

E.M.S. Namboodiripad Addresses

One-Lakh Rally In Calcutta* :

Demanding Release of Communist Detenus And Explaining Party Policy

A mammoth rally of over a lakh of people on the Calcutta Maidan on November 15, 1965 raptly listened to the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India E.M.S. Namboodiripad explaining the policy of the Party.

Huge demonstrations colourfully decked with flags and banners, preceded the rally. These demonstrations marched to the Maidan from Howrah, Sealdah, North Calcutta, South Calcutta, Kidderpore, Sotheast Calcutta and other industrial areas. For hours together the people of Calcutta watched from the pavements these colourful and militant demonstrations as they wended their way through the main streets. One of the often-heard slogan of the demonstrators was demanding the immediate release of political prisoners.

These demonstrations and the mammoth rally and the rapt attention with which the people listened to E.M.S. Namboodiripad were an answer, as effective as any can be given by a Party which is facing ferocious repression at the hands of the Congress rulers—an answer both to the Government which tries to find self-satisfaction saying that the Communists are getting isolated and the slanderers who try to make out that there are such deep fissures in the Communist Party of India that it is cracking up.

Dr. Narayan Roy, MLA, presided over the meeting which adopted a resolution demanding the immediate release of Muzaffar Ahmad and other detained Communist leaders.

A letter from Mohit Moitra, MLC, who was released recently due to his serious illness, calling on the people to launch a mighty movement for the release of Communist detenus, was read out to the rally.

* Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY" Calcutta November 21 1965

Mammoth One-Lakh Rally In Calcutta

E. M. S. began his speech emphasizing the critical situation through which the country is passing at present and said he would like to explain what the Party thinks about the crisis and how it should be solved.

He referred to the slander campaign started against the Party, dubbing it as a party of traitors and said that this was nothing new. Once we were dubbed as agents of Russia. Now we are being slandered as agents of China, and for some people, we are also agents of Pakistan. Friends and followers of Dange not satisfied with all this, say we are agents of not only China and Pakistan, but also of British and US imperialism.

Despite this virulent slander campaign, E. M. S. continued, our Party has grown and is growing. The proof is there for everyone to see. In the elections held in Kerala, our Party came out as the first party in the State while the friends and followers of Dange were completely wiped out as a political force. Slander campaigns against the Communist Party have always been tried by the ruling classes and their agents but it has always been proved that such slander campaigns can never succeed against the Communist Party because we are with the people and the people know what we are doing and are mature enough to judge us by our actions and not by what the Congress rulers and their hangers-on say about us.

The people of our country, said E.M.S., are now faced with some very serious problems that vitally affect their daily life—scarcity of food, abnormal rise in prices of essential commodities, unemployment, ever-increasing burdens of taxation, etc. There is no question that the people will and have to fight against the Government policies which create these problems and accentuate them. And when the people fight thus, E.M.S. declared, none on earth can deter the Communist Party from giving its full support to all popular struggles just because there is a war with a neighbouring country.

Does this mean that we are sabotaging the defence efforts of the country as the ruling party and some of the opposition parties are

saying ? Answering the question, E.M.S. said that he wanted to make it clear that the Communist Party stands for the defence of the country against any attack on its sovereignty. There has been no ambiguity about his stand at any time.

But that does not mean and cannot mean that we support everything that the Government says and does in the name of defence. There can be no defence of the country without defence of the people and as the party of the working class and all working people, it will be the duty of the Communist Party and of every Communist to defend the people against every attack made on their life.

The ruling party and some opposition parties say that we are against collection of defence funds. This is a total lie, said E.M.S. We do not oppose any voluntary contributions to the National Defence Fund. But we do oppose and cannot but oppose forced collections when they are made. Heads of departments in Government offices, for instance, are given quotas and they have to fulfil these quotas by making collections from their subordinates. Peasants going to various Government offices are forced to contribute to the Fund. In Kerala even ration cards are given only if money is paid to the defence fund. It is to these coercive methods of collection that the Communist Party is opposed, not to the voluntary contributions that are being made to the Defence Fund.

The ruling party goes on making exhortations to the people to make sacrifices in the interests of the country. From the speeches and actions of the ruling party it would seem that the common people are the only ones who should make sacrifices. There are dishonest traders and industrialists who possess black money. Just this period of emergency itself has been utilized by these elements to fill their coffers with ill-gotten wealth. But why is the Government which calls on the common people to make all the sacrifices not taking any step against these elements ? Not only are they not touched, the Government is offering them all sorts of awards and rewards for their dishonesty like the Gold Bond Scheme, etc. And this while the Government itself admits—the real figure must be much higher—that there is tax evasion to the tune of about Rs. 200 crores every year.

The leader of the ruling party has given the slogan of "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan." E. M. S. asked how the jawans can fight at the front with all their heart when their near and dear ones back home are starving, how can the kisan increase production when he is being evicted from the land and fleeced in other ways by the vested interests in the rural areas ?

Then there is the slogan of "Miss a Meal a Week". E. M. S. said that the rations given to the people of Kerala hardly cover six square meals in a week of seven days. The people of that State say, give us rations for twelve square meals a week and we are ready to let you take two square meals for the defence. When such slogans are given to people who are already missing not one meal a week but many meals, it does not show a serious approach to solving the problems facing us. No country, declared E. M. S., can defend itself by starving the people and depriving them of the barest necessities of life.

It is just this policy that the Government is pursuing, continued E.M.S. Taxes have been raised by twentyfive per cent in the villages of Madras and Uttar Pradesh and other State Government are also getting ready to do the same. In both the States where this increase in land revenue has already been introduced there was violent opposition from all the opposition parties and even from among Congressmen. But the Government just ignored this opposition. And yet, they go on asking for cooperation after showing such scant regard for viewpoints of the opposition parties.

It is against these policies of throwing more and more burdens on the people that the people are fighting and will fight in ever-increasing numbers in the coming days. No threats, no repression can make them desist from these struggles, because for them it is a question of existence.

Coming to the question of our conflicts with our neighbouring countries, E.M.S. said that there can be no military solution to the problems with China and Pakistan. Neither we nor the other countries are in a position to dictate terms to the others nor impose a solution of their choice by force on others. The only way these problems can be solved is through negotiations directly with the countries concerned and arriving at peaceful settlement.

Some elements out to slander us say when they hear this that we are asking the surrender of our country before others. There is no question of surrender in what we say. Direct negotiations and peaceful settlement of problems do not mean surrender, they are the path of sanity.

And it is not the Communist Party alone which advocates this path of sanity. President Radhakrishnan has often talked about the need for a peaceful settlement of our problems with our neighbours. He has said that the Rs. 900 crores we have to spend on defence because these problems continue constitutes as severe strain on our economy. Such well-known figures in our public life as Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narain have expressed similar sentiments emphasizing the need for a peaceful settlement with our neighbours.

Even a person like R.K. Nehru, a former Civil Service official who has served the Government of India in various top assignments, has been advocating initiative to solve our problems with China peacefully and asking for the exchange of ambassadors with China as a first step to create the right atmosphere.

Obviously all these people are not advocating surrender, they are advocating a path which is in the larger and long-term interests of the nation. We Communists are not doing anything different, let the slanderers remember that.

Referring to the question of Kashmir, E. M. S. briefly dealt with the history of the problem and said, the Government is taking away the special status which had been accorded to the State in the Constitution. There is deep discontent among the Kashmiri people—this is an undeniable fact. It is our task in such a situation to win the goodwill and cooperation of the Kashmiri people. This cannot be done by taking away the special status of the State or by repeating ever so often that there is no such thing as a Kashmir problem.

We have been negotiating for full two years with the underground Naga leaders who have been leading an armed struggle for a long number of years. These negotiations are being conducted to find a peaceful settlement to the Naga problem. Why can not the same

thing be done in relation to Kashmir? Why cannot negotiations with the representatives of the Kashmiri people— leaders of both the ruling party and opposition parties—be started to settle the problem?

In conclusion, E.M.S, said that development and prolonged war or continued tension with neighbouring countries cannot go together. Despite all talk of defence and development going together, what we find is that development is being relegated to the background and in the name of strengthening defence, even accepted policies of development are being given up. This all the more emphasized the need for a peaceful settlement of our problems with our neighbours.