to achieve our national aim, irrespective of the attitude of the British Government, because our need to take the destiny of our country in our own hands was greatest.

Our meaning will become clearer in the following sections.

Together with the rest of Congressmen we not only sensed but characterised the outbreak of war as an epochal change, which made the issue of the achievement of Indian freedom as the immediate issue. Throughout the war period, through all its vicissitudes we decided our course of action at any given moment in time on the basis of the following factors :

- (1) Which is the shortest path to our country's freedom?
- (2) Who are our country's allies, who its enemies?
- (3) In which direction shall we hit our hardest and how?