

**March of the
Communist Movement
in India**

**An Introduction to the Documents of the
History of the Communist Movement in India**



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15 UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Harkishan Singh Surjeet

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Introduction

This book is basically a collection of the Forewords written by me to the 25 volumes compilation of "Documents of the Communist Movement in India".

Tireless work by several comrades, spread over a long period of time, has made this work possible. The West Bengal State Committee of the CPI(M) needs to be commended for the painstaking efforts they made in the compilation of various rare documents contained in these volumes which are published. The publication of these documents accomplishes and satisfies a long-felt urge among the younger generation of communists, researchers and historians who have insufficient knowledge of the making of the communist movement. The publication of these volumes will enable them to understand and analyse the reasons for the success of the movement as well as its shortcomings. It may be mentioned that I had the opportunity of working with some of the early revolutionaries particularly *Muhajirs* and Gadr heroes mainly from Punjab who had contributed a lot to develop the communist movement in the twenties. Subsequently, I had been associated directly with the Communist Party to work out the line since early fifties.

I must admit that the Forewords written by me to the various Volumes have one limitation. I have not given my own assessment of the Documents from my current perspective. To avoid any controversy, I have tried to confine myself to the Documents adopted by the Central Committee and the

party comrades. But this does not in any way detract from the historical value of all the Documents that have been put together. The compilation of Forewords to the different volumes in the present book would provide an overview to the rich hoard of records related to the application of Marxism-Leninism in the concrete condition of India.

This book would also be a useful companion volume to my *Outline History of the Communist Movement in India*. These would provide an insight into the broad sweep of the revolutionary currents in our country during the present century.

The Communist Movement in India has faced many twists and turns in developing the movement of the working class, peasant and other toiling millions with the perspective of socialism. The Communists made tremendous sacrifices in the cause of national independence, defence of the interests of the working class, agricultural labourers, peasantry, employees and others. They had to undergo severe repression at the hands of the British imperialists and courted immense sacrifices. Despite shortcomings, the Communists have various achievements to their credit, which have received universal recognition. The Communist movement has succeeded in making an impact on the national scenario and influence the course of political developments. With the status that it has acquired, it is a political force that has to be reckoned with in India today.

Harkishan Singh Surjeet

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September 24, 1998

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CHAPTER

I

India Before the Era of the October Revolution

The Communist movement in India is as old as the movement in many former colonial or semi-colonial countries. The movement developed under the impact of the October Revolution, an event of great historic importance which ushered a new era of transition from capitalism to socialism. Lenin's declaration of firm support to the national liberation struggles drew the attention of the people fighting for national liberation all over the world. The formation of the Communist International in 1919 and the adoption of the Colonial Thesis of Lenin in its Second Congress exposing the miserable and inhuman conditions of the people of the colonial countries under imperialist rule and the call to fight for complete independence by uniting all the patriotic forces, with the working class and peasants playing an important role, gave a new tempo and strength to the national liberation movement. It called for the unity of the working class in imperialist countries with the people fighting for liberation in the interests of both. The Colonial Thesis became a new charter in the struggle of colonial and semi-colonial countries giving a new fillip to the struggle against imperialism as well as linking it up with the struggle for socialism.

Analysing imperialism, Lenin had concluded that it is not necessary that socialist revolutions can only succeed in advanced capitalist countries. He asserted that it could also take place in backward countries where the imperialist chain is the weakest. Subsequent events have vindicated Lenin's

understanding. Guided by the ideas of scientific socialism, wherever the working class was able to assume the leadership of the national liberation struggle, it was not only able to complete the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution but further succeeded in taking it forward to socialist revolution. China, Vietnam, Korea and subsequently Cuba substantiated this claim.

The Great October Revolution had played a significant role in the success of various national liberation struggles in the world. It was the victory over fascism which changed the face of the world under whose impact the struggle of colonial people rose to new heights, putting an end to direct rule of imperialism all over the world.

In the aftermath of the setback to socialism in 1991, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and reverses in the countries of Eastern Europe, a massive offensive was launched by imperialism and its pen pushers portending the demise of socialism and its ideas and proclaiming that capitalism is the ultimate stage in the evolution of human civilization. This contention has been rudely repudiated within a short span of five years. Capitalism once again finds itself in deep crisis. Despite the rapid advances in science and technology which it has used for amassing more profits and intensifying exploitation, poverty and unemployment are on the rise in the capitalist countries. In contrast, socialist countries through a process of reforms suited to the development of productive forces in their respective countries are overcoming the initial difficulties and advancing forward.

Drawing lessons from their past mistakes, the international Communist movement is regrouping its forces. The working class is once again rallying behind its party, the Communist Party, defying the pronouncements of its doom. It has dawned on them that it is not due to any erroneous theory that these setbacks have taken place but due to the distortions and deviations in the application of the theory of scientific socialism to concrete conditions prevailing in each country.

A question that has been nagging well-wishers of the

movement both within the country and abroad is—why has the Communist Party of India which was formed in 1920 not been able to realise its objective of the socialist revolution, whereas in some important ex-colonies or semi-colonies they have succeeded? Lack of dedication or sacrifices is not the cause. Indian Communists have a proud record in this regard. They have made tremendous sacrifices for the cause of national liberation, in defence of the interests of the working class, peasantry and other toiling millions. They were the first to raise the slogan of complete independence. They provided concrete examples of extreme sacrifices. They were able to draw into their fold the overwhelming majority of revolutionaries and represented the best traditions of revolutionary movement in India.

To reply to the question asked above, one has to analyse the failure on the part of Indian Communists to apply the science of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions prevailing in our own country. They became victims of various distortions and deviations. The publication of these documents will enable the people to understand and appreciate the advances and successes achieved by the Communists while at the same time to draw lessons from the shortcomings which prevented them from assuming the leadership of the national liberation struggle, it will enable them to successfully fight against the bourgeois-landlord rule. Perusal of the documents contained in these volumes will also enable the reader to comprehend the events that finally led to the handing over of power by the British. In the years immediately preceding 1947, the post-war upsurge had led to the working class assuming leadership of various struggles. The demonstrations for the release of INA prisoners, the Telangana armed struggle, the revolt by the Naval ratings in Bombay, various workers and peasant struggles—all these frightened the British imperialists. They struck a bargain with the Congress and the Muslim League and handed over power.

The lesson that has to be drawn is that Marxism-Leninism is a science which alone can enable us to emancipate

mankind from exploitation of man by man and thus liberate the productive forces. This science has to be applied to the concrete conditions prevailing in each country, based on the development of productive forces and in accordance with the correlation of forces existing there. There can be no single model that can be followed universally. Every country has to evolve its own model depending on the conditions existing there in order to achieve the objective.

The emergence and growth of the Communist movement in India in this background can be properly assessed on the basis of an objective analysis of the class relations and the social transformations taking place in the preceding ages. It is not necessary nor possible to represent here the entire changes, except the main directions, that occurred in Indian society from the ancient times. Marx had provided the basis of scientific analysis by applying dialectical and historical materialism and showed that all social relations, extremely varied, are divided into material and ideological relations, the latter being the superstructure ultimately determined by the former. Class divisions run right through social life affecting the whole system of social relations and the class antagonism accentuates the relations further. In India, class divisions took the form of caste divisions. The lower castes, generally economically exploited, were also oppressed and denied the privileges enjoyed by the upper castes.

Caste and Class Divisions

Many archaeological discoveries and historical research in the present century provide ample evidence of a developed Indian civilisation in ancient times. Based on the self-contained village with common ownership of land, agriculture was the mainstay of the ancient Indian economy. Flourishing at that period were trade and commerce—both inland and foreign—village industries, mainly handicrafts—eighteen in number as mentioned in ancient literature—science and astronomy, mining and metallurgy, arts and crafts, literature and culture—all these made this country of vast resources significantly wealthy as

compared to the European countries, and attracted a series of invaders. The main articles of export through the major ports were indigo, perfumes, spices, pepper, pearls, precious stones, ivory, sandalwood, gold and gems from the South, silk and muslins from Bengal and Banaras, musk and saffron from the hills, while the items of import were metals, gold, silver, corals and horses. On the whole, till 1813 India had been chiefly an exporting country, while the British rule made it an importing one. The village community system prevailed for centuries with the exploitation of the lower strata of peasantry and a large number of rural labourers through the institution of caste. The feudal system had taken its roots in the 6th-7th centuries and the institution of caste was consolidated in that period. In the history of India, the exploiting classes have all the time found it convenient to maintain the caste institution for their own class interest.

Meanwhile, the sweeping bourgeois revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe destroyed the feudal system that lasted for centuries and once seemed unshakeable. Britain was the first to go through a bourgeois revolution as far back as mid-17th century. While capitalism was on rapid rise in the West, a large part of the world became the target of colonial subjugation and ruthless exploitation by the newly emergent capitalist states. Britain used its supremacy among them to grab the biggest colonial empire, India.

In the closing chapters of *Capital*, Marx said: "Capital comes into the world soiled with mire from top to toe, and oozing blood from every pore". In smashing the feudal order, capitalism played a revolutionary role, a role that was completely lacking in the colonies. In his *Letters on India*, Marx noted that: "The misery brought by the British to India was fundamentally different and far reaching than anything that India had ever suffered". Written in 1853 on *British Rule in India*, Marx explained: "All the civil wars, invasions, revolutions, conquests, famines, strangely complex, rapid and destructive as the successive action in Hindustan may appear, did not go deeper than its surface. England has broken down the entire framework

of Indian society, without any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing. The loss of his old world, with no gain of a new one, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the present misery of the Hindu, and separates Hindustan, ruled by Britain, from all its ancient traditions, and from whole of its past history”.

The East India Company, a big organization of British businessmen and capitalists treated India as a commodity market and made use of and intensified feudal methods of exploitation of the peasantry to draw raw materials without investing any capital and without paying for the materials. Revenues from commerce and land were extracted as profits. They enforced permanent settlement in 1793 imposing unbearable pressure on peasants for revenues. As colonisation progressed, British imperialism turned from export of Indian goods to import of manufactured goods from Great Britain wiping out the Indian manufacturers from the market.

The dismantling of the ancient village system improved the productive forces but the plunder and the colonial exploitation caused immense hardship and death from famine and epidemics. The horror of famine that engulfed Bengal in 1770, and took the lives of 10 million people provides an example.

While sharply criticizing the British rule in India Karl Marx did not lament the dismantling of the stagnant, caste-ridden ancient Indian society. All that he did was to criticise the British imperialist policy which failed to usher in a new society.

Marx emphatically stated in his *British Rule in India* that, “...we must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies. ... We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances instead of elevating

man to be the sovereign of circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social state into never changing natural destiny, and thus brought about a brutalising worship of nature, exhibiting its degradation in the fact that, man, the sovereign of nature, fell down on his knees in adoration of Hanuman, the monkey, and sabbala, the cow”.

Capitalist Development

Guided by what Marx called the “vilest interests”, the British bourgeoisie which needed modern means of communication and transport in order to further their exploitation of India as a source of raw materials and as a commodity market, partially modernised the Indian society to the extent required for accentuation of their exploitation rather than requirements of development. All the elements of modernisation—building of railways, the free press, modern education and library, sea communication, plantation, industry were by and large restricted. Marx observed: “All the English bourgeoisie may be forced to do will neither emancipate nor materially mend the social condition of the mass of the people, depending not on the development of the productive powers, but on their appropriation by the people. But what they will not fail to do is to lay down the material premises for both. Has the bourgeoisie ever done more? Has it ever effected a progress without dragging individuals and people through blood and dirt, through misery and degradation?”

The capitalist development, however restricted, opened the road of emergence of a modern working class constituted of ruined craftsmen and impoverished peasants. It opened up a new force—the working class—the new intelligentsia and the middle class. Also the national bourgeoisie got strengthened with the cooperation of the British rulers. The workers’ unrest set in from the very beginning. The first textile workers’ strike took place in 1877 in Nagpur, one of the centres of the textile mills with some immediate economic demands. Apart from railway workers, workers of other industries, public utility services and unorganized workers participated. Other

movements of various nature took place in different industrial centres braving the repression.

A number of social reformers drawn from the ranks of the new intelligentsia, bourgeoisie and the landlords, made their mark growingly in the latter half of the last century. The liberal and moderate political trends, highly critical of popular unrest and agitation, confined themselves to putting forward some of the popular demands of the upper echelons, through timid protest in the press, petitions to colonial authorities, etc.

Radical trends of nationalism also gradually arose. The widespread movement of the working class and the peasantry added a new direction to the national liberation movement. Having been alarmed by all these developments the British rulers resorted to tightening of the laws to stem the consolidation of the future movements.

The Indian National Congress, the first political party, was born in 1885 in Bombay in the vortex of these struggles. This was a party representing the national bourgeoisie and the landlords, formed by Allan Octavian Hume to subdue the growing anti-British feelings, with the approval of the colonial authority. In fact, Hume accepted the request of the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin to become its General Secretary.

Being fearful of the emerging unity, the British took recourse to injecting Hindu-Muslim conflict in the national movement to serve its divide-and-rule policy. With the interplay of class interests the conflicts among various groups in the Congress got intensified.

Following the First War of Independence of 1857 objective reality made it imperative for the British rulers to change their course purposely for the consolidation of their colonial rule, and they initiated setting up of modern industries in the middle of the last century to the extent they thought fit for their colonial interest and super-profit of the British monopolies. After the introduction of railways in 1853 by the British for the sake of their military domination and to facilitate increasing trade and commerce, India saw its first textile mill in Bombay in 1854 and the second most important textile

mill was set up at Ahmedabad. From 1886 to 1905, the number of cotton textile mills shot up to 197, the corresponding numbers of workers were 74,000 and 1,95,000. In and around Calcutta, on both sides of the river Hoogly, as many as 64 jute mills were set up by the beginning of 1914. Either most of the large-scale industries or majority shares of those enterprises were owned by the British monopolists. The rising Indian capitalists, however, started investing in the then modern industries. Plantations for the cultivation of rubber, tea and coffee were increased; investments were also made for the building of factories and extractions of minerals. Railways and steamships operated after the opening of the Suez Canal provided a new impetus for the transportation of those products. Locomotives needed coal and Railways metal. Maintenance of railway lines needed Railway workshops, iron foundries and spare parts projects. Lenin explained this phenomenon thus: "Two important distinguishing features of imperialism were already observed in Great Britain in the middle of the nineteenth century—vast colonial possessions and a monopolist position in the world market." The new and newer methods of colonial exploitation was explained by Marx in a letter to D.F. Danielson in 1881: "What the English take from them annually in the form of rent, dividends for railways useless to Hindus; pensions for military and civil servicemen, for Afghanistan and other wars, etc., etc.—what they take from them without any equivalent and quite apart from what they appropriate to themselves annually within India—speaking only of the value of the commodities the Indians have gratuitously and annually to send over to England—it amounts to more than the total sum of income of the 60 millions of agricultural and industrial labourers of India! This is a bleeding process with a vengeance! The famine years are pressing each other and in dimensions till now not yet suspected in Europe!"

The British bourgeoisie started despatching more agricultural produce from India beginning from 1860s, the chief items being cotton, wool, jute, coconut fibre, rice, wheat, oilseed, spices, indigo, opium, etc. Of all exports of India the bulk

went to Britain. India was the main food supplier of Britain at that time. It increased three-fold in the last four decades in the last century. Imports from Britain to India pushed up five-fold during that period. The bulk of the imports were fabrics, metal, utensils and also other types of consumer goods. Modernisation and industrialisation was indispensable in order to ensure intensified exploitation of India by the colonial rulers causing further pauperisation of the peasants and working masses. It provoked strong resistance of the people.

Peasants Struggle

We can now look back at the glorious peasant struggles during the British rule in India. Ever since the British accession to power in India, many peasant struggles had been fought in different parts of the country. Two struggles that posed serious challenge to the British authority in a number of districts in Eastern India during the first quarter of the eighteenth century were the rebellion of Sanyasis and Fakirs, and also the "Chuar Rebellion" by a section of the adivasis. Many of the struggles were spontaneous in character, and fought locally. In several cases, these began with limited immediate demands, but were soon transformed into battles against landlordism and British authority. The Sanyasi and Fakir rebellions and also the Chuar Rebellion were sparked off by the 1770 famine and the death and devastation it caused. Inhuman methods were employed by the British to collect revenue despite the death of more than one-third of the population, in the years immediately following the famine. It, then, became a fight against imperialists and their landlord lackeys.

The peasants fought with courage. Many gave their lives for the causes they espoused. Irrespective of the issues which provoked the struggles initially, they spread widely and became a bigger struggle against feudalism and imperialism. However, these spontaneous, militant upsurges lacked direction and organisation, and in many cases, remained localised or bound within a given community. When the repression came, they could not match its strength despite the courage they

showed, and the movements came to an end. Yet, it should not be forgotten that many of the struggles won important demands; for example, the indigo revolt and the Deccan riots had forced the British Government to take steps to improve the conditions of the peasant masses.

The first half of the nineteenth century witnessed uninterrupted anti-colonial activity by the peasantry, tribals and feudal lords who had lost their privileges. In northern Circars, there was strong resistance to British domination. In 1807, the whole of the Delhi region took up arms. In 1814, at Tuppan of Muneer (near Varanasi) Rajput peasants secured an abolition of the sale, by public auction to a stranger, of the land belonging to a large village community. In 1817s, peasants of Orissa, led by local feudal lords, rose up in protest against the introduction of taxation on their rent-free-service lands. Pune district witnessed uprising by the peasantry from 1826 as a result of which the authorities were obliged to concede to them holdings, for low revenue charges. In 1830-31 British troops were sent to suppress the peasants uprising, in protest against tax increase in Bedsore district of Mysore State. In 1833-37, there was an uprising in Gumser in Madras Presidency, and in 1842 in Sagar. In 1844, the Kolhapur and Santavadi States bordering Bombay Presidency witnessed a large-scale revolt provoked by the British decision to increasing land revenue in order to pay tributes to the princes. In 1846-47, the peasants of Karnal rose up in revolt. In 1848, the Rohillas of Nagpur took up arms. The peasants of Khandesh in Bombay Presidency rose up in protest against the lands settlement which resulted in the increase of lands tax.

In the 1850s, Bengal witnessed the mighty struggle of the indigo-cultivators against the oppressive British planters. The *Nil-bidroha* was mainly against the coercive methods employed by the British planters to force the peasants to produce and sell indigo to them at throw-away prices. In the case of the Deccan and Pabna riots food and oppressive landlordism became the issues. The Moplahs of Malabar had been in

incessant revolts throughout the nineteenth century. In Moplah and Wahabi struggles, the resistance took the form of religious battle against the state.

There were innumerable uprisings of tribals during this period: of Bhils in 1818-1831, of Kols in 1824 in Bombay Presidency, of Mewars in 1820 in Rajputana, of the Ho tribe in Chota Nagpur in 1831-32, of the Cutchgis in 1815 and 1832. In 1846 the Khhonds rose up in Orissa and 1856 witnessed the Santhal revolt. Unusually there was also unrest in the towns, which generally took the form of hartals, as a result of the introduction of new taxes.

First War of Independence

These heroic struggles of the people culminated in the First War of Independence of 1857, when leadership of the movement was taken up by the Sepoys. Explaining the significance of this rebellion Karl Marx wrote: "Before this, there had been mutinies on the Indian Army, but the present revolt is distinguished by characteristic and fatal features. It is the first time that Sepoy regiments have murdered their European officers; that Mussalmans and Hindus, renouncing their mutual antipathies, have combined against their common masters; that disturbances beginning with the Hindus, have actually ended in placing on the throne of Delhi a Mohammedan Emperor; the mutiny has not been confined to a few localities and lastly that the revolt in the Anglo-Indian army has coincided with a general disaffection exhibited against English supremacy on the part of the great Asian nations, the revolt of Bengal army wing, beyond doubt intimately connected with the Persian and Chinese wars."

During the uprising, which was mainly confined to Northern and Central India, the peasants, after driving out the local representatives of the colonial administration, set up armed detachments for their own defence and defended the lands of the village communities which had been expropriated by British conquerors. The population in the towns played an active part in the uprising, helping to liberate a number of large cities

like Aligarh, Bareilly, Lucknow, Kanpur and Allahabad and to set up a Government in each of those cities.

This popular uprising of 1857-59 was defeated because of a variety of reasons; the most important among them was that, although the fighting forces had consisted of peasants and artisans, these rebellions were led by the feudal nobility, who were proved to be incapable of leading the national liberation struggle. They could not evolve a united strategy and command. Various centres of uprising emerged spontaneously, acting independently of one another. Moreover, after taking over the administration, these feudal lords did not take any measures to alleviate the lot of the peasantry. When the British Government made concessions to them, the landlords dissociated themselves from the uprising. The Sepoy commanders, who took their place, were not able to cope with the needs of this large-scale and complex war.

The British eventually succeeded in suppressing the uprising, but they were forced to change their strategy for colonial domination. The British Government directly took over the governance of India from the East India Company. They also made wideranging concessions to the feudal lords, thereby winning their sympathy and support. In spite of all these, the uprising left its imprint on the national liberation struggle that was built up in subsequent years.

The defeat of the uprising was followed by intensified colonial exploitation of India as a source of raw materials and a commodity market. This helped to promote the development of commodity-money relations in both towns and villages. The growth of simple commodity production, helped in the penetration of trading and usury capital further, in the sphere of agricultural production and handicrafts. Pauperised peasants, "free" of means of production, had appeared on the scene. Conditions for the development of the capitalist mode of production were slowly being fulfilled.

Peasant struggle in the beginning of the twentieth century intensified further. In the early part of the 20th century, discontent among the people, especially the peasantry, was

growing. The defeat of Czarist Russia at Japanese hands and the Russian Revolution of 1905 proved to be encouraging factors in the nationalist movement. The partition of Bengal became the immediate issue of a long-drawn struggle (1905-11) which fired the nationalist sentiments. The universal indignation of the partition spurred a movement against foreign rule. The call for boycott of foreign goods on 7th August, 1905 was a high point in the movement whereby concrete action was taken against the colonial exploitation by the British overlords. In Punjab, a powerful movement developed against the Colonisation Act, which was led by Lala Lajpat Rai, Ajit Singh and Banke Dayal. These movements, in which the peasantry participated in large numbers, were taking place simultaneously with the mighty trade union struggle in Bombay, Calcutta and other centres. The revolutionaries who took the path of armed struggle against imperialism also helped to radicalise the politics of those days. To meet this situation, the British rulers resorted to repressive measures, such as banning of meetings, detention without trial, imposition of heavy sentences, deportation, and so on. But these actions did not deter the struggling people. Under the pressure of this movement, the Government had to announce the review of the partition of Bengal and the withdrawal of the Punjab Colonisation Act, thus conceding significant victories for the Indian people's fight against colonial policies. However, these movements were led by a new class that had emerged on the scene, i.e. the Indian bourgeoisie.

First World War

The outbreak of the imperialist war in 1914 had raised the nationalists' hopes of snatching independence. Indian revolutionaries abroad, who were mostly peasants, took the initiative to organize rebellion in the Indian Army. They had formed a Gadr Party with headquarters in San Francisco. They raised the slogan of complete independence and sent hundreds of revolutionaries to India to organize rebellion against the British. Many of them were eventually caught and hanged

and a large number of them had to undergo life imprisonment or face torture and deprivation. Although they did not succeed in their mission, their dedication and courage made considerable impact on the peasantry. An overwhelming majority of them later joined the Kisan Sabha when it was organized. This struggle was particularly significant in view of the fact that the Indian National Congress had expressed loyalty to the imperialist war, in all its Sessions held during the war-period. Even at the close of the war in 1918, in its Delhi Session, the Congress Party passed a Resolution of loyalty to the King conveying congratulations to him at the successful conclusion of the war.

As regards the working class movement, from the last quarter of the last century to the first quarter of the present century it grew at a very fast pace leading to the formation of AITUC in 1920.

Capitalist Growth and Working Class Movement

The Indian working class experienced rapacious exploitation in terms of wages, working-hours, housing and other benefits since its germinating period. Utter neglect of safety measures led to frequent accidents. Manifest was the resentment and agony of the workers in the form of go slow, walkouts, etc. since the middle of the 19th century. Specifics of its formation and structure of the working class had conditioned the features of this initial stage. The communal and caste divisions, ethnic and cultural diversity, and the national discord provoked by the capitalists used to frustrate more often than not the unorganized spontaneous actions of the workers. Lack of maturity and the absence of trade unions hindered the growth of these movements. The intensification of colonial exploitation and capitalist onslaught combined with the worsening of the impoverishment suffered at the hands of the zamindars and money-lenders led to the deepening class contradictions inside the country, and also between the various classes in society and the British imperialists. In the midst of industrialisation poverty was widespread with famine in bad

harvests. Famine took the lives of 4 lakhs of people between 1825 and 1850; it occurred six times between 1850 and 1865 and eighteen times between 1875 and 1900. The famine death toll was five million and twenty six million respectively. The last decade of the nineteenth century witnessed powerful strikes of textile and jute workers, railway workers' protest which were joined by others. All this was turning the freedom movement gradually from the economic demands to political ones to a certain extent. Combined together with the Swadeshi movement, these struggles turned into a massive one in the first decade of this century. It was these struggles and specially the general strike of 1908 in Bombay that enthused Lenin to say: "In India the street is beginning to stand up for its writers and political leaders".

The British, on the other hand, resorted to various political measures to defend the interest of the propertied classes and to win over the moderate leaders of the national movement to their side. The militant opponents of the British regime were subjected to inhuman repression by the laws passed between 1904-1914. The Swadeshi movement drew sympathy also from the leading section of the Indian bourgeoisie who reaped the fruits of boycott of foreign goods. For instance, the prices of Indian fabrics soared by eight per cent while prices of British fabrics went down by 25 per cent. Swadeshi sentiments persisted for a long time. Meanwhile, the idea of Swaraj surfaced after 1907 specially after the first bourgeois revolution of Russia in 1905-07 which illuminated the various streams of national movement. Even Dadabhai Naoroji, citing the example of the gains achieved by Russians in the unsuccessful Russian Revolution, in his address to the Calcutta Session as the President of the Indian National Congress, expressed his indignation for not complying with self-rule.

Simultaneously with the decline of the mass movement in the following decade, one section of the youth who had deep feelings of patriotism without having any class consciousness, pursued the road of terrorism. It was met with savage repression by the British rulers. No matter how Utopian their views

on the way to freedom were, selfless sacrifice of the youth coming from the rank of petty bourgeoisie with the dream of ending foreign domination evoked emotional sympathy of the common masses both in the villages and towns. Their courage and sacrifice constituted an invaluable part of the history of the freedom movement. The emergence of imperialism at the turn of the century and consequent rivalry among the imperialist powers for the redivision of the world culminating to the First World War (1914-1918) had created a new situation with rapid development in India to meet the needs of the war. The entire economy was pressed into the service of the war resulting the immense privation of the peasantry and the working class while the same situation was fully utilized by the Indian bourgeoisie to prosper at the expense of Indian masses.

CHAPTER

II

Birth of the Communist Party of India

The discussion on the development of events under British rule in India clearly shows how class struggle was developing in different forms. This was true not only of the struggles of the working class, the most revolutionary class, but also of the peasantry, which was in ferment, particularly after the First World War. This vindicated the theory of historical materialism as enunciated by Marx and Engels as well as the analysis of imperialism as capitalism's highest stage, made by Lenin. The October Revolution, which was the most significant milestone in mankind's history gave this movement a new tempo.

The Great October Socialist Revolution is most significant milestone in the history of mankind. It opened the epic chapter of proletarian revolution and the transition from capitalism to socialism. It made a breach in the system of capitalism in the biggest country in the world, and put into practice the Leninist theory of socialist revolution. The proletarian revolution in Russia differed basically from all earlier revolutions. It is true that revolutions in the past liquidated certain forms of exploitation and oppressions, but they did not pave a way for putting an end to exploitation and oppression as such, they only substituted one form for another. The aim of the Great October Socialist Revolution was to abolish all forms of exploitation of man by man and to construct a completely new society substantiating the theory of scientific socialism. It brought about a profound change not only in the class structure of the society in Russia but it had a big impact throughout

the world. It led to a powerful revolutionary wave in the capitalist world. It gave open support to and inspired new awakening among the national liberation movements of the people in the colonies and dependent countries including India. The socialist declaration of freedom spread to the national liberation movements and the unity between the working class and the national liberation struggles inspired the people of the colonial and semi-colonial countries to intensify their struggles against imperialism.

The triumphant October Revolution awakened the oppressed people of the East which Lenin noted in 1919, "We know that in the East the masses will rise as independent participants, as builders of a new life, because hundreds of millions of the people belong to dependent, under-privileged nations which until now have been objects of international imperialist policy, and have only existed as material to fertilize capitalist culture and civilization ... That majority, which till then had been completely outside the orbit of historical progress because it could not constitute an independent revolutionary force, ceased, as you know, to play such a passive role at the beginning of the 20th century. We know that 1905 was followed by revolutions in Turkey, Persia and China, and that a revolutionary movement developed in India... The period of the awakening of the East in the contemporary revolution is being succeeded by a period in which all the Eastern people will participate in deciding the destiny of the whole world, so as not to be simply objects of the enrichment of others. The people of the East are become alive to the need for practical action, the need for every nation to take part in shaping the destiny of mankind". Lenin, in 1921, thus described the new role of the masses in the East: "The imperialist war of 1914-18 and the Soviet power in Russia are completing the process of converting these masses into an active factor in world politics and in the revolutionary destruction of imperialism..."

The activities of Indian revolutionaries who had migrated to Europe had also helped to spread the revolutionary ideas. In 1905-1907 a circle of Indian revolutionaries in exile was

set up in London and then in Paris. These emigres established close contacts with Russian Social Democrats who imparted to the Indian revolutionaries their revolutionary feelings. At the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International, Indian delegates delivered passionate speeches opposing colonialism and British imperialism. They spoke of Indian patriots and expressed admiration for the historic achievements of Russian revolutionaries.

Fully aware of the world-wide impact of the socialist revolution in Russia, world capitalism had used all weapons in their arsenal to prevent the message of the revolution from penetrating into the world proletarian movement as well as to the national liberation struggles. A complete ban on penetration of Marxist literature and books and reports on the first socialist revolution into India was imposed apart from severe repression on the Communist movement which was still in its embryonic stage.

It must be realised that unlike the European and some of the Latin American countries, no socialist movement existed at that time in India. Though capitalist development was taking place and the working class was born, socialist organizations had not yet been set up in India. Some leaders of the national movement had attended one or two conferences of the 2nd International and had the opportunity of meeting Lenin. This however did not enable them to equip themselves with the ideology of socialism even within the framework of social democracy. It is only after the October Revolution that these ideas began spreading. Indian revolutionaries abroad were the first to come under its influence due to the firm stand of the Russian revolution in support of Indian independence. The national liberation movement in India had also acquired a new tempo by the end of the war with discontent fast growing among the peasantry including the armed forces which had presumed that after the British victory in the war their conditions will improve. But the British were determined to suppress this upsurge. The gruesome killings by General Dyer in a peaceful meeting at Jalianwalla Bagh angered the people

throughout the country. This was followed by the noncooperation movement. This movement was widespread and saw huge participation of the peasantry. It led to the Chauri Chaura incident in which some policemen were killed, after which Mahatma Gandhi decided to withdraw the call, as the bourgeoisie did not want the struggle for independence to be linked with the struggle for agrarian revolution. It desired to keep the movement under its control with a view to bargaining with imperialism. The result of this policy is being felt even today. With the productive forces lying in the hands of a few, the country could not make much advance. Compare this to the countries like China, Vietnam, etc. which were more backward compared to India at that time and where socialist revolutions have successfully taken place. This, however, could not stop the growth of the working class and peasant movement in the country.

The first trade union of the working class was established in 1920 under the flag of the All India Trade Union Congress. Though initially it was under the control of the reformist leadership, eventually it acquired a militant form bringing the working class on to the political scene in cities like Bombay, Madras, Kanpur, Calcutta, Nagpur and Ahmedabad. Peasant organizations had also emerged on the scene by that time. By 1919 the Communist International was set up with its headquarters in Moscow. This was able to rally the revolutionary wings in the various social democratic parties the world over and in some countries the majority within the social democratic parties. It also drew the attention of the various revolutionaries working in the colonial and semi-colonial countries because of the firm support to the freedom movement all over the world. This was the time when Russia was trying to consolidate the revolution and was also facing foreign intervention

The Second Congress of the Communist International (July-August, 1920) devoted itself at length to discussing the problems of the colonial and semicolonial countries. In response to the presentation of the Colonial Thesis by Lenin,

M.N. Roy who was a delegate from Mexico presented his amendment in relation to the role of the Indian bourgeoisie. His position was rejected by the Communist International because he had refused to recognise the positive role of the national bourgeoisie in the struggle for independence. Long before this issue was sought to be raised by Roy, Lenin in 1912 itself had spoken of the militant democratic movement in the East, "...in Asia there is still a bourgeoisie capable of championing sincere, militant, consistent democracy, a worthy comrade of France's great men of enlightenment and great leaders of the close of the eighteenth century." Further "The chief representative, or the chief social bulwark of this Asian bourgeoisie that is still capable of supporting a historically progressive cause, is the peasant." Despite his limitations and vacillations Roy had played a role in mobilising the people against imperialism. Because he persisted in his stand on the Colonial Thesis, he was isolated. According to the decision of the Presidium of the ECCI in 1929, "Roy, by contributing to the Brandler Press and by supporting the Brandler organization, has placed himself outside the ranks of the Comintern and is to be considered as expelled from the Comintern" (Ref. INPRECORR Vol.9, No. 69, December 13, 1929, p. 1470). What role he played later is known to everyone.

It is not accidental that all the revolutionaries whether they were exiled or living abroad were attracted towards the Russian Revolution. The Provisional Government of India headed by Raja Mahendra Pratap and Maulana Barkatullah based in Afghanistan, the groups of emigres residing in Germany, Brussels and other European countries— all of them were drawn towards Mosocw. The Gadr Party formed in San Francisco in 1913 by Lala Hardayal, Sohan Singh Bakhna tried to make use of the situation created by the war and organize armed revolt. At the outset of the war the Gadr Party organized immigrants in Canada and America and sent 8000 emigres to India to launch a revolt. One thousand and five hundred of them were detained upon their arrival in India and their attempt could not succeed. Many of them were tried in the

San Francisco Conspiracy Case and had to court martyrdom and life imprisonment. Though the San Francisco Case dealt a crumbling blow to this organization they continued their work and ultimately began to look towards the Russian revolution. They sent their two emissaries Bhai Santok Singh and Rattan Singh to Moscow in 1920 and were told to meet Lenin. They were impressed by the Russian Revolution and after going back decided to work on the basis of the programme of the Communist International. They also attended the Fourth Congress of the Communist International. Subsequently they were sent to India to work under the guidance of the Communist International. By this time M.N. Roy, as mentioned earlier, had come to attend the Second Congress of the Communist International. He stayed in Moscow and became one of the important leaders of the Communist International and was elected to its executive committee. He played an important part in creating and developing the Communist Party in India.

In the same period, many Muslims drawn in by the Khilafat movement left India to take part in the fight for the restoration of The Khalifa. 200 of them reached Kabul. 30 of them came in touch with the Communists in Tashkent and 21 of them ultimately went to the University of Toilers of the East in Moscow to study Marxism and work for the revolution. In this period at the initiative of the Communist International the Communist Party of India was formed with a group by M.N. Roy in Tashkent in 1920. Most of the members belonged to the *Muhajirs* and the secretary was Mohd. Shafiq. After studying in Tashkent and Moscow the former *Muhajirs* came to India to work to develop the communist movement here. Most of them were arrested en route and tried in the Peshawar Conspiracy case in 1922-24 and were sent to prison for varying periods. They included Mohd. Shafiq, Ferozuddin Mansoor, Abdul Majid, Rafiq Ahmed, Shaukat Usmani, Fazal Elahi Qurban, Abdul Waris and Akbar Shah.

Apart from M.N. Roy another prominent person who took active part in the organization of communist groups among

Indians in exile was Abani Mukherjee, who came to the Second Congress of the Communist International as a representative of the India Independence Committee in Berlin. Roy and Mukherjee published during the '20s books, brochures and articles treating questions connected with the Indian national liberation movement and contemporary economic and political situation in the country. These were then illegally brought into India which contributed an important part in introducing petty bourgeois nationalists to Marxism. They issued manifestos for the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress—the Gaya and Ahmedabad Congress in 1921 and 1922 and subsequent sessions. It was the Communists who were the first to raise the demand for complete independence. These manifestos exhorted the Congress to take firm positions on the question of complete independence and also emphasised the necessity of agrarian revolution for mobilising the peasantry in the cause of independence. If one studies these manifestos and the letters addressed by M.N. Roy and Abani Mukherjee in that period one would find that they recognised the fact that after the formation of the Indian National Congress the bourgeoisie had come to the political scene much earlier than the working class and its party. Study of this volume would show what role the Communist Party played in that period in raising the question of complete independence and linking it up with the agrarian revolution thus giving a new tempo to the freedom movement. One would see that the formation of the Communist Party in Tashkent with hardly 10 people was the influence of the October Revolution.

In the development of the Communist movement in India different currents have played their part. Leaders arose from the working class movement in the country who got influenced by the October Revolution. The Gadr party in America which after the October Revolution showed its adherence to the Communist International started working in this direction. Young revolutionaries in the countries who were yearning for India's independence, *Muhajirs* as mentioned earlier, etc. became active. The Communist Party of Great Britain

had actively worked in helping organizing the working class movement in the country and in building the communist movement. It helped both by working among the Indian students pursuing studies in London and drawing them towards the Communist Party as well as by sending its cadres and leaders to work among the trade unions in India. Indian revolutionaries who earlier resorted to terrorism belonging to various groups including the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army and Navjawan Bharat Sabha also were drawn towards the Communist movement. All these currents contributed to developing and building the Communist Party in India.

There is some controversy within the Indian communist movement with regard to the exact date of the foundation of the Communist Party of India. The CPI takes the position that it was formed in September 1925 whereas the CPI(M) is of the opinion that it was formed in October 1920 in Tashkent. However, the fact remains that neither the party formed in Tashkent nor Kanpur had a full-fledged programme. Neither of them was affiliated to the Communist International. As per the rules and decision of the Communist International it was necessary for any Communist Party to be a section of the Communist International and that could be done only if the said party had a programme. Dr. G. Adhikari in his book has tried to argue in defence of this position. The reality is that neither in 1920 nor 1925 there was a recognized Communist Party as per the rules of the Communist International. And it came into existence only after the conclusion of the Meerut Trial and release of the Meerut prisoners when a central committee was set up in 1933 and a programme drafted and this got affiliated in 1934 to the Communist International. The discussions in the Communist International makes this clear.

On 5th March, 1926 (Fifth Congress) the Indian Commission stated "in view of these factors the executive of the Communist International resolves that the most important task in India is to build a strong Communist Party having close contacts with the masses on the basis of existing groups. The creation of a cadre of the Party leaders is of supreme importance.

For this an ideological and political Centre abroad will be indispensable for a considerable time to come." On 23rd July 1928, in the discussions in the Colonial Commission of the Communist International during the sixth Congress, regarding India it was stated by Com. Sikandar Sur that "I wish to express appreciation of Com. Bukharin's draft thesis on behalf of the Indian delegation. At the same time I have to complain against the negligence of the Communist International as I feel that no definite step has been taken during this period of nine years to bring about the formation of the Communist Party in India. It is high time that this Congress realises the potentialities of the Communist Party in India in view of the unprecedented revolutionary wave now developing there."

It is clear from the above that no Communist Party based on a platform existed but efforts were being made to unite all the groups and comrades working in different areas and knit them into an organization. The first initiative taken in Tashkent in this respect cannot be ignored. This was able to convey a message to India which was demarcated from the positions of the bourgeoisie, presenting the working class point of view on the question of complete independence combining it with the issue of agrarian revolution.

Marxist groups also appeared in large industrial centres in 1922. Shaukat Usmani after return from Moscow set up a Communist group in Banaras. A communist group also started working in Lahore under the leadership of Gulam Husain who started a Urdu newspaper *Inquilab*. A Calcutta group led by Muzaffar Ahmad started functioning in the beginning and put out a Bengali newspaper titled *Ganavani*. A Marxist group was set up in Madras under the leadership of Singaravelu Chettiar who started publishing *Labour Kisan Gazette*. These periodicals provided a source of collective propaganda and organization but important in this respect was the underground distribution within India of the journal *Vanguard of India* 1922-24 and *Mass of India* 1925-27. Between 1923-25 not only did these groups grow in areas but new groups were set up in the industrial centres of Kanpur and Karachi. Links were

established between various Marxist centres and the main task was to coordinate their activities and the formation of an all India centre inside the country. The British government had become panicky over the growing activities of the Communists in the country and authorities framed up three communist conspiracy cases in Peshawar in 1922-24 imposing heavy imprisonment terms on the Communist revolutionaries who had come back to India with a view to strengthen the Communist movement in the country. Again in 1924 the British government unleashed another attack by launching the Kanpur Conspiracy Case involving top Communist leaders like Muzaffar Ahmad, S.A. Dange, Shaukat Usmani and others.

Kanpur Conference of the Communist Party

In fact this conference was not planned by any Communist group because important leaders arrested under the Kanpur Conspiracy case were still in prison. A journalist from Kanpur had announced the formal formation of the Indian Communist Party in September 1924. This party had no connection either with the Communist International or with the revolutionary groups outside. But the conference was convened by him in cooperation with the left congressman Husrat Mohani who was undoubtedly influenced by the October Revolution. Communist groups decided to participate in this conference and the result was that the conference was held from December 28 to 30, 1925, chaired by Singaravelu Chettiar, a Communist leader from Madras and a resolution was passed for the formation of Communist Party of India with its headquarters in Bombay. Central Executive Committee was elected with J.P. Bagerhatta and S.V. Ghate as Secretaries. The Executive Committee included representatives of all the main Communist groups in India.

Differences arose in the Communist Party immediately on the question of links with Comintern. Satya Bhagata urged that the Communist Party of India should retain its national character and should not forge any tie with the Comintern. At the second conference of the Party held in 1926 this stand was not

accepted by the majority of the delegates and Satya Bhagata left the party and set up a National Communist Party of India initially consisting of organizations of revolutionary democrats.

By this time All India Trade Union Congress had come into existence since 1920 and now Communists had started playing bigger role in the trade union movement. In U.P. even peasant organization had come into existence in the early 20s. In 1926 there were 200 trade unions in India with a total membership of 0.3 million. Of this, 57 unions with a total of 1,25,000 members were affiliated to the All India Trade Union Congress.

The British authorities were making it very difficult for the Communists to function. Legal avenues were not available to the Communists.

Formation of The Workers and Peasants Party

The launching of the Peshawar and Kanpur Conspiracy cases made it clear that the British would not allow the legal functioning of the Communist Party in the country. The choice left was to work in the Indian National Congress and the trade unions of workers and peasants. But work in the Indian National Congress would involve compromises with the bourgeoisie. It was therefore necessary to have a platform for the completion of the democratic revolution. It is for this purpose that the Communist International decided to ask the Communists in India to form the Workers and Peasants Party with a clear-cut platform of anti-feudal, anti-imperialist revolution. While doing so it was stated that we would continue to work in the Indian National Congress while at the same time we would try to develop the Workers and Peasants Party in order to rally the working class and the peasantry for the bourgeois democratic revolution. It was also decided that the party would exist as an underground party representing the working class with its ideology of Marxism-Leninism. The purpose behind this was to provide us with a legal platform to popularize the ideas of the October Revolution and to rally the people behind it concentrating on the workers and peasants. Workers and Peasants Party emerged in four provinces—Bengal, Bombay,

United Provinces (present U.P.) and Punjab. These made important contributions to spread the Communist movement among the working class, peasants and the middle class and under their leadership, trade union, kisan sabha organizations started springing up by early thirties and gained ground. Workers and Peasants Party defended the interests of the workers and the peasantry and came out in favour of abolition of Zamindari system and for full independence. Publication of the programme of this party and its appeal to the National Congress gave rise to the crystallization of the Left-wing within the Congress. Various Indian newspapers published by this party played important role in this process.

Impact of the Communist International

The activities of the Indian Communists were guided and inspired by the policies and decisions of the Communist International. Though a weak force, the Communists were able to establish their links not only with the working class and peasants but also with Indian National Congress which was at the head of the freedom movement at that time. In the Second Congress of the Communist International, Lenin presented his thesis on the national question. Even in the pre-comintern period in his *Right of nations to self determination* (1914), Lenin, while asserting the fact that the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries plays a positive anti-imperialist role, at the same time insisted on differentiation of the class aims of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the national liberation movement. Lenin observed: "*To the workers the important thing is to distinguish the principle of the two trends. In so far as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, we are always, in every case, and more strongly than anybody else, in favour, for we are the strongest and most consistent enemies of oppression. But in so far as bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for its own bourgeois nationalism, we stand against.*

"...Bourgeois nationalism of oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression, and it is this content that we unconditionally support. At the same time we strictly distinguish it from the tendency towards national exclusiveness."

This provides a clue to Lenin's understanding of the dual role of the national bourgeoisie in the colonial countries. While this force plays an anti-imperialist role and thereby in the struggle against imperialist oppression the national bourgeoisie should not be written off, its actions would be marked by backsliding and compromise as soon as the class question would come to the forefront. Accordingly, Lenin emphasizes, the working masses must take into account the ambivalent character of the bourgeois nationalist movement while formulating their policies.

Based on this understanding, in the colonial thesis of Communist International, Lenin stated: "*The Communist International should support bourgeois democratic national movements in colonial and backward countries only on condition that, in these countries, elements of future proletarian parties, which will be communist not only in name, are brought together and trained to understand their special task, i.e. those of the struggle against the bourgeois democratic movements within their own nations. Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries, should not merge with it, and should under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even if it is in its most embryonic form.*"

M.N. Roy expressed disagreement on the line by placing a Draft Supplementary Thesis before the Congress. It led to serious debate in the conference. These differences centered around three crucial issues (1) Basic assessment of the social structure and the level of economic development in the colonies, (2) role of bourgeoisie in relation to imperialism and in the context of prevailing production relations in the colonies, and (3) assessment of the revolutionary potential in the colonies and the tactical line of action to be pursued in relation to colonial bourgeoisie. Roy, while introducing the supplementary thesis observed on the first question that from the moment the British capitalism had been established in India, 80 per cent of the inhabitants of the country living on agriculture had lost their properties and a class of rural proletariat was thus rapidly growing. Although, compared to the

rural proletariat, industrial proletariat was small in India, Roy urged that there were in India upto 5 million workers. Professional movements, he continued, were spreading fast amongst workers in India and strike had already emerged as a quite powerful force. The first significant strike involving the railway workers, had taken place in 1906 and that assumed the nature of a real uprising. Roy seriously believed that the proletariat in India was rapidly emerging as a viable revolutionary force which alone could pose challenge to British imperialism. This rise of the proletariat was explained by Roy in terms of what he characterised as the policy of industrialisation of India pursued by the British rulers since the World War I. This, he asserted was a break with Britain's earlier policy. While explaining, he stated: "*British capitalism has always hindered the development of British-Indian industry, of late it has not been so. In recent years, the industrial development of British India has gone up at such a pace as cannot be imagined here in Europe. One can have the idea of the level of rapid development of capitalist system in British-India from the fact that in these years the industrial production of British India has increased by 15 per cent and that the capital invested in British Industry has gone up by 2000 per cent. This also applies to Egypt, Dutch Indies and China.*"

Roy's assessment of the role of the bourgeoisie in the colonies followed logically from this premise. Since the process of industrialisation was leading to the emergence of proletariat on the national scene, nationalist leaders looked upon this development with dismay. This, according to him, led to polarisation of interests between the two streams. Elaborating his view, he stated: "*These movements in the course of this development, spread in wide circles of students and middle class, but the call of nationalists to fight for independence of India found no response from the masses.*"

"*The masses of India are not imbued with the national spirit. They are interested solely in questions of social and economic nature... a revolutionary movement in India so far as the wide masses are concerned has nothing in common with the national liberation movement.*" It was clear that Roy was looking at the national and the class interests as mutually opposed in the period of struggle for the overthrow

of British imperialism. In fact this was clearly formulated in paragraph 7, 10, 11 in the original draft which Roy submitted to Lenin. It elaborately formulated the propositions that fundamental contradictions existed between the interests of bourgeois nationalists and those of the masses and that the two streams were going further apart. The national movement thus was virtually written off by Roy.

This led Roy to formulate his view on the 3rd issue. His contention was that since Britain has changed its policy since the war, since industrialisation was progressing at a great speed and the contradictions between the masses and the bourgeoisie were growing sharper, the inevitable conclusion was that the proletariat had emerged as a real force in the colonies and already there existed in the colonies organized socialist or communist parties in close relation to the mass movement. It was from this standpoint that he advocated exclusion of article 11 of Lenin's draft thesis which spoke of the need for all communist parties to assist the bourgeois democratic liberation movement in colonies and in his speech in Comintern he stated: "*Communist International must help exclusively in building up and developing the communist movement in India and the Communist Party of India must devote all care exclusively to the organization of wide masses for struggle for class interests of the latter.*" Based on this understanding, it was natural for him to come to this conclusion that the destiny of the revolutionary movement in Europe depends solely on the course of the revolution in the East. Lenin disagreed with Roy on all these three issues and accordingly his supplementary thesis was modified and was drastically altered by Lenin deleting all the portions which were contrary to the colonial thesis presented by Lenin.

The colonial question again came for detailed discussion in the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922. M.N. Roy again came forward with his earlier thesis. But again Congress rejected Roy's idea and put forward the idea of an anti-imperialist united front. It stated, "*thesis of the 4th Congress, as we see, clearly defined the close connection which exist between the class and national aim of the proletariat in the oppressed countries. These aims far*

from being regarded as alternatives, supplemented each other. The tactic of the united anti-imperialist front in the East was closely bound up with the slogan of united workers front in the West. They are different aspects of the same tactic in the implementation of which leading role of the proletariat and the Communist Party in the revolutionary process was achieved through an unremitting daily struggle within the framework of the united front."

The thesis laid particular emphasis on the role of the peasantry in the struggle against imperialism in colonies. It stated that "*only the agrarian revolution aiming at expropriation of the large land owners can rouse vast peasant masses designed to have a decisive influence in the struggle against imperialism.*"

When the issue was discussed in the Fifth Congress in 1924 which again reiterated the strategy of anti-imperialist united front in colonial countries, but warned against the danger of class collaboration in the course of the work of the Communists with the *Kuomintang* in China and with the bourgeoisie in Turkey. Roy again upheld his earlier stand which was rejected.

Sixth World Congress

Between Fifth and sixth Congress the colonial question acquired new dimensions. Up to the 5th plenum of the Executive Committee, Communist International (ECCI) in 1925, Comintern pursued its understanding of anti-imperialist united front whereby the national bourgeoisie as a whole had to be supported, as well as, exposed, corresponding to its dual role of opposing as well as, collaborating with imperialism. This was reflected in the resolution of 5th Plenum of ECCI on India in 1925, which while calling for the participation of the Communists in the National Congress and the left wing of the Swaraj Party, simultaneously instructed them to direct their efforts towards securing leadership of the masses of the peasantry and the amalgamation of the trade unions with a view to taking over the leadership of all the struggles.

In the same year in his speech delivered at a meeting of students of the Communist University of Toilers of the East, Stalin while referring to the Indian situation observed that

India had to be distinguished from Egypt and China where despite the split of the nationalist bourgeoisie into revolutionary and reformist wings, the latter had not yet fully gone over to imperialism. In India on the other hand, the compromising wing had struck a deal with imperialism since it was afraid of revolution. Hence fire would have to be concentrated on the compromising wing of the national bourgeoisie and attempts would have to be made for creation of a revolutionary anti imperialist block and to ensure the hegemony of the proletariat in this block. But he observed simultaneously, the Communist Party can and must enter into an open block with the revolutionary wing of the bourgeoisie so that after isolating the compromising nationalist bourgeoisie, the masses could be led in the struggle for liberation.

The Sixth Congress of the Comintern was held in the background of the deepening crisis of the capitalist economy, rising mass struggle, developing organizations of working class and of peasantry and bitter experience of counter-revolution in China. While the colonial thesis adopted by the Comintern rejected the theory of industrialisation of colonies under imperialism, which later on came to be known as decolonisation advanced by M.N. Roy and others, it emphasized the necessity of carrying forward the agrarian revolution by building workers-peasants alliance and leading the struggle for complete independence. The thesis adopted at the Sixth Congress attached particular importance to the peasant question in the colonies and the necessity of forging its links with the proletariat. The thesis created the hope that rapid growth of labour movement in India, China, Indonesia pointed to the possibility of emergence of proletariat as an independent class force in direct opposition to the national bourgeoisie and of liberation from the influence of nationalist and social reformist leaders. The thesis emphasised with equal importance the characteristic features of the proletariat in the colonies.

“The prominent part of the colonial proletariat is derived from the pauperised village with which worker remains in connection even when engaged in production. In the majority of colonies (with the exception of

some large factory towns such as Shanghai, Bombay, Calcutta, etc.) we find as a general rule, only a first generation of proletariat engaged in largescale production. Another portion is made up of the ruined artisans who are being driven out of the decaying handicrafts which are widely spread even in the most advanced colonies. The ruined artisan, a petty owner, carries with him into the working class a guild tendency and ideology which serves as a case for the penetration of national reformist influence into the labour movement of the colonies."

Stressing the importance of peasant question, the thesis stated: "*Along with the national emancipatory struggle, agrarian revolution constitutes the axis of the bourgeois democratic revolution in the chief colonial countries. Consequently, communists must follow with the greatest attention the development of agrarian crisis and intensification of the class contractions in the villages, they must, from the very beginning, give a consciously revolutionary direction to the dissatisfaction of the workers and to the incipient peasant movement, directing it against imperialist exploitation and bondage as also against the yoke of various pre-capitalist (feudal and semi-feudal) relationships as a result of which peasant economy is suffering, declining and perishing."*

While it correctly analysed the nature of the working class and the importance of the agrarian revolution in the freedom struggle, the Thesis on the Colonial Question shows the shift from the earlier strategy of anti-imperialist united front. As has been stated earlier, in the background of growing and developing working class movement, the deepening crisis of capitalist economy and the betrayal of the revolutionary movement in China by the *Kuomintang*, the Thesis overestimated the strength of Communist parties and the working class in leading the national liberation movements in various colonies. Nobody questions the correctness of the assumption made by the Comintern about the crisis of the capitalist economy. It was subsequently proved in the period of Great Depression. This belied the claims of the Western economists who were enthusiastic about the economic boom in the late 1920s. But this does not mean that the capitalist economic system was going to collapse and was bound to strengthen the possibility of the Communist Parties taking over the leadership.

But Comintern's assessment of India was deeply influenced by this analysis. As the Thesis stated: "*The basic task of the Indian communists consists in struggle against British imperialism, for the emancipation of the country, for destruction of all relics of feudalism, for the agrarian revolution and for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry in the form of Soviet Republic.*" The situation got further aggravated by the negative attitude adopted by Gandhi towards the militancy of the masses. It emphasized exclusively the creed of non-violence. After the Chauri-Chaura incident, the Bardoli Congress decision was a clear example of this. In the Colonial Thesis the bourgeoisie was stated to be a class that was divided into two sections. One section comprising of national reformists such as Gandhites and Swarajists, was criticized by the Thesis. It thus stressed that alongwith the fight against British imperialism, which of course constituted the main danger, the fight against national reformists who always had the tendency of vacillation and then compromise with imperialism will also have to be waged simultaneously. As has been stated earlier the Thesis of the Sixth Congress on the colonial questions was also deeply influenced by the events in China. The Congress was held a few months after the historic Ninth Plenum of ECCI. The first united front by that time had given way, CPC was on the run facing attacks from the Chiang kai Shek army, and moreover there was the disastrous thesis of Trotsky that the revolutionary wave in China had now failed and that it was time for shedding tears and not for the preparation for self-defence and counter offensive against a most shrewd, deadly adversary. All these adversely affected the C.I. too.

Communist Movement from Thirties to Nineties

In the background of the growing attacks on the Communist movement and the role of compromise which the Indian National Congress was playing, the Fifth Congress of the Communist International decided that a political party of workers and peasants must be set up. The Fifth Congress discussed and decided that the workers and peasants of India can no

longer remain entangled with bourgeois nationalism which is decidedly antagonistic to any movement that would alter the social relationship. The object of bourgeois nationalism is the transfer of political power from the British imperialists to native upper class. The Congress noted that bourgeois nationalists were not interested in completing the agrarian revolution without which the productive forces cannot be developed. It was also discussed that the working class cannot lead the anti-imperialist struggle with the programme of bourgeois nationalism and on the other hand anti-imperialist struggle cannot be successful without the active participation of the working class. Therefore, not only for its own emancipation but even for the immediate objective of national freedom, the organization of independent working class party had become a central point. It noted that national independence under the leadership of the bourgeoisie will hardly make any effort for the economic betterment of the toiling masses although the burden of imperialist exploitation falls on the shoulders of the workers and peasants. The workers and peasants are much more interested in the struggle for national emancipation because there is no half way like a compromise with imperialism which bourgeois nationalism seeks. While taking decision on the formation of this party three points have been made very clear. Firstly, the formulation on the principal aspects of the programme on which will depend the possibility of a working alliance between the working class party and the bourgeois national parties. This alliance was to be sought during the anti-imperialist struggle. It was felt that the revolutionary significance that the nationalist bourgeoisie possesses will be brought to bear fully upon the situation under the pressure of the revolutionary masses. This pressure, it was observed, would be effectively felt when the working class party is able to make use of all available opportunities for arriving at an agreement with the bourgeoisie in the common struggle against imperialism.

Secondly, the workers and peasants party must not only lead the workers and peasants in their day to day struggles

for existence but should formulate demands which correspond to the long-term interests of the toiling masses. This would give them a vision thus empowering them with a will to fight.

It was decided that while formulating the programme it should be kept in mind that as India was overwhelmingly an agrarian economy, as the majority of the masses were peasants any programme that will fail to address their issues will fail to secure a response from them and therefore the agrarian question must be the axis of the programme. It therefore advocated total abolition of landlordism and the solution of the agrarian problem.

Thirdly, it was decided that the Communist Party, as the vanguard will continue to function separately as an illegal organization (since the conditions for open functioning did not exist at that time) with a view to lead and guide the revolutionary movement in the country. The charter of demands were formulated accordingly.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International in its address to the First Congress of the Workers and Peasants Party pointed out the following seven fundamental points for the programme, which are as follows:

1. Complete separation from imperial connection.
2. Establishment of a democratic republic.
3. Abolition of landlordism and radical readjustment of land ownership
4. Nationalisation of the means of transportation and other public utilities.
5. 8 hour day.
6. Minimum wages.
7. Workers' councils in factories and peasants union in the villages to protect the interests of the toiling masses.

In the discussions in the Congress it was felt that while deciding on the platform of the Workers and Peasants Party it has to be kept in mind that since the bourgeoisie has taken the lead in organizing the national liberation movement the Communist Party is being suppressed by using various means. Therefore the Workers and Peasants Party should

become a platform which can mobilise the workers and peasants in the struggle for independence with the agrarian revolution as its crux. In the process when the bourgeoisie compromises with imperialism it will be able to assume the leadership of the movement.

Two types of members were allowed in the Workers and Peasants Party. Individual membership consisting of those who adhere to the objective of completing the bourgeois democratic revolution (majority of whom were Communists) and others who were Left-oriented. The second category was from direct affiliation of trade unions and peasants organizations so that its base could be broadened. But because of the pressure mounted against the movement by the British government after the first conference in 1928 due to which the entire leadership was implicated in the Meerut Conspiracy Case, this could not be pursued.

CHAPTER

III

Meerut Conspiracy Case

The British did not allow the Communist and socialist idea to penetrate into India without extracting a heavy price. Terrible repression was inflicted on those who tried to carry those theories in the form of books and literature into the soil of India. The first attack was on the *Muhajirs*, the early revolutionaries. Cooked up cases were instituted against them just after they returned from Tashkent. Three conspiracy cases were instituted by the British rulers to suppress the Communists. The first was the Peshawar Conspiracy Case, followed by the Kanpur Conspiracy Case and then came the Meerut Conspiracy Case.

The Meerut Conspiracy Case and its outcome is a landmark in the history of the Communist movement. It came at a time when the entire capitalist world was trembling in the worst ever crisis called the Great Depression, at a time when the newly born socialist state Russia had been making tremendous advances. On the national plane the crisis was so deep that strike struggles mounted to the peak where Communists and revolutionaries took a leading role. It also influenced the national movement in a very big way. At the Lahore session of the Congress, the Congress had to adopt declaration for complete independence. The British were alarmed that unless checked the national movement would pass into the hands of the Communists and the revolutionaries.

Volume II of the Documents of the Communist Movement in India mainly deals with the Meerut Conspiracy Case. Meerut

Conspiracy case was started from March 1929 and lasted for four and a half years. The accused used the court platform to propagate the Communist movement and to expose British brutality. The statements of the accused before the trial judge reprinted in this volume is a testimony of effectiveness of the propaganda tactic. The entire nation was spell-bound by this barbaric act of the British rulers. Unprecedented at that time was the international support and solidarity for the Meerut prisoners. The Communist Party of Great Britain played a very important role by raising funds for the defence of the prisoners and campaigned for Communist ideas. Even the great scientists of this century like Albert Einstein and thinkers like Romain Rolland raised their voice against the British rulers and in favour of the Meerut prisoners. Conditions did not exist at that time for the revolutionary forces and the Communists to work openly. That is why the Meerut court was utilized fully by the Meerut prisoners to declare the aims and objectives of the Communist Party defying all the threats of cruelty. In the general statement of 18 accused Communists, the analysis of the world situation and the national situation, the national revolution, agrarian problem, the trade union movement, tactics for achieving national liberation and the basic ideas of Communism was proclaimed for the first-time. They were bold enough to state at the outset of their statement that: ".....in a colonial country, such as India is, the revolution will precede the proletarian revolution, will be of the nature of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. This will achieve the complete freedom of India from the control of British Imperialism, and the complete abolition of all feudal and pre-feudal forms of social organisation and will result in the establishment of an Independent Democratic Republic. This is the revolution for which we were working, and we are convinced that the programme which was put before the country, the programme of the united anti-Imperialist front of all those classes capable of carrying through the revolution, was the only correct programme for attaining it.

"Our programme and the activity which we undertook in

our efforts to put it into effect, have been much misunderstood and also intentionally misrepresented by the Prosecution and by the Magistrate who committed. We think it necessary both for the court and for the assessors that the chief particulars in which the Prosecution has tried to lead them astray should be corrected by us. This is the main purpose of our statement.”

The bold stand taken by the Communists accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case gave a big encouragement and direction to the growing movement of the working-class, peasantry and other toiling millions. Though the British imperialists through this trial wanted to suppress the Communist movement, in the wake of the deepening crisis of Indian economy and the developing hatred against the British rule, its result was quite the opposite. Not only the ideas of socialist revolution but the steps taken by the new state were popularised. The Meerut trial laid the basis for setting up an All India Centre of the Communist Party with a well thought out ideological platform that gave a thorough analysis not only of Imperialism but also of the Indian society and the tasks that the Communists have to carry out.

In the history of the Communist movement in India, the Meerut trial has a very special place. It was this trial that laid the foundations of the organized Communist movement and thwarted all efforts of British imperialism by taking a bold stand on all issues concerning revolution undaunted by all threats. A study of their statement would enlighten readers about the role the Communists have played in the freedom movement, putting forward the concept of real freedom that would not only unleash the productive forces but also lead the country to overall economic, social and political development.

CHAPTER

IV

1930s Mass Upsurge and Correction of Sectarian Deviation

The documents contained in Volume III pertain to 1930s when mass upsurge was developing in India. Working class which was resorting to strike actions was agitating not only for its own economic demands but also for the cause of national independence. Other sections of the population too were in ferment. It was against this background that the Indian National Congress was forced to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement. This movement had a big response all over the country and drew thousands upon thousands of people. People were eager to participate in the struggle defying law and facing police repression. It is in this background that the British organized the Round-Table Conference in 1932. By this time, the Congress had, in its Lahore Session, adopted the Resolution on Complete Independence. Such was the mass response and awakening that it was not possible for Gandhi and the Congress to compromise on this issue. This resulted in the failure of the Round-Table Conference and the renewed Civil Disobedience Movement in 1933. Though the Communists, due to their attitude towards the bourgeoisie, did not actively participate in the movement, in various provinces they did participate and were able to establish links with the growing upsurge. Mahatma Gandhi, however, apprehending that the movement will pass out of the Congress's hands, withdrew the call for civil disobedience, to the utter disappointment of the masses in the struggle.

It was during this period that in 1934 the Congress

Socialist Party was set up, projecting the idea of complete independence and agrarian revolution. Many radical Congressmen joined the Congress Socialist Party, which was set up at the initiative of Jay Prakash Narain. However, the tactical line of Communist Party prevented it from fully involving in the nationalist upsurge.

At the time when Meerut trial was on, CPI had come forward with its Draft Platform called *Platform of Action* in International INPRECOR. Basing itself on Marxism-Leninism it broke with the policy of bourgeois-federal outlook and linked the success of anti-imperialist struggle with the agrarian revolution and the abolition of all social inequalities. In a forthright manner, it declared war on all inherited inequalities and linked this battle with that against imperialism, calling on all sections to join the freedom struggle. Never before had India seen such a revolutionary document directly addressing the problems of all sections of Indian people, as well as the immediate needs of the revolutionary struggles to overthrow the British rule.

The Platform declared : *"In order to destroy the slavery of Indian people and emancipate the working class and the peasants from the poverty which is crushing them down, it is essential to win the independence of the country and to raise the banner of agrarian revolution which would smash the system of landlordism surviving from the middle ages and would cleanse the whole of the land from the medieval rubbish. An agrarian revolution against British capitalism and landlordism must be basis for the revolutionary emancipation of India."*

While putting forward a very correct programme the Platform contained serious mistakes and wrong notions about the role of the Indian bourgeoisie. It arose from the understanding imparted by the Colonial Thesis adopted in the Sixth Congress. It states: *"Linked up, as it is, with the system of landlordism and usury and terrified at the thought of a revolutionary insurrection of the toiling masses, capitalist class has long ago betrayed the struggle for independence of the country and the radical solution of the agrarian problem... the greatest threat of the victory of Indian revolution is the fact that great masses of our people still harbour illusions about the National*

Congress, and have not realised that it represents a class organization of capitalists working against the fundamental interests of the toiling masses of our country." Subsequently it says: "the most harmful and dangerous obstacle to the victory of the Indian revolution is agitation carried on by the "Left" elements of National Congress led by Jawahar Lal Nehru, Bose, Ginwala and others, under the cloak of revolutionary phrasology they carry on bourgeois policy of confusing and disorganizing the revolutionary struggle of the masses, and helping the Congress to come to an understanding with British imperialism."

The formation emphasized the necessity of ruthless war against "Left" national reformists as an essential condition, if the party had to isolate the former from the party and masses and the peasantry. It called upon the toilers to form the united front against imperialism, landlords, the moneylenders, and capitalists. Therefore from anti-imperialist united front it comes to formation of a front against imperialism, feudalism and capitalism and it is not accidental that the programme placed the objective of formation of Soviet power in its programme.

This understanding led to sectarian attitude in early thirties which did great damage to the Party's image amongst the people leading to misunderstanding about its revolutionary outlook. These mistakes were corrected later on after the Seventh Congress of the Communist International.

There Parties Letter

With a view to help the Communist movement in India, Communist Party of China, Great Britain and Germany addressed an open letter to the CPI. The main points of the letter were: "The general picture of the communist movement is not satisfactory. On the one hand, there is a tremendous development of the working class movement which is unprecedented in the past. On the other hand, the Communist Party as yet consists of small number (though the number is increasing) of weak groups, often isolated from the masses, disconnected with each other, politically not united and in some places not clearly differentiated from national reformism, adopting a conciliatory policy towards it. ... Lagging behind the Communist vanguard must be rapidly and most decisively overcome. This is the first and the most important

task for all those honest communist revolutionaries who stand by the platform of action of the CPI”.

It advocated that: “A distinction must be made between the bourgeois Congress leadership and those sections of the workers, peasants and revolutionary elements of the town’s petty bourgeoisie who not understanding the treacherous character of the National Congress followed it, correctly seeing in the domination of British imperialism the basis of their slavery. It is necessary to participate in all mass demonstrations organized by the Congress, and coming forward with our own Communist slogans and agitation.”

The letter was mainly based on the understanding of Platform of Action and the Sixth Congress Thesis and demarcated only in one respect, that is, the necessity of participating in mass actions organized by the National Congress and not to allow the Communist Party to be isolated from the mainstream. It undoubtedly emphasized the unity of the Party. But this letter could not play any great role in correcting the mistakes.

As mentioned earlier, the Sixth Congress of the Communist International had negated the role of the national bourgeoisie in the struggle for freedom. This had its impact on the policy being pursued by the Communists in India. The main emphasis was on the exposure of the bourgeoisie rather than the participation in the civil disobedience movement. In fact the civil disobedience movement created new enthusiasm among the people. Thousands upon thousands went to prison by offering *satyagraha*.

This policy continued till the release of the Meerut prisoners in 1933. In 1934 the party was affiliated to the Communist International after submitting its programme.

Though Communists were in the forefront of the workers and peasants struggles they kept themselves away from the main current of the national liberation movement which was headed by the bourgeoisie at that time, the Indian National Congress. It was only after the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935 that corrections were made in the line pursued till then. This Congress made corrections in

the earlier policies on the questions of social democracy and national reformists. Comrade Dimitrov in his report to the Seventh Congress stated: *"In India the communists have to support, extend and participate in anti-imperialist mass activities, not excluding those which are under national reformist leadership. While maintaining their political and organisational independence, they must carry on active work inside the organizations which take part in the Indian National Congress, facilitating the process of organization of a national revolutionary wing among them, for the purpose of further developing the national liberation movement of the Indian people against British imperialism"*.

Subsequently, the Communist Party under the impact of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International made a thorough analysis of the rise of fascism and felt the necessity of a broad front against Imperialism and Fascism. The Communist Party of India was able to take note of this and change its approach towards the Indian National Congress and the national bourgeoisie, despite its vacillations and semi-feudal limitations. Communists also joined the Congress Socialist Party which allowed Communists to maintain their membership in the Communist Party. The joining of Communists in the CSP gave it added strength. The CSP was thus turned into a platform for radical Congressmen and those inspired by the socialist revolution and the ideas of socialism.

It was during this period that Jawaharlal Nehru had assumed the leadership of the Congress and became its President. He gave a new orientation and helped in radicalizing the atmosphere within the Congress to a great extent, raising the slogan of socialism from the Congress platform. Though he was influenced by the ideas of socialism, he had a very vague idea and his class positions were not clear. He had not come to the conclusion that it was the working class alone which was capable of leading the struggle for socialism. Despite his ideas of socialism being within the framework of bourgeois democracy, his role in popularizing the socialist ideas and the achievements of the first socialist revolution cannot be underestimated. The organizational set up of the Indian

National Congress was also changed with various departments—political, economic, etc. being opened. Communists and socialists like Z.A. Ahmed, K.A. Ashraf, Ram Manohar Lohia, etc. were inducted to head these departments. By this time, Communists had also started fully participating in the activities of the Congress, while not overlooking the fact that it is the working class unity with the peasantry which alone is capable of carrying the revolution forward. Therefore, they concentrated their energies in developing the working class movement and set up the all-India organization of the peasants along with socialists and radical Congressmen. This organization slowly grew into a powerful forum championing full-fledged freedom and agrarian revolution. Communists at that time had advanced the slogan of direct affiliation of the trade unions, peasants organizations, etc. to the Congress. Nehru had supported this idea but Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Ballavbhai Patel were opposed to this and did not allow this to happen. It may be noted that the sessions of the Kisan Sabha were being held to coincide with the AICC. But the sight of the Red Flag itself began frightening Right-wing Congressmen.

The British government enacted the Government of India Act in 1935 enforcing separate electorates and limited franchise to the legislatures, giving encouragement to the communal forces to divide the people. Ultimately, the Congress Party decided to participate in the elections. The underground Communist Party also decided to participate and was able to secure success in various states particularly in the working class dominated constituencies and where the peasant movement was strong.

With the Congress securing majority in many provinces in these elections, the question of participation in the ministries came up. There was a big division inside the Congress on this question. The Left maintained that participation in the government would weaken the growing movement and will lead to more and more cooperation with the imperialists. However, the Right-wing prevailed and they decided to form the

ministries. These ministries refused to undertake radical programmes that would benefit the working class and the peasantry. In fact, they even resorted to repression of the Communists. Soli Battliwala was arrested by the Bombay Congress government. This became a big issue in the AICC session at Delhi in 1938. In 1938, under pressures from radical Congressmen, Subhas Chandra Bose was elected as President of the Indian National Congress. It helped in radicalizing the atmosphere.

During this period, the All-India Students' Federation was formed. It became a powerful force attracting the mass of the students into the struggle for independence and spreading the ideas of socialism. This movement provided the Communist Party with a large number of cadre. The Progressive Writers' Association was also formed during this period. It is in this period that the Communist Party alongwith socialists and radical Congressmen took initiative in the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha in 1936. In many states different organizations existed even earlier, but it took an all India form only in 1936. Subsequently this peasant organization grew and became a big force.

In India though Communists and socialists had gained considerable influence and they were also working inside the Congress, they were yet to come forward with a clear-cut analysis of the political situation prevailing then and the class alliance required for achieving the goal of complete independence. It was against this background that the Dutt-Bradley thesis came.

Rajani Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley were members of the Communist Party of Great Britain and took keen interest in the development of the Communist movement in India.

Popularly known as Dutt-Bradley thesis, the thesis emphasized the role of the Congress Party in the national liberation struggle. This document highlighted the need for unity in the struggle against imperialism. It correctly analyzed the two wings working inside the Congress at that time—Babu Rajendra Prasad advocating unity with the moderates who are outside

the Congress, with "the friends and allies of the British rulers, whose programme is one of cooperation with imperialism and entry into office in order to assist the slave constitution to function successfully". The document stated that unity in the struggle against imperialism cannot be an abstract one involving the entire Indian population. It points out that certain "sections have their interest bound up with imperialism, e.g., the princes, landlords, moneylenders, reactionary religious and political elements which live on exploiting communal differences, elements among the merchants and wealthy classes who favour cooperation with imperialism, etc." It called for taking into account these realities, the class structure and for uniting the overwhelming majority of the population against imperialism. Keeping this in view, it advanced the common platform for such unity:

i) "a line of consistent struggle against imperialism, and against the existing slave constitution, for the complete independence of India";

ii) "active struggle for the vital needs of the toiling masses." This was characterized as United Anti-Imperialist Front for the struggle against imperialism. It details the role of the Indian National Congress and states that the Indian National Congress can play a great part and a "foremost part in the work of realising the Anti-Imperialist People's Front," while at the same time pointing out that "as it exists at present, it is not yet the united front of the Indian people in the national struggle" as its constitution leaves out the broadest sections of the masses. It points out that the programme of the Congress does not clearly express the programme of the national struggle and that: "It does not at present draw out and guide mass activity, but rather acts as a brake upon it".

To make the anti-imperialist front effective and broad-based drawing in the overwhelming majority of the people, it calls for combining the struggles of the mass organizations of the workers, peasants and other such organizations and the Congress. While stating that a clear-cut programme of complete independence has to be there, it criticises the tactics to

“non-violence” as a dogma being at variance with ground realities. It also points out to the ideological struggle that has to be carried on simultaneously and for the consolidation of the unity of Left in the Congress, while at the same time not forgetting the leading role to be achieved by the Party in the struggle for the united front.

This document played a very important part in the working out of the strategy and tactics of the struggle for independence at that stage. The Communist Party, working on the basis of this document, came to the forefront of the national struggle, influencing it. The resolutions adopted at the subsequent Congress sessions vindicates this position. Many Congress committees came into the hands of the Communists, contributing to radicalization of the whole movement. This document had played a big role in giving a correct orientation to the Communist movement in India enabling it to radicalizing the Congress-led movement as well as in developing independent class organizations of the peasantry and other sections of the toiling masses.

The Right-wing in the Congress started getting afraid of the increasing clout and influence of the Left-wing within the Congress. They put up Pattabhi Sitaramayya for the presidency of the Congress at the Tripuri session in 1939. The Left took initiative for the continuation of Subhas Chandra Bose by supporting his candidature. With the victory of Subhas Chandra Bose, the Right-wing under the leadership of Gandhi and Patel imposed on the President, a Working Committee whose composition would not allow the President, to proceed as per his perspective. Ultimately, Subhas Chandra Bose had to resign and form the Forward Bloc. Communists wanted the Congress to remain as a broad platform and did not agree with Subhas Chandra Bose’s tactics.

Documents of this period published in this volume will show how the Communists were the firm opponents of the imperialist war and concentrated their fire against imperialism. Documents in this volume will help readers enlighten themselves to assess the role of the Communists in strengthening the

national movement in this period and how they made a departure from their earlier sectarian approach. The volume also includes a number of articles from *Labour Monthly* that reflect the struggles of the turbulent thirties.

CHAPTER

V

The Second World War

The documents in Volume IV are from the 1939-43 period. The world was moving towards a catastrophe due to the rise of Hitler and the Munich Appeasement policy of imperialist powers. The Communist International had given a call for unity of all forces to fight the fascist menace. The imperialist powers however did not respond. On the contrary they intended to utilize Hitler against the Soviet Union, the citadel of proletarian revolution.

On September, 1939, Hitler attacked Poland, and Britain and France immediately declared war against Germany and we were in the midst of the Second World War. On September 3, the Viceroy, without consulting any Indian representative, declared India 'belligerent'. On September 14 the Congress Working Committee issued a statement on war calling upon the British Government to declare its war aims before the Congress could offer any cooperation in the war. It also reiterated India's right to self-determination to be exercised through sovereign constituent assembly but all this could be postponed till the end of the war. Meanwhile all that Congress suggested was a war-time Indian government responsible to the Central Legislative Assembly, but even this was rejected.

The Communist Party immediately came out with the declaration of opposition to the war. On its initiative the working class of Bombay recorded its unequivocal stand against the war by a 90,000 strong anti-war strike on October 2—the

first of its kind in the world during the Second World War. This was followed by the dearness strike of 1,75,000 textile workers of Bombay on March 4, 1940, which lasted for 40 days in spite of severe repression and wholesale arrest of the leaders, and all sections of workers numbering 3,55,000 went on a one-day solidarity strike on March 10. The Bombay strike was followed by a wave of strikes all over the country, including 25,000 textile workers in Kanpur, 20,000 municipal workers of Calcutta, jute workers of Bengal, oil workers of Digboi, coal miners of Dhanbad and Dhadra, iron and steel workers of Jamshedpur.

In this entire period the student movement played a prominent anti-imperialist role. The All India Students' Federation became the most powerful and leading student organization in this period. It united and supported all fighting and radical sections of anti-imperialist students.

The Government came down with a heavy hand. Defence of India Rule was brought into operation and countrywide round-up of Communists and other radical elements started in June 1940. The Party organ was banned. Out of 700 detained, 480 were Communists. The Muslim League in March 1940 passed the well-known Lahore resolution on Pakistan, advocating for the first time a partition of India. When there was no response from the government to accommodate the Congress for cooperation in the war the Congress leadership decided a symbolic satyagraha in October 1940.

The new turn in the war came when Hitler's Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941. A world-wide anti-fascist coalition came into being against the three fascist forces. The slogan of people's war was given by the Communist International. Unfortunately the leadership of our Party was not able to take note of this new changed situation immediately. In July 1941, the P.B. resolution continued to repeat the slogan for converting the war into a revolutionary war. It was only in December when two documents—one sent by the detenus of Deoli camp under the leadership of comrade B.T. Ranadive and the second by the CPGB on the nature of

the war that the P.B. awakened to meet the new situation. It was in 1942 February that the P.B. said in its resolution: "*Make the Indian people play the people's role in the people's War*". In July 1942 the ban on the Party was lifted and releases started. It came forward with the slogan of *National Government*.

But it must be acknowledged that while pursuing a correct line the Party committed certain mistakes for which it had to pay a heavy price.

While rightly supporting the anti-imperialist war it failed to integrate the contradiction in the international sphere with the contradiction in the national sphere, which weakened its struggle for national unity to win national government. While lending support to the struggle against fascism in the international sphere, it was necessary for the Party to bring pressure on British imperialism to establish national government representing the Indian people. Only at a stage when fascist hordes had come on the doorstep of our country could we have joined hands with all the forces to fight back. This policy naturally led to our isolation from the national movement to an extent.

It adopted a line of avoiding mass struggles on the plea that they would damage the war efforts or help pro-fascist elements to sabotage it. The *Quit India* movement was opposed on the same basis. The Forward Bloc and socialists who attacked Communists as British agents were denounced in retaliation and were called Fifth Columnists and fascist agents.

The Party also failed to adopt more flexible tactics when a favourable turn in the war came with the victory in the Stalingrad battle. We could have organized a more active opposition struggle against the British.

Another serious mistake the Party committed during this period was on the nationality question, i.e. on the slogan of Pakistan. Instead of waiting for the conclusion of the war and to be at the head of the upsurge it concentrated its attention on the unity of the Congress and the Muslim League as a patchwork for the formation of a National Government. Muslim League by then had adopted the resolution for Pakistan which clearly meant the division of the country. It came out

with a slogan "*destiny of the nation depends on national unity—Congress-League unity*", which led to tailing behind the Muslim League.

A theory of *Oppressed Muslim Nationalities* was evolved. Introducing religion as a factor in the national make up later on led to accepting Sikhs also as a separate nationality and Western Punjabis as another nationality. In the Central Committee Plenum in September 1942 Dr. Adhikari reported on Pakistan and National Unity and this line was embodied in the resolution. He argued "*every section of the Indian people which had contiguous territory as its homeland, common historical tradition, common language, culture, psychological make up and common economic life would be recognized as a distinct nationality with the right to exist as an autonomous state within the free Indian Union or Federation and will have the right to secede from it if it so desires. This means that the territories which today are split up by boundaries of the present British Provinces and the so-called Indian State would be re-united and restored to them in free India. Thus, free India of tomorrow would be a Federation or Union of autonomous states of the various nationalities such as pathans, Western Punjabis (predominantly Muslims), Sikhs, Sindhis, Hindustanis, Rajasthanis, Gujaratis, Bengalees, Assamiyas, Biharis, Oriyas, Andhras, Tamils, Kannadiga, Maharashtrians, Malayalees, etc.*

"This would give to the Muslims where they are in an overwhelming majority in a contiguous territory which is their homeland, the right to form their autonomous states and even to separate if they so desire". It is stated: "the slogan of Pakistan rests upon the democratic urge among the newly awakened Muslim nationalities for self determination".

This mistake was later on corrected by 1946 and the theory about the Muslim nationalities and their right to separate State was given up. In the Party's memorandum to the Cabinet Mission, it was clearly stated that CPI "*is firmly convinced that the best interests of the Indian masses will be served by their remaining together in one common Union*".

Even at the close of the war we failed to make corrections in our policy, and we were guided by the C.C. resolution "*Forward to Freedom*" which characterized imperialism as prisoners of the peoples camp and advanced the theory that with

the victory over fascism India is automatically bound to get freedom. Though the Party continued to defend the interests of the working class, peasantry and other toiling people, this resolution came in the way of our taking the initiative in immediately leading the post-war upsurge.

CHAPTER

VI

The Post-War Upsurge

Immediately after the close of the Second World War a big upsurge developed against Imperialism in the country. Demonstrations for the release of INA prisoners in 1945 was an eye opener. In this situation the Party had to reassess its understanding and make necessary corrections in its resolution adopted in August 1946, called the "Final Assault". This resolution provided the initiative and the Party again started coming to the forefront. The result was our heading of peasants' and workers' struggles—the Tebhaga, the struggle of the Worli tribals in Maharashtra, the struggles of the tenants of Punjab, the Telangana struggle and the struggle in Travancore, in Tripura, in Surma Valley in Assam—and all assumed armed forms. The revolt of the Naval ratings and the hoisting of the flags of Congress, Muslim League and the Red Flag was an indication of the way the wind blowing. The two years between the end of the Second World War and Indian independence were marked by waves of peasant struggles. These struggles of the peasants and the working class shook the British rule in India.

The most glorious of all these struggles however was the epic struggle of the peasants of Telangana, which has no parallel in the contemporary history of the country. The movement began in 1946, under the leadership of Andhra Mahasabha, which was affiliated to the AIKS, and continued up to 1951. The immediate issue was the oppression of the landlords. Very soon, however, the abolition of forced labour

(vetti), the stoppage of illegal exactions, and the ending of the rule of Nizam over Hyderabad, a princely state of which Telangana formed a part, became the main demands. The movement which began in a small number of villages spread to more than a few hundred villages within a few weeks.

The struggle reached a peak immediately after the independence of India. The demand was now for the integration of Hyderabad with the rest of India and for ending the feudal aristocratic rule of the Nizam. The agrarian programme of Andhra Mahasabha included the call against forced labour, payment of rent and delivery of grains to the landlord, for seizure of land illegally taken over by the landlords, for seizure of grain hoards and distributing those to the needy, and burning of the records of the landlords and moneylenders. Eventually, a call was given for the seizure of waste land of both government and the landlords, and the imposition of ceiling of 10 acres of wet land and 100 acres of dry land on the landlords.

During the movement, guerrilla squads were formed from the village to the district levels to meet the terror unleashed by Razakars. At the peak of the struggle about 3,000 villages, with roughly 3 million people and an area of 16,000 square miles, were liberated and brought under 'gram raj'. In these areas a guerrilla squad of 2,000 and a people's militia of 10,000 guarded the villages, and about a million acres of land were redistributed among the landless. Usurious interests were slashed, forced labour was banned and a minimum wage was fixed, among the reforms introduced by the peasant revolutionaries.

This frightened both the Nizam and the Central Government. British Imperialism was planning through the Mountbatten Award to make the Hyderabad state an independent entity along with the formation of India and Pakistan. They had also similar plans about Jammu and Kashmir and Travancore. But the struggle of the peasantry of Telangana forced the Nizam to surrender to the Government of India. Ultimately, the Nizam was helped by the Indian Government to protect his interests and suppress the movement so that it

may not signal the development of an agrarian revolution in other areas. The Government of India sent in its armed forces in large numbers to suppress the movement.

Pitted against the forces of the Nizam and the Central Government it was not possible for the revolutionaries to carry on the struggle. But it succeeded in foiling the British plans to make Hyderabad an independent State. It also brought to the fore the necessity of land reforms.

It will not be wrong to say that the post-war upsurge beginning with the demonstrations for the release of the INA prisoners, militant working class actions, peasant revolts and the Naval revolt alarmed the imperialists and the Indian bourgeoisie. Afraid that this would lead to the assumption of leadership by the working class, the Indian bourgeoisie and British Imperialism arrived at a compromise. This however was at a heavy cost. While the country was partitioned, an assurance was given that British interests in India would be protected.

Documents in Volume V will throw light on these developments of this period to enable the reader to make a fuller assessment as to how the working class and its party came to the fore in providing leadership to the popular upsurge, mobilizing the working class and peasantry in the militant actions with a view to completing the tasks of bourgeois-democratic revolution with the agrarian revolution as its crux. This frightened the imperialists and the bourgeoisie and the British Imperialists had to quit India handing over power to the bourgeois-landlord classes.

The documents in Volume V will show how the Communists attempted to reassess the rapidly changing correlation of class forces in the country during 1946-48 period. Of particular importance in this respect are the documents related to the Second Congress of the Communist Party held in 1948. Following the Second Congress, the Party was banned and Communists had to suffer severe Government repression. In spite of setbacks and mistakes the Communist Party came out resolutely in opposition to the bourgeois-landlord rule in the independent India.

CHAPTER

VII

Correcting the Left Deviation

The Volume VI contains documents for the period commencing from 1949. To help understand the documents in this Volume it would be better if the reader goes through the documents of the Second Party Congress and the subsequent elaboration made by the Polit Bureau. A connecting link can be found among these documents. All these documents starting from December 1947 up to 1951 are part of the struggle to work out the new strategic-tactical line. Since the documents of this Volume are linked with the documents contained in the Volume V, it is necessary to make some comments about these documents to enable the reader to comprehend the background in which the documents in this Volume are drafted.

This period, in the context of continuation of sweeping post-war upsurge throughout Asia, undoubtedly provided a great opportunity for the intensification of the ongoing mass revolutionary upheaval headed by our Party never witnessed before and covering almost the entire population. Being apprehensive of the outbreak of a national anti-imperialist revolt British imperialism struck an understanding with the bourgeois-landlord classes to transfer power alongwith the partition of India. The new situation demanded fulfilment of agrarian revolution, abolition of princely states and breaking the stranglehold of British imperialism. It was only the Communist Party which could have taken up the concrete slogans on these issues and led on the mighty struggle of the working class and the peasantry. But the Party had miserably failed to

gauge the situation and analyse it in concrete condition which is essential for the concrete application of the science of Marxism-Leninism. This led the Party to undertake a Left sectarian adventurist tactical line in the Second Congress, ignoring the mass enthusiasm prevailing at that time and preparedness of the masses to carry forward the bourgeois democratic revolution.

A study of the documents of that period reveal that they were not based on a dialectical understanding of Marxism-Leninism and its concrete application to the situation prevailing then. The documents characterized the independence as 'sham independence' and the national bourgeoisie as "junior partners" in an imperialist, feudal bourgeois alliance.

The strategy emanating out of this erroneous understanding marked out the whole bourgeoisie as its enemy, also targetting the rich peasantry. In order to justify the mistaken contention, quotations of Lenin and Stalin abounded, of course, out of context.

The political thesis of the Second Congress (28th February-March 6, 1948) states "The post-war situation saw the national-revolutionary discontent reaching the level of armed struggle in India. The national bourgeoisie, though it lost the gamble of a 'swift and short struggle' nevertheless increased its strength and influence over the people enormously, because the people looked upon the 1942 struggle as an anti-imperialist struggle and the national bourgeois leadership as its leader. The exploitation of the anti-imperialist discontent in 1942 now paid its dividend. The national bourgeois leadership could now head and unite the discontent if it so wished. Imperialism realised that would sound the death-knell of its rule".

At the time it made an analysis about the deepening economic crisis with a view to projecting that India was ripe for revolution and that only a bold lead was required. The call for a railway strike on March 9 did not prove so successful. Those who sent reports about the failure to arouse the railway workers were dubbed as cowards and reformists. There was a big attack by the Government on the Party and the

bulk of the cadre was imprisoned. But they were also instructed to make prisons into fortresses of class struggle. In this process, many had to lay down their lives, due to their loyalty to the party and the cause of the revolution.

Adherence to the fundamental principles of democratic centralism which guides a Marxist-Leninist party organization was given the go-by. Anybody who raised his voice against the Party line on the basis of his own experience was dubbed as reformist and arbitrarily removed from the leadership. Many leading comrades were asked to give in writing their self-criticism and most of them submitted to the dictates of the leadership.

It is in this situation that an editorial appeared in the 'Lasting Peace' (organ of the Cominform) on January 27, 1950. The editorial approvingly quoted Liu Shao-Chi's speech at the Peking Trade Union Conference of the Countries of Asia and Oceania—"the path taken by the Chinese people... .. is the path that should be taken by the people of many colonial and dependent countries in their struggle for national independence and people's democracy".

Further elaborating this point the editorial stated that "A decisive condition for the victorious outcome of the national liberation struggle is the formation, when the necessary internal conditions allow for it, of people's liberation armies under the leadership of the Communist Party".

Referring to India it stated: "The mass movement of the peoples in the colonies and semi-colonies, the movement that unfolded after the war and developed into an armed struggle, forced the British imperialists to make a tactical retreat. A 'sham independence' was bestowed on India. But the interests of British imperialism remain 'sacred and inviolable'. The Mountbattens have departed but British imperialism remains and octopus-like grips India in its bloody tentacles".

Further "In these conditions the task of the Indian Communists, drawing on the experience of the national-liberation movement in China and other countries, is, naturally, to strengthen the alliance of the working class with all the

peasantry, to fight for the introduction of the urgently-needed agrarian reform and national independence of their country, against the Anglo-American imperialists oppressing it and against the reactionary big bourgeoisie and feudal princes collaborating with them—to unite all classes, parties, groups and organisations willing to defend the national independence and freedom of India”.

This editorial ignited a big debate inside the Party. Taking cue from this, Andhra comrades who were leading the Telangana struggle at that time took the initiative by projecting the Chinese path as the path of revolution as opposed to the Russian path earlier enunciated by the Second Party Congress. This also did not help to unify the Party though nobody dared to challenge this editorial, with everybody trying to draw their own conclusions from it.

Whereas the Andhra comrades saw it as a vindication of their line, the Polit Bureau tried to adjust to the editorial by highlighting the significance of the Second Party Congress on the one hand and tuning in to the path mentioned in the editorial. It did not make any criticism about the assessment of the situation in relation to “revolutionary upsurge”. While making some criticism, the Polit Bureau claimed that “in the course of the last one year, the working class and the Communist Party have registered considerable successes in developing and heading struggles of workers, peasants and the oppressed petty-bourgeoisie in many parts of the country in which tens of thousands have been mobilized”. It concluded by stating that, “By correct application of the tactical line contained in the editorial article, the Communist Party shall be able to be at the head of a nationwide struggle for real national independence and people’s democracy”.

In the meantime, from May 20 to June 1, the reconstituted Central Committee met and assumed the leadership and characterized the line pursued by the Polit Bureau as Left sectarian and adventurist and the conclusions arrived at in the political thesis, in relation to the present state and strategy of Indian revolution as compounding confusion over

democratic and socialist stages of the revolution and the roles of the different sections of the bourgeoisie and the rich peasants, etc. The reconstituted Central Committee also exaggerated the revolutionary situation and placed the perspective of developing armed struggle everywhere. As a result, this, on the whole, did not help in arousing the Party and unifying it.

The membership of the Party had come down from 80,000 to 20,000. It is in this situation that, in a bid to unify the Party, a new Polit Bureau was constituted in December 1950 including the leadership of the new C.C. as well as those who were critical of the line. By this time Ajoy Ghosh, Ghate and Dange had circulated their documents in September 1950. It was at that time that the Party leadership sought the help of the CPSU in discussions and resolving the controversies. A delegation consisting of Ajoy Ghosh, Rajeswara Rao, M. Basavpunnaiiah and S.A. Dange had gone to Moscow and had thorough discussions on the Party programme and tactical line. The new programme which was placed before the Special Party Conference in 1951 held at Calcutta was the outcome of these discussions. This programme made certain corrections but carried certain mistakes too, such as the stage of the revolution. But it was accepted by all not because it was based on the concrete realities existing in the country but because it was formulated after discussions with the CPSU including Com. Stalin himself. This programme and the tactical line was endorsed by the Third Party Congress from 27th December 1953 to January 4, 1954 at Madurai. This did help in unifying the Party at that time.

The deliberations of the Second Congress was not, as stated before, in conformity with the awakening of the masses. This theoretical formulation was used by the Congress rulers as a unique weapon to crush the democratic movement. Immediately after the Second Congress, within eight months of ostentatious celebrations of independence, the Congress started illegalizing the Communist Party, gagging the opposition voice and terrorizing the people with police force. The first attack came on the Party in West Bengal where a large number of

leaders and cadres were put behind bars without trial followed by one after another in rapid succession in other parts of the country. It can be recalled that the Communist Party was illegal *de facto* since its birth, though it was legal in name. It was an illegal Party from 1934 onwards, and it was given the right to be the legal once in 1942 even though hundreds of its members were still in jail afterwards. Within ten years of its formation it had to face three conspiracy cases. After independence gigantic "conspiracy cases" were instituted by the Congress Government against the Party which fought valiantly for national independence and for the rights of the workers and peasants in independent India. In the eighteen months of Congress regimes in provinces and eight months of its rule in free India, food crisis engulfed the country, prices skyrocketed and cost of living went high, thanks to the policy of decontrol which helped the speculators a lot. The workers became restive because of the rising cost of living and mounting attack of the capitalists. Similar attacks were launched against the peasants who were fighting for promised rights. The Government stood mercilessly against these movements blatantly betraying all their pledges. Hardly a day passed without some assault on the civil liberties, enactment of undemocratic laws, clampdown of Section 144, lathicharge, detention, not to speak of police harassment. Twenty-five thousand Indian troops were deployed by the Congress Ministry to suppress the heroic people of Telangana who committed no crime but only fought for land and bread. Mostly, the Communist Party was leading those strike-struggles. Under the circumstances the attack against the Communist Party was nothing but the frontline of the democratic forces. The Government wanted, in actual practice, to send the signal to the workers and the peasants that they must give up all ideas of struggle against the employers and the landlords, and that Government would not tolerate any movement whatsoever. But the actual account of the struggle during this phase demonstrates the shoreless sweep of the popular struggle at a time when thousands of Communist leaders were locked up without being

given a chance to defend themselves—Trade Unions, Kisan Front, Student, Women and other mass organizations were either banned or disallowed to function. These struggles had obviously become bound up with the movement for civil liberties, withdrawal of black acts and release of political prisoners. Apart from pressure of the mighty movement, the Calcutta High Court delivered a stunning blow to the Congress Government by declaring Section 16 of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, under which the Communist Party was banned, ultra vires the Constitution. Earlier, Madras High Court also delivered a similar judgment. All the slanderous campaign against the Communist Party was thus belied. Nevertheless it can be noted that but for the sectarian deviation, the popular mass movement could have been ever stronger and irresistible.

Perusal of these documents will also show that instead of making a concrete study of the situation, we were acting subjectively, contrary to the concept of historical materialism. Study of these documents will enable us to draw lessons that the concrete application of the science of Marxism-Leninism requires a concrete study of the development of productive forces in each country, correlation of class forces existing there including the level of consciousness of the masses—based on which concrete tasks have to be worked out to fulfil the strategic objectives with a view to carrying forward the struggle for peoples' democracy and socialism.

This period was very important as the Party had come to the forefront on the eve of independence heading the mass movements of workers, peasants and other toiling sections and had emerged as a substantial political force. If the mistakes which were committed by the Party in assessing the situation could have been avoided by correctly analyzing the nature of the transfer of power and working out concrete slogans commensurate with the mass mood at that time, the situation would have been quite different today. In that testing hour too, it was the Communists who withstanding all odds and sufferings, stood by the toiling people, and conducted the struggle

inexorably which no amount of repression could ever crush. It was only the Communists who have been carrying on the tradition of anti-imperialist struggle while the Congress gave it up. Objective analysis would surely suffer from distortion if this infallible aspect is overlooked.

CHAPTER

VIII

The First General Elections

The Volume VII covers the documents during the period 1952-56. The General Elections of 1952, adoption of Avadi Socialism by the Congress and Twentieth Congress of CPSU and consequent emergence of inner party programmatic differences are the main threads of this period. The Volume includes key documents of Third and Fourth Congress of the Party. The ban on the Communist Party was withdrawn just before the first General Elections. But the Party was yet to recover from the dislocation caused by the all-out attack perpetrated by the Congress rulers. In the ideological field too, the programme and the statement of policy which was a tactical line could not settle the controversy. Although in certain aspects the sectarian deviation was corrected, the Party had been unable to get rid of sectarianism in totality. In the new situation the Party had devoted all its strength to oppose Congress in the election. This Volume contains documents pertaining to the role of the Communists in the first General Elections and later on, initiation of ideological difference inside the Party.

The situation in which the Communist Party joined the first electoral battle under serious handicaps is to be noted in order to have a proper perspective. The Election Manifesto of C.P.I. stated: "Thousands of its leaders and members are in prison and Nehru Government refuses to release them even now. Thousands of its members, including most of the members of its Central Committee, cannot come in the open and have to remain underground. Many of the organizations of the Party

are illegal to this day. Military and police terror rages unabated in the areas where the Party is strongest, making participation in the elections virtually impossible. The names of most of those who could stand as candidates of the Party have been left out of the electoral rolls." Ever since its formation, Communist Party passed through these obstacles but stood by the people against all odds, even at the cost of their lives and properties. The Communist Party did not conceal their mistakes also. The Election Manifesto stated: "While waging all these fights, the Communists have not been free from errors and mistakes. But as serious fighters they have always publicly admitted their mistakes and corrected themselves. Never have they left the masses to the mercies of the oppressors."

It was the task at that time to see that all Left and democratic forces, groups and individuals come together and fight against the Congress. The Party thus called for forging a United Front to ensure the defeat of Congress. Of the major democratic all India parties, the Socialist Party had substantial following. But it showed its utter reluctance to go in for an alliance or any sort of understanding with the Communist Party. It was evident, in actual practice, that its leaders were more opposed to Communists than to Congress—an outlook which they made no secret of it. The Left Alliance, too, was not satisfactory.

During the five years of its rule, the Congress party seemed to have no liking for using the political freedom to the task of fulfilment of hopes and aspirations of the people exalted at the time of freedom struggle. The miserable failure of the Congress Government to serve the bare minimum interest of the people and betrayal of its pledges had started blighting the expectations of the people. The economic measures, far from improving the living conditions of the people, create paradise for the vested interests and hell for the poor. The degeneration of the Congress party also had set in with no bounds which was explicitly described by Swami Ramanand Tirth, the Chairman of the reception committee at the Hyderabad session in 1951 where Nehru took over the

presidentship in violation of the well-established practice that its president and office bearers are barred from holding ministerial posts, as follows: "Malpractices have been in vogue in organizational elections and money has also played its part. The result of all this has been that sincere Congressmen with long years of service are being defeated in elections because they cannot afford to resort to malpractice or have no desire to spend money for gaining a position in the organization. In consequence, the Congress has lost and is losing many genuine elements, and if this process continues for sometime more I am afraid Congress will be enormously weakened". With rapid succession the prediction came true. Any sort of popular protest was sought to be repressed. During the first three years of freedom fifty thousand political opponents were put behind the bar and over thirteen thousands were killed or wounded, according to the official figures.

Nevertheless the elections were held in such a background, but the outcome showed the Congress getting weakened, and it secured only 42 per cent of votes conceding defeat of several of its important leaders and ministers. The tall claims of communal forces were belied and they got less than five per cent of votes. Twenty five per cent of votes went to the fold of parties and individuals opposing Congress with a more or less radical slogans. Despite the best effort of the Congress to destroy the Communist Party, it emerged as the first opposition Party in the Lok Sabha and a powerful force in the Indian political scene. Reviewing the election results and taking into consideration both the successes and the weaknesses, the Party came to the conclusion that: "A period of tremendous possibilities has begun. The relative 'political stability' of the last five years is over; the 'stability' was based not on mass support for the government but on the fact that while we waged many economic and even political struggles, the Congress enjoyed a monopolist political position in the country and the vast masses did not see any alternative to Congress rule. Today the United Front constitutes a political challenge to the Congress in a vast area."

Noteworthy is one of the lessons the Party had learned as mentioned in the review that "One deviation cannot be corrected by jumping into another deviation, that both of the Right-opportunist and Left-sectarian types have to be simultaneously fought, that both result very often from failure to see a complex situation in its entirety and from focusing attention only on a part and not the whole". Ironical though it may seem, experiences in the following years showed that the apprehension had turned into a reality in the culmination of which one section of the Party toeing the Soviet line and advocating the policy of class collaboration in the name of Marxism-Leninism broke away, and before our Party was consolidated after the division, a Left-sectarian section blindly copying the Chinese line started disruption and left the Party in the long run. Documents depicting the twin deviations will come up in the subsequent Volumes.

Against the background of General Elections which had armed the people with the confidence that the Congress was not an invincible force and that it had been able to retain the power because of disunity in the democratic force, the mass organizations of the Party started regrouping and consolidating just after emerging from the orgy of attack since 1948. The All-India Trade Union Congress met in an all-India convention in Calcutta at the end of May, 1952 followed by kisan and other mass front meetings and conventions. Not since 1948 had it been possible for them to organise such meetings. Rallies, demonstrations, strikes and hartals became widespread against the anti-people policies of Congress which resorted to imposing unbearable burden on the toiling masses. Failing to stem the mass resistance of its policies, the government was becoming more repressive and extended the life of the Preventive Detention Act. The need of the day at that time was unity in action so as to coordinate all these movements.

The war danger at the time was growing with American imperialists and their allies threatening the world with newer weapons of mass destruction. Since 1950 the savage war had been waged in Korea by U.S. imperialism in the name of

United Nations—a war marked by the indiscriminate destruction of civilian population, barbaric torture of Korean war prisoners, the mass bombing with the use of napalm and the chemical warfare. The war in Vietnam and Indo-China was also a matter of serious concern for the peace-loving people all over the world. Since then the issue of war or peace dominated the international scene, peace movement which had the most vital bearing on the struggle for defence of national independence, had grown into an important rallying point. Imperialists' design and threat of war could be prevented, everyone was confident, because the forces seeking its prevention had strength superior to those forces seeking its outbreak. It is the Communist Party of India which had been in the forefront in organizing the people from all strata against war and imperialist intervention in many parts of the globe—thus continuing the anti-imperialist struggle. Of the greatest importance in connection with this was the remarkable fight for solidarity with Korea, Vietnam and national liberation struggles. The Congress Government had claimed to have been pursuing a policy of 'neutrality' and 'independent' foreign policy at a time when imperialist brutality was going on in Korea, Vietnam and Malaya, when the Soviet Union and China were championing the cause of peace and as opposed to it the imperialist camp led by United States had become the worst threat to world peace. The nature of 'neutrality' and 'independent' foreign policy were looked upon by the democratic and peace forces in India as appeasing imperialism as the attitude and actions of the Nehru Government threw revealing light in this respect. Such a policy of neutrality in words and submission to imperialism in deeds was exposed thoroughly, so much so that under the pressure of the peace movement it had to retreat to an extent ultimately. And the crushing defeat suffered by U.S. imperialists in Korea and more so in Vietnam suffered by the French imperialists who were wholly aided and abetted by United States, the sweeping advance of the national liberation movements in the changed international situation as well as national situation, brought

forth a shift in the foreign policy of Nehru Government that led it to establish friendly relations with USSR and China, to stand by the national liberation movements and to defend peace. India took a leading position in organizing non-aligned movement. On the other hand the dominance of public sector in the economy and land reform was emphasized in the draft Five Year Plan. Taking into account the radical mood of the people, the Congress party, in order to hoodwink the people, adopted the goal of "socialist pattern of society" at its Avadi Session.

But there started a difference of opinion inside the Party in assessing this shift in the foreign policy. A section of the Party leadership surprisingly was carried away by these developments and started arguing that the national bourgeoisie had split into two—the monopolist section standing for out-and-out collaborationist and compromise with imperialism and feudalism, while the other section opposed to imperialism and feudalism was represented by Nehru. This class collaborationist line was first advocated to the Central Committee by ten members of the U.P. State Committee led by late P.C. Joshi with eleven members of the State Committee opposing the line. But the Central Committee in its meeting in September 1954 rejected the line. The differences got sharpened after the Andhra elections in March 1955. The Communist Party was set to win despite all sorts of virulent campaign, threats and ugly manoeuvres by the Congress and other opponents pressing into service all their resources. The election meetings of the Party were seen to be overflowed with the sea of people but the outcome stunned everybody. The Party candidates were defeated with the margin of merely a few votes in the majority of the constituencies for which it secured only seven per cent of seats getting 31 per cent of votes while the Congress and its allies got 50 per cent of votes securing 74 per cent of seats. The Communist Party got 47 per cent of votes in nearly 100 constituencies.

In the background of intensified differences inside the Polit Bureau, the Fourth Congress of the Party was convened at

Palghat on 19-29 April, 1956. Prior to that Twentieth Congress of CPSU made a major Rightist shift in its ideological line, specially in relation to national liberation struggle, fuelling the Rightist line inside C.P.I. although the majority members of our C.C. refused to accept these formulations. The draft resolution of the C.C. for the Palghat Congress of the Party provided encouragement to the class collaborationist trend inside the Party. However, this line was challenged by a section of the C.C. who put forward an alternate draft. It is not that all the formulations of the alternate draft were based on firm Marxist-Leninist positions as we were yet to come out of the framework of the 1951 Party Programme. But we had corrected ourselves on the vital question of class character of the state and class alliance. The line of class collaboration was sharply criticized in the alternate draft. An intense debate set in over the two documents making it difficult for the pursuers of class collaboration to rally the Party behind them. The debate and discussion forced them to retain some of the basic ideological positions and incorporate the strategic objectives of people's democracy and Front led by the working class. The corrections did, more or less, satisfy those who had placed the alternate draft and, as a result it was withdrawn. But the Party remained divided on programmatic questions as well as on the immediate tactical line. Inasmuch as the amended draft of the Central Committee had not comforted the proponents of the class collaborationist line who were earlier supporting the C.C. draft moved their own alternate resolution at the Party Congress. As a result the Party Congress got divided on the political-tactical line with one-third of the delegates supporting the line of class collaboration. Going through the documents of this Volume will enable the readers to understand the prime source of ideological difference inside the Party that culminated ultimately to the formal division in 1964.

It would not be out of place to mention here that during this whole period the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of China had the same assessment of the internal situation which was incorporated in the

Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and Eighth Congress of the CPC. But our Central Committee disagreed with this assessment of India's internal situation by both the parties. While the CPSU continued the same line till the end, the CPC made an about-turn in its assessment in 1959 after their displeasure with some of the actions of the Nehru Government dubbing it as the puppet of U.S. imperialism which was corrected after the devastating failure of sectarian line in the cultural revolution. The deviations of the great two parties had caused further damage to our already crisis-ridden Party.

CHAPTER

IX

Against Revisionism

The period from 1957 to 1961 was one of gradually intensified debate inside the Party over fundamental ideological issues. However, the formation of a State Government led by the Communist Party in Kerala in 1957 breaking the monopoly of the Congress marked a significant event of far-reaching consequences in Indian political situation. In the Second General Elections held in 1957 the Communist Party brushing aside the ideological differences exercised all its efforts against the Congress. During ten years' period after Independence the rule of the Congress had ushered in a sign of persistent decay with the gap between the wealth of few and overwhelming majority becoming even more staggering. The Election Manifesto of the Communist Party of India explained the ruthless exploitation of the poor and the failure of the Congress Government in all respects. The formation of linguistic States was a key demand of our national movement. It was considered necessary in order to strengthen democracy and the unity of the nation, in order to enable the common people to participate in the affairs of the government and to create conditions for the flourishing of diverse cultures. All this was cynically forgotten by the Congress after the advent of freedom and the Party took up the issue and led the struggle mobilizing the democratic forces that forced Nehru Government to allay its vacillations and concede to the linguistic reorganization of States.

In the economic sphere, alongside the dismal performances,

the myth of the Second Five-Year Plan had already started receding. Those who had expected that the experience of the last few years would bring about a radical change in the outlook of the government, were getting disappointed. The Congress had little to offer but wild promises, though with less success than before. The Party, in its appeal, pledged to do everything at its disposal to achieve unity among Left and Democratic forces in the forthcoming elections against the Congress.

While the further advance of the Communist Party in the electoral battle and massive victory in Kerala which had come to power was a new milestone for Indian democracy, Congress suffered losses in almost in every state which encouraged Left and Democratic forces all over the country. The Nambudiripad Government set about its tasks in a manner which left no doubt in one's mind that, unlike Congress Governments, it was serious about implementing its pledges that offered to the people during the election campaign. Right from outset, the reactionaries in Kerala and their political representatives tried to foment disturbances to discredit the Kerala Government acting upon every pretext and to disrupt the outstanding performances of the government as well. Reviewing these and earlier developments, the National Council of the Communist Party of India which met in October 1958 stated in its resolution: "The danger and threat of the Central intervention are by no means gone. The Congress leaders know that the Kerala Government is gaining in prestige and stature everyday, while their chances of returning to power in that State through elections are fast receding. With the Congress Governments becoming increasingly discredited and isolated in other States, they are afraid of the successes and achievements of the Kerala Government."

The unconcealed arguments of the supporters of big business and their media was that the continuance of a Communist-led Government in one part of India was a hindrance to aid from the USA. It is worth mentioning that a few months after the Second General Elections in India, in September 1957,

Mr. John Foster Dulles said in an unambiguous term: "Local election victories by Communists in India and Indonesia is a dangerous trend. It is a dangerous trend whenever Communists move towards political control." What is more, everyone knows the fate of Indonesia and disclosure by former U.S. Ambassador in India, Moynihan, in the recent past about CIA providing money to the Congress leaders to debar the Communists from running Government in Kerala and from coming to power in West Bengal in early seventies. A few days after, as though commenting on Mr. Dulles's observations, Mr. T.T. Krishnamachari, the then Finance Minister of India, said in the course of an interview to an American paper on the eve of his departure to Washington for American aid: "We have to try to explain to them (Americans) that the battle in India is a battle against Communism too. We lost the State of Kerala to the Communists and one of the reasons behind it was that we could not spend enough money for development there." The signal was amply clear. Because of popular mass support and enthusiasm from inside and outside Kerala, it took two years to dismiss the Government.

The National Council of the Communist Party of India, which met at Trivandrum on July 15 and 16, called for meetings and demonstrations all over the country on August 3, in defence of Kerala. After the dismissal of the Government, August 3 became a day of countrywide protest against Central intervention. At least 30,000 people marched to the Parliament in Delhi, condemning the Central Government's intervention denouncing it as a blatant attack on nascent democracy and praising the achievements of the Kerala Ministry. It was a demonstration the like of which the capital city had seldom seen. Protest demonstrations across the country surpassed all record. But what took place in Calcutta, the biggest city in India, was something unprecedented, the massive protest by lakhs of people will ever be remembered.

With the march of time the Party which was gaining strength and winning more and more support among the people was the Communist Party of India as the spearhead of the

democratic movement. No wonder, therefore, that the extreme reactionaries and their allies even apart from the Congress, who wanted to thwart democratic advance, were raising the bankrupt banner of anti-communism. To this end they had propagated, and were still propagating, mountains of books and articles, spoiled tons of paper and ink. All proved to be in vain.

Mention must be made on some other important developments in this period. Since the Indo-Soviet Treaty distanced the imperialist countries, help from Soviet Union was pouring on the Indian soil for machine building, steel complex, mining and so to say, in every sector of heavy industry which practically formed our industrial base. This was also used, on the other hand, as a point of bargaining with the United States. In 1958, the military dictatorship of Ayub Khan was installed in Pakistan at the behest of U.S. imperialism. The arms pact between Pakistan and USA, the crackdown on democratic and progressive forces in Pakistan was combined with the threat of Ayub Khan to "take extreme measure" against India. The Communist Party came out steadfastly to denounce the evil design of American imperialism and demanded immediate peace negotiation with Pakistan, and at the same time stood against the outcry of the communal and ultra-nationalist forces. We lodged our anguish against the silence of Nehru over imperialist machinations in Asia and attack on Middle East. In the meantime, Cuban revolutionary forces led by Fidel Castro dislodged U.S.-backed dictatorial regime of Batista and assumed power which gave immense inspiration to the anti-imperialist forces.

The period was also full of powerful struggles. The economic crisis led Nehru Government again to secure loan from U.S.-dominated World Bank making India more vulnerable to the economic pressure of imperialism. Excessive dependence on the West, yielding to the pressure of the monopolists, placating landed interests by dropping agrarian reform enforced the scaling down of the Second Plan but profit of the monopolists was going high. Simultaneously, rising wave of

strike-struggles was dominating the scene. Despite the ideological debates that had persisted for a long period, the Party was steadfast in conducting the mass movement and taking stands on every issue of national and international issues. No one should overlook this aspect while going through the history of the Communist movement.

Immediately after the Communist Ministry took office, an ordinance blocking all eviction of tenants and also suits on arrears for rents and damages was promulgated on the strength of which cultivators for the first time in Kerala received the taste of freedom from fear of eviction and losing their rights. Then came the landmark in agrarian reform embodied in the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill which aroused the entire rural population increasing the heartbeats of vested interests. The next to come was the Education Act which was intended to safeguard the interest of the teachers. These two alone, not to speak of other successes, were sufficient to enrage the ruling class and reactionaries of all hues.

It was at this juncture that another bourgeois-landlord party, the Swatantra Party, was formed, then an insignificant force. This development was sought to be used by that reformist section of the party to line up with the Congress treating the emergence of the Swatantra Party as the biggest danger.

The Amritsar Congress, the Special Party Congress of April, 1958 put cold water on this line explaining that it was a reactionary and anti-people policy of the Congress Government that had given rise to position of anti-national, extreme right forces in economic and political life, and they could not be defeated without a simultaneous battle waged with determination and vigour against the anti-people policies of the government. Differences persisted even after the adoption of the tactical line in the Amritsar Congress. The softening of the attitude towards the Congress pursued by one section of the party received a jolt when the Communist-led Kerala Government was dismissed in a most undemocratic manner. Nevertheless, the lesson seemed to be short-lived.

Meanwhile, the peace manifesto of Communist and workers'

parties as well as the declaration of twelve Communist and workers' parties of the socialist countries brought forth some hope for the forces of socialism in the wake of differences within the international Communist movement in 1956. It was further enriched by the eighty-one Communist and workers' parties' declaration in November, 1960. To this, the CPI was also a signatory.

Before the ink of the joint declaration was dry the differences between the two Communist Parties—CPC and CPSU—cropped up again widening their position towards two opposite poles. Both these documents were considered as a guide in all respects for the forces of the advancement of the Indian Communist movement. We had lost sight of the fact that the exaggeration of the strength of the socialism and over-estimation of its immediate triumph as well as predictions of the immediate fall of world capitalism was made in these two documents. We cannot claim that it did not have any impact on our Party.

During the late fifties food crisis was acute and the Party had swung into massive struggles. In West Bengal the movement of teachers and students, the movement against rising tram fares and particularly the movement for food reached a high peak. The government tried to suppress it with the brutal force of the police resulting in the killing of eighty people in Calcutta and injuring hundreds. This savage attack on the hungry people who thronged the streets of Calcutta to demand food in great multitudes drew nationwide condemnation.

By this time serious differences had developed inside the Communist Party of India, on programmatic issues, on the issues of current policies as well as the ideological issues facing the world Communist movement. The two Commissions which were appointed by the National Council to draft the Programme and Political Resolution to be placed at the Sixth Congress at Vijayawada in April, 1961, could not come to any common understanding. So there were two draft programmes and two draft resolutions before the Party Congress.

These differences were summed up in the draft resolution presented by 21 members of the National Council.

The Draft Programme presented by Dange, Joshi and Adhikari completely ignored the compromising role of the Indian bourgeoisie, both at the time of the transfer of power and since it came to wield state power. It advocated a class collaborationist understanding of the character of the State as well as the path of revolution. The Congress Party is pictured in the Draft as, in the main, a progressive party. Thus this Draft Programme, if adopted, would have taken the Party to the path of out-and-out class collaboration.

The seriousness of the inner-party differences at that time was admitted by Ajoy Ghosh, in his report to the Sixth Party Congress, when he stated: "Our comrades know sharp differences have existed among us for some time. Due to these differences we could not adopt a political resolution at the Calcutta meeting of the National Council held a year ago." Further he said: "In December 1960, the National Council in its meeting in Bombay formed a Commission. That Commission, however, could not come to an agreed assessment of the situation or an agreed conclusion. Two separate drafts were placed before the National Council."

About the differences he stated: "It was evident that we differ on the following issues: (1) The actual implications of the formulations of the Moscow Statement in relation to newly independent countries; (2) the political and economic situation in our own country; and (3) immediate tasks before the Party. With these differences, it was not possible for us to work out a common political resolution."

The Political Resolution that was placed before the Party Congress by the majority of the National Council also reflected the collaborationist understanding. The Party thus faced the most acute crisis at the Sixth Congress in Vijayawada. A split was avoided only by making the Political Report and speech of the General Secretary the basis for amending the Political Resolution. The Programme drafts, after introduction, were kept in abeyance and referred to the National Council.

It was no doubt a Congress of compromise and all the ideological political differences which divided the Party remained unresolved. The only unity that was achieved was with regard to the broad tactics that were to be pursued in the elections that were held in eight months' time. The reformist section utilized all methods to capture the Party machine. The earlier method of preparing the panel of the National Council on the basis of recommendations of the State delegations was given up. Therefore, when the new CEC was elected, Comrades P. Sundarayya, Jyoti Basu and Surjeet decided to remain out. In view of the forthcoming General Elections, the differences, however acute, were pushed to the background and the Party came out with the slogan of breaking the monopoly of power of Congress. This Volume brings to light the intense inner-Party struggles against revisionism.

CHAPTER

X

Indo-China Conflict and Revisionist Machinations

This period (1962-1963) marked an assault on the Party, specially against those who were committed to line of class struggle in the Party, exploiting a situation when Indo-China border dispute erupted into a violent clash. The differences within the Party were further widened to almost a point of no return. So far the differences, that had been persisting since 1954, had been confined to the top leadership of the Party. The inner-Party debate and discussions did not involve the rank and file. To save the Party from more disaster in view of the tendency to follow blindly the CPSU line or the CPC line it was proposed that we should not resort to open criticism and attacks either on the positions of CPSU or the CPC till our Party worked out a line of their own after in-depth discussion on the basis of applying Marxism-Leninism in our concrete conditions in which we were lagging behind miserably. It was not paid heed to by the right deviationists led by S.A. Dange with one vote majority in the period mentioned.

The Party entered into the election battle in the General Elections held in early 1962. The election tactics decided upon was: "The monopoly of power of the Congress and the big majorities it enjoys in the Parliament and Assemblies out of all proportions to the votes it receives in elections has become today a positive hindrance to the growth of democracy and the advancement of people's cause....More than ever before, it has become today a national necessity to weaken and break this monopoly of power of the Congress by returning in a

large number of Communists and other candidates of democratic opposition to Parliament and State Assemblies.” In the face of mounting struggle for food, land, living wages and other important demands, the Congress was further isolated that found expression in the election results. Meanwhile Ajoy Ghosh died and the election of the new General Secretary came up for discussion in the National Council. Vacillations among a section of the National Council members was taken advantage of, and we had to agree to the creation of a new post of Chairman, though there was no such provision in the Party Constitution. As a compromise S.A. Dange became the Chairman and E.M.S. Namboodiripad the General Secretary. The National Council met to prepare the review of the elections but failed to come to a conclusion over two contrasting drafts because of serious difference of opinion on the very same question that was resolved in Palghat Congress, as to against whom, the Congress or the rightist forces was the Party to direct its fire. The reformists, after having seen that their line was going to fall through, insisted with matchless hypocrisy that it was unnecessary to go into a post-mortem of the elections.

With the outbreak of Indo-China border conflict at the end of 1962, a State of Emergency was proclaimed and DIR, to detain persons without trial was enforced—the extra-ordinary measures were, however, utilized in carrying out large-scale arrests of one section of the Party leaders who were opposing class collaborationist line and advocating peaceful negotiation and peaceful settlement of the dispute between the two neighbouring countries which had the tradition of fighting valiantly against the imperialists for a long period. Unbelievable that it may be, the Dangeite leadership availed of the oppourtunity to further pursue their line of class collaboration at a time when a section of the leadership were under severe repression. A concerted and slanderous campaign was launched in the bourgeois press raising the bogey of ugly chauvinism aided and abetted by reactionaries of all shades and colours. The Dangeite group was not a in a position

to deny their responsibility in this unleashing anti-Communist campaign, which was blown out of proportion.

Again, the differences between these two viewpoints came to a head several months later, in March 1963, when a large number of bye-elections had to be faced by the central leadership, and the reformists were able to advocate this line only because of the change in the inner-Party situation between October 1962 and April 1963. They even did not hesitate to support the Congress candidate who was contesting against the Socialist leader Ram Maonohar Lohia.

There is no parallel in the history of any Communist Party in the world where a situation created by an attack of the Government is utilized to imprison Party members in different States. When the main leadership was behind the bars, the West Bengal State Council was dissolved and a POC was formed. In Punjab, when the majority of the State Executive Committee was in prison, a special conference was convened and a new committee elected. It was done immediately after the attack. Even the late Bhupesh Gupta, in his note to the Central Secretariat of March 14, 1963 protested against this diabolical method of functioning.

But nobody heeded his advice because the Dangeite leadership was out to disrupt the Party and, utilizing Government repression, they wanted to oust all those from leading positions who were fighting against the class collaborationist line.

A well-organized campaign was unleashed through the bourgeois press that those in the Party who were opposed to the ultra-nationalist slogans and advocating peaceful negotiations and peaceful settlements were anti-national and should be put behind the bar. Public statements issued by several members and units of the Party who joined this chorus of bourgeois propaganda amounted to giving an excuse to Communist-baiters like Jana Sangh, RSS and the Swatantra Party, as well as, to the Government to continue their attack on the Party.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the supporters of the National Council did not react at all when the Government,

on November 7, struck the first blow in Maharashtra where this vilification campaign had reached the highest pitch. The arrests of the so-called "pro-China" elements in Maharashtra was the first action of the Government to find out the extent of support it could get. Dange did his best to prevent the resolution condemning these arrests and demanding their release being passed by either the CEC or the General Council of the AITUC which met ten days later. Having satisfied itself that it could not only have the support of Right reaction and the bulk of the Congress but also the support of people like Dange in the Communist Party, the Government was emboldened to start countrywide repression on November 21.

Even this, however, failed to wake up these people, they conducted no mass campaign to force the Government to retrace these steps. Every real Communist will feel ashamed that the protest against the Government's policy came not from the leadership of the Communist Party of India but from our fraternal Parties abroad. Even after fraternal Parties had repeatedly protested, the Dange group which was then in the leadership refused to launch a mass campaign against repression. This was perhaps the first instance in the history of any Communist Party that the leadership refused to unleash a protest campaign when a section of the Party was attacked by the Government. Release of political prisoners had become a big demand manifested in various on-going movements braving the vicious atmosphere of chauvinism.

It may be recalled that all this took place after the border clashes had ended. The Communist Party did not even ask for the lifting of the Emergency for six long months. On the other hand, many of them publicly opposed the demand made by other opposition parties for lifting the State of Emergency. In June 1963, when the National Council could no longer evade the issue and had to adopt a resolution on the question, it did not categorically demand the withdrawal of the Emergency, but requested the Government to review the question of the necessity of continuing the Emergency in consultation with opposition parties. It is noteworthy, however, that

within two days of the adoption of this resolution, when the General Council of the AITUC met, Dange made a statement, in his opinion, the Emergency should continue.

By the end of the year some comrades were released. They tried to protect the unity of the Party. In the October 1963 meeting of the National Council, Comrade M. Basavapunnaiiah and others made certain proposals for Party unity but all proposals for proper discussions inside the Party were rejected. Another effort was made on July 4, 1964 to restore unity in a meeting held between the leaders of the National Council and us. They repeated all the proposals made, including the one made by Bhupesh Gupta who represented them. They insisted on total surrender to the Dangeite-dominated National Council. They rejected various proposals to restore Party unity and went the whole hog in working out the class collaborationist line. So it had become very clear that the reformists, after capturing the Party machine, refused to agree to any norms of democratic centralism to put the Party on correct rails. Therefore, a situation was created in which the inner-Party contradictions arising out of conflicting ideological and political positions had become insoluble and they could be resolved only by reorganizing the Party on the basis of concrete application of Marxism-Leninism in concrete situation of India. That is why, those who met in Tenali in a convention, had to give the call for convening the Seventh Party Congress.

Even after the end of the border clash and ceasefire, the State of Emergency was utilized by the monopolists and the vested interests to suppress the movement of the working class and the democratic movement in general. This could not, of course, stop the mounting struggle of the workers and peasants who consistently fought against the onslaught on their living wages, against the burden of taxes and price-rise, movement for food and long-standing agrarian demands. Through these mass actions was bursting forth the deep discontent of the people against the dispensations of the Congress regime. Combined with this was the movement demanding release of prisoners and restoration of fundamental rights and civil liberties.

The documents in Volume IX will be of great help to the readers in taking stock of how our Party grew withstanding repression, combating resolutely ideological and political deviations and organizational disruption. It is heartening for all to see that the standpoint we had undertaken at the time of Indo-China border dispute for which we had been put under detention without trial had been accepted and followed by the Government in the later period.

CHAPTER

XI

Formation of CPI(M)

Volumes X(A) and X(B) cover the eventful year of 1964. The decade-long fight against revisionism had culminated into total break with it in the Seventh Party Congress of the Party held in Calcutta in 1964. Documents relating to this split and the formation of Communist Party of India (Marxist) have been incorporated in these Volumes. The Volume X(A) contains the key documents prior to the Seventh Party Congress during the first part of 1964 and Volume X(B) the documents of the Seventh Party Congress.

Of great importance in the initial phase was the statement of the thirty-two members of the National Council who walked out on April 11, 1964. This statement contributed to the emergence of a stronger Communist Party of India which has been built and steeled by great sacrifices. Explaining the reasons for final break with the revisionists headed by Dange who rejected all rational proposals for discussions on unity, the statement noted, "Having reviewing the situation for two days, we have now come to the unanimous conclusion that our struggle against this factional approach of the followers of Dange is an integral part of our struggle against their anti-party factional method of preparing for and convening party congress as well as against the reformist political line". It was not that there were no differences among ourselves on certain ideological issues but we were united on the draft programme which had been provisionally accepted. It was decided to have further exchange of views on the ideological and political

questions associating the entire Party membership in these discussions. The response from the Party members across the country was encouraging. We met in convention at Tenali to give a call for convening the Seventh Congress and to finalise the draft programme of the Party over which the debates continued for the preceding ten years.

The Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in Calcutta in December 1964 marked the culmination of our struggle against revisionism within the United Party. It marked a programmatic and organizational as well as ideological break with revisionism, accompanied by complete demarcation on tactics. The Seventh Congress of the Party was truly a turning point in the history of the Communist movement in the country. It adopted a new Party Programme and a Resolution on Tasks in which strategy and tactics of Indian revolution were enunciated and elaborated. The Programme repudiated all the revisionist formulations in relation to the Indian situation and correctly described the character of the State as a bourgeois-landlord state led by the big bourgeoisie. It rejected the position of the CPSU that the Indian Government represents the national bourgeoisie which has to be supported. The Party Congress at the same time did not also accept the stand taken by the Chinese Communist Party. It did not accept that the government of India led by Jawaharlal Nehru was a puppet representing the comprador bourgeoisie. It also did not accept that it relied upon U.S. imperialism behind the facade of the policy of non-alignment.

Our Party's struggle for a Marxist-Leninist line was conducted in extremely difficult circumstances. In the wake of the India-China conflict in 1962 our Party leaders, then in the United Party, were arrested and kept in detention for a long period. It became a God-sent for the champions of this line of class-collaboration who, under the new circumstances, got a majority in the National Council. They used this opportunity to launch a political and organizational offensive against those who resisted the reformist line of Congress-Communist unity.

The Seventh Congress adopted, on the whole, the tactical line of 1951 and effected some changes in the Constitution which was necessary for a revolutionary Party.

In the resolution on the tasks of the Party adopted in the Seventh Congress gave a concrete direction for developing the movement in that situation. The resolution directed to rapidly overcome the weaknesses prevailing in the trade union movement, kisan movement and in the Party organizations, and that political consciousness be inculcated in every way. In order to build a genuine revolutionary party the Resolution made a caution: "These tasks cannot be fulfilled without building the Party on the secure foundation of Marxism-Leninism as the initiator, builder and leader of mass movements and struggles. Our activity should be oriented towards taking up the problem of the basic classes which alone can forge the link that can revitalise the whole Party.

"The struggle against the revisionism must be systematically carried on inside the Party. At the same time, the Party must vigilantly guard against manifestations of sectarianism. For this purpose the Central Committee must prepare a detailed document showing the manifestations of these inside the Party, their political and ideological roots, the weaknesses in the struggle against revisionism, and educate the entire Party on it.

"The Party must organize and encourage study of classics as well as undertake systematically a study of the concrete problems of our country and movement and learn to apply Marxist theory to these problems."

Engel's assertion in this respect may be recalled. In the Prefatory Note to *The Peasant War in Germany* he pointed out that class struggle was conducted in a three-fold way—theoretical, political and the practical-economic. He stressed the importance of the concentric attack wherein lay the strength and invincibility of the movement.

The Seventh Congress stands the most important and decisive Party Congress since the formation of the Party in the final count. Still, we are to learn more how to apply

Marxism and Leninism perfectly in the concretely new and newer situation. The resolve of the Seventh Congress as contained in this Volume underlines the importance of this awareness.

CHAPTER

XII

The Worsening Crisis and the Left Deviation

With the sharp difference and division inside the Party in and around 1964 the critics and enemies of revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party comforted themselves with the thought that communism would be rolled back from India; very few people among them count on this today. In 1964, hardly six weeks after the Seventh Party Congress, the Government of India launched repressive measures against the Party on an all-India scale and detained more than a thousand of its leaders at different levels under the Defence of India Rules. The Government using its media of propaganda and pressing into service the so-called free Press under the control of big business let loose a most vicious slander campaign against our Party and its leaders who were nailed as "Peking agents", "anti-national" and so on. What made the Party's struggle even more difficult was that in addition to the slander campaign of the bourgeoisie-landlord Government, our Party leaders and their political line were also the object of concerted attacks by the leadership of the CPI which was supported in this by the CPSU leadership. Indian reformists pretending to be unifiers of the Communist movement dubbed us as splitters. Depicting us as dogmatists and adventurists, the Indian reformists sought to project themselves as creating Marxists. The Government had calculated that repression and all-round attack through propaganda would be able to stifle our voice and that because of the split in the Communist Party, the revisionists would be able to rally a majority. But these hopes

were belied. The first test of the correctness of our line was established in Kerala Elections held in 1965 where CPI(M) secured a resounding victory and the revisionists fared miserably. Most of our comrades who contested the elections from prisons got elected at a situation when larger number of leaders and cadres were in jails, and slanders and repressions were going on unabated.

In Septemeber 1965, when Pakistan attacked India, the Party leaders and cadres were in jail. The Party's international outlook was again tested during this war. Every other Party, including CPI, adopted a chauvinistic position. Ours was the only Party in the country that stood for peace and Indo-Pak amity. Our comrades outside the jails and our committees carried on their work valiantly. In this period Party organs were brought out in Bengali, Malayalam, Telugu, Tamil, Punjabi, Kannada and Marathi. People's Democracy was brought out. With the Party still semi-underground, big mass battles were fought in West Bengal and Kerala was also no relaxation in the Party's ideological battle against revisionism.

The Party leaders were released only in 1966. The process of release was completed only in May that year. It was then that the task of reorganizing the Party and the mass fronts was taken up in right earnest. The Party worked out the tasks on various fronts basing on the documents of the Seventh Party Congress concerning the Kisan Front, Trade Union Front and Party Organization. The Party was soon to face a General Election.

It was clear that, given the sort of circumstances that the Party had to face during '65-66, it was very difficult to organize mass struggles. But again the central aspect of establishing the new identity of the Party was linked to our ability to lead the masses in struggle. And our strong units took a lead in this.

West Bengal was rocked by a massive upsurge of struggles by various sections of the people during the entire period of 1965-66. The massive struggles touched a new watershed

during February to April 1966 on the popular demand of food and kerosene. The thoroughly anti-people food policy of the Congress Government in the State provoked widespread discontent among the people. The discontent was channelized into surging struggles. During this struggle, the Party played a pivotal role in activizing united broader militant platforms of the fight people to carry forward and to widen and deepen the sweep of the movement.

Apart from West Bengal, notable struggles were also being fought in other parts of the country. The most important of these being the general strike in Bombay in August, 1966.

Apart from the popular struggles on the question of food, increasing struggles were being conducted on the most important political issue of the time—democratic rights. The issue of democratic rights crystallized with the concrete demands of the immediate release of political detenus, withdrawal of the Emergency provision and the draconian Defence of India Rules.

The solidarity struggle with the national liberation movement of Vietnam against the crude barbaric war of aggression perpetrated by U.S. imperialism also picked up momentum during this period. The issues and developments regarding the struggle were taken to the grassroot level and hundreds of solidarity meetings and demonstrations were organized.

All these struggles not only vindicated our political line vis-a-vis Congress, but also got adequately reflected in the results of the general elections.

The Fourth General Elections held in 1967 brought about a new situation in the country. The electorate delivered disastrous blows to the ruling Congress Party and dislodged it from office in eight States where non-Congress governments were formed. Our Party came to occupy a central place in the two State Governments of Kerala and West Bengal. The strife-ridden Congress Party commanded only a precarious majority in the Parliament. The popular victory scored by the opposition of the democratic parties in these elections was the first big rebuff to the ruling Party after the victory in Kerala.

This election was also the first which we contested as a separate Communist Party. Apart from Kerala and West Bengal, we also emerged as a strong force in Tripura.

Following the election, on the issue of formation of non-Congress governments we took a principled position. The CPI on the other hand opted for a line of total support to non-Congress governments, joining in coalition governments which included the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra Party also. This fact amounted to repudiation of their own programmatic and tactical line. Our Party decided that we would join only those of the State Governments where we could effectively influence the policies of the Government.

The results of the Fourth General Elections confirmed the correctness of the class analysis made in our Party Programme at the Seventh Party Congress. The election results and the course of developments following them also fully vindicated the political-tactical line of the Seventh Congress. The Party came to the conclusion that by pursuing a determined struggle to win allies on a wider scale and directing the main fire against the Congress Party and its Government since it continues to be the chief instrument of bourgeois-landlord class rule, we had succeeded in contributing considerably to the people's victories at the polls. But the fact that the Congress Party was still the strongest class party of the bourgeois-landlord classes was not to be lost sight of.

In both Kerala and West Bengal, the Party participated in running the coalition Governments which comprised of several democratic, petty-bourgeois, bourgeois parties, groups and individuals. Our strength in Kerala at that time was decisively preponderant, while in the case of West Bengal, it was not so, though our Party was definitely one of the principal components of the coalition.

The Party made it clear that the power in the States was to be understood in clear class terms with all its limitations. In class outlook, composition and in several other respects the administrative machinery was not a suitable instrument for implementation of many of the pro-people policies, let alone,

class policies decisively directed against the vested interests. The Party also made it clear that the actual life-span of these State Governments and all the possible vicissitudes that these were to undergo during their tenure could not be predicted. Our Ministers, without either entertaining undue illusions about radical reforms and giving relief to the people in a big way or despairing that nothing could be done under the present set-up, should always bear in mind, that they, as Party's representatives should strive to establish our bona fides to the people. Any failure on this score would compromise the Party's political line in the eyes of the people.

In April 1967, the Central Committee adopted a Political Report entitled "New Situation and Party's Tasks". It assessed the developments since the Seventh Party Congress and carried forward its understanding. The Report noted the deepening economic crisis and its projection into the initial stages of a political crisis. It was noted in this Report that how the pursuit of the capitalist path without affecting radical agrarian reforms and relying heavily on foreign monopoly capital was leading the country to the danger of neo-colonial domination under U.S. imperialism. It was endangering the country's national independence and condemning its people to the cruel exploitation of imperialists, Indian monopolists and big landlords. The virtual abandoning of the Fourth Five-Year Plan and opening the floodgate of invasion by private foreign capital and its collaboration agreements with Indian big business and the crisis of policies of the Government spoke eloquently of the correctness of the Party's assessment.

Alongside, that Central Committee meeting addressed itself to work out the tasks of the Party in the post-election situation. It was at this time that the "Left" adventurist assault on the Party, its Programme and tactical line had been unleashed by the Naxalites in West Bengal. This assault was largely supported by the Chinese Communist Press and radio. This "Left" infantilism spread to some other States and district units and developed into a serious challenge to the Party, diverting its main attention from the mass political tasks

it had set before itself. It may be noted that in the above-mentioned Central Committee meeting there was no dissenting voice over the Report. However, in the wake of the Naxalite infantile revolt in May-June that year and with the support extended to it by the Chinese Communist Party, its open calls to rebel against the Party, the dissent based on "Left" adventurism reached a breaking point.

The Chinese Communist Party came out sharply criticizing our understanding of the Indian situation in June 1967. It became obvious that they had serious differences with us on a number of issues concerning the Indian revolution. From the writings in the Chinese Party Press and the broadcasts by the Peking Radio it was clear that the CPC regarded our Programme to be fundamentally wrong; our assessment of the Indian situation and our political tactical line to be reformist. The assessment of the CPC led to the conclusion that Indian State was not a bourgeois-landlord State led by the big bourgeoisie but a puppet Government led by the comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie run principally in the interest of imperialism while they themselves were reconciled to being parasites dependent on the crumbs thrown by their foreign masters. The CPC propaganda went to the extent of saying that ours was not a genuine Communist Party and that those of the extremists who had been expelled from the Party for following an adventurist anti-Party line and who later formed the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) were in fact the real revolutionaries.

The CPC attack was a grave development for our Party and the revolutionary movement of our country. But this unpleasant reality had to be faced. It would have been wrong on the part of our Party to gloss over the differences. The Central Committee therefore discussed the issues thoroughly and took measures to educate the entire Party about the erroneous position of the CPC in principle and in practice.

The C.C. outlined that our differences with the CPC were of three categories. Firstly, regarding the Programmatic aspect, the class character of the Indian state and Government,

the character and role of different sections of Indian bourgeoisie and their attitude towards imperialism. Secondly, regarding the actual assessment of economic-political situation in India, the degree of development of class contradictions and class consciousness among the working class and the peasantry and the concrete tactics and forms of struggle. And thirdly, regarding the political-organizational principles governing the relations between Communist Parties.

In our rejoinder to the CPC positions, the Party stressed that the Indian Government was not a 'puppet', 'stooge' or 'lackey' of imperialism and that the Indian big bourgeoisie was not the parasitic puppet of imperialism. The Party rejected the view that class revolution was imminent or that the revolutionary situation had matured demanding the highest form of revolutionary struggle. The Party described this CPC view of the Indian situation as "highly exaggerated and extremely subjective". The Party also rejected the CPC interference in our Party's internal affairs and their attempt to impose on us a programme and political line contrary to our understanding. This sectarian deviation ultimately led to the second split in the Party.

CHAPTER

XIII

Correct Line to Defeat Left Sectarianism

The year 1968 goes down in history as the glorious year of humanity in its prolonged ordeal for a better world as the heroic people of Vietnam who, with their blood, had written the glorious pages in the history of modern liberation struggle, scored a mighty victory against the American aggressors in the face of unprecedented toll of human lives, barbaric torture and flow of rivers of blood. Our Party had all along been conducting struggles for solidarity with the people of Vietnam. No wonder, the Congress Government which had made a positive shift in its foreign policy in the mid-fifties was found reticent and wavering as far as its role against U.S. imperialism was concerned because the anti-people rule and the bankruptcy of its policy for two decades of the existence of the Indian Republic was overshadowing everything—with the economy being dilapidated, planning scuttled, dependence on world capitalist economy aggravated and the policy of non-alignment helplessly subjected to American pressure. That was why, there was no word of condemnation of the monstrous crimes of the American aggressors in Vietnam from the Congress Government, rather it stopped trading terms with North Vietnam while supplying materials to the South Vietnamese puppet Government. Non-alignment had been dragged down disgracefully by the Government to mean not aligning with any sort of anti-imperialist struggle directed against American imperialism from whom it was borrowing at the expense of our national sovereignty.

In the national scene the Congress Party being humbled at the 1967 poll in many States, announced its unconcealed determination to turn to use the power at the Centre to bring down the non-Congress Governments in the States and restore its monopoly of power as before. This reprehensible effort began with a reign of terror let loose in West Bengal after the illegal dismissal of United Front Ministry and installation of a minority ministry of defectors with blatant instigation and approval from the Central Government degrading the much-cherished democracy and civil liberties. The entire hatred and hostility of the Congress High Command was concentrated against the United Front Ministry because the latter provided an alternative before the people in a short span of time. At the same time the Party was sought to be paralysed ideologically by the Left-sectarian deviation with open encouragement from the Chinese Communist Party. It prompted the Congress leaders, who met in the Hyderabad session to extend a clear go-ahead signal to the Congress followers in the States to resort to any means, however dubious and heinous, to topple the non-Congress ministries. The repression unleashed in West Bengal had not only failed to cow down the people, it set in motion a far more united and powerful spate of struggles against the onslaught on democracy, the weight of which, in the end, forced the Centre to dismiss the illegal ministry and to seek afresh the verdict of the people. Similar conspiracies followed in other States run by the non-Congress opposition. The Congress did its best to topple the Kerala Ministry through engineering defection as well as by starving the people of Kerala but to no avail. With every draconian step which the Congress set afoot in its efforts at regaining power the gulf between it and the people opened wider.

In any event, there arose in the process a growing agreement among the democratic parties with our stand that with the division in the non-Congress democratic opposition, the Congress managed to run away with a large number of seats and that must be prevented. The metamorphosis, that is still going on, succeeded, however, in infusing a new life and hope

into the national polity for the cause of the downtrodden and the defence of national unity, offering an alternative to the communal BJP and the fast receding Congress.

Besides subversion of democracy, twenty years of Congress rule had been corroding, to say the least, national unity and set off by its policy deep currents of disintegration. With more and more power being concentrated at the Centre ruled by the Congress, the federal spirit of the Constitution was endangered, the stranglehold of the Centre on all matters of revenue, finance and planning, the dictatorial and discriminatory attitude towards the States—all have led to a situation in where the States have been bereft of all political, social and economic initiatives, necessary for attaining ethno-cultural amity in a vast country like India with its complex and diverse social formations. This has led to tremendous disparities and backwardness—a breeding ground for flourishing fissiparous tendencies. The bourgeois-landlord class rule of the Congress was not only leaving a trail of unbearable misery but reduced its much-vaunted national plans to a fiasco. Being panic stricken at the growing isolation, the Congress rulers began to use more than before the national animosities, caste and communal divisions for the twin purpose of attaining narrow electoral gains and wrecking the united resistance of the masses, thus encouraging all varieties of communal, casteist, chauvinist and reactionary forces.

This Volume contains documents relating to the intense ideological battle against Left sectarian deviation inside the Party which opened up the entire gamut of our ideological-political position on basic issues confronting the Marxist-Leninists the world over. Left-adventurism had emerged at a most trying time when the Party was under severe attack from the ruling class, when the Central Government headed by the Congress was mounting pressure and hatching nefarious conspiracies one after another to dislodge the United Front Government in West Bengal and Tripura led by our Party. And the CPI, on the other hand, was concentrating on an orgy of attack purposely against us gladdening the vacillators, disrupters

of the Left and Democratic unity, and the reactionaries as a whole. Furthermore, as might be expected, the trouble making press and the media was all along preoccupied with spreading venomous misinformation and deliberate distortion with a view to bringing home the anti-Communist ideas. As far as it goes on, some people may certainly fall victim to these designs and commit blunders that run counter to their own conviction and true interests of the working class. Our experiences show it to be wrong to assume that such mistakes are confined to the gullible, backward and unsophisticated people, rather the opposite. It may affect even a politically advanced person who may, as Lenin illustrated it, "be depressed by certain sad and deplorable facts" and lose "the ability soberly to appraise the forces". It goes without saying that not only are we surrounded by inimical forces from outside but even as bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologies seek to penetrate our ranks, certain supposedly progressive groupings also come to work against us. Written as late as 150 years back, the conclusions of the Communist Manifesto are still worth recalling in this connection: "The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of the ruling class". Our Party continues to advance facing all these odds on the basis of our own Marxist-Leninist understanding.

It is worth mentioning that aside from other reasons, the immense influence of China had admittedly blurred our vision so much that the Chinese Communist Party's support of Left sectarianism was overlooked by large sections of our Party at the initial stage. In this backdrop the Central Committee of our Party at its meeting held on October 5 to 9, 1968 in Calcutta examined the basic causes of Left-adventurism, reviewed the entire course of our struggle against Right Revisionism since 1955, and also analysed the basic causes that gave birth to these two monsters in succession and drew correct lessons. Besides the general features and the particular features in each State, the meeting noted some specific features as: "Stagnation in the mass movement, reverses in the electoral struggles and the pressure of the enemy on our Party

and the movements under its leadership and the consequent frustration, all have their impact on this phenomenon. There are serious defections in States and areas where the mass movement of the workers and peasants is either stagnant or at a low ebb when compared to the States and areas where the democratic movement, under the leadership of our Party, is registering some progress and the Party is in live touch with the masses.”

The major amendments pressed by the Left deviationists in the Burdwan Plenum convened in the wake of serious differences and defeated at the Plenum were: (a) demanding deletion of the entire section of the draft of the Central Committee on Unity in Action; (b) stating that revisionism, in a concentrated form in all actions of the CPSU leadership was endangering world revolution; (c) demanding the deletion of the sentence in the draft which states that “Our criticism of the compromising and collaborationist policies pursued by the revisionist leadership of the CPSU and the Soviet Union does in no way imply the totally erroneous idea that the Soviet Union has become an ally of U.S. imperialism or is working for sharing world hegemony with American imperialism and for the division of the spheres of influence in the world as this is tantamount to nothing sort of placing the Soviet Union outside the Socialist camp.”

This Central Plenum was held at a time when the Chinese Cultural Revolution was going on in full swing. The demand that it should find a place in the document was not pressed after the C.C. statement that the Party’s stand had already been explained and inclusion of the topic without further examination would be incorrect.

But that the Chinese Cultural Revolution was a distortion of the rectification campaign did not find expression in the Plenum Document for the sake of preventing further disunity. As a matter of fact in the rectification campaign of CPC from 1956 onward there occurred, as revealed later on, the grave mistake of labelling many revolutionaries, advanced cadres and patriot democrats “Rightists”, and the Party suffered from the

tragic consequences of the mistake. The serious "Left" errors that followed, had culminated into stirring up of a panic about "capitalist roaders", spread unchecked throughout the country during the Cultural Revolution which pushed China grievously, according to the estimate of the present Chinese leadership, back by a couple of decades. In plain terms, we supported China's Cultural Revolution at its initial stage in the belief that in any event the remnants of feudal and bourgeois ideologies should not be allowed to spread as its corrupting influence might ultimately threaten the very cause of socialism. Subsequently it was rectified before long. In 1978 the Chinese leadership evaluated the blunders of the so-called Cultural Revolution and started a long process of rectifying the ill effects.

The Eighth Congress of our Party met at Cochin in Kerala on December 23, 1968, and reviewed the developments of the four years after the Seventh Congress. In the face of all-out attack and slander of the ruling class to isolate our Party, it not only survived but grew stronger. The acid test of influence among the masses, its correct programme and understanding of the situation was vindicated first by the mid-term election in 1965 in Kerala followed by the spectacular victory in 1967 in West Bengal, apart from mightiest struggles launched in the period. Amidst the ongoing fight with the CPI, we were not cautious enough about the danger of gradual stepping into another deviation of Left-sectarianism. The Eighth Congress expressed its unflinching determination to continue the fight against both the deviations and to advance on the basis of application of the science of Marxism-Leninism in our concrete conditions without being dictated by this or that, whatsoever.

In the period, since the Seventh Congress we continued our effort to overcome the legacies of revisionism. Four important documents were adopted in this period: (a) Our Tasks on Kisan Front, (b) Tasks on Trade Union Front, (c) Organizational problems, and (d) Ideological questions. Also we adopted "New Situation and the Party's Tasks" in April, 1967.

All these formed the basis of the Political Resolution of the Eighth Congress, another landmark in the history of our Party.

In the light of the analysis of our experiences about both the weakness and success of the mass movements, the Political Resolution stated: "It is against this background that the CPI(M) should examine its work of building the united people's movement, United Front of democratic parties and groups, the building of the united class and mass organizations and the building of a strong party capable of successfully discharging these tasks. Experience shows that unless and until the CPI(M) works hard, mobilises and organizes the people independently, acquires an independent mass base, all its slogans of building unity and united fronts and its aspirations of leading the united assault on the bourgeois-landlord regime of the Congress Party are in danger of remaining pious wishes and pompous declarations. Of course, it goes without saying that the independent growth of the CPI(M) and its mass political influence is again dependent on how it works out its mass line of working for the unity of the working class and its alliance with the peasantry for the united actions of the democratic classes and masses and for the united front of political parties and groups that represent the democratic classes and strata of our people".

Thanks to our correct line we were able to defeat Left-sectarianism as ideological disrupters even while fighting to overcome the brazen offensive of the ruling classes.

CHAPTER

XIV

Developments in Communist Movement in India and Abroad

An important incident of global significance in 1969 was the "International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties" in Moscow. As is well-known the bitter differences between the two major Socialist powers, Soviet Union and China, that were plaguing the International Communist Movement were causing the people around the world deep concern. The differences between the two big Communist Parties arose out of problems of interpretation of Marxist-Leninist theory and its application.

Even before the ink on the 1960 document of the International Communist Movement had dried, divergences of opinion over the fundamental thesis of the declaration and the statement sparked off to a sharp point. The USA, aware of the of the weakening of the anti-imperialist fight and problems within the International Communist Movement, had been intensifying its aggressive designs and the capitalist world, at the same time, was stepping up its onslaught on the working class and democratic movements in the respective countries. The serious consequences of this was not being realised by the Communist Parties. The differences on ideological questions were gradually being transferred into the relations between the socialist states thus disrupting the unity of world socialist forces. The Workers' Party of Vietnam, then fighting U.S. aggression, the Communist Party of Indonesia and of some other countries put pressure on CPSU and CPC so that they agreed to discuss their differences across the table. But all this failed to bring any positive breakthrough. It was at the

time that we were in the thick of fight against revisionist CPI and under severe repression from the Nehru Government even after the withdrawal of forces from the area of confrontation. As we were consistently advocating peaceful settlement of the India-China dispute we were put behind the bar. We took the same position when Indo-Pakistan war broke out and faced the same action of the Congress Government. We, however, like Communist Parties the world over, wanted Communist Unity of Action to be taken as the fundamental issue, because without that, our struggle against the respective class enemies and U.S. imperialism, would be many times harder.

Ironically, the two parties were aware of the consequences. The Chinese Party said: "The Chinese Communist Party has always regarded the safeguarding and cementing of the unity of the International Communist Movement as its sacred duty". On the other hand, the Soviet Party said: "We have no right to forget the behest of V.I. Lenin, who worried that dissension among Communists serve to benefit the imperialists". But the fact remained that the difference had sharpened to a point of no return. Efforts for convening a meeting of all fraternal parties of the International Communist Movement in the pattern of the 1960 meeting were made since 1963. But these did not materialise. The meeting with the Chinese Communist Party opting out, was convened in this background. We demarcated ourselves making our points of differences clear, as elaborated in the documents compiled in this Volume. Resistance against imperialism and struggle against revisionism and dogmatism are closely interconnected as could be seen in our document. "The common anti-imperialist struggle will help the process of liquidating the revisionist and dogmatic distortions in the International Communist Movement".

On the national scene, the crushing defeat of the Congress reducing it to a minority with about one-fifth of the total 280 Assembly seats in West Bengal marked the beginning of a new phase for the democratic movement of the Indian people. The people of West Bengal has reposed their confidence on the United Front led by our Party.

Mid-term elections also took place in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab where the Congress was unable to regain its position while the high claims of the communal Jan Sangh were also shattered. Despite intense propaganda unleashed by the bourgeois press, CPI(M) emerged as the biggest force in West Bengal winning 83 seats out of 214 seats won by the United Front. The victory evoked great enthusiasm that was reflected in massive rallies. The disruptive role of the Right Communists caused immense harm to the democratic advance of the people all over the country, West Bengal and Kerala were no exception, rather more than anywhere else.

The United Front's achievements in West Bengal and Kerala in the various spheres of social activity are well-known. There is much that could be said about the achievement in land reforms, and the restraints put on the repressive state machinery stopping them from going against the just movements of workers and peasants. Powerful peasant movement involving the entire peasantry of the State under the leadership of Kisan Sabha, which had few parallel, made the Government action highly successful and frustrated all designs of the vested interests. The vested interests and their political representatives aided and abetted by the Congress Government at the Centre got panicky and became desperate to hatch conspiracies after conspiracies from within and without. It was through the massive mobilization of the people that they were foiled. Led by the CPI, a mini front was formed with the backing of the Congress which unseated the E.M.S. Namboodiripad Ministry in Kerala. They formed a Government headed by a CPI leader and within a few months it surpassed all previous records of brutal suppression of political agitation and economic struggles by the opposition parties.

Another political development in this period was the split in the Congress Party precipitated by the disaster in the elections. Both groups, in utter hypocrisy, accused each other of not implementing the policies of the Congress and in actual practice, merely served the bourgeois-landlord interests more and more. Explaining our evaluation the Report adopted by

the Central Committee of our Party in its meeting held in Calcutta from February 2-9, 1970, stated: "In implementing this line, there is every danger of slipping into the stand of equating both the Congress wings, or even getting provoked into the position of treating the Indira Gandhi Congress and its Government as the more direct and immediate enemy than the Syndicate alliance which appears only as a potential main enemy. Such an error on our part disorientates the Party from its political line worked out on the basis of a concrete analysis of concrete political conditions in the country. It will reduce the Party, in practice, to adopting the unprincipled and opportunist tactics that the SSP leadership has adopted at its recent Sonapur session, a tactic that plays straight into the hands of reaction and its political game. The second danger, considered from the existing state of affairs in the Party and taking into account other realities, though not looming as serious as the one pointed out above, is that of tailing behind the Indira Gandhi Government, reducing the Party to the position of a docile camp-follower of the Central Government.

These dangers are confined to the field of our activities in the Central Parliament and the State legislatures, but also may arise in the agitation and propaganda of our Party, where the aspect of concentration of fire on the Syndicate might recede into the background, taking its exposure among the people for granted and objectively landing us in the position of concentrating the main fire on the Indira Gandhi Congress and its Government on the ground that they need to be thoroughly exposed before the people to disillusion them.

Our Party will have to guard itself against these possible errors if its tactical line is to be correctly implemented and the desired results are to be achieved.

It should be clearly understood and always be remembered that our line of irreconcilable opposition to the Syndicate and the conditional support to the Indira Gandhi Government is neither based on the revisionist thesis of the Congress split between monopolists and anti-monopolists nor is it of an electric and pragmatic nature that "we support all good steps and

oppose all bad steps” of the Indira Gandhi Government. The aggressive anti-people offensive launched by the Syndicate alliance is not accidental but is born out of the conditions of a sharpening economic-political crisis, and it is directed in the main against the Communist and democratic forces which have set the pace for the alternative process of political development in the form of non-Congress democratic state Governments, particularly the Left-oriented U.F. Governments of West Bengal and Kerala. It is to counter this process and counter it as early as possible, and preferably long before the ensuing fifth general elections and the Syndicate and its other reactionary allies embarked on the drastic course of setting up its own nominee in the Presidential contest, and if it won, to begin implementing its political line utilizing the Presidential office. It is at this point that the internal Congress crisis erupted, leading to the split, and power at the Centre and in some states passing to the rival wing headed by Indira Gandhi”.

During this period some alarming events took place posing grave dangers for the future unity and integrity of the country such as: border dispute between Maharashtra and Mysore, movement for separate Telangana State in Andhra, communal riots in Ahmedabad and several other places. It was the ruling Congress Party which was to be blamed at the first instance.

The twenty-two years of uninterrupted rule by the Congress had left a number of sensitive problems unsettled and brought on some more as an evil legacy which were exploited by vested interests, communal and divisive forces and to whip up hatred among people speaking different languages, holding different religious ideas and having different ethnicity and culture. The uneven development resulting from bourgeois-landlord class rule cast insufferable burden on masses and created wide disparities—that have frequently been used by these forces. The weakness of the democratic movement, the ruptures in the Left and democratic forces helped them sprout in all corners. Our Party, with no other interest to serve than the interests of the toiling people, was committed to defend

and protect democratic unity as the weapon to fight the ruling classes. Our Party took a principled stand on all the issues confronting the country and was in the forefront of the mass movement.

An innumerable number of peasants' and workers' struggles were launched during this period in many parts of the country braving oppression of the Congress rulers.

In conducting these mass struggles and forming the United Fronts, we always kept in mind the basic tasks of forging ahead the class struggle in our society where various obscurantist ideologies dominate the working masses to a large extent that find expression in the activities of the various parties and organizations. In order to change the present correlation of class forces, it is imperative for any Marxist-Leninist Party to win over the masses through various forms of struggle. We were guided, in this respect, by the teachings of the founders of Marxism that are embodied in the Communist Manifesto: "The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement. . . The Communist fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement".

This is where lay our basic understanding of forming the United Front and running United Front Governments.

CHAPTER

XV

New Experience of CPI(M) in the Struggle for Forging United Front

No other party, except ours, had a concrete and correct estimation of the split in the Congress party. The CPI(M) had constantly been warning against any illusion on that score. Fact of life and experience, in a span of a few months, had demonstrated the truth of this assessment. As for the Congress, the thin line of political demarcation between its Syndicate and Indicate wings was being erased in the developments following the split. Basically, the difference between the two, was of tactics, how to meet the challenge that had emerged after the formation of the United Front ministries in Kerala and West Bengal, and of the rising movement of the people across the country. The CPI at this juncture reacted to the split by sedulously putting out the thesis that Indira Gandhi's wing of the Congress, i.e. the Indicate, represented the progressive national bourgeoisie in opposition to monopoly capitalism and imperialist forces. All that they were doing, in accordance with the line advocated by them since the early fifties, was to trail behind the Congress in the name of fighting rightist forces, thus harming the democratic movement. Conveniently, they were oblivious of the fact that while the Syndicate and their accomplices like Swatantra Party and Jana Sangh posed a great danger to democracy, secularism and integrity of the country, the ruling Congress wing and its government at the Centre were also compromising with all kinds of divisive forces, attacking the democratic forces as before and pursuing anti-people policies in the context of the deteriorating economic situation.

This Volume contains a number of documents that exposed the deceitful character of the Indicate Congress, the serious danger of the Syndicate-Jana Sangh-Swatantra combine as well as the disrupting role of the CPI.

This was the period when the United Front Government of West Bengal was passing through acute crisis because of the betrayal by the Bangla Congress, a breakaway faction of the Congress which joined the U.F. in 1967, and whose members colluded with the Congress to topple the first U.F. Government. The CPI which, right from the beginning, was acting against the CPI(M), provided active support to and often engineered disruptive activities with an eye to forming a mini-front in West Bengal in the line of Kerala. The other major partners Forward Bloc, SUC and RSP fell in line with the treacherous game of the CPI, forgetting the grave consequences that such a course would entail to the democratic movement.

Remarkable in this period were the massive and spontaneous strike-struggles against this conspiracy instigated by the Central government led by Indira Gandhi. As a result of these struggles, all attempts at forming a mini-front got frustrated. President's rule was imposed after the resignation of Ajoy Mukherjee, the leader of the Bangla Congress as the Chief Minister. Even though the rest of the parties in the United Front had comfortable majority to continue in government, it was of no avail because of the resistance of the other partners of the U.F. The fall of the U.F. Government, thus, was followed by a further spate of semi-fascist terror directed mainly against the CPI(M). The tremendous advance of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) among the people of both West Bengal and Kerala during the last couple of years was, in fact, the source of panic in the enemy camp and became an eye-sore for different petty-bourgeois parties which were fast losing their influence on the masses because of their opportunistic role in the midst of the ongoing political crisis.

The success and onward march of the CPI(M) against all odds lies in that they were flexible in tactics and uncompromising in theory. This was tested on all occasions. While holding

far more strength than others in the United Front, CPI(M) had agreed to give up Chief Ministership to Bangla Congress for the sake of the unity of the United Front and for serving the interests of the common people.

In sixties and seventies the struggles of the working class had widened enormously and many gains were achieved. The working class had been facing a severe attack because of the continuing crisis and recession. The trade union movement was yet to realize that they should go out of the boundary of the economic struggle and engage the entire working class against the rule of the capitalists and landlords, against imperialism and finally to replace the present system by a state of people's democracy. All this depended on the firm unity of the working class, the mass of the agricultural workers, poor peasants and the working masses in general. The reformist and revisionist leadership of various central trade union organizations always seek to confine the working class struggle to the narrow orbit of economic demands, divested of all class consciousness. More often than not, the powerful workers' struggles were seen to be betrayed. It was under the difficult circumstances of constant attack of capitalists and their government at the Centre, fratricidal conflicts, perpetual betrayal by the reformist and revisionist leaders that the working class had to carry on their struggle for their immediate demands and assert themselves in the democratic movement. The working class in West Bengal and Kerala played a very big role in defending the United Front Governments there and also facing atrocious attacks from the Congress, police and vested interests. In this background the formation of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions was of historical importance. When all efforts to maintain the unity of the working class on the path of class struggle and democratic functioning of the trade unions failed, in the interests of militant trade union struggle the formation of Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) at the all India level became inevitable. Subsequent developments went to vindicate the steps taken and with the slogan of unity and struggle CITU emerged as a symbol of unifying the working class.

As far as Kisan movement is concerned, it is to be noted that India is the biggest under-developed country in the world, the importance of the agricultural labour and peasant movement as a firm ally of the working class cannot be underestimated. In fact, the question of agrarian relations is central to any discussion on economic and social development today. The study of changes in the agrarian relations is of fundamental importance whether one is analysing the political situation or economic and social structure. Thus the agrarian question remains the foremost national question for the time. The question of self-sufficiency in foodgrains and valuable raw materials for industry, lifting millions of rural poor out of their present life of misery and starvation, expansion of the internal market—to serve the growing national industry, to get out of the age-old backwardness—all depend on the solution of this problem. The reason for the backwardness lies in the land relations and the government policy of building capitalism in alliance with landlordism. During this time the agricultural labourers, poor peasants and the rural population in general were able to win many gains by powerful movements not only in Kerala and West Bengal but also in different parts of the country. The land reforms in West Bengal and Kerala, in contrast to the rest of India, had a big impact on the peasant movement in general.

This is the period when subversion of democracy in West Bengal and large-scale atrocities in Kerala were going on. Results of mid-term elections in Kerala, in spite of the false and mischievous propaganda of the ruling Congress party and its mini-front allies, conclusively proved that CPI(M), far from being isolated from the people, had emerged as the biggest political force in the state, enjoying the confidence of the ever-increasing sections of the workers, peasants and other democratic people. Thirty per cent of the votes were polled and 32 seats won by the CPI(M) and its allies, in the teeth of combined opposition of the ruling classes and their political henchmen. This goes to demonstrate how the political line of the CPI(M) had scored tremendous success. Mention must be made

of the fact that in 1967 there was a comprehensive united front of the Left and other parties but in 1970 many of these parties took up an anti-CPI(M) position. And in this anti-Marxist alliance, were ganged up the Congress, Muslim League, CPI, the RSP, the Catholic church in Kerala, the big landlords and the Nair Service Society. The anti-Communist press and political leaders were so vociferous that the CPI(M) and its democratic allies had been routed consequent to the result of the Kerala polls. The single aim of this propaganda was to divide and frustrate the fighting people everywhere but the facts spoke to the contrary.

Notwithstanding the repressive President's rule in West Bengal, a powerful movement was launched all over the state of West Bengal demanding immediate poll. Nobody can fail to see the diabolical game of the Congress Government in engineering murderous attacks by the so-called naxalites on the leaders and cadres of the CPI(M), and then publicising them as "armed clashes" between the naxalites and the the CPI(M) to draw support for the imposition of the Preventive Detention Act and other draconian laws. The government on the one hand was organizing planned infiltration of thousands of notorious anti-social elements into the naxalite movement and on the other was shooting down some of them while in custody or when they over-stepped the imposed limits. It was the CPI(M) which was the target of unprecedented attack both from the revisionists and naxalite extremists, other Left parties and also from the ruling class, because of its persistent role of defending democracy and the people's movement. This Volume contains documents relating to our stand at this critical juncture.

CHAPTER

XVI

Struggle of CPI(M) Against Semi-Fascist Terror

It was in the early seventies that the successes being achieved by the Vietnamese people in the anti-imperialist liberation struggle drew the attention of the whole world. The movement of the Vietnamese people to overthrow the imperialist yoke had reached a decisive stage. In this glorious struggle, the people of Vietnam received the ardent support of the Indian people. Solidarity actions were witnessed throughout the country and the slogan of “Amar Nam Tomar Nam—Vietnam Vietnam” symbolized the intensity of the feelings of the Indian people.

The people of India also stood firmly behind the freedom struggle of the 75 million people of former East Pakistan who were waging a war for liberation.

After years of enduring military dictatorship the people of Pakistan forced their rulers to hold elections. In East Pakistan, the Awami League secured over 98 per cent of the votes and got all but one seat in the Assembly. Instead of honouring the verdict of the people, the military junta resorted to genocide to perpetuate itself in power. The powerful movement against imposition of Urdu and suppression of Bengali language in the face of military bayonets, when a number of people sacrificed their lives, electrified the entire population and aroused genuine national feeling. Thanks to American pressure, the Government of India was hesitant to respond to the call of the fighting people of former East Pakistan. However, later it intervened in favour of the freedom struggle. The popular

perception in India also pressurised the government in this regard. Massive protest-demonstrations were witnessed in various parts of the country against U.S. imperialism specially directed against its action of sending the Seventh Fleet to the Bay of Bengal. It was the challenge posed by the USSR which forced the U.S. to send back the fleet. It was the firm warning sounded by the USSR to U.S. imperialism that proved the real worth of the Indo-Soviet Treaty. Our Party did its utmost to help the people of Bangladesh.

The general elections held in 1971, a year ahead of time, was a turning point in that situation which gave Indira Congress two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha. It also saw the rout of the extreme right reactionary alliance of Jana Sangh, Syndicate and Swatantra Party. In reviewing the election results we had said at that time that, the "Election results show that the main party of the bourgeoisie has manoeuvred in a way in which while carrying on its electoral conflict with rightist elements from its own class, it has dealt blows against the rising democratic movement".

As against the reduced strength of the democratic Opposition in Parliament, which had come down by one-third, the strength of CPI(M) increased from 19 to 25. For the first time, despite the heavy odds against which it had to fight, it emerged as the biggest group among the Opposition parties in Parliament. Alone, among the Opposition parties it fought both alliances of the representatives of the ruling classes. The election review further said that "the masses will lose heavily, the democratic movement will be curbed, if the democratic parties allow the present situation to continue, leave the democratic forces disunited and allow all the initiatives into the hands of the Indira Congress". We called upon all of them for united struggle to forge political unity of all toiling masses so that it would become an irresistible force capable of challenging all manoeuvres and attacks of the ruling classes.

The results of the election had to be seen in the background of the Congress party seeking to take full credit for the whole-hearted assistance that the people of India had

rendered to the liberation struggle of Bangladesh, the radical postures and delusive slogans that it had advanced, the disunity within the ranks of the Left etc.

In West Bengal a systematic reign of terror was unleashed. The state police force, the CRP and the army aided the Congress hoodlums in their nefarious activities directed against the CPI(M). Murderous attacks and repressive measures were launched. Side by side the naxalites also began murderous attacks against CPI(M) cadres. Thousands of CRPF were deployed for regular combing operation throughout the state with the help of the army. More than 20,000 people were arrested, warrants of arrest were served against one lakh people on framed up charges. The scale of the terror campaign can be gauged from the fact that 219 CPI(M) leaders and cadres were murdered following the fall of the second United Front Government. Failing to frighten the people with such terror tactics, the ruling Congress and their accomplices planned to murder a veteran freedom fighter and Forward Bloc leader Hemanta Basu just a few days before the election in order to intensify the hate campaign against the CPI(M). The conspiracy was later exposed, but at the time, no probe was ordered. Later on it was admitted by the American officials that they had aided the Congress with huge funds to defeat the CPI(M) in West Bengal and Kerala. Never in our country were elections held in such conditions of semi-fascist terror.

Thus the CPI(M) was sought to be wiped out by inhuman terror tactics, unfortunately, with the support of the CPI etc. on the one hand and by using the naxalites on the other. Many areas were inaccessible for CPI(M) leaders and cadres for free election campaigning. Much to the surprise of the ruling classes our Party captured 20 seats in Parliament from West Bengal and came out as the single biggest bloc in the Assembly for the first time. The tally of the six-party Left Front was 123, of which the CPI(M)'s share was 111. The Indira Congress trailed behind with 105. The results of West Bengal poll gave a fitting rebuff to the parties which had disrupted the United Front.

The Bangla Congress could get only 5 assembly seats against 33 in 1969 while the CPI, with the support of the Congress could manage to win only 13 seats against 30 it held earlier. The Forward Bloc was reduced to a mere 3 as against 20 in 1969.

This spectacular performance of the CPI(M) failed to open the eyes of the CPI and other Left and democratic parties, as a result of which a coalition of Congress-Muslim League-Bangla Congress-Syndicate was forced upon the people of West Bengal with the CPI and Forward Bloc resolving to stand by the government. The ministry, however, could survive for 88 days only. But during this short tenure also it perpetrated further atrocities on our Party in particular and the people in general. It collapsed owing to the cracks which developed within the alliance due to the pressure of the democratic movement. However, the anti-CPI(M) forces succeeded in having the assembly dissolved to deny the CPI(M) the opportunity of forming a government. In Kerala the so-called Indira Congress-wave was reversed. In Tripura, too, Congress managed to secure majority only by creating conditions of terror and manipulating elections.

The year 1972 witnessed huge majorities being mustered by the Indira Congress in almost all States in which elections were held. What happened in the elections to the West Bengal Assembly was unheard of anywhere else in the country. It was a totally rigged election. Apart from worst semi-fascist terror, armed Congress gangsters in collusion with the police captured polling booths, drove out polling agents of the Left parties and voters and indiscriminately stamped ballot papers. There was also tampering of ballot papers and ballot boxes. Few constituencies were spared from this. At the counting centres, armed gangsters had been mobilized and large-scale intimidation and armed attacks on people occurred in various localities. People were driven out of their residences in the localities in hundreds in the presence of the police and the army even in areas bound by curfew and prohibitive measures. Thus was completed the subversion of parliamentary democracy in West Bengal.

It was against this background that the Ninth Congress of our Party was held in Madurai from June 27 to July 2, 1972. In the political resolution, the Party Congress foresaw the impending danger of one-party dictatorship and authoritarianism. It called for creation of the widest possible front of all Left and democratic parties, groups and individuals to meet this challenge. The Resolution states: "The danger arises from the fact that the people in other states are ignorant of the meaning of West Bengal events, thanks to the monopolist Press which covers the misdeeds of the ruling party and slanders the democratic movement, that they still put their trust in the Congress party which has secured their vote in the recent elections. The danger arises from the fact that the Left stands disunited in the country, except in West Bengal.

"The victory of the Congress in recent elections, the weakness of the Left and democratic Opposition, the context in which the victory has been achieved and the anti-democratic methods used to secure it not only in West Bengal but also in Bihar, underline a trend towards one-party dictatorship in which democratic Opposition parties will have no role to play.

"This also creates the danger of further attacks on the autonomy of the States with the ruling party having its Governments in all the States, the process of eroding the powers of the States and augmenting those of the Centre is likely to be accelerated.

"The centralization of all authority in the hands of one person in the ruling party leads to authoritarian tendencies which directly helps the one-party trend.

"The existence of all democratic parties is being threatened. Those who swear by the Constitution, who stand by the parliamentary path as well as others all realise that the constitutional liberties, including the right to vote, are no longer secure under the Congress rule. This calls for the widest possible front of all democratic parties, groups and individuals to resist the march to one-party dictatorship. Our Party has been consistently endeavouring to convince others that the attack

on us constitutes a prelude to attack on the democratic movement. This is now being seen by others.”

This warning of the CPI(M) Congress was vindicated after the imposition of internal Emergency in June 1975.

The Ninth Congress of the Party was able to clinch the issue of the Party’s stand on the national question, which we had been debating since the adoption of the Party Programme in 1951. While adopting the new Party Programme at the Seventh Congress, our Party had decided to delete the clause, “the right of all nationalities to self-determination” from the earlier programme, deferring the problem for more elaborate discussion and study. The note adopted on “The National Question in India” states: “The inclusion of the demand for right of self-determination and secession might carry with it the danger of different linguistic contingents of the Indian proletariat acquiescing the secessionist agitations, instead of opposing them, and unitedly fighting for real autonomy of States and against my traces of inequality.

“Our Party takes due note of the attempts by the bourgeois-landlord Government to impose one language, Hindi, as the sole official language of the Indian Union, and the inequality such a course engenders between the Hindi-speaking and non-Hindi-speaking nationalities. Hence it is opposed to it and advocates equal status for all the languages.”

“The State Structure of People’s Democracy” as stated in the present programme defines clearly our stand on the national question and language question, apart from other fundamental issues. In this sense, the contribution of the Ninth Congress of the Party remains as a landmark in the history of the Communist movement. All this add profound significance to this Volume.

CHAPTER
XVII

CPI(M) in Defence of Democracy

Some of the focal aspects in the period 1973-74 include firstly, unprecedented attacks on democratic rights perpetrated by the ruling Congress Party that showed the teeth of authoritarianism. In the distressing economic situation fight for democracy, however, remained to be one of the major things of the day. Secondly, the bourgeoisie in order to meet the growing challenge of democracy was engaged in diverting the attention of the people to caste and communal division, linguistic, chauvinistic regional troubles, as seen in language riot in Assam Mulki agitation in Andhra, etc. These, in turn, strengthened the most reactionary forces. Left and democratic unity had to be reforged in the pressing situation. In the third place anti-imperialist struggle rose to new heights with the final victory of the Vietnamese people—the fraudulence of American Imperialism unmasked, their vaunted military powers who were unleashing unheard of savagery on the people of Vietnam defeated. The victory both on the battlefield and at the negotiating table had significantly raised the anti-imperialist struggle to a new peak so as to give tremendous confidence to the people worldwide, giving a new fillip to national liberation movements the world over.

The Congress Party ruling West Bengal after the rigged election in 1972 embarked upon extending semi-fascist terror to curb the civil liberties of all sections of the common people. With the use of the entire administrative machinery, the police and CRP apparatus and the Congress hoodlums, forcible

evictions of sharecroppers, loot of the crops of the peasants, snatching away of benami land of the landlords that had been occupied by the peasants during United Front days, dispossessing the poor peasants who had been allotted land during the United Front Government period, killings, arrests and repression etc. were daily occurrences. Thousands of families had been driven away from their houses in the urban areas. Not satisfied with the forcible capture of hundreds of party offices and trade union offices, the Congress government devised a new means of derecognising recognized trade unions. All democratic norms, all laws, all legality were sought to be abrogated. In Kerala too, massive strike struggles were faced with unprecedented attacks and terror by the CPI-Congress coalition government. Repressions, reminiscent of the worst period of British rule were going on in other parts of India and our Party while passing through this grim ordeal, was in the forefront to launch vigorous movements of the people across the country.

Reviewing the situation arising out of the growing authoritarianism of the Indira Congress which could not tolerate any opposition, the Central Committee of our Party that met in March, 1973, noted : "The ruling Congress will be resorting to intense repression, authoritarianism and drive to one-party dictatorship will intensify. This is the great menace facing the country." The Party called for immediate forging of a front of Left and democratic forces to defeat this menace.

The period saw fratricidal riots in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and in many parts of the country, a dangerous phenomenon persisting during the entire period after independence with the ruling Congress resorting all the time to utilize these for narrow gains despite loud talk of secularism. This has created a menacing situation in which ultra-chauvinist and communal forces can thrive even today, at the end of the century.

In respect of the rise and growth of communal politics in India, it would not be out of place to quote some of the assertions of the noted historians in their book "Freedom struggle" published by Government of India on the occasion

of celebrating twenty-fifth anniversary of Indian Independence in 1972: "Before the British came and gradually set up a foreign government on Indian soil, the Hindu and Muslim masses had on the whole lived together without antipathy or bitterness though there had existed certain religious trends which were exclusive and antagonistic. The divisions of the society were class-wise. There were the rich and the poor; there were the educated and the uneducated; there were the rulers and the ruled. Among these classes and groups there were both Hindus and Muslims. This was so during the Mughal period also. Even at the time of the 1857 revolt, Hindus and Muslims fought together side by side and their anger was directed against the common enemy, the foreign rulers at whose hands all India suffered alike.

"After the revolt had been put down, the British were particularly hard on the Muslims because they had come to the conclusion that the revolt was led by the Muslims and that they were primarily responsible for it. It is estimated that in Delhi alone 27,000 Muslims were sentenced to death during the revolt and the short period immediately following. For years the Muslims were viewed with suspicion by the British.

"With the rise of the nationalist movement, however, the British attitude changed. During the 1870s this became more and more noticeable. As everything else the British did or attempted to do, this change was politically motivated and was the result of the new tactics the British began following to safeguard their own interests. As the national movement spread and grew there was the threat that it might unite the people and pose serious problems for the Empire. A united people cannot be kept under subjugation for a long time. So in addition to repression and stringent action to control, and if possible, completely dry-up rising tide of nationalism, the British decided to do all they could to keep the people disunited and quarrelling and competing among themselves. They decided to divide the people in the name of their different religions and to encourage communal and separatist tendencies in Indian politics.

“Even legitimate demands of different sections of Indian society and the problems of democratization of the Indian society were exploited to create disharmony among Indians. The Indian social situation was quite complex. In many internal, social and cultural questions rights and wrongs were inextricably mixed and had to be carefully and patiently separated. This complexity was utilized by the alien rulers for their own purposes.

“There was one other important reason for the growth of a communal way of thinking during the period. Indian history had been presented by British historians with a special slant and, later, their Indian counterparts unfortunately followed in their footsteps, and wrote and taught in such a way as to arouse and foster communal feelings.

“The rulers, nobles, chiefs, and zamindars, whether Hindu or Muslim, treated the masses, both Hindu and Muslim, alike, that is, with the same contempt and disregard, as inferior creatures to be made use of for their own benefit. The Muslim masses were as poor and as oppressed by the taxes as the Hindu masses. These historians did not realize that politics in India during the ancient and medieval periods were like anywhere else, and followed the dictates of the economic and political interests of the rulers and seldom any religious considerations.

“The British and communal historians did not lay stress on the composite culture of India. The cultural pattern of India was, undoubtedly, diverse, but, there was a common thread running through, and, what is more important, the diversity was primarily class-wise and region-wise. By introducing the false concept of distinct and separate Hindu and Muslim cultures the communal approach to history came to generate divisive tendencies. The religious reform movements also had a similar impact. These movements made an important contribution as they opposed irrational and obscurantist thinking, spread rational and humanistic ideas, weeded out many of the corrupting elements from the 19th century religious beliefs and practices and fostered greater self-respect among the Indian people. At the same time many of them

tended to divide Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Parsees as also high caste Hindus from low caste Hindus. Any over-emphasis on religion in a country of many religions was bound to have a divisive effect.

“In a poor, backward country which was being actively under-developed under colonial domination, employment opportunities were limited especially to the educated classes. There was, therefore, stiff competition for the limited number of available jobs in the country at that time. The far-sighted Indians worked for the economic and political uplift of the country. But the situation was also exploited by vested interests, both Indian and British, to arouse communal, religious, as also caste and regional feelings. There was clamour for reservation of seats and jobs for all sorts and kinds of sections and groups. Narrow minded, short-sighted Muslims and Hindus alike began talking about their own nationalisms, as though nationalism was divisible and could be of many sectarian kinds and economic welfare could be promoted other than by a common struggle against imperialism and the vested interests.

“Thus, Muslims and the Hindu communalism inter-acted and provided sustenance to each other.”

Further, “The pride and joy in the achievement of freedom was diluted by the pain and sadness of partition and the consequences of partition.”

After independence it was a commonplace that the Congress Party and its government pursued the policy of compromise with the communal forces instead of fighting back in the cause of secularism, thus aggravating the communal situation at a faster pace. Although since its inception our Party has been consistently fighting to defend national unity and stands firmly for not mixing religion with politics and the state, an obligatory directive of the Constitution, the Congress Party paid scant respect to this noble principle in the interest of the class rule it was perpetuating.

One of the important issues that was dealt with by the Party in this period was the review of our position on certain agrarian issues. Since 1966 when we adopted “Tasks on the Kisan

Front”, different views came to the surface in the Party in course of developing the kisan movement. These relate to the questions of a) land ceiling, our stand towards non-cultivating owners other than landlords, b) the rights of sharecroppers vis-a-vis non-cultivating small owners, c) struggle for land and wage: attitude of the kisan movement towards advanced agricultural machineries, d) defining fair prices and e) the stand to be taken with regard to land legislations and the relation between the mass struggles on concrete immediate demands and the propagation of the Party’s programmatic agrarian demands.

The Central Committee at its session in Muzaffarpur from March 9 to 15, 1973, made useful contribution on these issues but on certain areas divergent opinions remained simultaneously. There were, however, some sectarian conceptions in the document relating to fair prices for peasant produce and creation of base areas which were subsequently corrected.

The said period had seen an unbroken wave of bitter struggles breaking out all over the country on the issues of prices, of short supply, collapse of distribution system, of wages and salaries, for democratic rights and against repressive measures drawing new and newer sections into action such as teachers, doctors, and nurses, engineers, officers etc. The indignation of all sections of the people against the misrule of Congress had burst out into innumerable mass actions whose tempo was daily rising with powerful struggles in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar in the forefront, even apart from the invaluable sacrifices of the people of West Bengal and Kerala. Significant in this context was the new awakening among Harijans who were mostly agricultural labourers and the scheduled tribes against ruthless exploitation and inhuman social oppression.

The most important development in the history of the working class struggle occurred during this period with two million railway workers conducting one of the longest strikes for three weeks in the latter half of 1974; this was repressed by the government with unparalleled victimisation and savagery

unheard of in the case of any civilised government in the world. The heroism, courage, spirit of self-sacrifice displayed by the railway workers formed a glorious chapter in the history of the working class movement. Unity of action, movement of solidarity from workers, peasants and all sections of the people throughout the country was never seen before. The open betrayal by the Right Communist Party-AITUC leadership at a time when the historic strike was about to succeed against the heinous repression of Congress rule, subdued the high morale of the strikers. This precipitated the decision for withdrawal of the strike on the wrong assumption and false propaganda that the strike had virtually collapsed. The misguided action of precipitous withdrawal of the strike does not, however, detract from the great and historic role of the strike.

The period witnessed a steep fall in popular support for the Indira Congress. This was observed in the humiliating defeats it suffered in a number of by-elections and Assembly elections in several states including Uttar Pradesh, the biggest state in India. But disturbing was the fact that this loss of popular support to the Indira Congress had been taken advantage of by communal and reactionary forces like Jana Sangh, Swatantra Party and others, mainly due to the weakness of the Left and democratic forces, a weakness further accentuated by the disruption of the Communist Party and some others who rallied behind the Congress Party. Our Party appealed to all Left and democratic parties to draw proper lessons from such developments and intensify their efforts to forge a united platform to lead the masses. "To defeat the Congress policies and frustrate the advance of extreme reactionary parties, it is absolutely essential to build a front of Left and democratic forces as a viable alternative to the ruling Congress party."

The December, 1974, meeting of our Central Committee reiterated this crying need of unity. Meanwhile, the leaders of Socialist Party and CPI(M) met and agreed that the parties would work together towards forming a viable radical alternative through the development of mass struggles. But it lasted

only for a while because the Socialist Party leadership started retracting back. The basis of that viable radical alternative was that Left and democratic forces should not come into any political alliances with Right reactionary forces. The leaders of the Socialist Party disregarded this and joined hands with these same Rightist forces.

Bihar movement drew attention of the whole country at that time where Jay Prakash Narayan took a leading part against the corrupt and despotic Congress government. Advisory committees of four political parties, the Jana Sangh, Congress(O), Socialist Party and SSP had been constituted at the behest of Jay Prakash Narayan. Undoubtedly we had initial hesitations about the JP movement. Overcoming it and rejecting the proposal of joining the four-party Advisory Committees we decided to mobilize the people independently in cooperation with Jay Prakash Narayan and the Socialist Party and other Left and democratic forces, and to synchronise it with the Bihar people's movement to fight corruption, misgovernance, blackmarketing, hoarding and for democracy.

We had discussions with Jay Prakash Narayan on that basis. The joint statement issued thereafter by P. Sundarayya and Promode Dasgupta (CPI-M), Madhu Dandavate (Socialist Party) and Jay Prakash Narayan concluded that "We agreed that we shall have frequent consultations among ourselves to radicalise and intensify the movement in Bihar while adhering to our respective ideological stances." The pledge and declaration of Jay Prakash Narayan to defeat Congress in every constituency was applauded by all and they started consultations with all those who responded to the call which culminated into a conference of Opposition leaders at the end of 1974 in view of the ensuing elections. Although we demarcated ourselves from such "all-in unity of the Opposition against Congress", we made it clear in course of several round of discussions with Jay Prakash Narayan that we were as concerned as other Opposition parties that the ruling Congress should be defeated effectively. It is to be noted that JP had shifted

from his earlier position of Sarvodaya and partyless democracy to active mass political movement.

We had been, however, working for breaking the polarization between Congress-Communist Party alliance on the one hand and the so-called Grand Alliance on the other which was the characteristic feature of the 1971-72 election. Only the consolidation of Left and democratic forces could make our struggles meaningful. The political situation sharply changed in the following months. This would be dealt with in the next Volume.

On the international plane, American imperialism having suffered the biggest ever defeat in its history in Vietnam resorted to detente conferences and manoeuvres. In Moscow and Washington heads of the States came into agreements to avoid war and initiate certain relaxation of tension. While welcoming the agreements, the Central Committee of our Party rejected outright the fantastic claim of the Soviet leadership that these agreements would signify the world's transition from the era of cold war to a new era of peace, detente and fruitful cooperation among countries of different social systems; and we also rejected the Soviet position that the fate of the world depends on peaceful competition only and not on intensification of class struggle in each country. The Central Committee in its meeting in July, 1973, considered that, "the objective situation is more favourable for a great advance of the forces of democracy, peace and socialism. The imperialist camp is weakened and is unable to adopt old postures. What is urgently needed is the unity of the socialist camp and the revolutionary movement. Unfortunately, the Sino-Soviet differences have developed into open conflicts and they are being used by the imperialist forces to save themselves. The Central Committee appeals to all parties believing in Marxism-Leninism to bend their efforts to forge the unity of the socialist camp so that the favourable situation can be used to advance the cause of national liberation, democracy, peace and socialism."

In this subcontinent, the decision of Indian and Pakistani Governments to resume bilateral trade, suspended a decade

earlier, was a welcome development. We warned at that time that if either India or Pakistan tried to take the help of imperialism to secure some advantage for itself against the other, the gain would be neither for India nor for Pakistan, but for imperialism. The problem of normalization of relations can only be solved by the realization of fighting the common enemy.

In all such international developments, our stand was based genuinely on proletarian internationalism which we ever adhere to.

CHAPTER
XVIII

National Emergency Imposed in India and
Electoral Defeat of Congress(I)

Very profound changes had taken place in the life of Indian polity unequalled since pre-independence days; the country was shackled with Internal Emergency at one stroke on top of the External Emergency that had been in force since 1971, during the Bangladesh freedom struggle. The period from 1975-77 was marked with another big stride forward—the Congress party was reduced to a minority at the Centre for the first time, and Indian politics twisted towards a new direction getting through a new chapter. In any event our Party played a very crucial role at this juncture.

It is only fair to say that we had not foreseen the sudden imposition of Internal Emergency and authoritarian compulsion of the ruling classes to silence the voice of the democratic opinion with such haste although we had warned the people about the rapid drive of the ruling party toward one-party dictatorship. Despite official claims the economic situation was increasingly precarious while the ruling classes were shifting the burdens of the crisis on the common man with mass lay-offs, retrenchments, by intensifying unemployment both of educated and uneducated, by unleashing sharp rise in prices, high indirect taxation, continued attack on the livelihood of village poor, ruination of small growers of commercial crop and foodgrains so as to enable the monopolists and landlords to ensure their loot. The crisis sparked off massive struggles everywhere that started with the historic railway strike in this phase. In the grim economic situation, the policies of

severe exploitation and ruthless repression, the division within the ruling class, and bankruptcy and squabble within the ruling party, resistance began to boil over across the country. In the wake of all such developments came the infamous rule of Emergency, draconian repressive legislations, 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, pre-censorship system rescinding all rights and liberties of the people.

The Polit Bureau of the Party immediately reacted that there was no more democracy. All fundamental rights were snatched away in the name of maintaining public order but the statement of our P.B., like statement of condemnation from all quarters had been allowed by the pre-censorship Act to see the light of the day. What a unique scientific prediction Lenin made as far as eight decades back: "Bourgeois democracy, although a great historic advance in comparison with medievalism, always remains, restricted, truncated, false and hypocritical, a paradise for the rich and a snare and deception for the exploited, for the poor..."

"There is not a single State, however democratic, which has no loopholes or reservations in its constitution guaranteeing the bourgeoisie the possibility of dispatching troops against the workers, of proclaiming martial law, and so forth, in case of a "violation of public order", and actually in case the exploited class "violates" its position of slavery and tries to behave in a nonslavish manner." In the Indian context, our documents circulated during Emergency evading the strictest preventive laws expressed our belief that the ruling class would never be able to maintain that darkest regime, the great urge for democracy would force them to submit, sooner or later.

In the midnight of June 26, 1975, the entire repressive machinery of the government swung into action rounding up thousands of leaders and cadres of the opposition, including Jay Prakash Narayan and all opposition leaders. Over a thousand leaders and cadres of our Party were arrested that night. Meetings and demonstrations were banned except the meetings of the ruling party and its then-trusted ally, the CPI. Pre-censorship regulations provided that only what the government

wanted to be printed could come out in the news columns of the newspapers. It was with such heinous muzzling of the press that the ruling party went into its gruesome scheme of forcible sterilization, bulldozing of urban slums, increased workload on the workers, wholesale dismissal of workers by the monopolists, undermining the system of collective bargaining and inhuman torture on peasants and all sections of people. Taking advantage of the situation, the monopolists, the landlords and the vested interests were having a field day. Through the inner-party circulation of our information bulletins, we kept the entire Party aware of the on-going developments and asserted that the situation was bound to turn against the ruling party due to the pressure of the democratic urge of the people.

After a few months, resistance started in factories and rural areas. The fetters of Emergency failed to make the workers and peasants submit to the repression and the unlimited greed for profits of the monopolists, landlords and vested interests. In a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by five members of the Polit Bureau of the Party, A.K. Gopalan, Jyoti Basu, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, P. Ramamurti and Harkishan Singh Surjeet, on April 9, 1976, the Party underlined the basic stand we had taken. The memorandum noted that "the Emergency is being continued, and it is being sought to be justified on the ground that country is passing through an economic crisis. This is in addition to the political reasons being advanced for such continuation. The Party has been warning for long that pro-landlord, pro-monopolist policies would lead the country into a crisis, and has been making concrete proposals for alternative policies which alone would solve the crisis".

The memorandum, citing concrete cases, dealt with the severe repression meted out to the right of dissent, the question of press censorship, the problems of functioning of opposition parties and mass organizations etc. It was made plain that the Party's record was one of consistently carrying on a political-ideological fight against Rightist policies, whether pursued by internal and external forces, and against policies

of the extreme Left. Similarly, the Party had been consistently fighting against those who base themselves on communalism and regionalism. The Party had also been fighting against policies which strengthen or compromise with feudal exploitation, against policies which help the growth of monopolies and increasing penetration of foreign private capital especially by the Transnational Corporations. But the Party, it was noted, had never hesitated to support the anti-imperialist position of the Government. The Party welcomed the improvement of relations with China, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal. It welcomed the decision to send an ambassador to China. It demanded the immediate revocation of the Emergency, repeal of the draconian Act MISA, removal of censorship, repeal of the 39th Amendment to the Constitution, release of all leaders and workers of political parties and mass organizations who were under detention, withdrawal of all pending cases, restoration of democratic and trade union rights existing before the imposition of Emergency.

In the second half of 1976, the government found the situation suitable for taking the risk of elections and thought that it would be able to muffle up everything. Efforts at forming what was called a single viable opposition were afoot with the communal force Jana Sangh, other Right opposition parties, the Socialist Party and a section of the "Left Congressmen" who were expelled from the Congress party for airing their views against the policies of the party. Our Party had never subscribed to the idea of the formation of a single party by merger or amalgamation of disparate parties, groups and elements differing in policies and political outlook to defeat the ruling Congress. The CPI(M) has since long been pursuing the policy, it is still relevant, of cooperating with any opposition party, individuals, groups and those sections of Congressmen who were and are willing to fight imperialism, communalism, Rightist policies and policies of the Congress. That was why the Party had refused to have anything to do with the so-called grand Alliance of 1970-71. The Polit Bureau of our Party warned that, "In reality, the so-called national alternative that

was being sought to be projected by the merger of these parties is bound to have a Rightist complexion. The platform evolved for the formation of this party has nothing to say against imperialism, Indian monopolists, their collaboration with multi-nationals and their penetration into the country's economy and its political and social life, and also against the vested interests in the country." Completing all the poll preparations for the ruling party the Prime Minister, in a radio speech on January 18, 1977 announced the decision to dissolve the Lok Sabha and held fresh elections in the middle of March without saying a word about lifting of Emergency. Never before had India gone through an election in which the scales were so much weighed against the opposition.

Meanwhile, the Janata Party was formed at the initiative and guidance of Jay Prakash Narayan when anti-Congress mass upsurge was sweeping the country at that time. The Central Committee of our Party reviewing the situation in its meeting in early February was clearly of the view that "the newly formed Janata Party cannot offer a viable alternative to the ruling Congress Party, no matter what its leaders claim and profess. It is well-known that most of the parties that comprise the Janata Party such as the Swatantra, BKD, Congress(O) and Jana Sangh were voicing their opposition to the ruling Congress from an extreme point of view, essentially representing the same vested interests which the ruling Congress Party represents. As such, the CPI(M) can neither conceive of political united front with the Janata Party nor of any electoral front with it with a common programme."

The division within the bourgeoisie seemed to have widened with one group pitted against the other representing two political forces. While the Party distanced and demarcated itself from both the formations and entertained no illusions about the Janata Party, the Central Committee, however, was aware that all the parties that had merged into the Janata Party had openly fought for democratic rights of the people and expressed themselves in favour of parliamentary democracy, ending the Emergency rule and draconian Acts, restoring the fundamental

rights of the citizens enshrined in the Constitution and halting the drive to the one-party dictatorship of the ruling Congress.

The crucial issue in that election was the withdrawal of Emergency and restoration of democratic and civil rights. Thus it was the prime task to prevent division of votes to inflict a defeat on the authoritarian rule of the Congress Party. The CPI(M) was, therefore, desirous of avoiding mutual contests within the Janata Party and it entered into seat adjustments with opposition parties and groups which were ready to restore democracy and fundamental rights. At the same time the Central Committee called upon the State units to study the concrete conditions and the positions of the different opposition parties, groups and individuals in different States, and to work out election tactics according to the guidelines enunciated by the Central Committee. It cautioned the State units to be vigilant against supporting such opposition candidates who had lost their credibility among the people, which would compromise the position of the CPI(M) among the public. The division of opposition votes almost all over the country was thus prevented resulting in rout of Congress in the election with the huge mass upsurge in the traditional Congress strongholds in the north. The victory was tremendously facilitated by the exit of Jagjivan Ram, the most respected leader, from the Congress and the formation of "Congress For Democracy" under his leadership.

The Janata and the CFD formed the government which was assured of support from our Party on the issue of undoing the evils imposed by the authoritarian policies of the Congress and for providing relief to the masses. The Central Committee of the Party met at the end of March to review the election results and called upon all Left parties and forces "to come together to join hands to put the democratic forces and movement on the path of firm and rapid advance. In these momentous times when quick events are taking place, when the mass of the people is showing unprecedented initiative and sensitiveness to political changes, only the combined

strength of the Left forces will succeed in guiding them firmly and decisively to inflict a complete defeat on the forces of dictatorship and authoritarianism”.

Close on the heels of the Lok Sabha elections, election to the State Assemblies and the Union territories of Delhi and Pondicherry took place and people inflicted a crushing defeat on the Congress Party, despite the division of Opposition votes owing to the attitude of the Janata leaders who ignored the task of common struggle in every state that went into the polls. The Left Front in West Bengal attained a massive victory with absolute majority secured by our Party itself routing the Congress. The people of West Bengal were the first to go through semi-fascist terror before it was extended to the rest of India under the Emergency. The Janata Party leaders in West Bengal paid little respect to the great sacrifices against this semi-fascist terror, and demanded 55% of the seats. The Janata leaders refused the handsome offer made by us and made themselves ridiculous in the election by securing only ten per cent of the seats.

This was a situation when the massive mandate could be utilized to consolidate the forces of democracy and to provide relief to the people. We warned, however, that it would be a dangerous illusion to think of the Congress and its anti-democratic outlook as dead. The struggle against it should not be relaxed as the Congress Party had started capitalising on every mistake of the Janata Party leaders and had improved its position in few months among the people compared to its complete isolation during the Lok Sabha elections.

Three months after the formation of the Janata-CFD ministry at the Centre, the Central Committee of our Party, noting the vacillations and hesitations of the Central Ministry over the electoral promises, observed that while on some issues bold and proper initiative was being taken, on many others there was prevarication, and the government's compromise with the arbitrary rules and regulations of the previous regime, and its pursuit of the same economic policies as the Congress was angering people more and more.

The communal elements within the Janata Party represented by Jana Sangh were very much active immediately after the new Ministry took office. Far from adopting any principled stand on this issue the Janata leaders found themselves unable to resist this menace within. Our Central Committee which met in New Delhi on 28-29 April, 1977 drew the attention of the Janata leaders to the ominous revival of the activities of the RSS. It said: "It was well-known that the RSS has created for itself a disreputable record as a paramilitary organization, directed against the working class, as well as the religious minorities. While the Left and democratic movement has rightly demanded the removal of ban on RSS imposed by the Congress Government, the working class and the other sections of the working people cannot be blind to the danger which a revival of the RSS on these lines would pose to all sections of the democratic movement".

It was growingly apparent that the Janata Party ruling at the Centre and the States were going the same way the Congress did, particularly with relation to socio-economic issues. This led CPI(M) to discontinue in the coalition ministry in Tripura. While the Left Front Ministry in West Bengal achieved spectacular successes in different fields within few months, the Janata Governments in different States were showing miserable performances.

This Volume will apprise the readers of our stand in the period of dramatic events during 1975-77.

CHAPTER
XIX

Failure of Janata Party Government
Disrupted Struggle Against Congress(I)

The question that was uppermost in the minds of the people was what would happen in the wake of events that were bringing to the fore growingly the weakness of the Janata-CFD Government. During 1978-79, it was becoming more and more apparent to Indian public opinion that even if the Janata Ministry could take pride in curbing authoritarianism, Janata Party was showing its inability to transform itself from a conglomeration of few existing political parties into a fully integrated political party and to rectify its failures and weaknesses. On the other side the shattering blow to the Congress in the Lok Sabha elections and in Assembly elections thereafter, the revelations in the Shah Commission of Enquiry that branded the former Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi as guilty of crimes against the people and democracy had put the Congress Party in disarray. Not only inside the country, democracy inside the Congress was also suppressed, any kind of dissent was disallowed in the Congress. Avadi and Bhubaneswar slogans of socialism, garibi hatao, etc., had ultimately ended up in the Emergency, the compelling factor being its obvious inability to surmount the economic crises arising out of its bourgeois-landlord policy. Of course, there was some criticism of the Emergency within the Congress party, but there was no attempt to isolate the authors of the Emergency while Indira Gandhi and her caucus stuck to their defence of authoritarianism and continued to justify the Emergency. With this dismal state of affairs of the Congress, the record of the Janata

Party on economic policies was also not something that could attract the people. The mini-MISA enforced by the Janata Government in Madhya Pradesh, banning of strikes in Uttar Pradesh, the attempt to deal with working class actions as law and order problems in the Janata-ruled States did not augur well for the party. After a few months they no more seemed to be serious about the pledges they had made to the people. That was what was gradually engulfing them into a crisis.

That was why discontent started growing among the people. Further, the parades and display of strength by RSS had been creating feelings of revulsion and concern in the minds of the people. The Central Committee of our Party meeting from March 3 to 7, 1978 took note of these developments and stated: "Taking into consideration the wide apprehensions among the minority community, it will be disastrous if the Left and democratic forces do not counter this evil and prevent disruption of democratic unity. The effect on the Muslim minority especially has been calamitous and it was fully exploited by Indira Gandhi. All those who stand for democracy wish that the Janata Party puts its own house in order. For the democratic movement the situation is a complicated and difficult one. The main opponent of democracy and parliamentary norms has again reared its head by misleading lakhs of people into its ranks. Complacency, lack of vigilance, and failure to keep up popular resistance to dictatorship will mean disaster. All hands must pull together to fight the forces of authoritarian rule and vanquish them. Once again, the all important task is to mobilize the people for anti-authoritarian struggle".

But as things stood in that period, the organized Left and democratic parties were weak and miserably divided. The Socialist Party and several other democratic groups and individuals had lost their identity and merged with the Janata Party. As early as 1969-70, the CPI made alliance with the Congress deserting the Left and democratic force. With the exception of some State-based and region-based Left and democratic parties and groups there existed no all-India Left and democratic party except CPI(M) and its Left allies in West Bengal

and Tripura, around which the Left and democratic forces was trying to unite and go ahead. Such was the difficult and complex task the history placed on the shoulders of our Party at a time when the international Communist movement was badly divided. It goes, however, to the credit of our Party that it pursued a correct line both at the national and international level and, that it refused to get provoked and fall a victim to the enemy's provocation. We played a significant role during pre-Emergency and Emergency days. It was our Party in West Bengal, and to a lesser extent in Kerala that bore the full brunt of repression and terror under the Congress rule. In the review report adopted at the Tenth Congress of our Party held in Jullundur, April 2-8, 1978 we, however, criticized ourselves for being extremely hesitant till October 1976, even on the issue of civil liberties to associate ourselves with the emerging nationwide movement. The review pointed out, "correct line of approach would surely have placed our Party as one that stands in the forefront of the struggle for civil liberties and democratic rights. It, certainly, would have helped to rouse more wider circles of the people, than were already under our Party's influence, for the struggle in defence of the civil liberties and democratic rights—is an integral part of the bigger struggle in defence of parliamentary democracy and against dictatorship".

We tried to learn lessons from the mistakes as the review report stated further, "The study of the phenomenon of developing differences and divisions among the bourgeois-landlord parties, in the background of deepening economic crisis was ignored. The question of utilizing the conflicts and divisions for the advancement of democratic movement did not arise as a serious proposition. Such a lag in our Party's thinking and understanding was partly due to the mistaken notion prevailing in sections of our Party at different levels, the P.B. and C.C. in particular, that the restoration of bourgeois democratic rights and freedoms was well-nigh impossible and the establishment of People's Democracy was the only way out".

The political resolution of the Tenth Congress emphasized the need for building a front of the Left and democratic forces in view of the polarization that was taking place round the two bourgeois-landlord combinations. The continuing struggle against the forces representing authoritarianism and dictatorship made it all the more necessary at that time to have a broad platform to fight them, the resolution stressed. It was evaluated that "anti-Emergency struggle and electoral victory have not led to a shift in the balance of forces in favour of the working class, i.e., the masses have not moved away from the influence of bourgeois parties and started rallying round an alternative leadership". To be with the people, to lead them, to raise their consciousness was the task of the Party identified by the Tenth Congress. Even though the Party Congress adopted correct political tactical line, much hinged on how this was put into practice by the concrete application of the science of Marxism-Leninism. Thus the Party arrived at broadly correct decisions on all the turbulent questions that had confronted the Party until then.

Meanwhile the Left Front Government in Tripura took office on January 5, 1978 with a massive mandate and our Party secured absolute majority. It created a unique example of tribal-non-tribal unity despite Congress and other reactionary elements' instigation to the separatist forces. Apart from the resounding success of the Left Front in West Bengal, the Left Front Government of Tripura fighting back deep-seated conspiracies, had undertaken a lot of steps to provide maximum relief to the people and implement land reform measures. In Kerala, struggle for surplus land intensified, which was a tremendous success. Strike struggles were going on in other parts of the country too.

In order to discharge this responsibility of building the front of Left and democratic forces and of bringing about a realignment of political forces in the country, the Tenth Congress underlined the pressing need to expand the Party organization so as to weather any eventuality and to remove the lags, weakness and shortcomings as well.

As such, the Party met in a Plenum held at Salkia in Howrah District of West Bengal from December 27 to 31, 1978 and called for building a mass revolutionary Party. At the same time the resolution on organization adopted at the Plenum cautioned that the efforts to build such a Party would bear no fruit if earnest efforts were not made to raise the level of the Party members and new entrants. "In essence still the problem is", as pointed out in the resolution, "one of converting the elementary consciousness of the daily struggle, into political and socialist consciousness, which demands intense and increased political activity of the Party among the masses and, above all, a persistent ideological struggle against all feudal, semi-feudal, anti-Marxist bourgeois ideologies". The Salkia Plenum self-critically reviewed the entire course of political organizational efforts and after mature deliberations, provided a concrete direction to renew and revamp the organization to meet the challenge in the new context as well as to streamline the Party, to nail down erroneous concepts of Party organization and deviations and distortion accumulating in its functioning over a period of years. As J.V. Stalin said: "A correct political line is not needed as a declaration, but as something to be carried into effect. But in order to carry a correct political line into effect, we must have cadres, people who understand the political line of the Party, who accept it as their own line, who are prepared to carry it into effect, who are able to put it into practice and are capable of answering for it, defending it and fighting for it. Failing this, a correct political line runs the risk of being purely nominal".

Twenty years after the adoption of Salkia Plenum resolution, we are still far away from building a Party that can meet the current challenges. After 20 years of Salkia Plenum we are yet to renew the organization on that basis.

These initiatives on the part of our Party in the political and organizational field was all the more necessary in a situation full of perils arising out of consistent failures of the Janata Government and growing estrangement of the ruling party from the people which encouraged problem-ridden Congress

Party to launch a counter-offensive in defence of the Emergency and the Congress-brand of authoritarianism. The unseemly wranglings of the Janata Party which were earlier limited to the State legislatures and lower ranks started gripping the topmost level with Charan Singh resigning from the parliamentary party. Raj Narain demanding removal of party president Jagjivan Ram, Charan Singh engaged in mudslinging against each other, and questions hovering round to the Prime Minister and his son. This was the sorry state of affairs in a party on which people had reposed faith to smash all traces of authoritarianism and restore democratic rights.

In foreign policy too, serious concern had been raised that the anti-imperialist base of India's policy of non-alignment was getting more diluted, that while the existing relations with the Socialist countries were maintained, efforts by the Prime Minister Morarji Desai and Foreign Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, now heading the Janata Government at the Centre, were close to U.S. imperialism and the West as manifest by a series of events.

It is to be noted that while U.S. imperialism intensified in that period its aggressive policy in Africa and West Asia, a critical situation had arisen in the Communist movement because of invasion by China's troops of the territory of Vietnam on the absurd plea of punishing Vietnam. They however met later in ending conflicts between the two Socialist countries through peaceful negotiations. Our ideological struggle with the Chinese and Soviet Communist Party was going on all through.

Another menacing factor that caused concern, was frequent occurrences of communal disturbances and atrocities on Harijans, reminiscent of despotic Congress rule. I had the opportunity to represent my Party in a conference of Chief Ministers and leaders of political parties at the close of 1978 convened by the Prime Minister in the wake of Aligarh riots to discuss the communal situation. It would not be out of place to mention some salient points that I had the occasion to explain: "Not a single month passes when there are no

communal disturbances. It is no use comparing numbers whether they were more during the Congress regime or less under the Janata regime. The reality is that the continuance of communal disturbances is weakening the secular foundation of our society.

“In the days of British rule, communal riots were used to divide the toiling people to weaken the common national movement against foreign rule. Provincialism, communalism, casteism all were being used consciously by the reactionary forces to stem the tide of the working class and democratic movements. One is forced to say that the same situation is allowed to be developed today in the wake of the deepening economic crisis.

“No commission of enquiry or any institution set up by the Government can help in overcoming the situation unless we are clear as to why these things continue to happen which are the forces actively working behind this menace. Why is the Government failing to uproot this evil?

“In our view to sidetrack attention from the rising social problems, reactionary forces fan communalism, incite violence against the minorities and rouse the most backward obscurantist sentiments. Even prominent leaders of the Government do not hesitate to openly associate and fraternise with these reactionary forces. In spite of the declarations of secularism spokesmen of the Government yield to the pressure of the ruling parties have become prisoners of Hindu communalism and are afraid of attacking this worst manifestation.

“I do not mean to say that feeling of casteism and communalism donot persist in the minority communities, but as the reports go to prove, the communal problem manifested in the Hindu-Muslim riots is mainly created by communal Hindu elements. Who can ignore the ideology which continues to mix up their religious beliefs with the country’s democratic structure? In most of the riots, the initiative comes from these elements and the minority community becomes the worst sufferer.

“The Preamble of our Constitution states that India is a

secular democratic and socialist state. But where is that secularism so far as the protection and defence of minorities is concerned? The religious and other rights are ignored. This is one of the tests of democracy and the Government have been failing to discharge them.

“We have to look into this problem from two aspects. One is the situation created by the riots engineered by the communal elements. This can be dealt with only if the Government shows courage to fix up responsibility in the proper quarters and smash their designs, which form a conspiracy against national unity and the country’s democratic advance.

“The second aspect is that riots take place in the background of an obscurantist outlook prevailing among the people towards the suffering minority. Sometimes only a weak resistance is put up to conspirators. This shows the total failure on the part of the Government to educate the people in the ideas of secularism has only strengthened the obscurantist religious outlook because the Government has been pandering to every backward sentiment in the name of secularism. The leaders of the Government could not find time to immediately show sympathy to the riot-affected minorities or to the Harijans groaning under the atrocities of the landlords. But they could spare time to attend functions of all obscurantist institutions.

“Therefore I would say that the major responsibility for the deteriorating situation and deplorable communal affairs rests on the Government whether led by the Congress Party or led by other bourgeois-landlord parties. Notwithstanding the repeated declarations denouncing communalism and upholding secularism and democracy by the leaders of the Government and the ruling parties and even taking certain drastic steps at times, when things threaten to go out of hand. I cannot but observe that a sort of patronising lenient and escapist attitude is adopted by them towards communalism and in particular, majority communalism which is more menacing in the situation.

“I would suggest that in case the Government is serious to

meet the present situation it should take a clear-cut stand to defend the ideas of secularism and democracy and should not allow the association of its leaders with obscurantist institutions. In so far as meeting the concrete situation is concerned, there should be adequate representation to the minorities in the police and other administrative services.

“As for atrocities on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, they have been mainly due to the issues of land and house-sites, wages of agricultural workers and social oppression. The solution lies in genuine land reform”.

The economic policies and measures adopted by the Government were becoming more and more anti-people. As for land reforms, which alone can solve the rural unemployment on a big scale and provide a big market for consumer durables, the Janata Government proved to be in no way different from Congress if not worse than it. Promises of establishing an effective public distribution system had remained paper declarations. Initiated by the Congress regime the economic independence of the country was being further bartered away with the open door policy to multinationals after the visit of the Prime Minister to U.S.

With this balance-sheet of the Janata Government, crisis in the Janata Party, riven by dissensions, deepened, one of the main issues being ‘dual membership’. The attempts of the communal RSS-Jana Sangh to dominate the party and infiltrate into the administration and its role in whipping up and igniting the communal riots were facing resistance from among a substantial section of the Janata Party who were demanding that the ‘dual role’ of the RSS leaders immediately be put an end to once and for all.

The Janata leaders were ignoring our repeated warnings against relaxing the struggle against forces of authoritarianism, the menacing domination of the RSS-Jana Sangh over the party and against pursuance of the anti-people economic policies. In July, 1979 the question of dual membership came to forefront in the backdrop of series of communal riots which were mostly instigated by RSS.

It culminated in the revolt of nearly one-third of the Janata members of Parliament against the Hindu chauvinist predominance in the party which had lost its credibility and led to the resignation of the Morarji Government before the no-confidence motion was put to vote. The CPI(M) had decided to lend support to the no-confidence motion against Morarji Government. Our Party offered its co-operation to political parties which were trying to form a Government which would not be dependent for its existence on either the Congress(I) or the Jana Sangh-RSS combination. The Party called upon all Left and democratic and secular forces to fight the twin dangers of authoritarianism and communalism. It was at that time the Congress was divided into two—the stronger one, the Congress (Indira) was led by Indira Gandhi, the other one was the Congress(S). In the developments that took place in quick succession, the President of India asked Charan Singh, leader of the Janata(S), a breakaway faction of the Janata Party to form the government and prove its majority. The Janata(S) and the Congress(S) formed the government with the support of Congress(I). The Central Committee of our Party met on August 15-16 at this critical hour and after a long discussion decided that “In this delicate situation, the C.C. is of the opinion that all democratic forces should make every effort to help the Ministry to disentangle itself from dependence on the Congress(I) and enable it to struggle both against authoritarianism and communalism. In order to prevent the Jana Sangh-dominated Janata Party from coming back and Congress(I) exploiting the situation, the CPI(M), while being in opposition, is prepared to support the Charan Singh Ministry in the coming vote of confidence though it has not yet freed itself from the support of the Congress(I) and is yet to give specific assurances to the masses. The CPI(M) will decide its attitude to the government from issue to issue on the basis of its policies in relation to masses and towards the struggle against authoritarianism and communalism”. Before the issue came up in the Parliament, the President announced dissolution of the Lok Sabha and ordered fresh elections that was welcomed

by CPI(M) and all Left parties. The Congress(I) was compelled to join in the demand as well.

The President's decisions came in the backdrop of the manoeuvres and conspiracies that were going on behind the curtain to install a RSS-Jana Sangh-dominated government and Jagjivan Ram-led Janata Party was already wooing the Congress(I) for support. Charan Singh alliance and its different partners were providing grist to the mill of both the Congress(I) and RSS-dominated Janata Party. All the non-Janata parties had earlier demanded the dissolution of the Lok Sabha and a fresh election, ultimately the Congress(I), too, joined its voice. It was quite obvious that differences arose inside our Party over taking the stand. All these were settled in the Eleventh Congress of the Party held in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.

The rest of the year witnessed intense electioneering battle by all the political forces and combinations.

Did the Party do the right thing in first supporting the Janata Party and later on withdrawing and becoming part of the effort to pull it down? Was it right on our part to extend support to forces known for their rightist leaning? These questions can be answered only keeping in mind the historical perspective in which these issues cropped up. They cannot be detached from that particular movement in history and viewed.

In 1969 we had supported the candidature of V.V. Giri for the office of the President of India, though he was the candidate of Indira Gandhi. Indira Gandhi's anti-Communist proclivities were revealed, it may be recalled, as early as 1959-60 when she was instrumental in undemocratically dislodging the duly elected E.M.S. Namboodiripad ministry in Kerala. We had to choose between Indira Gandhi's candidate and Sanjeeva Reedy of the Congress(O). Finally the Party chose to support V.V. Giri. It was class issues that determined our taking such a decision. The Congress(O) had adopted a totally rightist policy, opposing abolition of privy purses, bank nationalisation and implementation of land ceilings etc.

What was the compelling situation in 1977 that forced us

to support the Janata Party which contained both forces that we had opposed in 1969 as well as an avowedly communal outfit like the Jana Sangh? In 1977 we had to fight against an even greater danger to the very democratic foundations of the republic, authoritarianism represented by Indira Gandhi. Once the Emergency was withdrawn and the Janata Party started getting divided on the issue of dual membership of both the Janata Party and the RSS, we withdrew support.

Our tactics, therefore, in a given situation, was an answer to questions posed in a particular historical context, which in quite another situation may seem wrong. Therefore, it does not automatically apply to all situations.

This Volume is of great importance as it contains our decisions at successive turning points in the rapid political developments of this period, and also documents explaining these decisions.

CHAPTER

XX

Congress(I) Came Back to Power But CPI(M) Retained its Strength

In the background of the fight against Congress authoritarianism the Janata Party, forged by different political forces, got a thumping victory in the 1977 elections. The Janata Party government played a positive role in breaking the authoritarian framework. However, within two and a half years of its existence the government exhausted further possibilities of consolidating itself. The different forces that had come together to form the Janata Party, once again started pulling in different directions. The issue of dual membership, of both the Janata Party and the RSS, was a major issue. This issue remained unresolved with the members of the erstwhile Jana Sangh refusing to oblige others on this score. At the same time, the followers of the erstwhile Jana Sangh and the Congress(O) began taking a rightward posture in foreign policy matters and trying to placate U.S. imperialism. In the realm of economic policies, there was no difference between the earlier policies followed by the Congress Party and that of the Janata Party. The conflict between the various combinations representing the Congress(O) and the Jana Sangh, CFD of Jagjivan Ram, and the Lok Dal of Charan Singh finally brought down the government. The Congress(O) and the Jana Sangh combination were gradually strengthening their hold over the government.

We had already taken note of this trend in the Tenth Congress at Jullundur and had started demarcating ourselves from these policies. Therefore, it was not difficult for our Party

to vote against the government. Eventually the Charan Singh Government was sworn in office with the support of the Congress(I). However, before it could face the Lok Sabha, the Congress withdrew support, leading to general elections. In these elections, the CPI(M), some other Left and democratic parties appealed to the people to support the formation headed by the Janata(S) and the Congress(S) which was opposed to the Congress(I) on the one side and the RSS-Jana Sangh dominated Janata Party on the other.

Barring West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala, the Congress(I) achieved decisive victory with two-thirds majority but the other two bourgeois-landlord combinations were virtually routed as no viable alternative to the Congress(I) could be presented before the electorate in other States in the January 1980 Lok Sabha poll.

On poll verdict and post-election situation the Polit Bureau of our Party said: "The vote for the Congress(I) is an expression of the people's protest against the bankrupt policies of the Janata regime. Our Party was repeatedly warning the Janata Government that its anti-popular policies were supplying ammunition to the Congress(I) and offering it an opportunity to re-establish itself. But these warnings went unheeded. The election results show how the Janata Party and all its constituents have been thoroughly isolated from the people during the last three years. It is obvious that in the States also, the Janata leaders were ignoring the people and feathering their own nests. The Congress(I) was the largest bourgeois-landlord party spread all over India to exploit the situation and misled the people into believing that it was only the viable force capable of administering the Central Government".

Our Party warned that "the return to power of the Congress(I) with the huge majority is again likely to lead to consequences harmful for the people's cause. The overwhelming majority may be interpreted as a licence for arbitrary and autocratic rule".

Outlining the tasks ahead the Party called upon the Left parties to strengthen their unity and their hold over the people

as only the consistent Left forces, which included CPI after a long break, in alliance with other democratic forces, could save the situation. They must also bend all their efforts to build the unity of Left and democratic forces. A broad united front in defence of democracy and people's livelihood was the prime task of the hour.

Coming immediately in the wake of the sweeping success of the Congress(I) in the Lok Sabha elections, the victory of the Left and democratic alliance headed by CPI(M) in Kerala in the Assembly elections administered a much needed rebuff to the authoritarian forces which were engaged, by that time, to topple all non-Congress(I) State Governments so as to establish one-party rule in all the States. The defeat of Congress(I) alliance and spectacular victory of CPI(M)-led Left and democratic alliance inspired the disappointed democratic forces to pick up the gauntlet and organize unified battles against authoritarian forces ruling at the Centre.

Another welcome development, though belated and after causing immense damage, was the decision of the Janata Party National Executive by a majority vote to bar party members from taking part in the day-to-day work of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

It came about at a time when nine non-Congress(I) State Governments had already been dismissed and constant threats were being held out against the remaining three—the CPI(M)-led governments in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura; the drive towards an authoritarian set-up was all-too-evident. The decision of the Janata National Executive exposed the RSS elements and their design which prompted them to launch their own party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, which was nothing but the camouflaged Jana Sangh.

The absence of viable alternative made possible the victory of Congress(I) in the State Assemblies on the basis of very low polling. Where such an alternative was there, as in Tamil Nadu, the people voted for the combination of AIADMK-CPI-CPI(M) and others which inflicted a crushing defeat on the Congress(I) and its DMK ally.

The tirades against Left Front Ministries had become more and more strident after the Congress(I) came to power in January 1980 with the Central ministers engaging themselves in conspiracies one after another. The Prime Minister also had added her voice to these tirades which were enough to incite her followers in West Bengal and Tripura to create law and order problems. The real reason was that the Left Front Government had been functioning as the champion of the people throwing its full weight on the side of the poor and the people in general. This propaganda was rebuffed by the people of West Bengal with massive protest rallies and demonstrations.

Elsewhere, the swift anti-people measures of the Congress(I) Government were inviting wide movements. Various Kisan organizations joining hands to form at Central Kisan Coordination Committee organized a mammoth rally at Boat Club on March 26, 1981 unparalleled in the history of post-independence India and this was a pointer as well as a warning to the ruling class represented by Congress(I). Working class actions followed culminating in a one-day all-India strike on January 19, 1982 called by the National Convention Against Price-Rise and Anti-Labour policies of the government. The Convention was unique in the sense that except Congress(I) unions most of the central trade unions and national federations joined it.

While united resistance was developing to defeat the efforts of the ruling classes to throw the burdens of the economic crisis on the common man, the reactionary divisive, communal and separatist forces found it easy to exploit the backward sentiments of the people to pursue their game, and all-out actions of various forms had been sparked off in different parts of the country endangering the unity and integrity of India seriously.

In the North-Eastern region, utilizing the genuine grievances of the people of Assam and other States of the region, separatist movements had developed. Imperialist agencies were active to utilize some of the Christian missions to pursue their nefarious game of destabilization.

It was of significance that the RSS, Jamait-e-Islami, certain Christian missions and sections of the Akali leadership opposing each other diametrically, had started talking on the same wave length. The old slogan of Hindu nation and Hindu Rashtra, Sikh nation and Khalistan and Muslim nation had been revived with the logical destination of separatism. All these divergent forces were complementing and supplementing each other. These intensified activities required to be seen in the light of developments in other developing countries in Asia, where after disrupting Arab unity, the imperialist forces were trying to instigate religious fundamentalists to create a wedge between the people of various countries. One can ignore these theories, slogans and the imperialist machinations behind them only at one's own peril. After the split in the Janata Party, the BJP, the new name for the old Jana Sangh, had adopted a new pose declaring that it stood for Gandhian Socialism. In fact, under the garb of many utopian and absurd slogans, they tried, on the one hand, to mislead public opinion, and to conceal the fact that RSS is the real base of the BJP, and BJP leaders can never afford to sever link with it.

Imperialist agencies were giving all aid to all this conspiracy of destabilization. It was as a part of this game that a dastardly riot was organized in Tripura in the middle of June 1980. To add fuel to the fire, the reactionary "Amra Bangalee", a front organization of the notorious Anand Marg, was aggressively campaigning for Bangalistan, an openly anti-tribal slogan. The agitation in Gujarat, on the totally unjustifiable demand for scrapping of reservation in education and in jobs for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, had been turned into veritable caste war resulting in a large number of casualties. It was of even more concern that this anti-reservation agitation spread to Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. Despite formal denials, it was known to all that RSS was active in Gujarat agitation and in the communal riots, no matter what crocodile tears were shed for the weaker sections and Muslims in their resolutions meant for public consumption.

In Bombay, the chauvinist Shiv Sena went on a rampage attacking and destroying shops and houses belonging to Malayalees and Kanarese with the pernicious slogan of "sons of the soil". This was nurtured by reactionary elements including many Congress(I) leaders and Chief Ministers. Shiv Sena was a vociferous supporter of Emergency and had allied with the Congress(I) for long. Caste and communal riots were repeating themselves with the connivance of the political leaders of the ruling party and the BJP and the top echelons of the administration. The slogan of Khalistan raised by the Dal-Khalsa, followed by a series of violent incidents of sabotage and even hijacking of an Indian Airlines Boeing plane to Pakistan, was all being patronized by imperialist agencies who were using the soil of Pakistan. The major faction of the Akalis were openly advocating the slogan of Sikh nationhood, which is connected inseparably with the slogan of Khalistan. Various religious leaders and fanatics had been consistently encouraged by the ruling party. In Kashmir, militant outfits were mushrooming to demand separation. Where the Left and democratic forces are not strong enough to lead the masses on correct lines, reactionary elements are able to draw them into casteist, parochial, communal and other disrupting channels, and sabotage the struggles that should be fought unitedly against the anti-people policies of the bourgeois-landlord rulers—an assertion which is still, after 16-18 years, equally relevant.

international developments of serious concern were taking place in this period with the U.S. imperialists pursuing their plans for global domination using various agencies. Though it had received a rebuff in the fall of the Shah regime in Iran, U.S. imperialism was trying to grip the oil region and was making Pakistan its military base under the excuse of helping Afghan "freedom fighters". Defying the demand of the Arab world, of world public opinion and of all U.N. resolution, Israel formally annexed occupied Arab territory—Golan Heights of Syria, West Bank of Jordan, etc., it was because of support they had been receiving from the U.S. imperialists. The

proclamation of Arab Gulf as “a zone of U.S vital interests”, development of rapid deployment of force by Pentagon for intervention in various parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America was causing concern among the peace-loving people of the world. The support of the national liberation movement and the developing countries by the former Soviet Union was treated by U.S. imperialism as expansionism allegedly “threatening the vital interests” of USA and with this spurious plea they went on to expand NATO outside NATO areas. The USA has all along been looking upon non-Socialist countries as part of its invisible empire and any Leftward shift in the alignment of forces within the third world countries used to be regarded as a threat to their security.

The situation in the Socialist Poland was a serious international development in this period. The Polish “Solidarity” trade union leadership which was demanding workers’ rights at the initial stage in early 1980, had slipped into the hands of a confirmed counter-revolutionary band which was openly acting as a tool of imperialism to plunge Poland into a civil war and dismantle socialist regime. The whole imperialist press and other powerful mass media of the bourgeoisie, big or small, were harnessed to malign Socialist regimes and the Soviet Union depicting them as enemies of democracy and workers’ rights and interests. The bourgeois Press, the world over, had taken recourse to anti-Communist and anti-Soviet slander to put out cocertedly the shop-soiled lie that Communists are against democracy. The solidarity leaders, openly aided and abetted by imperialists, particularly the U.S. imperialists and the church, were out to bring about the collapse of Polish society by exploiting the discontent over genuine grievances. The Government patiently dealt with the situation, giving many a relief, accepting many a demand knowing that there was a genuine cause for discontent and avoided all repression to restore confidence among the people. All except naive and blind admit that the supervision was engineered by the imperialists and their henchmen in Poland exploiting the political-ideological blunders continuing since long and the consequent

economic setbacks. Polish experience, however, showed that the power and safety of the Socialist Revolution was compromised by blatant violations of Leninist norms in the functioning of the Government and the proletarian party. The subsequent events and setbacks in USSR and the East European countries vindicate this view more clearly. The imperialists took full advantage of it to subvert and dismantle those societies in collusion with the respective counter revolutionaries.

On the contrary, Socialist Cuba has been fighting heroically against all the blockades, designs and conspiracies of the U.S. imperialism, a shining example of Socialist revolution firmly overcoming all inconceivable odds.

It was heartening for all countries that People's China which had committed grave mistakes and distortions in the decade-long "Cultural Revolution", was engaged in the task of restoring Leninist norms and the Chinese leadership was embarking upon modernization maintaining the Socialist base. The CPI(M) welcomed this development while calling for change in their erroneous evaluation of contemporary world and world balance of forces which had caused immense harm to the world revolutionary movement. The Central Committee of our Party extending its greetings in September 1981, emphasized that, "The differences, disputes and divisions in the world camp of anti-imperialists and Socialist forces should not be allowed to be exploited by the imperialists to their advantage. The diabolical war plans of crisis-ridden imperialism shall not be allowed to fructify under the false cries of Soviet aggression and expansion".

Such national and international developments and our stand on all this are provided in this Volume.

CHAPTER

XXI

CPI(M)'s Strive for Left and Democratic Unity

The Eleventh Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) was held in Vijayawada from January 26 to 31, 1982 four years after its Tenth Congress in April 1978. It was a significant event in view of the fact that fight against the authoritarian party and its rule by forging a broad forum of resistance constituted, in the first place, the central task which was to be carried out in the face of growing challenge to the unity and integrity of the country. This situation was also sought to be utilized by imperialism which was encouraging divisive forces in the country directly instigated by the Pakistani rulers. Pakistan by now was not only instigating trouble inside Kashmir to destabilize the situation but had started encouraging extremism in Punjab by backing forces of Sikh fundamentalism which in the name of demanding a separate State was determined to disrupt national unity. The U.S. imperialism had not been reconciled to the role which India was playing in the world forums like NAM, U.N. and other places. They also had their eye on Kashmir and encouraged the movement of independent Kashmir so that they might have their base in this strategic area to manoeuvre against India, China, Pakistan etc.

Secondly, strengthening of the Left and democratic unity was of overriding importance for changing correlation of class forces in the people, for increasing the weight and influence of the Left forces. It alone could give expression to a radicalization among the masses which was manifest in

various ways. That was the call which emerged from the Tenth Congress and was further emphasized in the political resolution of the Eleventh Congress to face the existing realities. While the broad resistance to authoritarianism was meant to help democratic advance checkmating the forces of dictatorship and authoritarianism, the concept of Left and democratic unity was to fulfil the long-term objective. The Tenth Congress Resolution stated the basic reason for forging the unity of the Left and democratic forces thus: "The Left and democratic front is not to be understood as only an alliance for election or Ministry, but a fighting alliance of the forces for immediate advance—economic and political—and isolating the reactionary classes that hold the economy in their grip."

Alongwith this emphasis we had also seen that in the background of developing economic situation accompanied by growing mass discontent following isolation from the masses, political representatives of certain sections of the ruling classes start vacillating and engage themselves in action at cross purpose to maintain their class rule. It is the job of the working class and its revolutionary Party to take advantage of such a situation in order to advance the cause of the working class and the toiling people. It is in this respect that understanding and alliance, though temporary with certain sections of the ruling classes acquire importance. Thus the main slogans evolved at the Tenth Congress though different from each other nevertheless were inter-related. The distinction between the two slogans had been further underlined by the experiences that had been developed during four years preceding the Eleventh Congress. Hence the political resolution of the Eleventh Congress taking into consideration the developments that had taken place in the preceding four years included a six-point Platform of Broad Resistance and 23-point Programme of Left and democratic front. All the international and national developments made it necessary to effect some modifications both in the platform and the programme.

The political resolution of the Eleventh Congress stated: "By struggling for the building of the Left and democratic

front, by popularising its programme opposed to the programmes of the bourgeois parties, by changing the correlation of political forces through broader mobilization and, above all, by leading mass struggles, the Party brings into the arena precisely those classes that must take a prominent part in building the People's Democratic Front. This is the importance of its immediate tactical line." Further, the political resolution came to the conclusion with this: "The situation demands of the Party incessant and urgent efforts to unite the Left and democratic forces so that the initiative in the fight against authoritarianism remains with these forces."

"It also calls for the broadest possible resistance to the attacks of the authoritarian party to scuttle democracy."

"The Left Front Ministries, whose defence is imperative in the struggle for democracy, and their achievements offer a firm foundation for building the unity of the Left and democratic forces."

"Mass actions and struggles led by the Party or jointly with other parties and mass organizations constitute the lever to build Left initiative and broad mobilization."

It must be understood that the bursting mass discontent and struggles emerging from it provided fertile ground for organizing widespread resistance and forging common understanding with others at different levels. To lead all these struggles decisively, to channelize them all in an anti-authoritarian direction was the immediate task which the Party had to face. But along with this the Party and the Left had to take the lead in mobilizing various forces and the people on the issues of subordination of the judiciary to the executive and setting up the presidential form of Government—both weapons for installing one-party rule. But the assault by the divisive forces instigated by foreign powers had complicated the situation. This danger could be fought only by uniting the Left, democratic and secular forces.

It said: "The Party in cooperation with all Left, democratic and other patriotic forces must fight the secessionist challenge encouraged by imperialist agencies."

“And, finally, the challenge of imperialism to the foreign policy of non-alignment, the pressure to weaken the Indo-Soviet Treaty and relations with the Socialist camp, and the arming of Pakistan’s military clique, have to be taken seriously. There is concentrated propaganda from parties like the BJP which act as the vociferous anti-Soviet, pro-U.S. lobby. The internal pressure against non-alignment was never so great. The Party must work for the broadest mobilization of all patriotic forces against the imperialist challenge.”

The need for the simultaneous development of the Left and democratic front and of a broader forum, and integrating both got emphasized in the political resolution.

As a logical conclusion of the decision of the Tenth Congress, the Party can now take pride in pursuing a correct tactical line during the crisis of Janata Government. The differences inside the Party on the tactical line adopted during this period caused the entire bourgeois Press to speculate on a split in the Party at the Congress. To their utter dismay, the differences were resolved after detailed discussion in the Congress. The Political-Organizational report as adopted in the Eleventh Party Congress dealt with the issue in depth and stated: “The differences that surfaced relate to individual issues and moves in the process of implementing the line. One such issue was whether our being neutral on the no-confidence motion would have been received by the people well or our actively supporting the no-confidence motion, after our efforts to persuade the Janata Government failed. Similarly, the issue was raised whether our support to the Charan Singh alliance was received well or ill by the people at large, and why not demand elections instead of lending support to the formation of the Charan Singh Government. It was also asked by some whether our supporting the no-confidence motion had helped Indira Gandhi to stage a come-back, thus objectively strengthening the forces of authoritarianism. All these do not belong to the category of basic differences on the fundamental political tactical line of the Party, and most of them were answered in the course of the P.B. and C.C. discussions, and finally in the election review of June 1980.”

These differences and consequent difficulties arise, firstly, because of the extremely uneven strength of our Party and movement in different States; secondly due to the uneven strength and role of different political parties in different States; and lastly because of the absence of uniform political discipline in several bourgeois and petty-bourgeois Opposition parties.

“...Our Party will have to take into account the reactions or the likely reactions of different sections of people in different States, while taking decisions on problems that concern the people of more than one State or the people of the country as a whole. It also will have to judge the entire situation in Marxist-Leninist class terms, as the vanguard of the revolutionary working class movement. Numerous occasions arise when our Party puts forth a correct line, and in the best interests of people, but may not be able to carry conviction immediately.”

“...The anomaly in the behaviour of some political parties creates certain difficulties when the Central Committee has to address itself to one particular task taking the country as a whole and the attitude of the political parties at the national level while the State Committee of the CPI(M) will have to address themselves to the particular situation prevailing in the States in question, though both the C.C. and the State Committees follow the central political-tactical line.”

“...The struggle between the bourgeois-landlord classes and their political parties on the one hand and the Left forces opposed to these classes and parties on the other, takes the sharpest form in these three States (West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala), while in the rest of the States in the Indian Union, the struggle among different bourgeois-landlord parties for the possession of the State and administrative apparatus gets sharply emphasized. The two main slogans of building the Left and democratic front and the broad forum of resistance, raised at the Jullundur Congress, had to be pursued under these specific conditions.”

“...Without ascribing loyalty to democracy and commitment

to resist authoritarianism to any particular person or group or party, we will have to deal with these bourgeois-landlord Opposition parties, utilising their conflicts and contradictions with the party in power in furtherance of the united actions on issues and in the struggle against authoritarianism and in defence of parliamentary democracy. If we start looking into the history of the individual leaders of these bourgeois-landlord Opposition parties, their defections and re-defections from parties, their basic class outlook on people's issues, etc., in order to decide our approach to them we land in an unreal position of spurning any agreement, alliance and cooperation with most of them. This approach towards the bourgeois-landlord Opposition parties and working for united action on issues with them is very necessary in our struggle to dislodge the bourgeois-landlord political-ideological hold on the great mass of our people that still exists. History during the last four years has conclusively proved the correctness of the above assessment of the bourgeois-landlord Opposition parties, and there need be no illusions on the score."

There were doubts and differences on some other issues, for instance, about the correctness of our Party leading the peasants struggles for remunerative prices, and also the correctness of associating our Party and our Kisan organization with the Central Coordination Committee comprising of several political parties, to lead the united mass actions of the peasants and agricultural labourers, and Party's line on mass organizations etc. Most of the differences were resolved even though some remained to be resolved later on. A close study of this Volume which contains developments during 1982-83, will reveal our Marxist-Leninist approach in resolving inner-Party difference.

The political resolution outlined some new features both in the international and in the national situation. It focussed its attention on the U.S. design of nuclear war and threat before the Soviet Union. It stressed on the task of fighting war danger, wider mobilization for peace and in defence of the Socialist countries.

In the national situation, the contradiction and conflict with imperialism were on the increase. Besides, imperialism led by U.S. imperialists was trying its best to bring about the destabilization of India so as to secure its neo-colonial domination. It was facilitated by huge loan from IMF with stringent conditions accepted by the Congress(I) government at the Centre. As a consequence, the economic policies were gradually subjected to the approval of creditors, consequent pressure on foreign policy to toe the wishes of imperialism was being mounted. Generally speaking, the Government of India was, however, not prepared to succumb despite some vacillations. But the forces of disintegration were very much active to direct the genuine problems and grievances of the people into reactionary channels under the tutelage of U.S. imperialism. What caused concern was that the Government at the Centre and the bourgeois-landlord Opposition parties were evidently lacking political will to solve it, they seemed to be not at all inclined to expose the imperialist machinations. Rather, all of them were trying to utilize this disruptive forces to fulfil their selfish political and electoral end. This aggravated the situation further. The BJP, on its part, has been consistent, for opportunists reasons, in belittling the threat from U.S. imperialism. None can also escape the truth that the class movement of the working class, peasantry, student and youth had not paid enough attention to such a serious question of national unity. The Eleventh Congress had assigned the Party to take up the issue with all seriousness.

The undemocratic and authoritarian moves of the ruling Congress had come to the help of those divisive, communal and separatist forces. The Congress(I) rulers set a series of examples of subversion of all democratic principles in imposing a minority government led by the Congress(I) in Kerala in the first place and disallowing the Opposition parties with a majority in the Assam Assembly to form the government following the defeat of the minority Congress(I) government on the other. In the January 1980 elections in Kerala, the Congress(I) had managed to get only 17 of 141 seats. The

Left-Democratic Front led by the CPI(M) won 93 seats with a massive mandate of the people against the authoritarian Congress(I). Betraying this mandate, some elements of the Left-Democratic Front joined hands with Congress(I). Even then the Congress(I) did not have the majority but the Governor, a Congress(I) leader till the appointment, imposed minority government of the Congress(I) in Kerala facilitating the Congress(I) to resort to horse-trading and unsavory manoeuvres in the meantime. The Congress(I) rulers were in panic with the performances of the LDF government to live up to its pledge to the people in its 21 months of office. Police raj was unleashed immediately after the resignation of LDF ministry and 25 CPI(M) cadres were murdered within three months by the RSS and the Congress(I) hoodlums in collusion with the police.

After the severe electoral setbacks in West Bengal where the Left Front secured massive mandate, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana in 1982, the ruling Congress(I) was rudely shocked by the electoral defeats in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tripura in January 1983 elections. The defeat of the Congress(I) in its traditional strongholds paved, to a great extent, the way for consolidating the Left and democratic forces. While the voters in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka being angered against a long-span of Congress(I) misrule and its anti-people policies, could not but choose alternatives with the Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh and Janata-Kranti Ranga in Karnataka, the verdict in Tripura was for the Left Front and its policies.

It was in this period that the crisis in Punjab was being accentuated to a serious proportion with large-scale violent extremist activities rocking Punjab and posing a big danger to the unity and integrity of the country. We did never spare the extremists or the Akali leadership's role, but the primary responsibility must be placed with the Congress(I) government at the Centre for its misleading policies, its hesitation and vacillation in solving the problem. In the beginning of 1981, the Akalis presented their memorandum of 45 points, with all

manner of demands and grievances clubbed together. We could not agree to all these demands, nor to the concept of Anandpur Resolution. The Prime Minister started negotiations on the basis of the memorandum first through emissaries, then directly, which went on for months together. The government could not find a single point acceptable to it, though the same religious demands, later on accepted, formed part of these 45 points. The Akalis, it was made known, were prepared to agree to much less at that time. In fact, after eight months of negotiations nothing was accepted by the government. While the extremists were obstinately different, the Akalis did not give up the path of negotiations at that time. The government did not try to isolate the extremists at any point of time. The Akalis were forced to start agitation at a time when the extremists of Bhindranwale were carrying on parallel activities. The Congress(I) government ignored our repeated call to find out a political solution for which we and the opposition as a whole extended full support and cooperation. It banked on dealing with the situation only through administrative measures which aggravated the crisis to the detriment of the unity and integrity of the nation.

The Central Committee of our Party that met from September 10 to 16, 1983 discussed the Punjab situation which went out of control of the Congress(I) government of the State with concern. The C.C. came to the conclusion that: "In Punjab the situation has deteriorated further because of the Central Government's refusal to accept and implement the consensus of the Opposition parties including the Akali Dal. In spite of the helping hand given by the Opposition parties, the government had created a situation in that State which has enabled the reactionary and disruptive element to seize the initiative. The Government's policy is disrupting the unity of the country". One month later, the Polit Bureau of the Party noted that, "the Akali leadership which is becoming conscious of the need for communal unity in the State, has not dissociated itself completely from and denounced the terrorist deeds of the extremists. This makes it difficult for the democratic

forces to develop a united country-wide movement which alone can force the Central Government to abandon its policy of keeping the tension alive in order to make partisan political use of it."

The year 1983 also witnessed some encouraging developments. The All-India Conference of Opposition parties met thrice this year on the most burning political issues in the country. The first conference held in May in Vijayawada was a beginning of the assembly of all national and regional parties opposing Congress(I) rule. It adopted an unanimous resolution against the authoritarian rule of the Congress(I) as well as against the separatist and divisive forces. The BJP and the AIADMK thought it fit to opt out of the second conference held in Delhi. The BJP took the plea that H.N. Bahuguna was the convenor of the conference whom they did not like. The Delhi conference made a positive contribution by offering concrete demands for resolving Punjab crisis, the Akalis also participated in the meeting. The third conference held in Srinagar was remarkable as the Opposition parties came to a consensus to adopt a resolution on Centre-State relations. After the defeat of Congress(I) in several States and the emergence of regional aspirations, its leadership felt it necessary to form Sarkaria Commission to go into the question of recasting Centre-State relations—a long-standing burning demand in the face of growing centralization of power at the hand of the Centre depriving the States.

The resolution at Srinagar conference, coming in the wake of formation of Sarkaria Commission had ensued nation-wide debate on different aspects of the Centre-State relations. The DMK was invited to the Srinagar conference though it was not invited on earlier two conferences. The BJP had put it on record that they did not subscribe to the subject—Centre-State relations and the venue as well. Opposition to the devolution of power to the States matches the ideology of BJP and its Sangh Parivar which stand for more centralization. The next Opposition meet at Calcutta marked a further improvement of this exercise. Prior to that, the participants of the Srinagar

conference met in Delhi to formulate the proposals for Calcutta conference on the issues confronting the livelihood of the people, the Congress(I) move to topple non-Congress(I) State Governments, failure to carry out land reform measures, the growing corruption, caste, communal and other divisive forces which were encouraged by the ruling party etc.

The coming together of Opposition parties in a situation of growing attack on democracy and people's livelihood gave a fillip to the united struggle all over the country for reversal of government policies. But surprising was the fact that the ruling Congress(I) was trying to hold the Opposition parties responsible for the failures which they could no more conceal. Our Party concentrated its efforts to unite the forces of Opposition and rally the people for change of anti-people policies.

With U.S. machinations in the region, the developments in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, we pointed out, were matters of serious concern. Meanwhile, our Party hailed the struggling people of Pakistan and Bangladesh who were fighting against the military dictatorships and for restoration of democracy. The anti-imperialist struggles were also widespread in this period.

In the context of existing world situation which was threatened with a nuclear war being prepared by the U.S. imperialists, despite repeated proposals of Soviet Union which had unilaterally pledged before the world community that it would not be the first to use nuclear weapon, for limitation of nuclear armaments, the Seventh Non-Aligned summit held on March 7-12 in New Delhi was a significant event.

The political declaration as well as the economic declaration showed that NAM withstood the imperialist pressures and maintained its anti-imperialist position on the whole. The unity of NAM as maintained was itself a major achievement.

Much to the satisfaction of the world Communist movement the sharp change in the erroneous concepts and serious blunders of the Chinese leadership helped to normalize the relation between our Party and the Communist Party of China. A three-member delegation of our Party visited China and

after exchange of views on wide-ranging issues, the Party to Party relations between the two Parties were restored. Since then China restored its relations with many friendly parties, and now it is for all to see that how China is moving forward in the last one and half decade by its sincere effort to concretely applying the science of Marxism to the concrete condition of China.

The CPI(M) delegation consisting of E.M.S. Namboodiripad, M. Basavapunnaiah and myself had a three-day exchange of views with the delegation of Communist Party of China led by its General Secretary Hu Yaobang. We explained during the talks that the Party had to face many hurdles in its struggle for reforging unity of the international Communist movement since it could not see eye to eye either with the Soviet Party or the Chinese Party, but we refused to adopt either anti-China or anti-Soviet positions. Uncompromising struggle against U.S. imperialism formed the basis of our national and international policies. Our delegation went on to express the view that the differences among the various contingents in the World Communist movement arose first of all, because a few of them are the ruling parties in their respective countries, while the rest have to fight the regimes in their countries, and, secondly, because each country had its own national characteristics. This makes it incumbent on every contingent of the international Communist movement to make the utmost endeavour to resolve these differences bilaterally or otherwise. Open criticism by one fraternal party of the other should be avoided as far as possible. However, on basic ideological issues in which differences exist between two or more parties and on which a particular party considers it necessary to educate its ranks, they may have to express their views and criticism publicly. We explained our own basic positions, independent of others, on current political-ideological issues, both national and international.

The Chinese delegation elaborated that it was due to the Left deviationist policies that the relations between the two parties had been strained. Not only that, the aberrations

affected all aspects of the economy, political and cultural activities of the Chinese Party and Government.

After wide discussion with the Chinese delegation and also with Deng Xiaoping, Chairman of the Advisory Council and member of the Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of China and other important leaders, a Press release issued thereafter said: "The talks over the past few days proceeded in a sincere, warm and comradely atmosphere. The two sides had a wide-ranging exchange of views reaching agreement on many issues. The two parties also presented different views about a number of issues, but they agreed that these differences do not hamper the restoration and expansion of their relations." The basis, the Press release said, on which the relations were being restored are, "the principle of independence, complete equality, mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs."

The restoration of relations with China, suspended since 1967 is remarkable on many counts as far as international Communist movement is concerned. This was followed by many other parties establishing relations with the Party.

CHAPTER
XXII

Fight Against Divisive, Communal and
Separatist Forces

The period from 1984 to 1986 was marked by the quickest turn of events—assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the sweeping victory of the Congress(I) in the face of the gathering momentum of the united movement against its misrule. And yet the period had not been without its compensating features in line with what Engels asserted in 1895 in his introductory remarks to Marx's 'The Class Struggle in France': "The irony of world history turns everything upside down."

With utter disregard of the repeated agreements on the Punjab problem, the latest one being on April 20, 1983, the Punjab situation was allowed to pass into the hands of the extremists, and it led to 'Operation Bluestar', — flushing out of the extremists from the Golden Temple and unearthing of an underground arsenal, an underground maze of tunnels, manholes and bunkers by the army deployed by the Government of India. Surcharged with religious sentiments, the Sikh community was deeply anguished and bitterly angry with the Central Government, with the consequent strengthening of extremism, though a large number of the terrorists had been either liquidated or captured. Alongside, the moderate Akali leadership had been isolated and lost any claim to enter into negotiations. Hindu-Sikh polarisation had become even more intense. That was the situation which suited the imperialists and extremists who were engaged in disrupting the unity and integrity of the country.

While reiterating our constant condemnation of the

activities of the extremists, of the indiscriminate killing of innocent people and separatist slogans, we expressed our strong feeling that these tragic happenings of June 6, 1984 could have been avoided if the Prime Minister and the Central Government of the Congress(I) had only accepted the proposal of the Opposition parties for a solution of the Punjab tangle. We had repeatedly warned the government that the situation could not be tackled by administrative measures alone and it was necessary to find a political solution to the problem. Otherwise the government would be playing into the hands of the extremists. Even the Akali leadership was demarcating itself from the extremist activities of killing innocent people.

What did prompt the government to resort to delaying tactics? As a matter of fact, the government was prepared to settle with the Akalis if they were prepared to support the ruling Congress(I) government and share power. It was even prepared to settle with Bhindranwale, the extremists' chieftain, forgetting all that he had done, provided he was prepared to help the ruling party to perpetuate its rule. The government never sought the cooperation of the Opposition parties to find a solution, it was trying to use the Opposition to pressurize the Akalis and then have a political deal with them directly. The narrow interests of the Congress(I) had run supreme over national interests. If the Akali leadership whose advocacy of the slogan of forming a State with Sikh supremacy laid, in the main, the ideological basis of Khalistan, had continued to demarcate itself from the extremists and to join hands with the Opposition parties, the government could be forced to do otherwise, and the situation could have been different.

The role of the Hindu communalists, represented by BJP, was adding fuel to the fire. The people of Punjab, both Hindus and Sikhs, have always been opposed to the slogan of Khalistan and desired peace and communal harmony. They were so fed up with the unbridled and nefarious activities of the extremists that there was no spontaneous reaction amongst them against the flushing out of the extremists from the Golden Temple. It was only when the Akali dissidents led by its stalwarts

took up the issue that the extremists, who had been put on the run, again become active. On top of all, far from mobilizing the people against disrupting forces the Congress(I) and its government continued to bank on administrative action. The lack of political will of the government to have recourse to a positive stand prevailed. In response to the call of the Party, Punjab Week was observed from July 10 to 17, 1984 throughout the country which along with a series of similar programmes helped the people realise the gravity and correctness of the line pursued by the Party.

At a time when American imperialism was moving all-out to instigate the divisive, communal and separatist forces, in order that India got destabilized, the Congress(I), far from facing the challenge, was using everyone of them to strengthen its position in the respective States.

A horrifying communal massacre took place in Bhiwandi, Pune and Bombay of Maharashtra that had no parallel till then; several hundred people lost their lives, nearly two thousand hutments were razed to the ground during an orgy of murder, loot and arson organized by the Shiv Sena, a notorious semi-fascist organization. It was the Congress(I) which utilized Shiv Sena for its partisan end. Having been thus nursed, the Shiv Sena joined hands with BJP to organize riots. How the Congress(I) government failed, could be judged from a single fact that only in 1984, 23 communal riots had broken out on the occasion of Dussera and Muharram.

The whole North-Eastern region was faced with the serious problem of separatist forces which provided a fertile soil for imperialist machinations. Tripura continued to be the exception where, under the leadership of CPI(M), the Left Front government had been maintaining the unique amity between tribals and non-tribals, combatting all attempts of the separatist disrupters with whom the Congress(I) is in alliance even now.

The National Conference government in Jammu and Kashmir, a State vulnerable to separatist and fundamentalist forces aided by imperialist agencies, had been carrying forward

its long tradition of unity of the country and integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India. The Congress(I) government at the Centre did never bother about these pertinent issues, it was only interested in imposing its own rule on the State. The toppling game in that State had started immediately after the formation of the National Conference government. Failing, the Congress(I) leadership manoeuvred to effect a split in the National Conference and dismissed the Farooq Abdullah government. It unlawfully installed a minority government of 'splitters', imposing a curfew all over the State without even allowing Dr. Abdullah to prove his majority on the floor of the House. All Opposition parties and the Press in general condemned this action of the Central Government which was not simply a blatant attack on democracy but also an outrageous action which would be opening the floodgate of separatist activities in this strategic State further imperilling the unity and integrity of the country.

Having failed to solve any problem facing the country, the Congress(I) on a toppling spree dismissed the Telugu Desam Ministry in Andhra Pradesh in an utterly arbitrary and unconstitutional way. Before that, similar conspiracies were hatched in Sikkim and Pondicherry. Prior to all that, infamous Congress(I) leaders were sent as governors—A.P. Sharma to West Bengal, Jag Mohan to Kashmir and Ramlal to Andhra Pradesh. Apart from persisting economic blockade against the Left Front government of West Bengal, the governor A.P. Sharma was openly violating all norms and decency to put hurdles before the Left Front Ministry in West Bengal and associating himself with the conspiracies of West Bengal Congress(I) leaders—all these thoroughly exposing the unscrupulous and nefarious designs of the Congress(I) High Command on the eve of the Lok Sabha elections. The Opposition parties joined hands to organize fitting protests by way of giving a call of 'Save Democracy' Day on August 25 which received massive response from the people.

In the midst of all these developments and intensification of mass movements all over the country against the disastrous

policies of the Congress(I), Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India was heinously assassinated at her official residence by Khalistani secessionists patronised by imperialist agencies with the aim of destabilizing the Indian situation. In the aftermath of the assassination, a communal flare up engulfed vast areas of the country killing thousands. The whole community of Sikhs was, in the main, made target of murder, arson and loot. Utilizing the deep indignation of the people against the heinous assassination, Delhi and its neighbourhood were subjected to mass killing of Sikhs, numbering a few thousand. Sikh-owned shops, factories, houses and vehicles were looted and destroyed. But the most despicable aspect of this madness was that it was instigated and led all over the country by the leading lights and hirelings of the Congress(I), a fact which has recently been more clearly established by a commission appointed to enquire into the Delhi riots.

The Congress(I) leadership led by Rajiv Gandhi, who became Prime Minister after the assassination of his mother, spared no efforts to utilize the surcharged situation for its electoral interest and announced elections to the Eighth Lok Sabha at the end of December 1984. Our Party in its appeal to the electorate said about our line: "It will be a disaster if the electorate returns the Congress(I) party to power. The CPI(M) calls upon the electorate to defeat the Congress(I) at the polls and take the future of the country in its own hand.

"The CPI(M) works for a new alignment of forces through the elections. They should lead to the defeat of the Congress(I), isolation of the divisive forces and strengthening of secular and Left and democratic forces."

"In the present situation it is not possible for a single party to defeat the Congress(I). What is required is a combination of forces who stand on secularism, who are wedded to fight authoritarianism and save democracy, who support non-alignment and are vigilant enough to protect the country from the machinations of imperialism, who stand for a proper Centre-State relationship and who agree to give immediate relief to the people from high prices, unemployment and inadequate wages."

“The CPI(M) is prepared to support such a combination in the coming elections and is prepared to support a Ministry which is faithful to the above programme. The CPI(M) considers that the decisions of the Srinagar conference of Opposition parties and the Calcutta Conclave should form the basis of such a programme.”

“In different States different combinations or political parties are in the field. The CPI(M) while maintaining and strengthening the unity of the Left forces is prepared to support these parties and combinations. These are the DMKP, Congress(S), DMK, National Conference (Kashmir), Telugu Desam, Congress(I), Janata Party and some others.”

The elections were taking place with a qualitative new situation that emerged with the assassination of Smt. Indira Gandhi. As such election results showed that a basic change in the outlook of the electorate had taken place with the Congress(I) securing four-fifths of the seats—a success which it never had before. Our Polit Bureau and Central Committee made an objective review of the election results.

The Polit Bureau observed that, “The discontent flowing from the anti-people policies and practices of the Congress(I) Government was relegated to the background by the shock at the assassination and sympathy for the Congress(I). The Congress(I) party took note of it and while projecting the question of national unity before the people also appealed to the sentiments of the majority community. It is not accidental that during the whole campaign Congress(I) leaders did not utter a word against the RSS. Concern for the unity and integrity of the country threatened by the activities of extremists and separatists of various kinds, led the people to look upon the Congress(I) as the protector of India’s unity. This is a feature of the situation which most of the bourgeois Opposition parties failed to take note of. Some of them had seen in the secessionists, communal and casteist forces only an embarrassment for Indira Gandhi rather than a threat to national unity and integrity. After the assassination also they failed to note that the revulsion among the people against the activities of

separatist forces would make them rally still closer to the Congress(I).

“The CPI(M) was conscious of this before and after Smt. Gandhi’s assassination. The CPI(M) in its election campaign had highlighted the question of national unity pointing out that the policies and practices of the ruling party in fact were helpful to the growth of divisive and separatist forces rather than stopping them. Vast sections of the people however felt that the Congress(I) was the only force which could be trusted in the present situation to protect national unity.”

The Central Committee opined that in that situation, with the idea of unity dominating the minds of the people, the call for an alternate government at the Centre became a non-starter. It became unrealistic with the failure of the Opposition parties to unite and present the possibility of an alternative. Their indifference towards the question of national unity and their attempts to belittle the dangers further eroded their capacity to discharge the task which the people considered vital.

The Central Committee noted that, notwithstanding the spectacular success of the Congress(I) in securing four-fifths of the seats, the Opposition vote was almost equal to that of the ruling party. The deep concern for unity did not sway this huge mass to put their trust in the Congress(I). The Congress(I) vote was by no means an endorsement of the economic and other policies followed by the ruling party. Besides in some States the Congress(I) vote had been reduced as compared with 1980. If the ruling party would behave as if the Opposition was smashed and was irrelevant it would come to grief. One piece of electoral reform in the direction of proper reflection of people’s mind—proportional representation—would give the Opposition an almost equal number of seats.

The Central Committee however recognized that this was a big swing in favour of the Congress(I). It examined the setbacks in West Bengal and Kerala and came to the conclusion that the reverse in these States was not entirely due to the new concern for unity. Other factors were also responsible and both the Central Committee and the West Bengal and

Kerala State Committees identified them. The Central Committee called upon the Committees concerned to repair the damage done.

The C.C. called upon the Left Parties to close their ranks and face the coming Assembly elections unitedly. It was their responsibility to stem the tide of one-party triumph and save the multi-party character of India's democracy.

As expected, this spectacular swing of the people towards the Congress(I) in the Lok Sabha elections evaporated soon after. The Congress(I) lost heavily in some Assembly elections and certain by-elections within two months following the Lok Sabha elections. History was really turning upside down—which underlined that the contradiction between the ruling bourgeois-landlord combine and the mass of the Indian people was in no way resolved and discontent among the masses was on the rise, resulting in mass movements of the different sections of the people.

After having massive majority in the Parliament, the new Congress(I) government led by Rajiv Gandhi seemed to have changed the policy of drift in tackling the burning problem of Punjab which started assuming serious proportion by that time. Release of Akali leaders and lifting of certain bans, etc. were preparing the ground. In the course of subsequent changes, an Accord was signed in the middle of 1985 between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Shiromani Akali Dal President Sant Harchand Singh Longowal on the Punjab tangle which was welcomed by all in unambiguous terms and which was undoubtedly a stunning blow to the extremists. Being isolated, the extremists did not hesitate to commit the gruesome crime of murdering Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, which shook the people, both Hindus and Sikhs. People's urge for peace was again proved by the electoral victory of the Akalis when people ignored the boycott slogan of the extremists. But the inordinate delay in implementing the July 1985 Accord gave rise to many complications out of which the extremists were trying to make capital. Meanwhile the Akali Party got weakened because of its vacillations regarding the extremists. The

Congress(I) Party and the Central Government must share responsibility for contributing to the rapidly deteriorating situation by not implementing the Accord in letter and spirit for 17 months.

The situation in Jammu and Kashmir had also deteriorated as a direct result of the Congress(I) policy of allying with communal forces at the cost of national unity. The same Congress(I) had reached an understanding with the National Conference to share a coalition ministry after inflicting serious damage to the nation. Quite naturally, this coalition displayed its incapacity to save the situation.

During this period, the separatist Gorkhaland agitation in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal caused concern. Several Nepali-speaking followers of the CPI(M) laid their lives to defend unity of the people speaking different languages and having different ethnic identities. The role of the Congress(I) and its government at the Centre provided further encouragement to the agitators. The CPI(M) had for long stood for Regional Autonomy of this hilly region—which was not heeded to by the Congress(I) government. After severe damage, an agreement had been signed among West Bengal government, the Central Government and the agitators giving expression to the same regional autonomy for which CPI(M) had been fighting for decades.

The Assam Accord was also signed in this period. But far from retracing its steps, the actions of the Assam Gana Parishad Government had been exacerbating the situation.

It was not only these divisive forces, but the opportunism, chauvinism, casteism and communalism of the bourgeois political parties that were making their contributions to the process of disintegration, with the Congress(I) and BJP heading the list. The situation was quite disturbing because of the alarming growth and consolidation of different divisive, communal and casteist forces that were out to exploit the evergrowing mass discontent. In Punjab, Assam, Tripura and Kashmir, a lot of our leaders and cadres sacrificed their lives in defending unity and integrity. Seldom can any other party claim such

a sacrifice. The Left democratic and secular parties have been consistently and courageously challenging the bourgeois-landlord class offensive on our people and fighting for national unity. But with growing strength at faster pace they should be in a position to succeed where the bourgeois opposition parties were failing on burning economic and political issues. That was what the Twelfth Congress of our Party, held in Calcutta from December 25 to 30, 1985 emphasized.

The Political Resolution adopted at the Twelfth Congress said, "Today when the country is in danger, when the task is of fighting authoritarianism, defending national unity and defeating imperialist conspiracies against the country, only the unity of the Left and democratic forces, only the increase of their weight in Indian politics will save the country.

"Only the Left and democratic forces can wage an immediate struggle against mass misery and exploitation of the people, against the dependence of our economy on Western countries, for national unity and a consistent foreign policy of non-alignment, and against the authoritarian danger. Only the Left and democratic front representing the interests of the masses can unite the toilers to clear the road for the advance of democracy.

"The main task of fighting against the authoritarian drive of the ruling party while meeting all the new challenges to the nation, devolves on the Party and the Left forces. The Left and democratic front cannot be growingly built without the growing unity of the Left forces and without their capacity to launch massive united struggles against the authoritarian regime, its policies of suppressing democracy, its economic policies endangering the independence of the economy and the unbearable burdens being imposed on the masses."

The growing importance of forging this unity was stressed in the Political-Organizational Report of the Twelfth Congress : "No matter what the bombastic declarations of the government are to assure the people that their new economic strategy promotes greater employment, decreases the disparity between the rich and the poor and serves the interests of the country and the common man, these policies are bound to

increase the miseries of the masses, bringing them into head-on conflict with the ruling classes and the government. Thus the period ahead of us is a period of rising mass struggles, increasing unity of the democratic and secular Opposition parties and the enhanced activity of the CPI(M) and other Left forces in the country.”

At the same time the Political Resolution pointed out that the independent activity of the Party in organizing mass actions, building Left unity and the Left and democratic front must increase very much compared with the past. The last four years showed some progress in this direction. But this was too small compared to the needs of the situation and weaknesses of the other partners.

But it was an unfortunate fact that Left unity did not register progress as envisaged earlier. In some respects, Left unity, the unity between CPI(M) and CPI in particular, was strained. It all began with the attack directed on the CPI(M) by the CPI when the CPI(M) reformed party-to-party relations with the Communist Party of China in 1983. Since then the CPI showed more and more reluctance for united actions. And the disunity and bitterness grew between the two parties during the 1984 Lok Sabha elections. The Political-Organizational Report, while it stressed the necessity of ideological struggle against their basic postulates, the criticism of their deviation, of their erroneous opinions and tactics, concluded with the importance of strengthening the unity. It said: “The CPI(M) pledges to attach utmost importance to the struggle for Left unity, as an integral part of the struggle for forging of the urgently needed Left and democratic unity.

“The CPI(M) is fully aware that several of these bourgeois Opposition parties do not take consistent democratic positions on certain questions. It is also conscious that there will be vacillations in the struggle to forge the unity against authoritarian Congress drive for the perpetuation of its one-party monopoly rule. And yet the importance of rallying these parties for united actions in defence of democracy should not be underestimated.

“The CPI(M) and the other Left parties and groups should always bear the above in mind and act up to it.

“The consolidation of Left unity can be achieved only on the basis of widespread mass actions of the Left parties, their joint mass actions, call for strikes, morchas and demonstrations on issues vital to the life of the people and the nation, and their capacity to attract broader and broader forces in the common struggle.”

One point deserves mention here. In consequence of the crushing defeat of the Congress(I) in the elections in Andhra, Karnataka and Tripura in 1983, and in the background of rising people's discontent, the ruling Congress(I) was facing crisis in every State. The ruling alliance in Kerala headed by the Congress(I) was affected by intensified bickerings and conflicts. Considering these developments, a section of the supporters of Left-Democratic Front was encouraged to suggest that initiative should be taken to go for alliance with those in the ruling coalition who were dissatisfied, in order to replace the Congress(I) led coalition government with an alternate government. Some leaders of the constituent parties of the LDF were also favouring the proposal. That was, to some extent, affecting the thinking of a section of our leading comrades as well. Discarding the idea, the Central Committee of our Party advised its Kerala unit to concentrate on systematically organizing campaigns to which even section of the masses following the parties of the ruling coalition could be drawn and that the LDF's political campaign should have its edge directed against the Congress(I) alliance with the caste and communal organisations.

Taken as a whole any political manoeuvring with such parties as were being exposed as the representatives of caste and communal separatism would surely deprive our Party of its democratic and secular image, would have compromised our Party's basic stand regarding the communal and divisive forces, while only helping the consolidation and the strengthening of these which serve to disrupt the class and mass organizations that were being built by us for decades.

Yet, there were some comrades who failed to realise the dangers inherent in it.

After the Parliament and Assembly elections in Kerala in 1984, the question was that of disentangling the Party from the All India Muslim League which was a constituent of LDF. In a Polit Bureau letter to the Party members in Kerala it was again made clear that the issue involved was broader than the Party's relation with AIML. The issue was raised and well discussed in the Twelfth Party Congress which endorsed the line pursued by the Polit Bureau and the Central Committee.

It was made clear in the Party Congress that the political line of the Party was tried and tested in the preceding four years. Nevertheless while joint actions on economic issues had increased, including Bharat Bandh called by the Opposition parties on February 28, 1986, against the sharp increase of prices of essential commodities and other programmes of joint action, direct political actions were few.

The Twelfth Party Congress gave a clarion call: "The CPI(M) calls upon all progressive forces, the entire Indian people to realise the dangerous situation confronting our country. Our democratic rights are under attack under the authoritarian drive: the self-reliance and independence of our economy is being endangered; national unity is under constant attack; the secessionist, divisive and communal forces are rallying to bury national unity; imperialism is resorting to interventionist devices to destabilise our country and change its policy of non-alignment.

"Who will meet all these challenges? Who will protect our freedom, our unity and independence? Only the people rising in their millions can stay the hands of domestic and international reaction. Only the people fighting poverty and aware of the incapacity of the ruling party to protect national interests will save the situation. The mighty force of our people rising to meet all the challenges will prove a powerful defender of world peace and opponent of U.S. imperialist war plans.

"The CPI(M) places itself at the service of all people in this great cause of national unity, freedom and social advance.

It assures that all its committees, units and members will relentlessly work for the cause of the people.”

The contents of this Volume will show the capacity of our Party to meet any eventuality and rise to the occasion for the cause we have been consistently and relentlessly fighting for.

CHAPTER
XXIII

CPI(M)'s Fight Against Misrule of
Rajiv Gandhi's Government

The convulsions that occurred during 1987-88 of Rajiv Gandhi's regime, the crisis in the policy and socio-economic structure and the growing discontent of the masses springing from the ruinous policies of the Congress(I) Government at the Centre had intensified the contradiction between the people and the government. Instead of finding a solution to the urgent problems, the government was trying to take away the democratic rights of the people through various repressive measures. On the one side, the government was adopting a compromising role towards the menacing communal and divisive forces, and, on the other, the disrupting forces were making all efforts to utilize the discontent in order to divert it to the communal and divisive channels and thus disrupt the unity of the democratic movement. And over and above all these, the disclosures of corruption scandals one after another that rocked the country led to the further loss of credibility of the Rajiv Government. This period was marked by powerful countrywide movement for the resignation of Rajiv Government which was installed with a massive unprecedented mandate after the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, and for early mid-term poll. Our Party played a significant role in conducting the struggles of this period which the documents of this Volume illustrate in a large measure.

The Twelfth Congress of our Party held in Calcutta had warned categorically that the political crisis of the system was expressing itself in the drive towards authoritarianism.

The economic crisis, aggravated due to the new economic policy imposing new burdens on the people and compromising the interests of the country, was intensifying the contradiction between the people and the ruling classes; which the ruling party would try to solve by strengthening authoritarianism in the government and compromising criminally with the divisive and communal forces. The developments following the Calcutta Congress had proved the correctness of the warnings but its impact was underestimated by the people earlier.

The sharp deterioration of the economic situation as a consequence of succumbing to the growing pressures of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund as expressed in the new economic policy of Rajiv Government had resulted in a mighty outburst of mass anger. The Twelfth Congress had also warned against the yielding by the Rajiv Government to the growing intervention of imperialism and its agencies in our economic sovereignty, imperialist pressures against our non-aligned foreign policy, and their direct support and instigation to the secessionist and communal forces to destabilize our Indian polity.

The Central Committee of our Party concluded in its meeting in August 7-10, 1987 that "Rajiv Government is leading the country to ruin, disunity and disorder with accelerated speed. Everything which it touches leads to increased miseries, disruption of national unity, enabling the forces of destabilization to attack the country with greater vigour". Further, taking into consideration the immediate political developments, the discontent among the people, the mighty struggles that they were waging against the series of corruption scandals, the rapid isolation of the ruling party as manifested in the struggles and significant electoral battles in West Bengal, Kerala and Haryana and so on, the Central Committee considered that "Rajiv Gandhi Government has become a government of national disintegration, incompetence and utter callousness towards democratic and parliamentary norms". It demanded the resignation of the Rajiv Government and called

for a fresh mandate from the people. It was of the opinion that "only a government which is secular in outlook, wedded to fight communalism, determined to fight authoritarianism, protect democracy and eliminate corruption; which stands for a policy of non-alignment and preservation of world peace; protects Indian unity against imperialist forces of destabilization; and agrees to remunerative prices for the peasants and give immediate relief to the people from high prices, unemployment and inadequate wage, will be acceptable to the people to meet their needs".

In order to realize the demand, the Party called for the broadest understanding and unity of all secular Opposition parties, unity between these and the Left and democratic forces. It even called upon all Congressmen who were opposed to corruption and other facets of the Rajiv regime to take a bold stand and join the popular forces. It may be recalled that the CPI(M) had been foremost in analysing the situation concretely and called for a countrywide movement to replace the regime through a mid-term poll.

The Congress(I) led by Rajiv Gandhi was appeasing on the one hand Muslim fundamentalist forces by enacting Muslim Women's Bill with a view to reversing the rights accorded by the Supreme Court to the Muslim women in the Shah Bano case and compromising with Hindu fundamentalists by raking up the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue. By this twin stroke, the ruling party had contributed immensely to the deteriorating communal situation all over the country. The BJP, taking advantage of the situation, was training its gun with revivalist slogans.

The issue of the Presidential form of government raised by the BJP at that time deserves mention because of its relevance in today's context. Whenever the ruling party finds itself in a mess, failing to solve the problems of the people with the deepening crisis of the economy, it resorts to the slogan of changing from the parliamentary to the Presidential form of government. Instead of bringing about a sharp change in the economic policies, policies of developing capitalism in

collaboration with feudalism and imperialism, it seeks other ways to perpetuate its rule, the ways of fettering the democratic rights of the people. The debate started with the break in the monopoly of power of the Congress party in 1967 when, in many of States, the non-Congress governments came into power. Thus the debate began, not because the system had failed, but as a means of somehow recovering the Congress monopoly of power. Subsequently, the debate arose when the Emergency was imposed and though at that time, the Constitution was amended in this direction, the change could not be fully implemented because of the resistance that came up, even inside the ruling party. The debate again was raised by some Congress leaders in 1982 when economic situation visibly worsened, two years after the Congress came back to power. By 1983, the movement in defence of democracy, against mortgaging our economy to the IMF and other imperialist agencies was so powerful that the ruling Congress Government had to retreat and appoint the Sarkaria Commission to restructure Centre-State relations, a demand raised more often with a view to strengthening the parliamentary system.

In 1986, Janata Party leader and Chief Minister of Karnataka had come to support the idea of bringing into existence a two-party system. One can understand that a party like the BJP, which stands for a unitary form of government, and whose real intention is to work for the 'Hindu Rashtra', will naturally advocate a Presidential form of government. It was with this dictatorial approach that since 1987 BJP has been persistent for redrawing the political map of India, giving up the present linguistic set up as fashioned in their election manifesto of 1998, and being in power, is now bent upon carrying out this exercise. Behind all this false theorizing which deliberately obscures the history of our freedom struggle, lies the objective of establishing a 'Hindu Rashtra'.

As for separatism it was the ruling Congress(I) which has been in alliance for long with the separatists of Tripura and has cooperated with those outfits in other parts of North-East region, thus aggravating the very cause of national unity. It

was the same Congress(I) which tried to destabilize Kashmir by its earlier manoeuvre of toppling the Farooq Government and installing the Shah Government. It was the policy of non-implementation of the Punjab Accord arrived at on July 1995 and dismissal of the Barnala Government that perpetuated the extremist activities of the Khalistani separatists.

In the chain of the national political campaign for securing the removal of Rajiv Gandhi Government to be followed by mid-term elections, two all-India campaigns were unleashed in cooperation with other secular Opposition parties—against communalism and separatism that culminated in the convention held in Delhi on October 12 and the historic December 9 march to parliament by 24 mass organizations of Left parties, on a number of burning issues: drought and flood relief, price rise, an effective public distribution system, remunerative prices for the peasant's produce, education and jobs for all, industrial closures, defence of trade union rights, equal rights for women, the atrocities against weaker sections including women, central legislation for agricultural labourers, minimum wages for unorganized workers, land reforms, restructuring of Centre-State relations and electoral reforms, fight for national unity and against communalism, corruption in high places like Fairfax, German submarine and Bofors deals. The massive campaign, protest rallies and *jathas* were followed by a great Bharat Bandh on March 15, 1988. The nationwide struggles of public sector workers and workers of different industries, the all-India struggles of the peasants and agricultural labourers in September 1988 evoked a unique response. The unity in the fields and factories was accompanied by an effective demonstration of Opposition unity in parliament against the enactment of the 59th Constitution Amendment Act, which constituted a strong threat to the fundamental rights.

A series of corruption scandals in the columns of the Press exposed those who were in authority. Names alleged to be involved in those scandals were mentioned by some of the people very close to the Prime Minister. This led him to rush through the infamous Defamation Bill to gag the Press. It was

resisted by the complete strike by the employees and the employers of the national Press on September 6 which had the support of the entire people, political parties and mass organizations, trade unions and kisan sabhas. The Bill obviously failed to see the light of the day, but was indicative of the extent the government could go to suppress the freedom of the Press in order to cover up its misdeeds.

At a time when among the people of the country there was an earnest desire for Opposition unity to get rid of the Congress(I) regime and prevent the communal forces from taking advantage of the situation, there seemed growing disunity in the Janata Party whose main preoccupation centered on permutations and combinations among the leaders. The merger of four national parties was announced without any programme whatsoever. We welcomed the formation of the National Front. Although it used to suffer from serious weaknesses, it was able to keep the BJP and other communal parties away. We had appealed to the leaders of the secular Opposition parties to understand the gravity of the situation, submit their personal ambitions to the requirements of national interests, forge unity and, in alliance with the Left, develop a challenge to the present regime, and keep the divisive and communal forces at bay. This could be done by leading movements in defence of the interests of the masses, of their democratic rights, and of national unity. Two distinct streams of the Opposition, the right on the one side and the Left and secular forces on the other, emerged— always irreconcilably opposed to each other. Only on rare occasions—that too on limited issues and for short spell—did they come together as in 1976-77 against the rule of Emergency. It is an undeniable fact that some of the secular Opposition parties had reservations on the uncompromising line adopted by the Left towards the BJP and caste-communal parties. The same hesitation on the part of many parties seemed to have been exploited by the BJP today to forge unprincipled alliances.

While mobilizing the masses against the Rajiv Gandhi Government's policy, the Party in cooperation with the Left

forces simultaneously exposed and opposed the communal forces, representing Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communalism and the political parties spreading the communal passions like the BJP and the Jamat-e-Islami. The Party in its campaign focussed attention on the task of defending national unity. Since the days of the freedom movement, such a massive mobilization by the Left in the fight against communal and divisive forces and for the unity of the country had not taken place. Moreover, this struggle was linked with people's fight for democratic advance and expansion of democratic rights for better living conditions. In doing so the Party took notice of the increased political influence and the organizational strength of the BJP, the expanding sphere of activities of the RSS and kept in view the fact that the task of defending national unity in effect requires focussing attention on isolating the BJP and concentrating on exposing its virulent propaganda.

The CPI(M) and the Left forces emerged as the most consistent champions of national unity and it made a deep impression on the broad patriotic forces which were feeling concerned over the growing influence of divisive tendencies. The bourgeois parties' vacillations in the fight against communalism also became evident in the context of this initiative of the Left.

In fighting the challenge of Muslim fundamentalism, the CPI(M) expressed the view that part of the appeal of fundamentalism is due to the fact that the Muslim minority in the country does not enjoy either a sense of security, or a sense of equality and there is in many respects obvious discrimination against them. All this followed from the incapacity of a bourgeois-landlord regime of a newly liberated country to ensure the guaranteed fundamental right of a religious minority. The Party recognized that a successful fight against Islamic fundamentalism cannot be carried out without the relentless defence of the basic rights of the Muslim minority and without our mass intervention when, during riots, they are made the targets of severe attacks. It was because of the Party's regular intervention in earlier years in West Bengal and elsewhere that it had in that State secured the confidence of the minority.

The Party has been in the forefront of the fight against secessionist challenge ever since it raised its head posing a serious threat to country's unity. The Party in West Bengal was able to deal with the secessionist movement in the Darjeeling District and find a solution which protects national unity. This was appreciated by all the patriotic sections of the people. Only our Party understood the crux of the problem i.e., the dual character of the movement, based on the genuine grievances which were utilized by a few secessionist elements. The election results in Darjeeling, however, showed that though the mass of the people had been won over to give up secessionist demands, the calls in the name of ethnic identity still exercised a powerful influence.

The Party also fought the chauvinist, anti-minority and anti-tribal policy of the AGP Government in Assam. In Punjab, our Party and the CPI shared the burden of heavy sacrifices in our fight against Khalistani secessionists. The Party also simultaneously made efforts to mobilize other political parties and the democratic forces to end the impasse in Punjab. But its efforts were sabotaged by the criminal opportunism of the ruling party. Just at a time when the Akali ministry under the moderate leader Shri S.S. Barnala was taking up cudgels against the secessionists and when all parties including the Congress(I) were conducting a joint campaign against secessionism, the Central Government of the Congress(I) dismissed the Barnala ministry with the only objective of wooing the electorate in neighbouring Haryana to install a Congress(I) ministry there. Needless to say that the ascendance of Khalistani propaganda and the vastly expanded theatre of violent activities of terrorists in the late eighties to a great extent was a result of the political myopia of the Congress(I), which led it to the dismiss the Barnala ministry.

The election results in Kerala and West Bengal in early 1987 constituted a stunning defeat for the Congress(I). It was a people's verdict on the opportunistic policies of the Congress(I) party under Rajiv Gandhi's leadership. The Left Front in West Bengal secured a three-fourth majority. This

was the third successive defeat for the Congress(I) with the CPI(M) strength increasing from one election to the next. The Left Front in West Bengal was able to achieve this success, despite the rather difficult situation due to unemployment which followed the closure of jute mills and other engineering concerns. The Congress(I) dared not oust the Left Front Government primarily due to the commendable performances of the West Bengal Government.

Evaluating the West Bengal results positively the Party thought it necessary to further deeply analyse the figures of voting and remove weakness thus revealed. The Party came to the conclusion that securing absolute majority of votes after five years of economic crisis was an outstanding achievement. The election figures also showed that in spite of continuous exposure of the Congress(I) policies in particular its economic policy, its attitude of compromise with divisive and communal forces and its approach on the Gorkhaland issue, it partially gained in industrial areas where big sections of non-Bengali, Hindi and Urdu-speaking workers and other sections reside, though the Congress(I) lost the rural areas. The setback to our influence in our traditional industrial areas was obvious. The Party came to the conclusion that the politicisation of the Hindi-speaking working class had lagged behind. It was also clear that sections of Urdu-speaking Muslim workers had been swayed by the propaganda of the fundamentalists, as well as, that of the Congress(I).

The Left Front victories in West Bengal and Kerala helped in further projecting the Left and democratic alternative at the national level. Following these victories, the CPI(M) and the Left forces were in a position to play a much more meaningful role in the matter of coordinating activities of secular Opposition parties to fight the anti-people measures of the Congress(I).

It was for this reason that the Congress(I) concentrated its attack on the three Left Front Governments of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. In Kerala, the Congress(I), backed by the BJP, the RSS and the bourgeois Press, used every excuse

and every event to rouse sectional and communal feelings against the Left Front Government. The vicious propaganda against the Left Front ministry of West Bengal surpassed all records. Manifestly defamatory statements were made against CPI(M) leaders and ministers and a slanderous offensive was launched against them all because the Congress(I) party in West Bengal was incapable of impressing the masses with any alternative policy.

In Tripura the Congress(I) itself created law and order problems by encouraging the TNV activities. The ally of the Congress(I), the TUJS, worked in close collaboration with the TNV extremists coming from across the Bangladesh borders. Instead of fighting these anti-national elements the Congress(I) used their activities to defame the Left Front ministry and demanded President's rule. The support that the Congress(I) in Tripura got from Rajiv Gandhi and other Congress(I) leaders revealed the utter degeneration of the Congress(I) outlook and policies. The government leaders at the Centre conspired with the separatist TNV to organize a series of murders on the eve of the election, creating the pretext for declaring the whole of the state a "disturbed area" and then deploying the army in the name of "curbing the TNV terrorists". This was followed by rigging of elections, particularly at the stage of counting thereby ensuring an electoral victory for the Congress(I), and the formation of Congress(I)-TUJS Government. The ruling party thereby established a semi-fascist regime in the State unleashing physical attacks, mayhem and murder of the CPI(M) and the Left Front activists. In this cynical game of dislodging Left Front from power, the obvious outcome was a political settlement with the TNV. The CPI(M) and its cadres once again bore the brunt of terror and succeeded against heavy odds in keeping the tribals in the mainstream of national life.

The international situation in relation to rapid developments in erstwhile Soviet Union and East European countries was of grave concern for the forces of socialism, peace and freedom worldwide. This Volume contains documents which

explain our correct and timely assessment of the changing situation.

It was explained in the previous Volumes that the CPI(M) stands unswervingly with its independent assessment of the concrete situation by applying concretely the science of Marxism-Leninism. This basic position that can in no way be compromised, has distanced us from the two big contingents of world Communist movement, CPC and CPSU, for long. It was during sixties that the observations of Comrade Rajni Palme Dutt proved to be prophetic. At the time of the formation of the CPI(M), Comrade Rajni Palme Dutt had extended his valuable observations to us that once the Party gains the confidence and support of the people, Communist parties from all over the world would be interested in forging relations with us. By then, since we had emerged as a leading Left force of the country, a large number of overseas parties had established relations with us.

The rapid developments on the international plane, witnessed in the mid-eighties, were followed by even faster changes in the subsequent period. The USSR persisted with its efforts, through ever-new proposals, to prevent the disaster of a nuclear war. In February 1987 USSR came out with proposals to remove medium-range missiles from Europe. These proposals were also vital for peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region. The year 1986, which was declared the '**International Year of Peace**' by the U.N., was dominated by the theme of unilateral Soviet moratorium on nuclear tests. The U.S., however, went on with new tests and the building of its 'Star War' project. Subsequently, an agreement was reached between USSR and USA to eliminate all medium and short-range missiles from Europe. The Party hailed this agreement though it did not cover more than 4 to 5 per cent of the nuclear weaponry. As a result of the consistent policy of peace followed by the USSR and other socialist countries and the role played by the world-wide peace movement which led to an increased awareness of the nuclear threat all over the world, U.S. imperialism found itself isolated internationally. And

though the U.S. had not given up its efforts to blackmail the socialist and other peace-loving countries, it was forced to take the course of dialogue and negotiations.

Assessing the world situation the Party noted:

“It would not be wrong to state that in spite of efforts by U.S. imperialism to gain superiority in nuclear weapons, a change in the correlation of forces has taken place, which is capable of averting nuclear war. This is because of the strength of the peace-loving forces, which unite the socialist countries, the non-aligned movement, the world peace movement and even sections of the ruling circles in the imperialist countries.”

The change in the correlation of forces in favour of peace made possible a series of measures to settle local conflicts. Such were, for example, the Geneva Agreement on Afghanistan, the cease-fire in the eight-year-old war between Iraq and Iran and the agreement on the independence of Namibia.

The rapid developments inside Soviet Union, in particular the programme of perestroika in the socio-economic life of the country, attracted a great deal of attention of the entire mankind and particularly of various segments of the international Communist movement. Our Party paid attentions to these developments and discussed both socio-economic as well as political-ideological issues involved and expressed its opinion. In November 1987 a Party Central Committee delegation attended the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution in Moscow where the CPSU General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev made a report. Our delegation was of the view that the report marked a major deviation in the understanding of the Central Committee of the CPSU about the international situation and the tasks of the international Communist movement. We informed the Central Committee of the CPSU about our disagreement on the assessment of the situation and they agreed to hold discussions with us on these issues. We also briefed the Communist Party of Vietnam, Japanese Communist Party, Communist Party of USA and Communist Party of Cuba about our views on the report. After

a few days, a delegation of our Party visited Moscow and had discussions with the representatives of the CPSU on this subject. But we could not reach any agreement.

The Central Committee of our Party in May 1988 adopted a detailed resolution titled **"On Certain Ideological Questions"** which contained our evaluation of the position taken in the Report on the 70th anniversary. This resolution was circulated for inner-Party discussion.

The Central Committee in this resolution reviewed the main controversies in the international Communist movement since the 1957 Communist Parties' Conference and explained the stand of the CPI(M) at various stages. The Central Committee resolution said that Gorbachev's presentation of the world situation sought to make a case for growing modification of the contradiction of the period, for avoiding confrontation between the people and imperialism and suggested ways in which the interests of the people and the working class could be reconciled with the interests of imperialists and capitalists. The Gorbachev Report put forth a new concept of growing interdependence and integrated relations of the two worlds, the socialist and the imperialist. The resolution said that the internationalization of economic ties is not taking place on terms of equality and it only provides opportunities to imperialists for further exploitation of the rest of the world. The scientific and technological revolution was also a weapon of domination in the hands of the advanced countries. Discussing the new concept of Gorbachev about the Third World countries' relations with the imperialist countries, the resolution noted that according to Gorbachev the choice is that the Third World countries **"must tolerate exploitation of the imperialist countries and should not think of creating a disaster by trying to liquidate the relations of exploitation"**. The resolution further said :

"The analysis (contained in the Gorbachev Report) keeps the Third World masses out of the picture of international situation and helps the governments of these countries to strike a deal with imperialism in the name

of equally balancing the interests of all. The analysis will result in giving a wrong direction to the international movement, to ignore the mass struggle in the Third World countries, ignore parties, including Communist parties leading the struggles and consider the compromising governments of these countries as the sole representative of the people". In August 1988 the Central Committee adopted a resolution titled **"On developments in the Soviet Union"**, taking into consideration in particular the discussions and resolutions of the 20th CPSU Conference. This resolution stated that the developments in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries had to be understood in the background of political problems faced by the Communist parties. In 1986, the Central Committee had supported the decisions of the Twentyseventh Congress of the CPSU in a general way upholding expansion of democracy and restructuring of economic management. The concrete proposals advanced at the Twentieth CPSU Conference were however presented in the context of, at times, a total negation of entire course of the CPSU. The guiding role of Marxism-Leninism and the leading role of the Party were an essential condition in social transformation, which stood negated in the conclusions of the conference.

The August 1988 Central Committee resolution had provided a framework to assess the then recent developments in the Soviet Union. It had noted that CPI(M) realized that advance of socialism in any country must be accompanied with increased initiative of the masses both in running the economy and the State. With the development of socialism it was also necessary to strengthen the roots of democracy while adhering to the science of Marxism-Leninism and preserving the role of the Party as a leading force in the society.

Held in this national and international backdrop, the Thirteenth Party Congress that met in Trivandrum from December 27, 1988 to January 1, 1989 analysed the concrete situation and formulated the immediate tasks this way:

"It will be appropriate to recapitulate the concrete

conditions under which we have to discharge our immediate tasks while working for the objective of our class alternative.

(i) The contradiction between the bourgeois-landlord rule and the Indian people has further sharpened. At present it manifests itself through isolation of the ruling party and sharpened opposition of the people towards it. It gets intensified through the effects of the economic policies of the ruling party and the economic crisis.

(ii) The contradiction between imperialism and the Indian people has sharpened demanding a firm policy of non-alignment. The non-aligned policy still stands but is under pressure.

(iii) The ruling party meets the growing anger of the people by resorting to authoritarian measures.

(iv) Its economic policies facilitate easy penetration of foreign capital and multinationals endangering the independence of the economy.

(v) Divisive, secessionist and communal forces have launched an intense offensive against national unity exploiting the prevailing discontent and the failure of the Rajiv Government to combat them.

(vi) The battle for national unity has to be carried on by the Left and democratic and patriotic forces.

(vii) The sharpening of the conflict between the bourgeoisie and landlords aggravates the agrarian situation.

(viii) The economic crisis aggravates Centre-State relations and leads to further erosion of Congress(I) influence. Opportunistic forces use the situation for divisive purposes.

(ix) The isolation of the Congress(I) is creating conditions for its electoral defeat but the class limitation of the bourgeois Opposition parties and their opportunistic attitude to the BJP hinder the process of consolidating the anti-Congress(I) secular and democratic forces.

(x) The CPI(M) and the Left forces have increased their influence in national politics. This calls for strengthening Left unity without which there is every possibility of a major part of the mass discontent petering out or being exploited by reactionary forces.

(xi) A mass upsurge is fast developing all over the country. It is the task of the Left and the CPI(M) to guide and centralize it to change the correlation of class forces.

(xii) It is only by intervening in the present situation, by defeating the Congress(I) in the next elections and frustrating all attempts of the communalists and pro-imperialist forces that the revolutionary forces can march ahead and strengthen the struggle for Left and democratic unity.

(xiii) The Party must play its role by its initiative and unifying capacity.

“It is under these conditions that the Party has to discharge its immediate tasks and link them with the struggle for a Left and democratic front. The immediate task is to secure the ousting of the Rajiv Government in the coming elections while protecting the unity and integrity of the country against the divisive designs of imperialism and the secessionist and communal forces. There can be no compromise with these forces and popular victory in the elections must result in their rejection and repudiation. It is necessary therefore to mobilize all the bourgeois Opposition secular forces and the Left forces for a common fight against this government of national disintegration and authoritarian attacks.

“It is necessary to continue to strengthen Left unity and increase its weight in national politics by increased mass activities among all sections of the people.

“It is necessary to increase the political activities of the Party, its activities to fight the destabilization designs of imperialism, communalist and secessionist forces, in defence of non-aligned foreign policy and overcome the weakness of bourgeois Opposition parties in this respect. It is necessary to popularize the achievements of the Left Front Governments and defend them against the attacks of the ruling party. It is further necessary to strengthen our independent mass activities in defence of the interests of the common man, strengthen the unity and activities of the mass organizations and promote growing unity in action with mass organizations belonging to other Left parties. This all-sided struggle is to

be linked to the struggle to build up the Left and democratic front.”

The Thirteenth Party Congress also reviewed the situation of the Party organization since the Central Committee Plenum of 1978 on organization. There had been a three-fold increase in the Party membership i.e. from 1,61,000 to 4,65,000. The membership of the mass organizations led by the Party had increased 21-fold from 0.223 million to 4.8 million.

Reviewing the shortcomings, the Political-Organizational report of the Thirteenth Congress stated:

“While the Party membership has grown considerably in the last three years it still lags behind the growing influence of the Party among the people. The work of Party building and consolidating of our mass influence has to be stepped up in a big way. While the mass organizations have registered notable progress during this period they are still far from what they should be if they are to be in a position to play their vital role in the developing national politics. The entire Party should pay serious attention to implementing the correct relations between the Party and mass organizations to ensure their proper development. The Party has to pay priority attention to the requirement of Party members from the working class and systematic work to develop cadres amongst them. There is to be planned recruitment from the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, women and minorities. The Party committees must pay serious attention to the systematic re-education of the old and educating the new members of the Party. The Party has to step up in a big way its agitation and propaganda activities independently and through its publications. These and other tasks outlined in the Salkia Report and Resolutions on Organization adopted in 1978 should be carried out. This alone will guarantee steady advance in the radicalization of our national politics, further consolidation of the ties between the Party and the working class and the general mass of secular democratic forces.”

CHAPTER
XXIV

Formation of National Front Government
and the Role of CPI(M)

This Volume covering political events from 1989 to 1991 will be valuable to anyone concerned with understanding the position of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in relation to the contemporary political instability : two general elections in quick succession in India, shocking upheavals in the Soviet Union and East European countries, the turmoil which erupted in China following the Tiananmen Square incidents. How did the Party maintain its independent line? How did it show its maturity in formulating its ideological stand and line of action? How did it discharge its responsibilities in leading the daily struggle of the masses against the onslaught of the bourgeois-landlord classes on living conditions, democracy and national unity? The documents in this Volume provide the answers, which remain great lessons for today and tomorrow.

The global situation in this period had been one of the most stormy and difficult for the Communist movement, the forces of national liberation and the class movement since the end of the Second World War. All at once in this short spell, the dismantling of the Soviet Union preceded by the setback to socialism in Eastern Europe overturned the world balance of forces in favour of imperialism. It is appropriate now to call to mind with fairness that all of us in the international Communist movement failed to grasp the underlying implications at a moment when significant changes began taking place in those countries—which was why all were taken aback

by the cataclysmic events at the first instance. It had grave and far-reaching consequences for the socialist countries, the Third World, the Communist and the general democratic, anti-imperialist movement. It had its repercussions on the national political scene too.

Turning to the national aspects, our repeated warnings that the new economic policy of Rajiv Gandhi Government with its emphasis on import liberalization, call for competitiveness of industry, attack on the powerful base of the public sector, new openings to foreign capital detrimental to our self-reliance would engender growing dependence of our economy on imperialists, were precisely proved to be true. The vulnerability to outside pressure increased because of, one, our growing foreign indebtedness in order to finance unproductive expenditure and huge budget deficit accompanied by stringent conditionalities of the World Bank-International Monetary Fund; two, weakening of the forces of socialism by the events in USSR and Eastern Europe that elated the new imperialist offensive. A terrible situation was created by the government for the lakhs thrown out of employment, for the crores engaged in the unorganized industry, for the lakhs and lakhs of unemployed youth and for vast rural masses.

Outstanding was the rising tide of struggles of the workers and peasants, students, youth and women, not to speak of the on-growing general democratic movement to press the demands such as: resignation of the Rajiv Gandhi Government and bringing to book those who had jeopardized the security of the country through corrupt defence deals; defence of national unity, protection of minority rights and isolation of communal and separatist forces; resistance to imperialist pressure on the Indian economy, curb on price rise and making the "right to work" a fundamental right; an immediate end to closures, lockouts and retrenchments, and reopening of all closed factories; implementation of land reforms, remunerative prices for peasants' produce; minimum wages for agricultural workers and other unorganized labour; end to atrocities on scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and

women; a stop to discrimination against non-Congress(I) State governments and encroachment on the States' existing powers; more power to the States.

The mounting nationwide struggle especially pressing the demand for radical land reform through demonstrations and *dharnas* from May 25, 1989, the strike-struggles in different industries and all streams of movements converged into a Bharat Bandh backed by all important trade unions of the country except INTUC and BMS on August 30, 1989 that found unprecedented response nation-wide. It was followed by a massive rally in Delhi on September 25, 1989 called by the Left parties. At a time when on November 9, 1989 the date of general election was announced, the aggressive communal campaign of RSS-VHP-BJP-Shiv Sena-Bajrang Dal combine was reaching a climax at Ayodhya in the name of Ramjanmabhoomi Shilanyas at a disputed site with the permission of the Congress(I) Government disregarding court directives while thousands of people, at the call of the Left parties, raised their voice of defending communal harmony and secularism only a few kilometres away. The damage because of communal frenzy could be gauged by the fact that during September and October of 1989 alone, riots took place at as many as 55 places in Northern and Southern India. At a time when communal forces were fanning communal passions in the name of the Ramjanmabhoomi, the move of the Rajiv Government and the State Government led by Congress(I) had appeased and encouraged them in a big way, thus the communalization of politics had started worsening the situation further. On November 9 two other persons who had reached Ayodhya were the Janata Dal President, V.P. Singh who had resigned from the Rajiv Government and joined the forces of Opposition, and veteran Congress leader Kamalapati Tripathi. They contributed to the struggle for communal harmony by taking a definite stand against RSS-VHP-BJP designs although they did not attend the Left rally.

Earlier, in order to suppress the truth on the Bofors pay-offs the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his cohorts were

resorting to stonewalling tactics and clumsy cover-ups with the unprecedented majority in Parliament, which was exposed by the Comptroller and Auditor-Generals' report. Since the Prime Minister had not responded to the legitimate demand for his resignation for many charges of omissions and commissions, the Lok Sabha members of the entire Opposition resigned which prompted him in the long run to declare general election for the ninth Lok Sabha in November in a surcharged communal atmosphere.

The vacillations in the National Front-Janata Dal combine sought to be utilized by the communal forces led by BJP had compounded the pre-election scenario. The CPI(M) in its Election Manifesto stated, "To combat Congress(I) claims, it is necessary to unite all the Left and democratic and secular forces and all sections of the fighting masses. The CPI(M) considers that united stand and common understanding between the Left parties and the secular Opposition parties represented by the National Front and Janata Dal and isolating all communal parties like the BJP will ensure the defeat and the rout of the Congress(I) and at the same time protect national unity". The Congress(I) led by Rajiv Gandhi was engaged in competing with the communal BJP to woo Hindu votes for which they had to pay a heavy price.

Of the three objectives the CPI(M) and the Left had set, the first one had been achieved with the defeat of the Congress(I) which had about 425 seats in the Eighth Lok Sabha, and had been reduced to 200. Of these, the bulk comes from the South. In this regard the pattern seemed to be somewhat similar to that in 1977. In so far as the second objective, that of isolating the communal forces is concerned, the Left did not succeed fully. One positive element in the elections, however, was that in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the two major States, people had not allowed themselves to be swerved along communal line even though every effort was made by the BJP and its ilk to vitiate the communal atmosphere. While fighting the Congress(I) misrule and misdeeds, the people had not fallen prey to the intensely communal BJP propaganda.

Whatever the BJP gained, had been on the strength of its adjustment with the Janata Dal, where the two were fighting each other, the BJP had lost.

In this regard, the example of the Faizabad parliamentary seat is especially significant. It was from here that Rajiv Gandhi started his election campaign with a promise of "Ram Rajya" in the next five years. It was from Ayodhya in this very constituency that the BJP-RSS-VHP sought to influence the national politics in their favour. Here, the BJP even withdrew its candidate in favour of the Congress(I) nominee. But yet nobody could prevent the victory of the CPI candidate from Faizabad, supported by the CPI(M) and the Janata Dal. Moreover, in Akbarpur Assembly constituency, which is adjacent to the Faizabad parliamentary constituency, the CPI(M) nominee came out with flying colours. The principal stand of the Left parties and Janata Dal on the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi issue and their exposure of the dual game played by the Congress(I), also played a big role in influencing the people who, by and large, voted for the Opposition. Another contributory factor was the Bhagalpur and other riots, which completely exposed the Congress(I) as well as the RSS-BJP-VHP combine.

Coming to the third objective of strengthening Left forces in Parliament, it is true that, the poll results fell short of what Left had expected. Yet in West Bengal, in spite of all its efforts, the Congress(I) lost very heavily, not to talk of making any dent. Even in terms of votes polled, there seemed to be a shift away from the Congress(I). It is the CPI(M) and the Left which had gained in West Bengal, and the State remains their stronghold, playing a very significant role in the body-politic of the country.

Tripura was a different story. In terms of mass support, the State has always been a stronghold of the CPI(M) and the Left. But in the 1988 Assembly polls, they were prevented from coming back to power by the Congress(I) which unashamedly rigged the elections with the help of the para-military forces, and also joined hands with the secessionist TNV

to come to power. They again used these methods in the same elections. Even though concrete instances of booth capturing were given to the Election Commission, the latter did not do anything.

Overall, the Left had much improved its position in the elections, and had been assigned an important role in the future set-up of the country. Even though the objective of a government of the secular forces supported by the Left had not been achieved, it was for the first time since independence that the Government would have to depend on the Left support.

The concrete situation at the national level was that even though what the Left desired had not been fully achieved, the Congress(I) had been defeated which was an important event in itself. The complexity of the situation took such a shape that the National Front and the Janata Dal formed the government with the support of both the Left and the BJP. There could not be any coalition in such a situation because of serious divergences between the standpoint of the Left and that of the BJP. On its part the Left decided not to impose its views, it expected the BJP also not to do so which they agreed at that moment. We supported the National Front-Janata Dal Government with the declared expectation that the government would be running on the basis of its own election manifesto, which, in the opinion of the Left provided sufficient grounds for effecting relief to the people. With the Left parties categorically ruling out their support to any ministry in which BJP would be a participant, the BJP was left with no other alternative but to support the National Front ministry from outside. It went on record on the floor of Parliament that though it had its differences with the National Front-Janata Dal combine on certain crucial issues like Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, scrapping of Art. 370 of the Constitution and the Minority Commission it would not force these issues and bring them to the forefront. With similar gesture the government led by V.P. Singh was required to fulfil its pledges it offered to the people during the election. The CPI(M)

and the Left were committed to play the role of a watchdog that would not allow any reversal of policy in the rightist direction.

The anti-Congress mood of the people continued unabated. Within three months of the verdict of the people against the Congress(I) in the Lok Sabha elections, eight States and a Union territory run by the Congress(I) went to the polls on February 27, 1990. Except in the tiny State of Arunachal Pradesh, the Congress(I) was humiliated, the strength of its Legislative Assembly members was reduced from 1120 to 396, which was even worse than the results of the Lok Sabha elections. The strength of the Congress(I) as well as the BJP could have been further reduced if the Janata Dal had gone in for an overall understanding with the Left, like in Orissa. Where the Left was weak and the Janata Dal pursued an opportunist policy in having an understanding with the BJP, the latter with its communal appeal succeeded to an extent in rallying the people behind it.

The CPI(M) and the Left welcomed some of the performances of the National Front Government such as: inclusion by a constitutional amendment of all Land Reform Acts in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution, proposed legislation of Prasar Bharati Bill, the Lok Pal Bill and electoral reforms, upgrading of the commission for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, setting up of Inter-State Council, new orientation to improve Centre-State relations, change in the attitude of the Centre towards Left governments. But the carry-over of the economic policy and industrial policy of the Congress(I) Government which had landed the country in a serious crisis was resented. The CPI(M) and the Left organized nationwide movement against price-rise, unemployment and other burning issues.

After initial cohesiveness of unitedly fulfilling their promises to the people, the Janata Dal and the National Front showed rivalries, and group interests took precedence over collective functioning.

For years Kashmir, Punjab, and Assam problems were

threatening the very unity and integrity of the country, the spectre of Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue had been haunting the whole country. As if this was not enough, another dangerous dimension relating to anti-reservation movement had been added to the general conflagration. Both the BJP and the Congress(I) activists were actively competing to lead the anti-reservation agitation.

For such outbursts, the government had also its share of blame. The Mandal Commission submitted its report a decade before. Though the National Front-Janata Dal had promised to implement the recommendations, it did not take all the political parties into confidence before placing it on the floor of the Parliament. Howsoever, neither those who advocate reservations without restraint nor those who oppose reservations on the plea that it perpetuates casteism do never outline the need for building of unity of the toiling people who suffer from both caste and economic oppression in order to march forward to the goal of agrarian revolution.

Before the violent situation arising out of the anti-reservation agitation cooled down, the country was faced with a very critical situation, for the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi issue had occupied the centre-stage with the intransigent stand of the BJP that its *Rath Yatra*, which had created communal tension all over the country, must be allowed to proceed to Ayodhya and the temple be constructed at the disputed site on October 30, 1990. Unashamedly flouting its promises on the floor of Parliament that it would not raise the bogey of communal slogans while lending support to the V.P. Singh Government, it started, within months, raising communal passion to a yet another pitch, leaving in its trail death and destruction on an unprecedented scale. The BJP refused to heed the reasoned appeal of the National Integration Council, the resolution of both Houses of Parliament and the all-parties meeting. After discussions with some of the BJP leaders, the government came out with a three-point formula : a) taking possession of the whole disputed area; b) to allow construction of the temple on undisputed territory; c) reference to the

Supreme Court for an opinion on the dispute. With scant respect to public opinion and contempt for the court order, the VHP-RSS-BJP, however, were adamant and declared to go ahead with their sinister plans. On the other hand, a fundamentalist section of the minority, Babri Masjid Action Committee was also instigating the people against each other in reciprocation.

The Left Parties held a massive rally at Lucknow on October 12 to mobilize the public opinion against the dark forces of communalism, to uphold peace and communal harmony. The Congress(I) had again exposed itself with its irresponsible and opportunistic role by keeping away from the all-party meeting to score petty political gains. Since the V.P. Singh Government depended on the support of the Left and the BJP, the latter thought it a chance of a lifetime to revive the Ram temple issue and achieve demolition of Babri Masjid. Standing firm in his commitment to the defence of secular edifice of the country, however, V.P. Singh and a major section of the Janata Dal withstood the pressure from within and did not succumb to the blackmailing tactics of the BJP from outside. Commendable was thus the role of the V.P. Singh led government at the Centre, the Janata Dal governments in U.P. and Bihar which blocked the way and accepted the challenge of the VHP-RSS-BJP, resulting in the BJP's withdrawal of support from the V.P. Singh Government.

At such a moment when the unity of all the Left, democratic and secular forces was of the utmost importance, the opportunistic combination of the Congress(I), BJP and the Janata Dal dissidents led by Chandra Shekhar brought down the eleven-month-old V.P. Singh Government which, against the dangerous challenge of the VHP-RSS-BJP, staked its government in defence of national unity. Sacrificing the prime national cause of secularism, the Congress(I) installed a minority government of Shri Chandra Shekhar defying the mandate of the people who had elected them to fight the Congress(I). Throughout the month of October and November, the country witnessed innumerable massive rallies and

processions against communalism, defence of national unity, social justice, and upholding of parliamentary democracy organized jointly by the Left and the Janata Dal.

It was no wonder that the Chandra Shekhar Government depending solely on Congress(I) support could not last long. Its life depended on what particular time the Congress(I) would find suitable for going in for elections. That came true in March, 1991 when the Congress(I) led by Rajiv Gandhi collapsed the defector's government. The country witnessed Rajiv Gandhi and his party Congress(I)'s despicable manoeuvres of seeking power through the backdoor and avoidance of facing the people and elections. The CPI(M), the Left and the National Front demanded fresh elections which was held in the third week of May after a long sordid drama of the Congress(I).

There were three electoral formations, one led by Congress(I), another led by BJP and the third one by the combination of the Left parties and the secular Opposition parties represented by the National Front and Janata Dal, the latter being perceived by the people as the sole alternative.

A joint appeal to the people on behalf of the National Front-Left on the eve of the election assumed great importance. The National Front suffered a setback and was weakened due to defections and disruptions. Yet the combination raised hopes among the people. The joint appeal stated: "The dark forces of communalism are making a bid to divide the country on religious lines spelling grave dangers to the country's unity. The forces inimical to democracy seek to impose authoritarianism, which will endanger parliamentary democracy, and they do not hesitate to opportunistically align with the divisive forces. The Congress(I) represents authoritarianism and anti-people policies. The BJP is bent upon misusing religion to divide the people. Both these parties are pursuing such disruptive politics at a time when the country and the people are suffering from serious economic crisis.

"It is of enormous significance that at this juncture, for the first time, there has emerged a cohesive and nation-wide alternative in the form of National Front-Left parties alliance."

The forces of the Left in combination with the National Front provided a formidable challenge to the Congress(I) and the BJP. A few years before, the people could not have envisaged such a scenario. This combine created great enthusiasm among the people as evident during the election campaign. But in a campaign unprecedented for violence, acrimony and ferocity, the secular forces failed to stem the BJP.

After the first phase of election out of the three phases, the Congress(I) President and former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated during his election tour in Tamil Nadu. The dastardly crime, committed by the enemies of the Indian people, had been condemned by all shades of political opinion. The preceding few years had been witness to the menacing rise of divisive, separatist, communal and fissiparous forces in the country. American imperialism, bent upon destabilizing and dismembering the country has been actively intervening for a long time by aiding and abetting these forces. A strong and united India, an independent and developing India, has been perceived as a threat to the manoeuvres of the United States of America. World events have had enough undeniable facts in store to prove that even the minutest of threats to imperialist interests in pursuance of its aim is met with terror, threat, pressure and force. It was in this background that we viewed the assassination of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, although seemingly, in the later case the crime was committed only through the designs of the Sri Lankan extremists.

The Central Committee of our Party that met in June 22, 1991, reviewed the Tenth General Elections and formulated the immediate tasks in post-election situation. It underlined the factors that led to none of the three combinations getting a majority and made a self-critical review which was important because of the flexible and suitable tactics we had adopted in such a situation. It was explained that "the question of a National Government, mooted by the then President after Rajiv's assassination, has been categorically rejected by us and the National Front. Since the Congress(I) has emerged as the largest single party, it will form the government. The CPI(M)

along with the Left and the National Front should sit in the Opposition. The Congress(I) along with its allies will form the government but they will be short of a majority. Our attitude to the government's policies will have to be decided, judging issue to issue and specific policies.

“... Our approach would mean no compromise on the issues which affect the interest of the masses. While skillfully using the floor of the parliament to advance the cause of the working people, we must concentrate on developing the movements of the workers, peasants, youth, students, women, and other toiling sections. We must firmly resist those policies that will throw the burden of the economic crisis on the common people. The BJP will try to exploit the discontent to disruptive channels. We must be vigilant to see that this does not succeed.”

The minority Congress(I) led government, several weeks after assuming office, showed its inclination to surrender to the World Bank-IMF dictates posing a grave threat to the economic sovereignty of the country which had become a big issue, and the Left and the National Front started countrywide campaigns against it starting from August 15 that culminated into the massive march in Delhi on September 27. The next important stage of the mass protest action was the successful all-India industrial strike at the call of the central trade unions on November 29. In the next few months, this movement had become more widespread against the Congress(I) Government's mischief and against the growing threat of communalism.

Refusing to draw any lesson from its own experience of compromising with communal forces in the past, the Congress(I) started once again bargaining and striking deals with the BJP on one question or the other. There were meeting grounds and similarity of approach between the Congress(I) and the BJP on the question of economic policies too. While the BJP would put up some show of opposition to the new economic, trade and industrial policies of the Congress(I) Government, in actual practice, they were pleased to note that

the Congress(I) was pursuing the very same policies they had been advocating since mid-fifties. Liberalization of trade, giving up of self-reliance, 51% equity participation to the multi-nationals, devaluation of the rupee, etc., carried out at the behest of the IMF-WB, had received a general support from the BJP. Even more interesting was the declaration of one of the topmost leaders of the BJP that it was the Congress(I) Government, which hijacked the economic policy of the BJP.

With the economic crisis further deepening, the mass of the Indian people was growingly confronted with a further cut into their already miserable living conditions. Alongside, a further onslaught on the country's unity and integrity, the intensification of BJP's campaign for Hindu Rastra had shouldered a great responsibility on the Left and secular forces to organize a multi-pronged battle that could only ensure a new orientation in the political scene of the country.

On the international scene, progressive forces throughout the world were watching the unfolding events in the Soviet Union with concern, anxiety and anguish. To us, the Communists, who had witnessed in this period the East European countries rolling back to the path of capitalism, the events taking place in the USSR that led to the dismantling of socialism and break-up of Soviet Union was yet another worst tragedy in history.

In the early eighties, it is well known, the Communist Party had lost its grip over the working class and the people in Poland in a situation of accumulated ideological disorientation and distortions, opening the floodgate to the counter-revolutionary forces. The Communist Party was, at the beginning of those developments, forced to enter into a coalition government with the so-called Solidarity whose leadership was financed and openly supported by the imperialists. Next came the demise of socialism in Hungary in the late eighties when the Communist Party and had been dissolved and the majority had decided to call itself Hungarian Socialist Party, had asked for U.S. help, declared for market economy, an easy walk-over for the capitalist system. The setback to socialism

in these two countries was the biggest triumph scored by imperialism since the victory against the Nazi aggression. Yet the international Communist movement failed to gauge the gravity of the impending danger. There had been no sense of solidarity with the working class that was betrayed and defeated.

The same tendency was in evidence in relation to counter-revolutionary struggle in China in May-June, 1989 treating the offensive of the counter-revolutionary forces backed by the imperialists as an internal matter of China. While the Chinese revolution was attacked internally and externally, while the world imperialism was unitedly throwing its weight to aid and abet the counter-revolutionaries, the international Communist movement stood confused, divided and disorganized.

It was in this situation our Central Committee meeting July 15-17, 1989, discussed these developments in People's China and concluded that, "No person with a minimum class consciousness could miss the significance of world media support to the rebellion. Which kind of democracy this media has been supporting on a world scale. Its main business has been to denounce all revolutionary agitations and defend the global interests of imperialism. The fact that this media was whole-heartedly supporting the student agitation should have made it clear to all, the class content of the movement. If there was any doubt it should have been dispelled when one imperialist country after another started condemning China and its success against the counter-revolutionary forces. Media propaganda about mowing down of hundreds of students was now followed by threatening postures and threats from the entire imperialist gang. Never in the recent past did the imperialist camp show such unanimity and oneness of purpose as in denouncing China and intimidating it to conciliate with the rebels."

And further, "Today the entire bourgeois world and the forces of world reaction are trying to isolate People's China for the 'crime' of defeating the counter-revolution. The CPC requires strong support and sympathy of all Marxist-Leninist

Parties and progressive forces. There is no doubt that in the coming months as things clear up the present day critics of China will understand that they were misled by imperialist propaganda and once again there will be a line-up of the world democratic forces in support of People's China and the CPC."

Imperialism had never been reconciled to the existence of socialism which, from one country to the other, went on to embrace as much as one third of humanity. Socialism posed a serious challenge to imperialist design for global hegemony and put an end to the exploitation of man by man in the socialist countries. With the changed correlation of class forces on the international plane in the post-Second World War period, imperialism failed in its attempts to defeat socialism. However, taking advantage of the distortions and deviations in building socialism, it launched a propaganda blitzkrieg, that socialism has failed, that Marxism-Leninism has no relevance, and that capitalism represents the ultimate stage in the evolution of human history. It assisted the forces that were unleashed in the wake of the reforms initiated in the Soviet Union.

Embarking on an uncharted path, it was but natural that errors and mistakes be committed while building socialism. But deviations and distortions in socialist construction, of a very serious nature, had taken place giving rise to stagnation and a bureaucratic style of functioning. Even while parity and superiority was established in military and space technology, scientific and technological developments in other fields were neglected. In the sphere of polity, whereas socialist democracy envisaged a higher level and stage, in reality as it existed in the socialist countries, it was far behind. It was therefore natural that reforms, both in the sphere of the economy and polity, had become a necessity. But the reforms initiated instead of strengthening and consolidating socialism and helping in overcoming the distortions and deviations were to compound the matters further. It released forces inimical and opposed to socialism that were to eventually lead to present-day developments.

We, of the CPI(M), have been critical of the CPSU at

various points of time. We had lambasted the revisionist doctrines propped up by Khrushchev in the fifties that set a chain reaction throughout the Communist world particularly in the Third World countries. We had pin-pointed their mishandling of the Sino-Soviet relations and their erroneous understanding of the international situation. When Gorbachev propounded the theory of "modification of contradictions", we were sharply critical of it. These criticisms were based on our understanding of Marxism-Leninism, from the standpoint of a fraternal party giving expression to its opinion to the other. However, there is an imperative need to evaluate the revolutionary changes in the twentieth century with all the victories and defeats, advances and setbacks.

Though initially we had welcomed the reforms in the economy and polity in order to overcome the lags in socialist construction, we expressed our apprehensions on the measures employed to overcome them. Subsequent events vindicated our fears and instead of consolidating socialism, forces inimical to socialism were unleashed which, emboldened and strengthened by imperialist support, were determining the course of events in the Soviet Union. When the Emergency Committee took over the reins on August 19, 1991, we had hoped that they would be able to stall this slide to disaster. Our position was in conformity with our position to defend socialism and against imperialism. It was dictated by the circumstances under which they took over power, it was an expression of the desire of the overwhelming majority of our ranks, who saw in the reforms initiated by Gorbachev a rolling back to capitalism and disintegration of the socialist USSR.

Their foreign policy based on the theory of modification of contradictions resulted in being detrimental to the interests of the developing countries. The policy pursued saw an emboldened U.S. bulldozing the Third World countries into submission, the virtual destruction of Iraq at the hands of the U.S., a weakening of the Arab League and the Organization of African States and the Non-Aligned Movement. The balance of forces, now altered, see the aggressive drive of the

U.S. to establish its hegemony worldwide. The people inhabiting the former Soviet Republics were then confronted with the reality of the snatching away of rights they had hitherto enjoyed as citizens of the Socialist State. The rights to work, to housing, to education, to health care—in all these they were deprived of exploitation of man by man. Misery and destitution, unknown to the present generation, staged a comeback.

The Third World countries, which had already had a taste of these implications even before the latest developments took place, are now facing greater dangers, with U.S. imperialism running amuck.

The Indian media fed on a diet of anti-Communism has been echoing the voice of imperialism for long. It launched a tirade against the Left parties when they cautioned against the economic sovereignty of the country being compromised at the dictates of the IMF and the World Bank. The very same media was glorifying the “demise” of Communism and the Soviet Union, hailing them as positive developments. The anti-Communist Press and forces of India have been seeking to obliterate the immense contribution of socialism to the material and intellectual development of human civilization in the 20th century. They want the Indian people to forget that it was on account of the assistance rendered by the Soviet Union that we were hitherto able to resist imperialist pressure. Can they mislead our people to believe that the Soviet Union has not contributed in laying the foundations of our economy, its industrial base? Do they presume that we will forget that were it not for the cautioning of the Soviet Union, the U.S. ships would have reached our shores during the Indo-Pak war of 1965 and 1971? The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Peace had not only checked imperialist intervention in the country but also contributed immensely to safeguarding our independence and sovereignty.

The Communist movement, right from its inception, had to confront stiff resistance and attacks. In many countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia, Communists were beheaded and mercilessly massacred in their lakhs. Indescribable was

the brutal massacre of the Communists by the Nazis. Volume upon volume can be written of the ruthless torture, of the trials and tribulations, of the trying times through which the people enlightened by the science of Marxism-Leninism had to pass in the sacred task of establishing a society free from exploitation of man by man. The indomitable spirit, which they imbibed, armed them with the weapon to walk the thorny path with ease. It is this determination and dedication, which would not deter them from the chosen path, even when faced with the gallows and sure death.

Ups and downs, onward march and setbacks have all been part and parcel of our movement. In India, we had to face ruthless suppression of the British imperialists. When the British Union Jack was brought down, the State organ of the bourgeois-landlord ruling classes carried on this task. More than a thousand of our comrades were killed in cold blood during the semi-fascist terror in West Bengal. Our comrades in Tripura confronted terror of the most barbaric type. Thousands of others courted martyrdom in working class, peasant, youth, student, women and agricultural workers' struggles in various parts of the country. All these have steeled us in our determination to put an end to this system of exploitation; added strength to our dedication and devotion to the working class movement; kept the fire alive within us against our class enemy.

The events and developments in the Soviet Union, far from being a repudiation of the science of Marxism-Leninism, vindicate the fears and apprehensions that we had expressed, basing ourselves on this very science. The rich experience thus gained would arm us in our struggle to usher in a society free from exploitation of man by man. The science of Marxism-Leninism and the ideals of socialism are invincible.

In the midst of such a distressing situation, it was gladdening to note that the Communist parties of China, Vietnam, Cuba and the Workers Party of Korea had also declared that they would continue to adhere to socialism and the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism. There were some

other parties, which were in the thick of a struggle and continue to fight the imperialist offensive, and they too had expressed their adherence to the cause of revolution.

As against the fate of many other Communist parties that discarded or intended to discard the Red Flag, delete Marxism-Leninism from this basic philosophy, throw overboard democratic centralism, denounce the past and change their names, our entire Party had rallied around revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism.

In such a complex national and international situation, the Fourteenth Congress of CPI(M) was held in Madras from January 3 to 9, 1992 which remains as a landmark event not only in the history of our own country; it also heightens the Party's prestige in the international arena by its contribution to the struggle in defence of Marxism-Leninism and the socialist choice.

CHAPTER
XXV

Expanding Role of CPI(M) in National and International Plane

The early nineties goes down in history as an extremely difficult period for forces of socialism, national liberation and the working class movement. The reverses suffered by socialism in the Soviet Union and East Europe, the break-up of the USSR and the new imperialist offensive posed a very serious danger to the forces of peace and democracy and a threat to the security and independence of the Third World countries. The U.S. imperialism was emboldened to intervene brazenly in order to impose its dictates globally. As a result, the course of advance in newly independent countries had been adversely affected and the Non-Aligned Movement, despite its continued relevance, had been reduced to passivity and ineffectivity. The U.N. and in particular the Security Council has been hijacked by the U.S. and its allies. In the new world situation the imperialism led by U.S. imperialists was then exerting all-round pressure on the remaining socialist countries, committed to socialism. Cuba has been directly threatened because of the unilateral withdrawal of Soviet military aid and the U.S. blockade of its economy.

In this situation of decline of strength of the forces of socialism, the Party continued to uphold its deep commitment to socialism and to revolutionary transformation of the society. The Party noted that despite serious setbacks in the world revolutionary process, in this period itself, there were some notable successes of the national liberation forces. The independence of Namibia and the success of democratic forces in

South Africa, the release of Nelson Mandela and the legalisation of ANC and the Communist Party, the defeat of Pinochet dictatorship in Chile and nearer home, the electoral gains of Communists in Nepal were some of the developments showing the continued resistance to imperialist pressure. The Party expressed firm solidarity with the socialist countries, which were facing the difficult challenge of reforming the system and renovating the economy. The economic reforms in China were continuing after the Government of PRC met the counter-revolutionary challenge of May-June 1989 events. The Party expressed solidarity with Vietnam in undertaking reforms within the socialist framework.

Assessing the dismantling of socialism in USSR and East Europe, the Party drew the conclusion that these developments were the result of accumulated distortions and deviations in the application of Marxist-Leninist principles to building socialism. The theoretical and practical distortions in the application of Marxism-Leninism by individual parties and socialist countries could not be attributed to the science of Marxism-Leninism. The reverses, the Party expressed the view, were not permanent.

These developments were summed up at the Fourteenth Party Congress at Madras in January 3-9, 1992. The Political Resolution of the Congress noted that the big changes in the world situation did not nullify the theory of contradictions operating in the world today. The imperialist offensive against socialism was being conducted not through direct military intervention but via internal subversion, leading to "peaceful" transformation and integration into world capitalist system. As for the Third World, in the last decade, their terms of trade had deteriorated. Still, the burden of debt remains as a major weapon in the hands of the developed countries to perpetuate the highly unequal economic relationship with the developing countries. The total credit in any year of this decade was less than the corresponding debt service repayment. The inner-imperialist rivalries were also assuming complex and contradictory forms.

The Political Resolution further said that the contradiction between capital and labour had assumed new complex forms. In the decade of eighties, imperialist ruling circles and the big business mounted large-scale offensive against the working class. Despite adverse circumstances, the trade union movement was able to withstand the attacks with strike actions. In Britain, France, Japan, Germany and Italy there had been big strike struggles to protect the workers' gains.

Reiterating the Party's pledge to fulfil its internationalist duties by mobilizing all sections of Indian people in the struggle against imperialism, the Political Resolution stated:

"We must firmly counter the massive propaganda unleashed by imperialism and its agencies in India that socialism is doomed, communism has no future and that capitalism is eternal and last stage in social evolution.... . We must in the face of the imperialist offensive heighten our solidarity with the socialist countries, with the Third World countries determined to defend independence and social transformation, with the national liberation movements, with the working people's struggle in capitalist countries and the forces of the world peace."

The decline of socialism in the land where this system had its first trial in history, quite naturally led to deep anguish and the urge for a thorough introspection of its own ideological mooring in the CPI(M). The Party which arose out of sharp ideological struggle between Marxism-Leninism, on the one hand, and its distortions like revisionism and dogmatism, on the other, had to go deeply into the cause of failure of socialism in USSR and East European countries. The Party had been debating the basic issues involved herein since Gorbachev made his 70th anniversary speech in November, 1987. The Polit Bureau and the C.C. discussed the developments in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. But the disintegration of the Soviet Union which came as a culmination of the policies of the CPSU under Gorbachev required a more thorough analysis of the ideological issues involved. The Fourteenth Party Congress adopted a Resolution titled "On Certain Ideological Issues", which represents the

collective understanding of the Party on the subject. The Resolution is comprehensive but the Party had thought it was proper not to lay any claim to its finality saying that it contains "some preliminary conclusions" and the whole issue still needed "wide, extensive and in-depth study".

The root cause of Party's error of assessment of the world situation was that it understood the general crisis of capitalism simplistically. The Communist Parties' Conference of 1957 and 1960 has stated that socialism was becoming a decisive factor in world development. Only in May 1990, the Party, in its C.C. resolution, criticised this assessment as "a gross underestimation of the potential of world capitalism both of its capacity to further develop productive forces as well as its capacity to adapt to the changed circumstance". The Fourteenth Party Congress resolution noted that the CPI(M) as a contingent of the world Communist movement, was influenced by the incorrect understanding of the 1960 statement of the 81 Communist Parties which said among other things that "today the restoration of capitalism has been made impossible not only in the Soviet Union but in other socialist countries as well". The Resolution noted that the inevitability of capitalism's collapse was not an automatic process. Capitalism had to be overthrown, Marx and Engels had projected the triumph of world socialism as the post-capitalist stage in human evolution. Contrary to their expectations, in the changed situation the socialist revolutions triumphed in countries that were comparatively less capitalistically developed. The failure of the revolution to succeed in any advanced capitalist country by itself imposed limitations on these countries to consolidate socialism. The socialist revolutions reduced the physical size and levels of operations of world capitalist market, but in the absence of a socialist revolution in any advanced country, these basically affected neither the level of productive forces already attained by capitalism nor its future potential. It was hence possible for world capitalism to adapt to the new realities of a reduced physical-market and yet raise the levels of the productive forces. This was testified by its initiation of the scientific

and technological revolution in the post-second world war period. The resolution stated further:

“The CPI(M) continues to adhere to the understanding that the present-day world developments can be comprehended only by a proper study of the four fundamental contradictions of the present epoch, viz., between the forces of world socialism and imperialism, between imperialism and peoples of developing world, between imperialist countries themselves and between capital and labour in the capitalist countries.”

“The CPI(M) continues to adhere to the understanding that of these four, the contradiction between imperialism and socialism on a world scale occupies the central role in this epoch. Further, that any of these can intensify so as to come to the forefront of world developments at a point of time with replacing the central contradiction.”

“Notwithstanding the present reverses for the international Communist movement, this understanding retains its validity, given the current historical developments. These reveal the intensification of all these contradictions, not their modification, as the CPSU propounded. The CPI(M) openly disagreed with such an understanding. The subsequent world developments only strengthen the analysis then made by the CPI(M).”

“The intensification of the central contradiction is manifested in the current reverses for forces of world socialism. The reverses have shifted the balance of class forces, on the international plane, in favour of imperialism, albeit temporarily, in the historical perspective. This permits a new aggressiveness on the part of imperialism, which it is already demonstrating in its quest for a ‘New World Order’.

Discussing the issue of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Party Congress Resolution stated that forms of this dictatorship are not constant or immutable. As the socialist society develops, the forms pass through varying and different phases. The Resolution noted that “the right to dissent within the Socialist framework must be recognized”, but in doing so neither the class character of the State, nor the leading role of the Party could be abandoned. A distortion in the erstwhile

socialist countries, according to the Resolution was that the "dictatorship of the class was replaced by that of the vanguard, the Party, and more often than not, by the leadership of the Party."

The Party Congress Resolution stated that only after the establishment of People's Democracy and complementing the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, anti-monopoly capital tasks can be Indian people advance towards socialism. The Resolution defined socialism in the Indian conditions as a system wherein people's power would be supreme and socialist economic construction will be based on socialised means of production and central planning. Various forms will be that of social ownership of means of production. Under socialism the right to dissent, freedom of expression and plurality of opinion will flourish.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and setback to socialism in Eastern European countries, the international Communist movement suffered a major reverse and various Communist parties began collapsing, leading to serious ideological confusion and various parties abandoning their names. We do not want to say that our Party was not at all affected by all these changes. But the effect was much less because we have been taking an independent position on the basis of Marxism-Leninism as we understood not only in relation to the Indian situation but also to that of the international situation. And we were consistently in this struggle and developing the working class, peasant, student-youth movements and struggles of women and other sections in the country. This enabled us to resist pressure and maintain unity in our Party.

Our membership had increased during these last three years. It was perhaps not accidental that we held a seminar from 5th to 7th of May, 1993 at Calcutta to mark the 175th birth anniversary of Karl Marx. We invited only those parties which had not only not changed their names but also adhered to the principles of Marxism-Leninism. Of the parties, which were invited, all 30 of them responded, either by direct participation or by sending their papers or messages. The response

therefore was overwhelming and the initiative was thus a reflection of the urge and desire of the Communist and Workers' Parties worldwide. All these appeared to be the result of our consistent struggle in defence of proletarian internationalism, as well as, our increased presence and strength among the Indian people.

The Fourteenth Party Congress on the basis of the experience of work since the previous Thirteenth Congress came to the conclusion that though the Party proceeded on a correct line and our assessment of the situation had been vindicated by subsequent developments, it had not been possible to bring any radical change in the political situation. Popular discontent against the ruling party had been growing fast. There had been a new awakening among the downtrodden, the tribal population and the different ethnic formations.

The regional parties in certain areas and States tend to use this discontent in reaping electoral gains. This is the result, on the one hand, of the failure of the recognized all-India parties to keep in mind the sentiments of different States that constitute India. On the other, it also reflects the conflicts and contradictions between the Centre, which is dominated by the big business, and the State where the interest of regional bourgeoisie are also substantial. The Party Congress also noted the growing criminalisation of politics, which poses a great threat to democratic structure of the country.

The Fourteenth Party Congress drew the conclusion that the change in the world situation and the economic policies opted for by the ruling Congress(I) had affected our foreign policy, with India no more playing the important role in the world arena that it had been doing so far. On issues like the solution of Kampuchean problem, a settlement in West Asia, the U.S. blockade of Iraq and of Cuba, India's voice was nowhere to be heard. Never since the Bandung Conference was India so marginalised in the international sphere as it was during that period.

The question of bringing about a change in the correlation of class forces was a key question. The Left had emerged as

the foremost defender of national unity. It had been able to instil confidence in the Janata Dal and the National Front that in spite of differences with them on some basic issues, there was a firm basis for working together as allies. This understanding with the two formations help us in the achievement of the objective of isolating communal forces, particularly the BJP. The emergence of alliance and understanding between the Left on the one hand and the Janata Dal and the National Front on the other was of utmost importance. The anti-Communist bias prevalent in the parties of bourgeois-landlord classes was on the wane. It should also not be forgotten that the Janata Dal staked their power on the issue of national unity. It would, however, be wrong to conclude that a split has taken place between the monopoly and the non-monopoly sections of the bourgeoisie and the latter has become a part of the Left and democratic front.

Given the level of consciousness of the majority of Indian masses, who are still behind the parties of the bourgeois-landlord classes, the stage is not yet set for the coming into existence of such a situation. But the conflicts and contradictions that emerge among the various political formations of the ruling classes have to be skilfully utilized for the advance of the Left and democratic movement in the country. It is always required to make full use of the potential of the parliamentary struggle and combine this with our work in class and mass organizations. It is of consistent necessity that we raise the level of political consciousness of the masses.

While working with the bourgeois-opposition parties, we always keep in mind their class outlook. This alliance should not be confused with our slogan of Left and democratic front. Our party experience also shows that we do not try to demarcate with them when demarcation becomes necessary. Sometime we tone down our differences in the name of unity. We also become victims of parliamentarianism under one pretext or the other. Though it was necessary to change the tactical line, in the period after Emergency, bourgeois-landlord parties were able to dictate terms to us in many places instead of

coming to proper understanding. While making certain very necessary compromises, we can never forget our class outlook and ideological moorings.

The Fourteenth Party Congress adopted a "Report on Organization and Tasks", which formed a separate agenda, an item of the Congress because a plenum of the C.C. to review the implementation of the decision of 1978 Salkia Plenum could not be held due to the Party's pre-occupation with the rapidly changing national political situation, the serious communal challenge and the Tenth General Elections.

The Report noted that P.B., and Salkia Plenum guidelines had produced good results. The Party membership had increased from 1,61,000 in 1978 to 5,79,000 in 1991. The membership of the Party-led mass organizations had increased six-fold, i.e. from 4 millions to 28.7 millions in the same period. This expansion was the biggest gain from the thrust given by the Salkia decisions. But this growth had also highlighted certain continuing problems and thrown up some new ones. Even today it is relevant. The major expansion in Party membership was due to increase in West Bengal and Kerala. Tamil Nadu had also made substantial progress followed by Andhra Pradesh to a lesser extent. The proportion of Party members from Kerala and West Bengal out of the total membership still continue to increase. In Bihar, the membership of mass organizations had registered substantial increase while Party membership had increased only marginally. Still today, there has been steady recruitment to the Party from basic classes, but the attention to improving working class composition is inadequate. In terms of age group at the time of the Party Congress (January 1992) the proportion of those who joined the Party after 1980 stood at 70 per cent. The Party had made headway in the Hindi-speaking States but on the whole there were deficiencies in the functioning of the State Committees and State Secretariats.

The Report made an analytical study of Party's work in mass organizations. It examined Party functioning with reference to democratic centralism and the growth of the evil of

bureaucratism in Party organizations. The Report also assessed the state of Party's ideological work and the shortcomings therein.

Outlining Party's tasks, the Report called for renewed thrust in three major areas—in stepping up mass struggles, in restoring the primacy of Party building as a key task and in heightening the ideological work and independent projection of Party's line and policies.

Another important proposal adopted by the Party Congress was about updating the Party Programme. It was felt that even though the basic formulations in the programme regarding class character of the Indian state power, stage of the Indian Revolution, the Front required to achieve the goal, etc. were correct, in the changed circumstances, when the world balance of forces tilted towards imperialism and big change in the national situation since 1964 had taken place, and above all when some of the formulations of the world Communist movement were found incorrect, it was necessary to update the Party programme. The Sixteenth Party Congress to be held in Calcutta in October 1998 is set to come to a decisive position on the issue and after elaborate discussion in the proper fora the updated Party programme will be adopted shortly after the Congress.

In pursuance of the decision of the Fourteenth Party Congress, the CPI(M), working in such a complex situation, came out with a big solidarity campaign to defend the Cuban people and their revolution. Cuba has been under American embargo for decades. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, its biggest trade partner, Cuba was sought to be strangled and U.S. imperialists were pressurising others too to refrain from helping Cuba in her hour of trial. The valiant Cuban people have again and again refused to capitulate. Fidel Castro had replied to the American imperialists by reverberating the clarion declaration of Cubans—Socialism or Death! That it inspired and electrified the anti-imperialist movement, which was subdued after the setback to socialism, was manifested through worldwide response for solidarity with Cuba. True

to the international outlook we did not forget to discharge our international duty and obligation to try our utmost to help Cuba ward off the effects of U.S. embargo. The countrywide campaign by the National Committee for Solidarity with Cuba galvanized various sections of the Indians that culminated with the shipment of 12,000 metric tonnes of wheat and rice, and medicines collected from all over the country on the Cuba liner 'Caribbean Princess' at Haldia. Befitting was a huge gathering that looked like a human sea. Apart from Left Governments a number of State Governments, like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab contributed handsomely. The Central Government stepped in and came to help in a big way. The concentrated expression of anti-imperialist sentiments had, in actual practice come to the fore again on this great occasion which, subsequently influenced the hesitant Central Government to overcome U.S. pressure and play its role as a leading non-aligned nation.

There were other positive elements alike. It was for the first time a President of Indian Republic paid an official visit to China in May 1992. It was followed by a first visit by an Indian Defence Minister after a couple of months. According priority to the speedy development of friendly relations with China, to the necessary steps of removing all impediments to the flowering of Indo-China relations has always been an ardent desire of people of India.

As a matter of fact, the process of normalization of relations gained impetus since 1988 when the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China and both sides agreed to improve cooperation in many spheres. Since its formation the CPI(M) has been asking both countries to give up confrontationist attitude and resolve the dispute across the table. In the contemporary world situation when U.S. imperialism had been going all-out in its effort to establish hegemony and browbeat the Third World countries, the visit of the President R.K. Venkataraman and Defence Minister Sharad Pawar had come as a high watermark of steadily growing goodwill and mutual cooperation.

The Non-Aligned Movement summit at Jakarta in September 1992 in the backdrop of such a world situation, when U.S. imperialism freed from the fear of restraining counter-action of the Soviet Union, was carrying on its imperialist depredations against the Third World countries, had evoked hope among the people. The pressure of U.S. imperialists on NAM to tone down its position during the previous summit at Belgrade did not succeed. The NAM failed to act meanwhile in regard to disastrous situation created by the U.S. and other western powers in Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia. The Jakarta summit—China also a participant for the first time—came to certain important conclusions on some pertinent issues. It maintained that the world today was still far from being a peaceful, just and secure place. It also urged accelerated efforts “on the prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction as a nuclear-weapons-free world has always been the position of our movement.” It came out forthrightly on various issues like: against foreign occupation; unfavourable external economic environment characterised by crushing burden of debt and debt servicing, severely curtailed financial flows, unabated protectionism, inadequate access to technology, low international prices for commodities and raw materials; agricultural policies of imperialist countries that depressed export earnings and more importantly revitalization and democratization of United Nations, apart from others. We want our people to take up the issues into their hands and build public opinion so that India continues to play its rightful role.

Beside the consistent refusal by the Indian Government to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the show of defiance in pursuing the advance in rocket technology with the launching of Agni, the period as discussed above had been marked by succumbing to U.S. pressure on various other counts such as Super 301, acceptance of Dunkel Draft on GATT, etc. despite strong public opposition.

Four important issues dominated the political scene in the period of 1992-93. They were threat to secularism; the anti-people economic policies that were threatening economic

sovereignty; continuing threat to national unity from the separatist and divisive forces; and major corruption scandals.

December, 1992 goes down in the historical calendar of this country as **BLACK SUNDAY** when India was submerged in shame before the globe as the **BJP-VHP-RSS** vandals at the instance of their masterminds had been able to demolish the four-and-half-centuries old structure known as **Babri Masjid**, subverting the Supreme Court decision, the Constitution and with total disregard of the secular values of the nation. Consequent to this outrageous happening at Ayodhya, the country had been engulfed in communal riots that claimed, according to official figures, the lives of 1,500 people and inflicted injuries to thousands of others, unprecedented in scale and dimension since the days of the partition. The impact of this worst criminal act was not confined to India alone. Both Pakistan and Bangladesh also witnessed riots and attacks on minorities and their places of worship following the outrage.

The most horrifying condition into which the country had been plunged was but the culmination of the events that had been taking place over the preceding years. As for the Congress(I), the shameless compromise and unprincipled appeasement which began in the days of Rajiv Gandhi with the unlocking of the gates of the mosque in 1986, and the sanctioning of the 'Shilanyas' ceremony in 1989 had been more vigorously continued by Narasimha Rao led Congress(I) Government. Even after the National Integration Council meeting which gave an unparalleled mandate to the Prime Minister to face the communal challenges and if be needed, to dismiss BJP led government in Uttar Pradesh wherein Ayodhya belongs, his obnoxious line of compromise continued. The Polit Bureau of our Party, taking into account all these developments, said, "instead of relying on the unstinted support of all the secular parties, the Prime Minister preferred to come to an understanding with the RSS-BJP leaders. It is due to their disastrous policy that the Left parties and the National Front demanded the resignation of the Prime Minister." The Party had called upon to launch immediately a sustained joint

mass campaign to isolate the communal forces and defeat the compromising policies of the Congress(I).

The impact of the IMF-WB dictated new economic policies since 1991 had led to the acute economic disaster in all fields, systematic erosion of economic sovereignty and the destruction of India's immense potential for building a self-reliant economy. The economic liberalization policies had opened the floodgates to racketeering; the combination of big business, ruling politicians, black money and anti-social elements had found firm entrenchment in policies. The corruption scandals galore would be belittled if it were only called to be the cases of high-level corruption, it was no less than the corrupting role of the ruling party on the democratic institutions.

The growing incapacity of the government to evolve a credible policy to tackle the serious question of national unity, to fight the divisive and separatist forces had brought to the fore the opportunistic policies of the Congress(I) which showed explicitly its repeated tendency to place the Party's narrow interests above that of the country. At a time when separatist and fundamentalists forces were posing a grave threat to the nation's very unity, the Congress(I) government by its anti-people economic policies was strengthening these very forces. Thus the fight against communal and divisive forces and that against anti-people economic policies were interlinked.

The above-mentioned period witnessed intensification of mass movements on all the issues confronting the country. Remarkable were all-India strike called by Central Trade Unions; massive rallies, demonstrations and dharnas all over the country, 'Jail Bharo' movement, week-long observance of national unity and secularism from August 9 to 15, 1993, all-India industrial strike and magnificent 'Bharat Bandh' on two occasions called by the platform of mass organizations to press 19-point charter of demands, widespread campaign against abject surrender to imperialist sponsored GATT proposals—all these achieved spectacular success. The campaign against the communal forces after the demolition of the mosque

by the Left and secular forces drew immense response from a wide cross-section of the Indian people.

The resounding victory of the Left and democratic forces led by the CPI(M) in Tripura in the Assembly elections in April, 1993, was an unmistakable expression of the people's wrath and revulsion against the most heinous terror unleashed by the Congress(I) regime in Tripura. Hundreds had been murdered and thousands of others had to face severe hardship under semi-fascist rule of Congress(I). It was followed by elections to four northern State Assemblies formerly ruled by the BJP and in the Union territory of Delhi that assumed great political importance.

Unfortunately, the Left is very weak in these States, though its prestige is very high. Excluding the Left, except in Uttar Pradesh, the other secular Opposition parties were also not strong. Hence, barring U.P., the main fight was between the Congress(I) and the BJP. It was in Rajasthan that the BJP had emerged as the largest party, that too due to complete bungling by the Congress(I). The BJP, which had campaigned on the slogan of forcible construction of temple at Ayodhya and Hindutva as its main platform, while lending full support to the anti-people policies of the Congress(I) government, had been badly humbled. In U.P., the Congress(I) had further eroded its base and the Samajvadi Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) alliance emerged as a decisive force. Wherever the Left and secular Opposition alternative was absent, the people rallied behind the Congress(I).

The central thrust of the CPI(M) in these elections was to defeat the BJP and prevent its coming back to power in U.P. and the other three States. This goal had by and large been achieved. The Central Committee of the CPI(M) after analysing the election results concluded that "despite the setback suffered by the BJP, it continues to wield substantial influence both in terms of percentage of votes polled and seats won. The Central Committee, therefore, called for continuing the struggle against the communal ideology and politics". Alongside, the Party decided to intensify the struggle against

the pro-imperialist economic policies of the Centre. The results also showed the assertion of the backward castes. It was decided that the CPI(M) while supporting the demands of social justice would try to enhance the class unity and class consciousness without which the caste polarization might turn to divisive channels.

There were encouraging developments around the world too. Concerted action against apartheid by the people of the world had brought South Africa to the road of non-racial democracy. The victory of the alliance of the Left Parties in Poland Election marked the growing disillusionment of the people with the IMF-dictated breakneck privatization. The regrouping of the Left and revolutionary forces was taking place in Russia, other Republics of former USSR and East European countries.

Withstanding and resisting U.S. pressure, the socialist countries of China, Vietnam, Cuba, and also Democratic Korea were on the advance, reaffirming their commitment to socialism. The pursuit of world domination of U.S. and other western powers through economic and political weapons were facing resistance from all over the world.

Rising like a phoenix from the ruins, the signs of building a stronger, more experienced, much determined and more ideologically armoured working class movement were evident everywhere.

No student, historian, researcher or a serious political activist can afford to be without this Volume. Fighters for freedom, democracy and socialism will surely find it necessary, I believe, to refer to it repeatedly to answer certain basic questions of Marxist-Leninist ideology and rebuff the lies against the Communists and expose the cruel aims of the reactionaries of all hues.

CHAPTER
XXVI

Fight Against New Economic Policy Led to Formation of United Front Government

The period between 1994 and 1996 had seen the Congress(I) government's drive towards capitulation before the IMF-WB dictates and allowing the multinationals a free hand even at the cost of indigenous industries. Nobody is today opposed to investment of foreign capital in areas where we need modern technology. The liberalised import policy, not balanced by matching exports, had contributed further to industrial sickness, closures, growing unemployment and rapid rise in prices, placing the burden of the 'development' on the shoulders of the common man.

The Congress(I) government also showed disregard to the democratic institutions, judiciary and the Constitution. This period saw the Supreme Court returning to the President the reference, made under Article 143 of the Constitution, as to whether a Hindu religious structure ever existed on the site of the Babri Masjid, as non-maintainable, thus reviving all the Ayodhya-related cases pending in various courts of the land. The country also saw the government dithering on a pointed query as to whether it would abide by the apex court judgment. The Supreme Court had upheld the dismissal of BJP governments in U.P., M.P., Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan and also upheld the secularism as the basic structure of the Indian Constitution, defining secularism as the complete separation of religion and politics. These verdicts only vindicated the demand of the Left and secular parties that all Ayodhya related cases be clubbed together and referred to the apex

court under Article 138(2) of the Constitution for a binding decision.

Yet the Congress(I) government went on with its manoeuvring about formation of a trust with Hindu religious figures for construction of a temple on the very spot where Babri Masjid stood. It alienated the minorities further. However, the government appeared to have learnt no lesson from the debacle of the ruling party in the last Assembly polls in northern States.

During this period the BJP strained all its muscles to raise once again the slogan of Hindutva but to little avail. It had to face growing resistance from the people and suffer isolation. While the BJP had not given up its support to the pro-imperialist new economic policies, it did not appear to be blatantly supporting them. Without taking leave of its senses, the BJP came out with a slogan of a 'Swadeshi Alternative' noting the mass discontent as a fall-out of the new economic policies. The people's perception of RSS slogan of Swadeshi as a facade for hoodwinking the people, might at least partly be the reason why it had failed to move the masses. It is more explicit today than before. Within months of its rule at the Centre the BJP has gone about negating its own 'Swadeshi Pledges' without any qualms through an even greater commitment to the neo-liberal agenda dictated by the IMF and World Bank. There are literally scores of examples which go to show that the BJP is now pursuing the same economic policy of the Congress(I) government with greater exuberant zest to appease imperialism desperately.

Thanks to the Rao government's utter recklessness that national unity was made subordinated to its cynical manoeuvre for keeping its narrow, political interests. The issue of corruption also came up in a big way in this period and the Congress(I) government was exposed as a government of the corrupt, run by the corrupt.

With the growing resistance of the people, the crisis within the Congress(I) was assuming acute forms. As the General Elections drew nearer, for the first time after long years,

the debate inside the Congress had started on the issues of economic policies, compromise with communalism and the rampant corruption.

The election results in some important State Assemblies in early 1996 was a pointer to what the shape of thing would be coming in future. The Congress(I) faced almost a rout in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra, Karnataka, and Bihar. The Congress(I) and the BJP were rejected in Andhra and Karnataka, where the Telugu Desam and the Janata Dal gained a massive mandate respectively. In Maharashtra, Congress(I)'s tally had come down from 150 to 80. For want of a viable secular alternative to the Congress(I), the BJP in Gujarat and the BJP-Shiv Sena combine in Maharashtra succeeded in cashing in on the people's discontent. In Orissa, the Janata Dal headed by Biju Patnaik earned hatred and distrust from the people who expressed their anger by reducing the Janata Dal strength from 123 to 46. In the absence of a Left and secular alternative, the people of Orissa voted for the Congress(I). In Bihar, the Congress(I) and the BJP were united in thwarting the democratic process for different reasons but both were drubbed in the election.

This period had also witnessed intense imperialist offensive. The prolonged recession in the advanced capitalist countries had belied all the claims put forward for capitalism as the only future for mankind. In the erstwhile socialist countries, significant resistance was developing with people, being faced with hard reality, coming to the conclusion that the earlier system was better than the miseries which capitalism had brought in. In fact, emerging from the ruins, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation was growing fast to become a significant force in the Russian Parliament, the Duma.

It was unfortunate that when the unity of the Left, democratic and secular forces was of utmost necessity to meet this challenge, the National Front-Janata Dal, in the absence of any coherent policy, began to disintegrate. Our Party then was faced with the task of mobilizing people and strengthening the Left unity by its joint actions, trying to involve other

secular forces as much as it was possible to do. It was on this basis that though not yet in a position to change the situation, the Party and the Left were able to exert some influence, with the result that the people beyond the purview of the Left began to look upon it with respect as a principled force.

Our Party has been the only consistent and vocal opponent of the Rao government's succumbing to U.S. pressure. Although, the BJP showed its disinclination to oppose the yoking of India's self-reliance, foreign policy and security interests with USA. The other bourgeois Opposition parties have been least concerned about the relentless U.S. pressure on our economic sovereignty. Therefore our Party and the Left would have to carry on exposing the government, mobilize patriotic opinion and conduct anti-imperialist struggles.

It was in this background that the Party Congress met in Chandigarh April 3-8, 1995. Though the current political situation was extremely complex, the atmosphere inside the Congress exuded confidence and determination to strengthen the Left, democratic and secular forces to meet the challenges.

As compared to the Fourteenth Congress some changes in a positive direction in the international situation had taken place. In Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland and several former Republics of USSR the erstwhile Communists were replacing the counter-revolutionary forces that had overtaken the socialist power. That did not imply that the process was getting reversed but it slowed down the IMF-dictated reforms and undertook some pro-people measures. Belying the dream of the imperialists to turn back the wheel of history China, Vietnam, Cuba and North Korea were developing their own forms and structure to pursue the socialist path. In the rest of the world the Communist movement had started asserting itself. The old euphoria at the so-called collapse of communism had receded into the background because of the prolonged recession in capitalist countries, the growing resistance among the working class of these countries—both developed as well as developing—and the increasing contradictions between the imperialist countries themselves.

The discontent against the growing hardships of the people in some of the advanced capitalist countries resulted in the defeat of the ruling parties. The right-wing Freedom Alliance in Italy got defeated by the centre-Left Olive Tree Alliance. The Communist Refoundation Party of Italy increased its votes from 6 to 8.6 per cent. In Greece, the Social Democratic Party won a majority and the Communist Party and the Left Alliance increased its popular support. After 30 years of uninterrupted rule, the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan failed to get absolute majority. The Communist Party of Japan increased its strength remarkably. The wave of anti-government militant actions rocked Indonesia during this period and the Suharto dictatorship was threatened. The popular movement has forced Suharto to quit power recently.

People's protest against the neo-liberal economic policies specially in the Third World countries were also being manifested. The election results and the protest movements illustrated the change in Eastern Europe too. With the growing exploitation of the Third World countries, the non-aligned movement was required to reorient itself to provide a countervailing force to the desperate efforts of imperialism for a new world order and play the role to put a resistance to the blatant attempts of the United States of America with a view to enforcing its will over the world. But the 11th Non-Aligned Summit held in Cartagena in Columbia in October 1995 showed its vacillations and failed to concentrate its fire against this menacing drive.

However, most of the issues confronting the Third World countries i.e. reducing the debt burden, free flow of technology and trade without protectionism, democratisation of U.N., and disarmament, found mention in the declaration. Thus the contradiction with the Third World and imperialism was growing unabated.

The Party Congress reiterated that the central contradiction in today's world still remains between the imperialism and socialism with the U.S. imperialism doing its utmost to defeat the Cuban revolution. It was also exerting pressure on

North Korea over the nuclear inspection issue and issuing threats to China on trade related economic issues. Despite the renewed U.S. offensive, resistance was also developing. The international support and solidarity which rallied behind Cuba was a significant factor in thwarting U.S. imperialist designs. Our Party trained in an international outlook, expressed its solidarity with the socialist countries. We took the lead in campaigning for solidarity with Cuba. Similarly, we expressed our solidarity with North Korea where the U.S., using the nuclear reactor issue, was trying to intervene.

With regard to the international situation, an important point highlighted was the failure of the Party to implement the assurance of an in-depth study of the cause of the serious setbacks to socialism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Though the resolution on "Certain Ideological Issues" which was discussed at the Madras Congress had provided guidelines for analysing the causes, the Fourteenth Congress had felt this insufficient to enrich the ideological understanding of the Party ranks. The Fifteenth Congress renewed the need for extensive study on such vital questions of twentieth century and draw our own lessons.

Elaborately analysing the national economic and political situation we warned that, the danger from the communal forces could be underestimated only at a heavy cost, since, taking the country as a whole the BJP had emerged as the second biggest party in the country bidding for power at the Centre. Under no circumstances would the BJP be allowed to capture power at the Centre and we must rally all the Left, secular and democratic forces to oppose this. If this force is allowed to grow it will disrupt the unity of the working class, peasantry, agricultural workers and other toiling sections. Without doubt the compromising role of the Congress(I) was mainly responsible for this growth of the BJP. While the Left had carried out a consistent struggle against the communal forces by arousing the people to be on guard against this danger and appealing to their patriotism, the Congress(I) had always encouraged and placated these forces. The role of the

Congress(I) in the Babri Masjid/Ramjanmabhoomi controversy and its ultimate betrayal were clear examples of this. Both the Congress(I) and the BJP ignore the fact that the Indian people are basically patriotic, and will not tolerate machinations weakening the secular ideology.

As regards separatist movements, the ruling party had failed to go to the roots of the problems of Kashmir, Assam and the North-East. Their only solution was administrative measures, using the para-military forces and the army to suppress the terrorist activities. The Congress(I) Party had also failed to utilize the discontentment of the people against the extremists and was instead pursuing a course which only aggravated the situation.

The Party Congress pointed out that the only solution to the problem in Kashmir lies in protecting the identity of the Kashmiri people, and this can be done by strengthening Article 370 and ensuring the autonomy of Kashmir. The same applies for the North-East. The government should draw the necessary lessons and fulfil the aspiration of the people of Nagaland, Manipur and Assam, and stop wasting public money mainly on the armed forces to deal with the situation.

An inevitable result of the capitalist path of development pursued by the ruling classes is not only widening the disparity between the rich and the poor but also causing uneven development across the regions. Certain areas in the country have remained awfully neglected and backward. This has resulted in their urge and demand for separate States. The government must realise that unless their backwardness is overcome and their aspiration fulfilled, no solutions are possible. Their demand in this respect can be primarily redressed through the setting up of autonomous councils in each of these regions—Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh.

The tribals are suffering in a similar fashion; misled, the exploitation and repression against them continue on a greater scale. The Party Congress had decided that our Party must concentrate on the problems of the tribals along with those of the Scheduled Castes, to defend them and demand autonomous councils in the contiguous areas where the tribals reside.

A good debate also took place on the OBCs. In years there had been a new awakening among them to overcome their backwardness. The Party had endorsed the 27 per cent reservation as recommended in the Mandal Report. It had also stated that the creamy layer should not avail of this concession at the cost of the poorer sections. If, however, vacancies remain, they can be filled, if necessary, even from the creamy layer.

There are certain political forces, however, which in reflecting the demand of the OBCs are distorting it to perpetuate the caste division among the toiling people. This will prove very dangerous, because it not only disrupts the unity of the toiling people, but also because all those belonging to the upper castes are not well off. They include poor sections as well, for example, the so-called upper castes of Uttarakhand are mostly engaged in menial jobs. The Party Congress warned against perpetuation of caste divisions and disruption of the democratic movement which would only provide a strong base for the disintegrating forces.

The main debate in the Political Resolution centered round the direction of the movement and it appeared that some confusion existed. Three types of alternatives were mentioned in the Resolution and their place in pursuing the tactical line. The first of three was the People's Democratic Front which alone can achieve the People's Democratic Revolution, a long range perspective to complete the stage of the democratic revolution and march to the ultimate goal of socialism. This is a strategic objective fighting for which requires a class alliance of the working class, peasantry, petty-bourgeoisie, based on the worker-peasant alliance, led by the working class. The building of this front requires a radical change in the correlation of class forces when the working class will be able to acquire leadership. Only when this strategical line is forged can we claim to be on the verge of revolution. This perspective must be kept in mind and all other slogans in the interim period are directed to achieve this objective.

Secondly, it is the interim slogan of the Left Democratic

Front which can be termed as a tactical slogan. This Front will lead to the achievement of the People's Democratic Front. The only difference between the two fronts (the People's Democratic Front and the Left Democratic Front) is that in the latter, the leadership of the working class is not yet ensured. In other words, the process of advancing from one to the other involves bringing about the necessary change in the correlation of class forces that ensures the leadership of the working class. It is possible that during this process the bourgeoisie may itself split with some sections forming new parties at the national or regional level. They may even join with the Left on the basis of a minimum programme which could eventually emerge as an alternative to the bourgeois-landlord parties.

However, at the present moment, neither the People's Democratic Front nor the Left Democratic Front can be immediately realised but should be realised as a tactical slogan which ultimately helps achieve the strategic goal of the people's democratic revolution. The requisite conditions for reaching this stage can be created through mass actions by the Party and the Left as a whole, with class struggle as the motive force.

This Front is not the immediate alternative because as yet the correlation of class forces is not in our favour. Then how should we meet this complex situation where on the one hand, in the wake of political instability, the Congress(I) was pursuing economic policies endangering economic independence, and on the other, the BJP with like-minded groups was posing a grave threat to national unity?

To meet both these challenges from the BJP and the Congress(I) requires a huge fight against both, rallying the secular forces along with Left, where the slogan of unity of Left and secular forces presents an electoral alternative. Knowing the limitations of the secular parties we continue to warn them to have a cohesive programme because of the bad experience the people have had of them in the past. In spite of the victory of the BJP in the western States, by and large, the country would not like the BJP to rule, aware of the

consequences it would pose to national unity. Such a situation would strengthen the forces of fundamentalism even inside the minorities where each would supplement and complement the other. Given the huge size of the minority community, these forces would be bound to disrupt national unity.

While the Party Congress decided that both the Congress(I) and the communal forces would have to be defeated by rallying the Left and secular forces the question was asked, who is the main enemy? The answer to this will depend on the concrete situation, of which force at a particular moment comes to the fore. How does this assertion of ours come true today can be ascertained by the present-day reality when BJP constitutes the main danger after its assumption of state power early this year.

The people would like a Left and secular alternative, but the secular parties were not clear on their economic objectives, or sufficiently aware of the dangers arising from the Centre's economic policies. We have to constantly warn them that the people would not repose their confidence in them unless the objective of social justice was kept in mind, not only with regard to the castes, but in regard to the general poverty and backwardness without tackling which no political party could rally the people.

We were confident that with the developing crisis in the Congress(I), the rising prestige and initiative of the Left would succeed in advancing this limited objective. The Party Congress gave the clarion call in this respect.

But, as the debate in the Congress emphasized, on the basis of the three years of experience, even to achieve this a further increase in the influence of the Left is necessary, particularly of our Party. This can be done through unleashing mass struggles and movements against the economic policies, against communalism and in defence of secularism. To that end, we must consolidate the mass organizations of the working class, peasants, agricultural labourers, youth and students, women, employees, and from these struggles draw the militant cadres into the Party.

The Fifteenth Congress specially debated on the state of Party organizations essential for developing the mass movements and mass organizations, building Left unity and uniting the different forces to meet the challenges in the trying situation. In 1978, the slogan of building a mass revolutionary party was formulated in Salkia Plenum. The Fifteenth Congress called upon to carry this forward by strengthening the party ideologically and expanding its mass influence. A mass revolutionary party does not mean enrolment of mass membership. The membership of the revolutionary party will grow with the growth of revolutionary consciousness and political development of its cadre. Thereby it expands its mass base. The debate outlined the big gap existing between the Party's prestige acquired through intervention on all the political and social issues coming before the nation, and the weak Party organization. Unless this lag was overcome, it was stressed, we would not be able to discharge our responsibilities and turn the tables on the bourgeois-landlord regime. Otherwise our intervention would be limited to temporary interventions to ward off immediate dangers. The Fourteenth Party Congress at Madras had discussed the organizational shortcomings and deviations of serious nature and stressed the need for correcting them with sustained effort. Yet such tendencies and weaknesses continued to manifest themselves in the Party. Certain deviations from the principle of democratic centralism—liberalism or over-centralisation, criticism and self-criticism—had been seriously noted.

The Party Congress also noted that with the decentralisation, a very large number of elected posts had been created at every layer of administration. The lure of these posts, particularly in West Bengal where we are in office for nearly two decades and in Kerala, was leading to parliamentary deviations among Partymen. This apart, certain bourgeois vices are also creeping into the Party with some cadres opting for an easy life etc. Notwithstanding the usual corrective measures, the Party Congress had warned that, being a revolutionary Party, it cannot allow any scope for such tendencies

and deviations. It emphasized that each post assigned to any Party member has to be considered as a job to intensify the class struggle to achieve our goal. No assignment or post should be considered a life-long one—the only permanency is the dedication of the revolutionary to the sacred cause to serve the objective of a people's revolution.

Certain factional tendencies were also noted, particularly in Kerala and to a certain extent in West Bengal. The Congress decided that the factional tendencies must be terminated and no quarter be given to those who indulge in factionalism. The Party is based on the principle of democratic centralism—every member has a say in the formulation of policy and raising any political ideological or organizational issues. Once a decision is taken no one is allowed to play a disruptive role. The Congress authorised the Central Committee to take firm action to weed out factionalism and also federalism wherever and at whatever level it emerges.

There should be no hesitation in eliminating these tendencies emerging inside the Communist Party. The Party is judged not only for its outlook based on the historical-dialectical materialist philosophy but also its outlook on life as dedicated revolutionaries.

The Political-Organizational Report of the Fifteenth Congress reviewed that, "the majority of the Party members have been recruited during the last decade. Though we have made some attempts to educate the Party members and to raise their political-organizational consciousness they are not sufficient to meet the situation. There is also need to re-educate the old Party members. The education of the new entrants to the Party and the re-education of the old comrades should be a continuous process. Political education is not confined to political classes alone. It includes self study, participation in discussions, attending general body meetings and public meetings, participation in campaigns, struggles, and political propaganda etc. The organizational review report of the state conferences reveal that a considerable percentage of the Party members are not attending Party branches regularly of getting

involved in Party activities constantly and 50 per cent of the branches etc. are not functioning properly. The lower level of political-organizational consciousness of the Party members, the existence of a considerable number of inactive Party members, the defective functioning of a large number of Party branches etc. are restricting the Party's attempts at expansion. This state of affairs is also responsible for making the Party members vulnerable to bourgeois ideological influences. There are also reasons for bourgeois organizational practices like factionalism, individualism, careerism, corruption, parliamentary opportunism and wrong style of work creeping into the Party."

Therefore, it stressed: "The Party members and units should always keep intimate and live contact with the people, take up their problems, give class orientation to the issues, organize campaigns and struggles for the redressal of their grievances etc. Party members should behave well with the people and live as one among them. They teach the people and also learn from them. Communists should always try to strengthen collective functioning and should not show any sort of bossism towards the people.

"Lack of proper political and organizational education and the alien ideological influences are responsible for the erosion of Communist standards.

"Some comrades and units are imitating the style of functioning of bourgeois parties and are affected by bourgeois vices.

"Corruption has become a problem particularly in a state like West Bengal where we have been the ruling party for over 17 years. There can be no compromise with corrupt elements as they will corrode the revolutionary character of the Party. The Party members and units should show extreme vigilance against this menace and weed out such elements.

"We have to initiate a rectification campaign in the Party to eradicate the reformist style of functioning and all the accompanying bourgeois vices. All Party units should make a self-critical review of the present situation and should start rectifying the defects and shortcomings." The new Central

Committee after elaborate discussion concretised the document for rectification campaign after the Party Congress. The entire Party had taken up the campaign seriously. Even though it did not produce the desired result, it indicates the lines on which we will have to revitalise our organizational work in striving to discharge the stupendous political tasks facing our Party ahead.

In the aftermath of Fifteenth Congress, many important developments had taken place till the end of 1996, which in various counts confirmed the direction of the political analysis made by the Party Congress.

Before the general elections in April-May 1996, the ruling party was trying to recover some of the lost ground by announcing a series of popular schemes and sops to the electorate. But it was next to impossible to white-wash the record for brazen and rampant corruption of the Congress(I) government, the record of the horrible fall out of the IMF-WB dictated new economic policies and its shameless record of compromise with communal and divisive forces. Added to this was the factional infighting inside the Congress(I). On the whole the ruling party stood exposed and discredited. The position of the unmasked BJP, which was frantically making alliances with any regional party, was no better. As a matter of fact, the people were displaying their willingness to support a secular alternative to the Congress(I) by not falling prey to the communal appeal of the BJP.

In order to present an effective third alternative to the Congress(I) and the BJP it is our Party that took the initiative to broaden the unity of the democratic and secular forces. Due to the lack of coherence and consistency in the Janata Dal the sincere effort for unity was hampered to an extent.

The poll offered a fractured result, for no single party or combination could assume power on its own. It led to a new situation with the decisive defeat suffered by the ruling Congress(I) which got the lowest percentage of votes and seats since the first general elections in 1952; and menacingly, the BJP had emerged as the single largest party, though far away from mustering majority.

The non-Congress(I), non-BJP secular parties constituted a significant bloc in the Lok Sabha. In the given situation, as no party or combination was in a position to dominate the scene, the regional parties had acquired a crucial role to play.

We reviewed the results of the election in depth and self-critically evaluated our performance which was very important in the continuing phase of political developments in the country. This self-critical estimation prompted our Central Committee to translate into action the Fifteenth Congress call for a rectification campaign within the Party to remove wrong trends and defects within the organization, as stated above.

The developments relating to staking the claim to form the government by the BJP and its allies constituted a dangerous signal for the whole country. Our Party resolved to make all efforts to rally all the non-Congress(I) secular parties in order to forge a broad-based combination which could stake its claim to form the government which the Congress(I) could support from outside. The Party expressed itself against any coalition government with the Congress(I) as it would be counter to the anti-Congress(I) verdict given by the people.

When the BJP was making all efforts to placate the regional parties it was primarily our efforts which helped to rally them. The DMK, the Tamil Manila Congress, the TDP and the AGP came together and decided to join the wider formation. It was this alliance which was named the United Front and which elected Deve Gowda, the then Karnataka Chief Minister, as leader of the alliance. The final decision of the President after a long confusion led to the formation of the 13-day aberration of the BJP government which did not have the confidence of the majority in the Lok Sabha and which was only banking on the hope that having formed the government it could allure some of the secular regional parties and organize large-scale defections even from the Congress(I). Its failure to realize the ill-design led to the formation of the United Front government. Indeed, the success in uniting all the non-Congress(I) secular parties, in which our Party played a key role, resulted in the fall of the BJP

government in less than two weeks and the formation of the United Front government.

As a framework for the government's policies to be pursued, the United Front set up a Steering Committee and adopted a Common Minimum Programme. While the Common Minimum Programme had a positive content on issues such as secularism, Centre-State relations, commitment to social equality and democratisation of the polity, however, in the key areas of the economy the thrust was towards carrying forward the liberalization policies of the Congress(I) government contrary to the principled stand of the Left. The Congress(I) was compelled to support the government unconditionally from outside. With the invitation of all participating parties in the United Front extended to our Party, the question of leading and participating in the government came up for discussion and debate at our Central Committee which met twice to adopt the tactical line to be followed. After elaborate deliberations we came to the conclusion with the majority decision to decline the offer and support the government wholeheartedly from outside. While extending overall support, being in the Steering Committee, and pushing for implementation of the positive features of the Common Minimum Programme, we had also maintained our independent positions to support or demarcate on specific issues.

In the situation of tardy implementation of the Common Minimum Programme, the fractures and bickering in the Janata Dal, infighting in the Congress(I) organization and the multiplying problems of the United Front government, the Central Committee of our Party in its meeting in October 1996 underlined the tasks:

“There is no doubt that the important task of fighting communalism remains and will continue to remain one of the main tasks till we are able to bring some change in the correlation of forces and in this respect isolation of the BJP and forging cooperation with other secular forces will remain on the agenda. Secondly, the old economic policies being pursued are throwing more burdens on the people and providing

more facilities to the foreign monopoly houses to make inroads in all spheres of our economic life. Unless we put up a stiff resistance against them, we will be only tailing behind the bourgeois parties. It is necessary to build up broad resistance to the economic policies so that the communal forces are not able to utilise the discontent created for reactionary purposes. We will be able to make use of this situation by strengthening Left and democratic forces.”

This period saw rapid change in the situation and tactical political line, thus evolved, of our Party and also of the different parties and combinations. This Volume will definitely help the readers understand and assess the stand of the CPI(M) in the complex situation.