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## **CPI(M) Programme: Basic Strategy Reiterated**

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### **I**

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has updated its Programme at the Special Conference held in Thiruvananthapuram in October, 2000. While updating the Programme, the Party Conference has retained the core of the Programme as it was adopted in 1964. This is in keeping with the direction given by the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Party that the stage of the revolution, the strategy, class character of the Indian State and the government and the class alliance to achieve the people's democratic revolution contained in the Programme adopted in 1964 is valid and should be retained. The updated Programme has adhered to the essence of the strategy formulated in 1964 concerning these basic programmatic concepts.

The question may be asked as to why we have retained the core of the strategy set out in 1964? What is the experience gained in the 36 years since the Programme was adopted which results in reiterating the strategic positions which were formulated at the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Party?

The questions regarding the stage of the revolution, the nature of the Indian State and the strategic class alliance to be forged were debated in the post-independence period within the communist movement. Without going into the history of these debates, it is necessary to point out that the 1964 Programme was a product of a prolonged inner-Party struggle which lasted nearly a decade between 1955 and 1964 in the united Communist Party. While studying the updated Party Programme, it is necessary to refer to some of these debates to understand why the CPI(M) continues to maintain that the strategy for the Indian revolution adopted by it in 1964 remains valid and relevant at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Assessment of the Stage of Revolution**

For formulating a correct strategy, it is necessary to have a comprehensive and accurate class analysis of Indian society which is integrated with the correlation of class forces internationally. It is on this basis that we can determine the stage of the revolution. Whom should the revolution be targetted against and which are the classes who can be mobilised for achieving this aim? The stage of the revolution is determined on the basis of the correlation of class forces nationally and internationally. It depends on the nature of the socio-economic formation which is determined by the level of the productive forces and the relations of production. Further, for deciding the direction and stage of the revolution, we have to assess properly the degree of consciousness and organisation of the proletariat and the degree of unity with its allied classes.

The Party Programme adopted in 1964 characterises the stage of our revolution as democratic. This recognises the fact that the agrarian revolution which is the prerequisite for completion of the democratic tasks is still incomplete. The contradiction between landlordism and the bourgeois-landlord state, on the one hand, and the mass of the peasantry on the other, is the key one which needs to be resolved for breaking the fetters imposed on the existing relations of production and ensuring further development of the productive forces.

Before independence too, the nature of the revolution was democratic. It was directed against British imperialism and therefore the strategic class alliance was the general national united front against imperialism. With India attaining political independence, a new State led by the Indian ruling classes came into being. The stage while still being democratic was now directed against the Indian state and the classes which control it. The abolition of landlordism, the elimination of the grip of Indian monopolies and foreign capital were all tasks left over after gaining national independence. The basic tasks of the democratic stage are therefore anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly and anti-landlord.

One of the major differences with the CPI in this regard was not the characterisation of the stage of the revolution, which both termed as democratic but in defining the nature of the Indian State and the leadership of the strategic class alliance which has to make the democratic revolution.

Within the range of Marxist definition of the Indian State, there is a school of thought, represented by parties like the Revolutionary Socialist Party, which characterise the stage of revolution as socialist. Some Marxist scholars also subscribe to this approach. The argument put forward is that with the development of capitalism in India, especially after independence, capitalism has become the mode of production in Indian society. A variant of this argument being that capitalism has become the dominant mode of production. In such a situation, it is argued that it is appropriate to characterise the Indian State as a capitalist State and the stage of the revolution as a socialist one.

After more than five decades of capitalist development in India, why cannot the slogan of a socialist revolution be raised directly?

### **Why a Democratic Revolution?**

It is necessary to address these old arguments as they will keep coming up time and again given the steady development of capitalism in India. It is true that capitalism is the dominant mode of production in Indian society today. It is understood by Marxists that in a socio-economic formation, it is possible to have a dominant mode of production like capitalism co-existing with survivals of pre-capitalist relations. The existence of pre-capitalist or semi-feudal relations cannot detract from the fact that capitalism is the dominant mode of production in Indian society. Having stated this, it is also important to remember the relatively lower level of capitalist development and the growth of the productive forces in India compared to the advanced capitalist countries. It is further necessary to see what are the relations of production extant in our society, the nature of the classes and the relations that are existing and developing between them. Without going into the role of classes and their inter relationship, it will not be possible to arrive at a political strategy for a revolutionary movement.

It is here that those who advocate the socialist revolution based on the definition of the Indian State as capitalist, fail to recognise the key questions associated with building a revolutionary movement.

The contradiction between landlordism and the mass of the peasantry, in particular the poor peasants and agricultural workers, is the foremost one in the agrarian countryside. The development of

capitalist relations in agriculture has led to a change in the nature of landlordism with the transformation of the semi-feudal landlords increasingly to capitalist landlordism. The development of capitalism from above without a thorough going democratic agrarian revolution has led to a type of capitalist landlordism which has preserved a vast nexus of semi-feudal relations which exploits the peasantry in varying degrees in the different parts of the countryside. The task of the agrarian revolution is directed against the elimination of this form of landlordism and the survivals of semi-feudal relations so that the existing relations of production can be transformed and the way opened for the rapid development of the productive forces.

A revolutionary strategy requires an effective alliance to be forged of all those forces who can rallied alongside the working class in India. The proletariat, both urban and rural, can build a powerful revolutionary movement only when it is able to attract the non-proletarian classes, primarily the peasantry to the revolutionary movement. It is the slogans of a democratic revolution which will draw the peasantry into active participation alongwith other allied classes. Without the worker-peasant alliance, there can be no firm foundations for a revolutionary movement. The task of winning over the allies of the peasantry will not succeed, if slogans of a socialist nature are raised at this stage of the movement. The anti-imperialist, anti-landlord and anti-monopoly slogans which will mobilise the vast sections of the people are basically of a democratic character.

It is through the experience of the struggle for fulfilling the anti-landlord, anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist tasks that the mass of the people belonging to the allied classes can realise the necessity for socialism. The consciousness will come from the actual experience of the movement and the struggles conducted and not by the abstracted slogan of socialism.

The bourgeoisie in ex-colonial countries have in the twentieth century consciously refrained from completing the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic stage, as it faced the threat of a potential revolutionary movement based on the alliance of the working class and peasantry. The strategy becomes revolutionary because it recognises that these democratic tasks cannot be left to the bourgeoisie but something which has to be accomplished under the leadership of the working class. The link between the democratic revolution and the succeeding socialist revolution is the working

class leadership which can ensure the transition to the higher stage.

The democratic stage is not predicated only on the agrarian contradictions but has a wider significance given the nature of the socio-economic formation in Indian society. The flawed transformation which has taken place under the capitalist path of development in India is described in the Programme as follows: "Unlike in the advanced capitalist countries where capitalism grew on the ashes of pre-capitalist society, which was destroyed by the rising bourgeoisie, capitalism in India was super-imposed on pre-capitalist society. Neither the British colonialists during their rule nor the Indian bourgeoisie assuming power after independence attempted to smash it, which was one of the most important preconditions for the free development of capitalism. The present Indian society, therefore, is a peculiar combination of monopoly capitalist domination with caste, communal and tribal institutions. It has thus fallen on the working class and its party to unite all the progressive forces interested in destroying the pre-capitalist society and to consolidate the revolutionary forces within it so as to facilitate the completion of the democratic revolution and prepare the ground for the transition to socialism."

The critics of the CPI(M) position contend that it is "confounded" by the continuance of semi-feudal relations and miss the main feature that capitalism has become the dominant mode of production<sup>[1]</sup>. This approach is probably not concerned with the question of how to mobilise the different sections of the people and the classes to build a revolutionary movement. If the revolutionary movement is to succeed in capturing State power, it has to overthrow the existing system which sustains and perpetuates the economic and social relations which are a source of oppression and misery for different sections of the people. The vast mass of the peasantry are moved by democratic slogans such as those concerned with land and other means of production. They are adversely affected by the bourgeois-landlord policies which affect their livelihood. The millions of dalits and adivasis who constitute nearly a quarter of the Indian population, apart from the growing capitalist exploitation, they face forms of social and economic oppression which are peculiar to the caste system in Indian society. The abolition of untouchability and the caste system is a basic democratic slogan. A big section of the proletarian and semi-proletarian masses who belong to the dalit and adivasi communities will be moved to revolutionary action by any movement which challenges the basis of this system.

Similarly, women belonging to the non-proletarian strata, millions of whom belong to the peasantry and other working sections will rally to the slogan to end feudal forms of gender exploitation. Thus, democratic slogans will be the bedrock on which the working class can rally all the forces who have a stake in doing away with both monopoly capital and semi-feudal oppression which is the goal of a democratic revolution.

In the present world situation, the democratic stage is all the more relevant for our country. With the global imperialist offensive and India coming under increased imperialist pressures, the anti-imperialist tasks will occupy increasing importance. The broadest anti-imperialist unity can be forged by drawing into the struggles all those non-proletarian strata whose interests are affected.

Even in the relatively more developed capitalist countries, the Communist parties have underlined the anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist tasks in the first stage of the revolutionary transformation which would lead to socialism. In these countries, where there are no pre-capitalist relations of any consequence, the dynamics of the building a revolutionary movement dictates the necessity to rally the non-proletarian strata of the people to isolate the big monopoly corporations and the ruling classes.

## II

The 1964 Programme had analysed the nature of the capitalist path of development in India in the post-independence period. In doing so, it settled some of the long-standing disputes about the nature of capitalist development and the role of the bourgeoisie in the Indian State. When we look back on the formulations regarding the capitalist path made, more than three and a half decades later, the singular achievement of the Programme in this context stands out.

The analysis in the 1964 Programme refuted comprehensively and with great clarity the revisionist idea that “an independent national economy” could be developed under the auspicious of the capitalist path. It rejected the contention that with the help of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries, the Indian bourgeoisie could embark upon an independent path of capitalist development which

would open the way towards a non-capitalist path of development where the working class would be in a position to share power with the national bourgeoisie.

### **Nature of Capitalist Path**

The exposition of the capitalist path provided in the Programme had the following main features:

- a) The Indian bourgeoisie adopted a specific type of capitalist development without completing the basic tasks of a democratic revolution, that is clearing the ground for capitalism, by the elimination of pre-capitalist relations centering on the land question. The bourgeoisie struck an alliance with the landlords which necessitated the compromise and the implementation of a limited form of agrarian reforms designed to superimpose capitalism from above on agriculture.
- b) The big bourgeoisie assumed the leadership for this type of capitalist development and it is the leadership of the big bourgeoisie which effectively ensured the compromise with landlordism while maintaining its organic links with imperialist capital.
- c) The State power was used as an instrument to accumulate capital and to serve the interests of the bourgeois-landlord classes. Thus, the economic policies of successive governments perpetuated and intensified the exploitation of the people by the bourgeois-landlord combine led by the big bourgeoisie.
- d) The Programme placed the path of developing capitalism in the international context. The existence of the socialist bloc of countries enabled the Indian bourgeoisie to industrialise and build the infrastructure for capitalist development to a certain extent and stave off pressures to completely succumb to imperialism. It recognised a degree of autonomy for the bourgeoisie to pursue this path utilising the existence of the two blocs to bargain between both to strengthen its class position.
- e) However, the Programme concluded that such a path cannot be sustained as it was crisis-ridden and becoming increasingly dependent on imperialist capital.

This depiction of the nature of the capitalist development in India

has stood the test of time. Unlike the CPI Programme, which was also adopted in 1964, the CPI(M) has consistently maintained that there is a bourgeois-landlord alliance and the leadership of the ruling class is vested in the hands of the big bourgeoisie. It is this leadership of the big bourgeoisie which has led to the rapid growth of monopolies and big business houses. The top 22 big business houses have seen a 500 fold increase in their assets between 1957 and 1997. According to one estimate, the top 50 big business houses had assets totaling Rs. 2,15,990 crores in 1997. (The definition of the 50 big houses, excludes transnational corporations and assets of joint ventures abroad.)[\[ii\]](#)

The new phase in the capitalist path of development ushered in for the last decade through liberalisation in the late eighties does not, in any way, negate the validity of the above analysis made in the 1964 Programme. The Programme had warned that the capitalist path would prove to be a bankrupt one. The policies of taxing the people and transferring resources and assets to the big bourgeoisie and landlords by inflation-cum-deficit financing would be unsustainable. The grip of big bourgeoisie over the State apparatus would nullify any prospects of utilising the state capitalist sector and planning to develop on an independent basis. The growth and concentration of capital and reliance on foreign capital would be the result. This is what actually happened.

By the eighties, the model of capitalist development based on state capitalism and state regulation to promote the interests of the bourgeois-landlord classes had exhausted its possibilities. The big bourgeoisie which had grown enormously and fattened at the expense of the people by its hold over State power was now prepared to embrace liberalisation. The changes in the international situation with the collapse of the Soviet Union and neo-liberal offensive of imperialism only hastened the shift in the stance of the ruling classes.

### **The role of the big bourgeoisie**

The dominance of the big bourgeoisie in State power left its imprint on the type of capitalist development witnessed in the last five decades. The growing concentration of capital, the capitalist-landlord model of agrarian development, the growing reliance on foreign capital – all pointed out in the 1964 Programme have turned out to be true.



## **CPI Analysis**

In the CPI programme which was also adopted in 1964, the primacy of the big bourgeoisie in State power was not recognised. It talks of the national bourgeoisie as a whole being in State power. The big bourgeois leadership which ensures the bourgeois-landlord partnership in the State was missed. All this led to the wrong estimation of the character of the Indian State. "National Democracy" hence meant, sharing power with the national bourgeoisie (including the big bourgeoisie) which already controls the State. Without pinpointing the leadership of the dominant strata in State power, the big bourgeoisie, the strategy of class collaboration become inevitable. How the CPI now estimates the role of the big bourgeoisie in the State structure, when it updates its Programme, remains to be seen.

The merit of the 1964 Programme was to puncture the illusions that an independent path of capitalist development would be promoted by a big bourgeois-led ruling combine. At the same time, it also decisively rejected Left sectarian notions about the nature of capitalist development in India. It was not surprising that the CPI(M)'s programmatic outlook on the nature of the bourgeoisie and the Indian State was denounced by the Left sectarian trend represented by the naxalites. More than three decades ago the naxalites' termed the big bourgeoisie as a 'comprador' class deriving their inspiration from Mao Zedong's analysis of the comprador bourgeoisie in China. This vulgar and mechanistic transposition has few advocates today.

## **Left-sectarian Position**

Yet, the CPI(ML), in its journal *Liberation* has recently launched an attack on the CPI(M)'s programmatic positions on the Indian big bourgeoisie and the dual character of the bourgeoisie.<sup>[iii]</sup> According to them, there is no dual character of the Indian bourgeoisie. Neither does this wing of the naxalites accept that there can be a differentiation between the big bourgeoisie and the non-big bourgeoisie in its approach to imperialist capital. The updated Programme of the CPI(M) upholds the dual character of the bourgeoisie. It maintains that the big bourgeois strata which is dominant, is more pro-imperialist and seeks to resolve its conflicts with imperialism through pressure, bargain and compromise.

This, however, does not negate the fact that contradictions exist between imperialist capital and the Indian bourgeoisie as a whole, including the big bourgeoisie. The increasing collaboration of foreign finance capital was not something which was overlooked in the 1964 Programme. In fact, the dangers of increasing collaboration with foreign finance capital were highlighted. With liberalisation, this collaboration by the big bourgeoisie has come to the forefront. In the entire world capitalist system, different segments of the bourgeoisie, both at the national and international level, have entered a new phase of inter-relationships. One of the factors in this is the increasing concentration and mobility of finance capital. But to assume from this that all conflicts and contradictions between different national capitals and between them and international finance capital have disappeared would be un-Marxist. We can envisage in the future resistance developing to the imperialist-driven globalisation and the intensification of the contradictions between imperialism and the third world countries. This will have its impact on the Indian bourgeoisie, including the big bourgeoisie. Just as it was erroneous to posit a consistent anti-imperialist character to the national bourgeoisie, so also it would be dogmatic to conclude that no segment, no fraction of the big bourgeoisie or national bourgeoisie will come into conflict with international finance capital in the future.

Instead of addressing this basic position of the CPI(M), the Liberation ideologues seek to confuse the issue of strategy and tactics. What the Programme of the CPI(M) does is to note the conflicts between imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie so that appropriate tactics can be worked out by the working class-led democratic movement. Nowhere does the Programme of the CPI(M) advocate a strategic alliance with any section of the big bourgeoisie on the basis of its conflicts or contradictions with imperialism. But in working out correct tactics to isolate the ruling classes, it is necessary to take note of such differences. Unable to counter the CPI(M)'s correct understanding of the role of the big bourgeoisie vis-à-vis imperialism, the ML ideologues seek to portray the dual character of the bourgeoisie as a pretext for a strategic alliance with the big bourgeoisie.

In the naxalite scheme of things, it is not possible to envisage conflicts between the non-big bourgeoisie and the big bourgeoisie. The CPI(M) Programme specifically notes these conflicts so that

correct tactics can be worked out. The ML theorists seek to educate us about the role of the bourgeoisie in a democratic revolution quoting extensively from the revolutionary history and the works of Lenin and Mao. They labour to establish that the bourgeoisie cannot be a revolutionary class in the current epoch and will not undertake even the "bourgeois democratic tasks" for fulfillment. The CPI(M) Programme is premised on the fact that the bourgeoisie cannot as a class play a revolutionary role in the era of imperialism and when proletarian revolution and socialism have entered the scene.

That is why it sets out a strategic alliance for the people's democratic revolution which is based on the leadership of the working class. The working class will have its allies amongst the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie. As for the non-big bourgeoisie, the Programme envisages sections of them joining the people's democratic front when certain circumstances are fulfilled which include the growing strength of the revolutionary movement.

### **Contradictions of Compradorism**

But what about the CPI(ML)'s own understanding about the big bourgeoisie? The CPI(ML) had termed the big bourgeoisie as comprador and the Indian State as: "a comprador-bureaucrat feudal State". Three decades later, various CPI(ML) groups are hard put to explain how the "comprador" "big bourgeoisie" embark on a capitalist path of development which has enabled it to accumulate and concentrate capital in its hands. They cannot explain how the state capitalist policies pursued till the mid-eighties was utilised by the big bourgeoisie to strengthen and expand itself. Neither are they able to deny the reality of capitalist development in the agrarian sector.

The CPI(ML) has more or less abandoned the use of the term 'comprador' in the Marxist sense. This is evident from its own admission: "In India too, if the CPI(ML) in its 1970 programme had employed this term to describe the big bourgeoisie, it was primarily to draw attention to the pro-imperialist character of this class. Subsequently, however, we felt that the term was not sufficient to reflect the peculiarities of the Indian variety of capitalist development vis-à-vis pre-revolutionary China and we therefore opted for the term 'dependent' as opposed to the opportunist notion of an independent and anti-imperialist bourgeoisie".

The CPI(ML) had characterised the big bourgeoisie as comprador, not merely to draw attention to the pro-imperialist character of those sections but also to characterise the Indian State too as comprador and semi-colonial.

In an earlier article in *People's Democracy*, we had referred to the thesis of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International which described the comprador bourgeoisie in colonial, dependent or backward countries as "servitors of foreign imperialism concerned mainly with trade operations connected with the export of indigenous raw materials and the import of manufactured goods from imperialist countries.....". It was mainly a trading bourgeoisie and merchant capital which acted as the comprador as distinct from the industrial bourgeoisie. The Liberation commentator have accused us of ignoring the contribution of Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party regarding the role of the comprador class. There is no difference in the use of the term comprador between the original Communist International definition and Mao Zedong's use of the term, except that Mao applied it concretely to the class in pre-revolutionary China. Mao Zedong differentiated between the big bourgeoisie in China which was comprador and the national bourgeoisie which he identified as the medium and small bourgeoisie.

The big bourgeoisie in India unlike the Chinese big bourgeoisie was more developed and had an industrial base. It was this strata which led the national movement for independence unlike the Chinese big bourgeoisie which became the agent of rival imperialist powers. What the naxalites did was to transplant the analysis of classes in China in the pre-revolutionary period into India. It has taken some time for the reality to penetrate the thick walls of dogma. Three decades after the Left sectarian analysis, the CPI(ML) Liberation is hard put to explain how the big bourgeoisie which it states is in leadership of the State could develop a relatively strong capitalist system, if it is "dependent-comprador" and functioning in a semi-colonial set-up.

At first, the CPI(ML) had characterised the state as "imperialist-comprador-bureaucratic capitalism and feudal". In 1988, at the Fourth Congress, the CPI(ML) liberation group stated "We prefer to characterise Indian capitalism as comprador-monopoly-bureaucratic

capitalism, or, in popular terms as dependent monopoly capitalism or comprador-bureaucratic capitalism”.

In the refurbished Programme adopted by the CPI(ML) in 1997 in its Sixth Congress, it is stated: "Indian big capital is comprador in origin, dependent in nature and monopoly-bureaucratic in appearance and operation, often presenting a complex admixture of private management, State finance and foreign technology".<sup>[iv]</sup> This is a road travelled, quite far from the earlier 1968 characterisation. Now the Indian big bourgeoisie is only comprador in origin. This is unexceptionable since most national capitalists, in colonies and semi-colonies, had such origins. Then they proceed to term the big bourgeoisie as 'dependent in nature'. Compradorism is not dependence. Further, every serious social scientist, leave alone Marxists, would recognise that in the world capitalist system today, no capitalist class of the lesser developed countries can develop capitalism without being dependent and interlinked to the imperialist dominated capitalist system. To discover that the Indian big bourgeoisie is dependent in nature is stating the obvious and does not, in any way, conform to its earlier comprador characterisation.

The term comprador, we reiterate, applies to colonial and semi-colonial conditions. To characterise any "dependent" or "collaborationist" bourgeoisie of the third world today as comprador is both unscientific and ahistorical. By this absurd use of the term all the major bourgeoisie of the third world, whether it be the Brazilian, South Korean or Indian capitalist class are all to be termed comprador and not national bourgeoisie.

### **Fallacy of “semi-colonial” “semi-feudal” society**

The CPI(ML) has sought to get rid of the malady of compradorism. But the cure is proving to be a complicated and contradictory process. The same ML programme which abandons the comprador definition of the big bourgeoisie, also characterises Indian society as semi-feudal and semi-colonial. So, for this brand of naxalite theorists the big bourgeoisie is heading a State which is not really independent but a semi-colony. Even after five decades of capitalist development since independence, Indian society is semi-feudal.

However, when analysing agrarian relations in India, the policy document on the agrarian question of the ML states "The bourgeoisie

is promoting a capitalism in Indian agriculture based on new landlords and rich peasants. Apart from many of the old landlords who are undergoing transition into new capitalist landlords, a section of rich peasants are also merging into capitalist farmers who can also be characterised as kulaks or agrarian bourgeoisie. Under this landlord path of capitalist development, the penetration of capitalist relations is very slow and uneven and the forces of capitalism are entering into hybrid relations with feudal remnants".[\[v\]](#)

The above description is more of a steady but "slow and uneven" development of capitalism in agriculture. This does not warrant the definition of a semi-feudal society. Surely, the CPI(ML) is sufficiently knowledgeable about the way capitalism grows making use of the pre-capitalist relations extant in agriculture. As the CPI(M) Programme puts it "India is a vast and living example of the rule that capitalism penetrates agriculture and rural society in a myriad ways". The dissolution of pre-capitalist relations and their suborning by capitalism is a complex and varied process in different societies. This developing capitalism's "hybrid relations with feudal remnants" cannot detract from the fact that capitalism is the dominant form of relations in agriculture.

The contours of capitalist development in agriculture that has taken place is well known. Landlordism, with concentration of land, has continued under the expanding capitalist regime.[\[vi\]](#) Capitalist development has led to growing proletarianisation of the peasantry. After the large-scale eviction of tenants holding traditional leases in the earlier period, in recent years there is a growth in leasing-in by the landlords and rich peasants. There is greater differentiation within the peasantry, increasing production for the market and increased levels of reinvestment of capital in agricultural-related activities by the rural rich. Usury is being resorted to by the capitalist landlords and such peasants on a large-scale to fleece the poor peasants and agricultural labourers.

It is true that the expansion of capitalist relations of production and exchange taking place is subject to regional diversity and unevenness. The updated Party Programme highlighted this complex and uneven growth. But to call this particular type of capitalist development as just "semi-feudal" is to ignore the production relations in the agrarian sector and sticking to a dogmatic concept which does not conform to the CPI(ML)'s own analysis of "capitalist landlordism". This will lead to an incorrect strategy to develop the

peasant movement for the abolition of landlordism.

As for semi-colonial, the justification given is more flimsy and strange. "Finance capital's deep penetration in our society and its wide-ranging economic, political and social links provide a fertile ground for the spread of decadent bourgeois culture, for the craze for anything and everything western and stand as a big blockade to any real national awakening. *The Party therefore, characterises the Indian society not only as semi-feudal but also as semi-colonial*".[\[vii\]](#)

If the "spread of decadent bourgeois culture" and the "craze for anything and everything western" are the reasons for calling India "semi-colonial" then much of the world will have to be declared semi-colonial, including much of Europe (if 'Western' is defined as US influence there). Whatever the "revolutionary" theory and practice of the CPI(ML), it cannot bridge the gulf between an independent republic and a semi-colony.

The dichotomy in the CPI(ML) Liberation's outlook of clinging to "semi-feudal and semi-colonial" Indian society while noting the steady development of capitalism and the "agrarian bourgeoisie", is not shared by all those who belong to the naxalite stream. The process of rethinking and reappraisal has gone ahead. A study undertaken by the Lal Parchan and Lok Dasta study group has come to the conclusion that terms like comprador and semi-colonial applied to the Indian bourgeoisie and society were grossly mistaken. Referring to the latest phase in world capitalism, the study concludes that "then there are those for whom the current position of the third world bourgeoisie is a clear signature of their supposedly comprador character while their earlier anti-imperialist stance was a mere eyewash. Such suppositions however, are quite far from truth".

"The new rulers adopted an anti-imperialist stance when the earlier modus operandi of imperialism threatened their political independence and tried to obstruct the economic development of its economies. Accordingly, they adopted the strategy of decolonisation. Now the things are quite different. Capitalism is well consolidated in a large number of third world countries. Their political independence is a fact accepted by all including the imperialists."[\[viii\]](#)

This is a clearer view of the role of the third world bourgeoisie

including the Indian class untrammelled by the dogmatic distortions of compradorism.

The discussion about the big bourgeoisie and its character is not merely an abstract one or, an academic pursuit. It is crucial for determining the strategy of the revolutionary movement. What the comprador school and its variants end up in, is a total underestimation of the strength of the main enemy of the democratic revolution. The Indian big bourgeoisie is the most resourceful and powerful section of the ruling classes. It has been the main beneficiary of the steady development and expansion of capitalism. Over the years, the composition of the big bourgeoisie has changed. There are a number of new entrants. Even before liberalisation, the bourgeoisie had expanded into new sectors like petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, steel and computers. With liberalisation, it has entered the financial sector. With the enormous reserves at its command and its grip over the State structure and its firm alliance with the landlords, it has been able to protect its class interests even while collaborating with foreign finance capital. To undermine the role of the big bourgeoisie in the particular type of capitalist development that has proliferated in India and which has played a leading role in fashioning the political system and State structure, is to ensure that the direction of the revolutionary movement goes astray.

The CPI(M) has unlike the revisionist or sectarian assessments squarely placed the big bourgeoisie as the centrepiece of the ruling combination which controls State power in India. While updating the programme, we have kept this focus and noted how the main antagonist of the revolutionary forces has grown and consolidated its position.

The Left-sectarian critics of the CPI(M) programme are unable to really refute the correctness of its characterisation of the Indian state, the nature of capitalist development in independent India and the role of the bourgeoisie. It would be better for them to proceed with the process of reappraisal which hopefully will lead to the abandonment of "compradorism" and seeking refuge in anachronistic descriptions like semi-feudal and semi-colonial to characterise contemporary Indian society.

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[i] Buddadeb Bhattacharya: "Mode of Production and the Character of the State in India" in *Capitalist Development Critical Essays* (Felicitation Volume in Honour of Prof. A.R. Desai) edited by Ghanshyam Shah, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai 1990, p. 144

[ii] *Business Today*, August 22-December 6, 1997.

[iii] *Liberation*, July and August, 2000

[iv] Basic Documents of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) – *The General Programme*, November 1997.

[v] *Policy Resolutions on Agrarian Question*. CPI(ML) Sixth Party Congress, November, 1997.

6A total of 3.8 per cent of households in the rural areas have holdings above 4 hectares (9.88 acres) which cover 31.5 of the area. When it comes to operational holdings, there are 7.4 per cent of the total households who are having operational holdings of above four hectares which constitutes 41.6 per cent of the area. (National Sample Survey, 48<sup>th</sup> round, 1991-92.)

7 *General Programme*, CPI(ML)

8 *Globalisation of Capital*, A study commissioned by Lal Parcham and Lok Dasta, New Delhi 1997, p. 252