

The Marxist

Volume: 18, No. 01

January-March 2002

**Extracts From The Political-Organisational Report
Adopted at the 17th Congress of the CPI(M)
Review of Political-Tactical Line
With Reference to United Front Tactics**

While reviewing the implementation of the political-tactical line adopted in the 16th Congress, we must address ourselves to the central issue which is engaging the attention of the entire party, which is, why the Party is not growing as a political force and increasing its mass influence at the all-India level?

This question is directly connected with our basic understanding that we have to change the correlation of class forces in order to advance towards the People's Democratic Revolution. The Updated Programme has reiterated our strategic goal of accomplishing the People's Democratic Revolution.

The advance of the CPI(M), politically and organisationally, must be seen in the context of the political-tactical line that we have been formulating and implementing over a period of time. From the 10th Congress onwards, we have been assessing in successive Party Congresses that the political-tactical line pursued has been broadly correct despite some shortcomings.

On the organisational front, after the 10th Congress, we have held the Salkia Plenum which gave a new direction to building and expanding the Party organisation. In the 14th Congress, we had reviewed the implementation of the Salkia guidelines and set out immediate tasks to streamline and expand the organisation. In the subsequent two Congresses, we have pinpointed the shortcomings to be overcome and reiterated the tasks set forth.

Yet, despite the efforts to implement the political-tactical line and the organisational guidelines, our progress has been minimal. The Party's overall influence is not growing. An objective review would show that except for the three strong states of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, the Party is stagnant, or, even declining in some areas, in terms of its mass base and organisational strength.

Growth of Party Assessed

It is necessary therefore to review some aspects of our political-tactical line and its implementation particularly with regard to united front and electoral tactics. Such a review was called for in the Central Committee's election review report of the 1996 Lok Sabha elections, where referring to our lack of advance it was stated: "This will entail further self-critical examination of our political-tactical line since the 10th Congress, particularly our experience in allying with the bourgeois parties both electorally and in general political

terms". Instead of covering the wide canvas of the political-tactical line adopted over a period of twenty years since the Jullunder Congress, it will be useful to focus on the experience of our united front tactics with the bourgeois parties including electoral tactics.

The political-tactical line as it evolved since the 10th Congress has helped the Party register some important successes.

(i) We were able to strengthen and consolidate our bases in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. Compared to the pre-1977 period, it was no longer possible for the bourgeois-landlord classes to unitedly attack the Left strongholds, given the correct tactics that we adopted. The Left was able to rally the opposition bourgeois parties to oppose attacks by the Centre or the ruling party against these bases. The existence of the Left-led governments in these three states continuously in West Bengal and repeatedly in Kerala and Tripura have enhanced the prestige of the Left and its intervention at the national level.ii) The intervention of the CPI(M) and the Left at the national level, grew since the 10th Congress. Whether it be the struggle against the divisive forces, the defence of democratic rights, to check imperialist intervention or defence of people's rights; the role of the CPI(M) and the Left was important.

(iii) Politically, the position gained by the Party and the Left made it impossible for any alternative to the Congress to emerge at the national level till 1998 without the support and the role of the Party and the Left. The formation of the non-Congress, non-BJP political combinations which emerged at the national level required the active support and initiative of the Left.

(iv) In the struggle against the communal danger and later the threat of the BJP in power at the Centre, the CPI(M) and the Left have a vital role.

(v) In the struggle against liberalisation and the pro-imperialist policies, the Party and the Left are the only consistent force which fight for defence of national sovereignty and the people's interests. It is this resistance which has checked to some extent the liberalisation drive.

Notwithstanding these gains, the question which must be sharply posed is why the Party has not grown commensurately as a political force with a substantially increased mass influence at the all-India level? Why is it that despite a number of struggles and mass movements which the Party and the mass movements have conducted, we have not been able to bring about any change in the correlation of class forces?

A major factor is what we have already noted in our last three Party Congresses from the 14th Congress onwards, which is, the rightward shift in Indian politics which has been exemplified by the growth of the communal forces and the liberalisation policies which have marked a new offensive against the working people. It is not only the CPI(M), but the Left as a whole, which has failed to make advance. The decline of the Congress dominance has led to the BJP and the rightwing forces filling the vacuum. The only other forces which have grown are the regional parties, most of which in terms of economic policies have proved no different from the all-India bourgeois-landlord parties and many of whom have shown themselves to be opportunist on the question of fighting communalism.

While we have been striving to build the independent strength of the Party, forge Left unity and building the Left and democratic alternative, the reality is that in the constant flux of events, socio-economic developments and the change in the international correlation of class forces, we have not been able to overcome the hurdles and grow. At the national level, the decline of the Congress has benefitted the BJP. At the states level, the various regional parties and forces have come up and made their mark. They range from the extreme right like the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, caste based parties having their roots among oppressed sections like the BSP in UP, regional bourgeois-landlord parties like the TDP, AGP, BJD, Samajwadi Party and RJD.

If we review the electoral performance of the last two decades it can be summed up as maintaining or consolidating our influence in the three strong states while stagnating or declining in the rest of the country.

As far as the electoral performance is concerned, which is one indication of our influence, in the 1999 Lok Sabha election, the Party polled a total of 1.97 crore votes of which West Bengal and Kerala accounted for 1.72 crore votes. We polled only 24.8 lakh votes in the rest of the country having fought only 28 Lok Sabha seats outside West Bengal and Kerala. However, this gives an indication of the very limited influence in electoral terms outside the three strong states.

The stark fact is that despite our pre-occupation with parliamentary and electoral work there is not a single parliamentary constituency outside the three strong states where we can win on our own strength. Further, we cannot claim that we can win a single assembly seat on our own strength (with two or three exceptions) in the entire country outside these three states.

The electoral performance is only one indicator of our political and organisational position in the country. Review of our organisational work since the Salkia Plenum will show that while we have made some progress in terms of building mass organisations and taking up the day to day issues of the people and expanding membership in some states based on the slogan of Salkia for a mass revolutionary party, the overall position of the Party in terms of the independent strength, mass influence and Party organisation remains extremely unsatisfactory.

Though the Party membership has increased from 1.6 lakhs in 1978 to 7.96 lakhs in the year 2001, the three strong states account for 5.85 lakhs. In the rest of India, we have just over 2 lakh members. If we exclude the membership in Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh, we have a membership of only around 85,000, in the rest of India.

III

Review of United Front Experience

The last two decades have been a period when the forces of communalism grew, the onslaught of the divisive forces took place and the offensive of liberalisation evolved. These are all relevant factors. To this must be added the role of the various bourgeois political parties and our tactics vis-à-vis them. The 10th Congress of the Party had given two specific tactical directions. Firstly, to mobilise a broad resistance to authoritarianism, wherein

bourgeois parties who take a stand in defence of democracy should be brought into a broad platform. This stemmed from the understanding that we should utilise the differences and schisms which develop between the bourgeois parties. The second direction was to forge the unity of the Left and democratic forces through developing mass movements and struggles based on a programme of the Left and democratic forces which is distinct from all other bourgeois parties. It is necessary to go into the experience of implementing the line regarding both these aspects.

Since the 10th Congress we have adopted united front tactics in all the states with various bourgeois landlord parties. Some of these alliances have been for a prolonged period. In many instances such alliances especially during elections have helped the Party to meet the electoral situation and fulfill its immediate goal of either defeating the Congress or the BJP. At the same time, the experience of such alliances with bourgeois parties has shown various shortcomings which were pinpointed in the reviews conducted by the Central Committee and the Party Congress.

United Front tactics are essential for the Party to advance. United fronts are of different types. There can be united actions on common issues with other parties and organisations to develop the mass movement. There can be united front with political parties to mobilise the people on specific political issues and to launch campaigns and struggles. In the electoral sphere, we may enter into understanding with other parties including bourgeois parties for the limited purpose of achieving our immediate aims in the election battle or to effectively intervene in the electoral battle and bring about a change in the political situation. It is axiomatic for a communist party that united front tactics go side by side with the independent activities of the party. While uniting with bourgeois parties in particular, the Party must zealously project its own independent politics and line amongst the people from its own platforms even when common platforms or joint electoral platforms are forged. It is also necessary to demarcate the Party's stand from those of the bourgeois parties on various policy and ideological questions which arise while we have united front activities with these parties.

Another important aspect of united front tactics is that it enables the Party to gain access to the masses following other parties through the united platforms and activities which enables the Party to reach out to the masses and gain influence amongst them. The correct use of united front tactics should enable the Party to win over sections of the masses under the influence of bourgeois parties with which it allies. It is by winning over more and more masses under the influence of the bourgeois parties and bringing them under the influence of the Party and the Left and democratic forces that a change in the correlation of class forces can take place.

It is a matter of serious concern that despite our prolonged use of united front tactics and electoral understanding with bourgeois parties we are not able to make much headway. Let us take the two states which are considered to be the strongest in terms of the Party's influence and mass base after West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura i.e. Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu.

If we look at the performance of these two states in assembly elections, it

illustrates the problem that we are facing. There has been no appreciable increase in our independent electoral strength despite prolonged use of united front tactics. In 1967, the first elections we contested as the CPI(M) in Andhra Pradesh the Party polled 7.6 per cent of the votes in the assembly elections. Even after the naxalite disruption in 1972, we polled 5 per cent. In the last two assembly polls in 1994 and 1999, the Party polled 2.7 percent and 1.7 percent respectively. From 1984 to 1998, the Party had an alliance with the TDP for 14 years. The 1999 elections were held after the break with the TDP and our voting percentage came down to the lowest indicating erosion in our mass base in certain areas.

In Tamilnadu in 1967, the Party polled 4 per cent and in the last two assembly elections of 1996 and 2001, the Party polled 1.65 per cent and 1.68 per cent respectively. In Tamilnadu we have alternated between the DMK and the AIADMK for the past three decades with only one or two brief breaks. Both the Dravidian parties continue to monopolise the people's support after all these years. In the other weaker states, the situation is no better. We have the experience of alliance with the AGP in Assam. We entered into an electoral alliance with the AGP for the first time in 1996 and this came to an end in 2001 when the AGP defected to the BJP. The subsequent elections saw a setback for the Left in terms of its voting strength. In Bihar too we have been in alliance with the Janata Dal and later the RJD for more than a decade. The CPI(M) and the Left forces have not been able to make headway and lost ground despite this prolonged alliance. Similar is the situation in Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and Karnataka.

In the state conferences held in preparation for the 17th Congress, the review undertaken in some of the states with respect to the experience of united front tactics is relevant to our discussion.

The Andhra Pradesh report states:

"The long association with the TDP resulted in wrong approaches and trends of the bourgeois parties having an influence on our following. All this contributed to weakening of our popular base. There were some lapses in maintaining our Party's independence while dealing with TDP. Due to the lapses in drawing very clear demarcation line between us and TDP, the harmful impact of TDP was felt on people and our followers in some areas. Some activists in some districts due to alien class influences and illusions left our Party. An ex-MLA and two district committee members and over 15 sarpanches left our Party after elections in Khammam district. Similar such instances were also seen in some other districts.

"Drawing proper lessons from these experiences we should very carefully protect our independence while dealing with bourgeois-landlord parties in future."

The Assam report pinpoints the mistakes in the relations with the AGP. The state committee of the Party has observed that the Party has failed to show to the people the differences with the AGP led alliance government.

"There are two reasons for this failure: The differences of the Party with the government could not be clearly and correctly raised by

the Party leadership and on the other hand the Party could not increase its independent, sustained activities amongst the people.

Though the Party tried to build up mass movements among the masses, it has turned into a formality only. No strong and sincere measures were adopted to organise the people and unite them for any movement. As a result, the activities of the Party and its independent position were not observed by the people. The AGP also continued to campaign that our Party is also a partner in the government taking full advantage of our failures.

"Regrettably, the Party leadership failed to ward off both the weakness identified by the Party at the appropriate time. Result was the debacle in the Assembly elections.

"..... In absence of solid political interference and independent mass movement and inactiveness of the Party in different spheres pushed the Party to such a corner that the people started identifying the Party with all the misdeeds of the AGP led government. Such a feeling developed in the minds of the people that instead of fighting for the interest of the state and the people the Party became the protector of the corrupt and useless government."

The Maharashtra conference report explains the circumstances which led to the Party's changed stand regarding the Congress-NCP government:

"Our Party and other Left parties had extended support to the INC-NCP-led state government with the sole purpose of keeping the communal alliance (BJP-SS outfit) away from power. However, this government has put severe burdens on the people, it has not been able to resolve the problems of the people and has failed to take effective actions against the communal forces. Hence the possibility has arisen that the people's anger will make them turn again to the BJP-SS combine. The recent gains of the BJP-SS in the local elections is an indication of this. The credibility of the Left will decrease in the absence of an alternative.

"The Left and democratic parties in the state have for the past two years been a part of the coordination committee of the DF (Democratic Front) and two of these parties, namely the PWP and Janata Dal (Secular) are in the ministry. Because of this, the movement against the government's policies by these parties does not carry conviction and the very purpose of supporting the government in order to keep the communal alliance out gets undermined. The communal combine (BJP-SS) is likely to increase its base because of this.

"In these circumstances, the Maharashtra state committee has taken the decision to withdraw the support given to the state government, to come out of the DF coordination committee and to keep our position regarding the government on an issue to issue basis."

In many cases, the electoral understanding does not remain limited to the elections. After the elections, our relations continue either as a "supporting party" or through "informal" or "formal" coordination. This has been the situation in states like Bihar, Assam, Andhra Pradesh and recently in

Maharashtra where we were in a coordination committee which supported the Congress-NCP ministry. Such an approach has prevented our demarcation from the ruling party and its bourgeois landlord policies. It has not been conducive to fostering our independent role and activities which is the basis for strengthening our Party. When our electoral allies win the elections and form the government, the tendency has been to treat them as allies throughout their tenure in office. Such state governments, often headed by regional parties, adopt the same economic policies of liberalisation and generally pursue bourgeois-landlord policies and it is inevitable that we come in conflict with them. Opposition to these policies, demarcation from their political-ideological positions are absolutely necessary. If these are muted, it harms the Party's image and affects its mass base.

From the PB and CC, we have failed to stress this important point and intervene to provide a correct orientation, as our preoccupation has also been with rallying and maintaining good relations with these parties.

Our alliances with all India bourgeois-landlord parties have also been developed at the national level since the 10th Congress. One of the results has been that in certain states we have been continuing with our relations with the concerned state units of the bourgeois parties as allies, because of the national level combination. When state governments are run by these parties, we have adopted an approach of a friendly or constructive opposition which does not pay priority to developing the struggles against the bourgeois-landlord policies of that government or strengthening the independent activities of the Party, which means also politically and ideologically demarcating from these parties.

In this connection, the review made in the political-organisational report of the 14th Congress with regard to the experience of work with these parties is highly relevant.

"But on the basis of the experience of the past we have to overcome our weaknesses in working with these parties. We do not try to demarcate with them when demarcation becomes necessary. We tone down our differences in the name of unity. We also become victims of parliamentarianism under one pretext or the other. In our anxiety to win some seats in the regions where we are weak we completely surrender our masses to these parties even at a time when elections enable us to propagate our views and policy issues can be posed very clearly. If we try to study the performance in the elections before 1977, when we were independently contesting we were able to expand our influence in different areas. Though it was very necessary to change the tactical line, in the period after the Emergency, against authoritarianism, it led to a situation where, bourgeois landlord parties were able to dictate terms to us in many places instead of coming to a proper understanding. This tendency also leads us to allow the masses to fall prey to these parties, instead of rallying them behind our Party and the Left. Lack of sufficient demarcation on certain issues during united action affects our mass base. This shortcoming is to be overcome. Therefore, the Party has to be very careful while working along

with these parties. While making certain very necessary compromises, we should never forget our class outlook and ideological moorings. In the background of the developments in the international Communist movement and the reverses and setbacks suffered, this aspect has to be given more importance. The Party, being the biggest force of the Left, has to take initiative in developing mass movements and leading political ideological battles to release the mass rallying behind the bourgeois-landlord classes from their ideological influence."

Subsequently, the Central Committee review report of the 1996 General Elections referring to our lack of advance in the weaker states noted:

"In those weaker states, where the Party has some presence and pockets of influence, our political tactical line enjoins us to forge alliances with the secular bourgeois parties which are opposed to the Congress and the BJP. Over a considerable period of time we have adopted concrete tactics which have resulted in alliances and joint election campaigns with the bourgeois parties who are stronger than us.....However, both in mass movements and in elections such joint platforms and fronts have not led to the commensurate growth of the independent strength of the Party and its mass organisations. It is a common experience in many of the weaker states that our independent strength has stagnated or declined compared to the advance made by other bourgeois-landlord parties."

The rectification document adopted by the Central Committee in 1998 pointed out another problem connected with our alliance with bourgeois parties. "For the past two decades, since 1997, the situation necessitated a tactical line of alliance with bourgeois parties particularly electoral alliance. This has led to the possibility for the penetration of bourgeois style of functioning into our party. Our cadres can get influenced by the type of money power and other bourgeois vices followed by these parties. "

Because of all this, neither the Party's independent strength nor its electoral influence grows and the tendency to tail behind bourgeois parties has helped in strengthening them and not the Party and the Left forces.

Both at the national level, and in most of the weaker states, the united front tactics are mainly confined to the electoral sphere. There is lack of emphasis on developing united fronts for joint struggles on mass issues and movements on commonly agreed demands. In the electoral sphere, because of our weak independent strength, we are not able to effectively use the election platforms and joint campaigns to expand our mass influence. We must emphasise the need for united platforms for joint campaigns and struggles to develop the mass movements.

We should keep in mind that most electoral understandings are for a particular election and not a permanent alliance. When we cease to have united platforms for joint movements or when elections are over, our work with the activists and masses of other parties must not cease. After the united front or joint actions is over, our Party cadres have to maintain links with the cadres and masses of other parties and strive to win them over politically to

our side through constant dialogue.

IV

Independent Activity of the Party

Since the Jullunder Congress, every Party Congress has stressed the importance of strengthening the independent activity of the Party and strengthening the mass organisations.

(i) However, it is doubtful whether there is a proper understanding of what the independent role and activity of the Party means. Generally, this is understood as the Party giving periodical calls for protest actions against governments policies and on important political developments, attacks on people's livelihood etc through holding campaigns, meetings, dharnas etc. While these are necessary, the main effort should be to develop struggles under the Party's leadership of different sections of the working people against the class exploitation. This is how class struggles advance. Developing struggles and sustaining them on partial demands -- this is one of the key aspects of independent activity. Where such struggles are conducted by the class or mass organisations, the Party intervenes and supports such struggles. For this the Party committees must study the conditions of the people and formulate demands based on the concrete situation. Such an approach is all the more important in the rural areas to mobilise and organise the peasantry and agricultural workers.

All India calls and the state level calls given on some issues are observed in a ritualistic form. There is need for orienting the Party units at all levels to take up the acute problems which affect the people and launch sustained struggles at the local level. The Central Committee and the state committees must assist to help develop such area-based struggles. The absence of such an orientation in the higher committees is also responsible for the present state of affairs.

(ii) Alongwith the struggles and mass movements, the Party should conduct political work and ideological propaganda to influence and win over these masses to join the struggles of the Party. This work is an important part of independent activity which is totally neglected. This is the reason why our political influence does not grow commensurate with the struggles that we are leading and our work on mass issues.

This was pointed out in the 16th Congress political resolution: "One of the major tasks before the Party is to step up the political ideological work in such a manner as to consolidate the influence gained through the various struggles led by the Party and the mass organisations. A continuous political campaign to counter the political slogans of the bourgeois-landlord parties and systematic ideological work to combat the communal and reactionary ideologies is necessary, if the Party is to consolidate its existing influence and win over new sections of people."

(iii) Independent activity and united front tactics are interconnected. As pointed out in earlier reviews in the Party Congresses, the united front platforms cannot benefit us, unless simultaneously, independent work is also carried out. Here two types of failures have been noted. Firstly, in election campaigns, our lack of independent campaigning and reliance only on joint

platforms leads to the Party's stand not being projected among the people and the blurring of our independent identity. This has been harmful for the all-sided activities of the Party. Secondly, electoral united front tactics are not only meant to win a few seats or achieve the immediate aim of defeating the main opponent, it is also meant to provide access to the masses of the bourgeois parties that we ally with. Our united front tactics during elections should also help in the Party gaining access to these masses and influencing them. Generally, we have not been able to do this.

Because of our failure to develop the independent strength of the Party we are in a difficult and weak position when we enter into united fronts with bourgeois parties. Time and again the bigger bourgeois partners have forced us to accept much fewer seats than our actual strength. For the sake of unity we have to give in. Such repeated tactics have marginalised our Party's electoral presence in quite a few states. Further, our weak strength does not enable us to utilise the united platform and campaign effectively to expand our influence. Our extreme weakness itself leads to the bourgeois parties dominating and projecting their own politics and influencing our own masses and following.

It is only by expanding the independent activities of the Party and increasing its strength that we can compel the other parties to come forward for united actions on the terms we wish. The more extensive our independent work which reaches out to the masses behind other parties, the greater will be the pressure on the leadership of other parties to respond to calls for united campaigns or electoral adjustments.

V

Left & Democratic Front

The political resolution of the Jullunder Congress had for the first time spelt out correctly the tactical line of forging the unity of the Left and democratic forces and building the Left and democratic front as the real alternative to the bourgeois-landlord policies.

"The struggle to build this front is part of our endeavour to bring about a change in the correlation of class forces, to end a situation in which the people can choose only between two bourgeois-landlord parties, and get imprisoned within the framework of the present system. By gathering all Left and democratic forces together for further advance, the Party makes a beginning to consolidate those forces which in future will participate in shaping the alliance for people's democracy under the leadership of the working class. The Left and democratic front is not to be understood as only an alliance for elections or ministry, but a fighting alliance of the forces for immediate advance -- economic and political -- and for isolating the reactionary classes that hold the economy in their grip."

Further, the resolution stated "By putting forward a political and economic programme, distinct and sharply opposed to the platform and practice of the bourgeois-landlord parties, by leading the masses to realise it, the Left and democratic forces enable them to move away from the bourgeois-landlord parties and increasingly rally around an alternative leadership.

The 11th Congress political-organisational report stated: "While always propagating the programmatic slogan of the people's democratic front, we agitate for the Left and democratic front as a slogan of action, to be materialised in the immediate future." The 12th Congress political-organisational report states that forging the Left and democratic front is an urgent and important task because "as the common people in the country are coming to realise that another bourgeois alternative on the pattern of the Janata Government of the 1977-79 period is either hardly realisable, nor it can provide a real alternative with genuine alternative policies." We have in the 14th, 15th and 16th Congresses reiterated that the struggle to build the Left and democratic front by mobilising and launching mass struggles on the basis of the programme of demands is the part of the endeavour to change the correlation of class forces and that this is the only real alternative.

Yet, we have been unable to make any headway in this regard. After the 10th Congress we have been able to achieve a greater degree of Left unity amongst the existing Left parties. There is still confusion among comrades about the difference between the Left and democratic front which is the real alternative and the various combinations with bourgeois landlord parties which we have forged from time to time to meet the immediate situation or as an electoral alternative. The Left and democratic front is not an election alliance or the ministry that is formed in a state. The Left and democratic forces are all those sections of the people and the classes who can be rallied through struggles around a set of policies which provide an alternative to the bourgeois-landlord parties. The Left and democratic front is not envisaged as a distant goal. The demands which we formulate for the programme of the Left and democratic front have to be based on the current level of consciousness of the people and their immediate problems.

The Left and democratic front can be built only at the national level. In the process of building such a front, various types of Left and democratic combinations can emerge at the states level but will be part of the struggle to build the all India front. Left and democratic front cannot be seen as a combination of only the existing parties. It will grow and take shape as we succeed in forging the united struggles of the masses under the leadership of the Left and attracting all other democratic forces.

From the 10th Congress onwards, the successive political-tactical lines worked out correctly stressed the forging of Left and democratic unity and the building of the Left and democratic front for which a programme of the Left and democratic forces was also formulated. At the same time the immediate task set out in the different periods, of fighting the authoritarian danger, of defeating and ending the Congress monopoly and isolating the BJP and currently of defeating the BJP which is in power, have led to setting out the immediate task of forging broader unity, Left, democratic and secular unity, for forging the third alternative etc. which involves alliances with bourgeois parties.

The immediate task has been the main preoccupation in practice, leading to the de-linking of the immediate political and electoral tasks stemming from the current needs of the situation, from the equally important and basic task set out in the political-tactical line of developing the independent activity of

the Party and advancing the struggle of the Left and democratic forces.

The successive political-tactical lines have set out the main task as building the independent strength of the Party and to forge the Left and democratic front. It is in order to facilitate this that the tactical line addresses the immediate tasks of fighting authoritarianism, or communalism to clear the way for the advance of the Left and democratic forces.

Without the ever-expanding independent activities of the Party at the political, ideological level and building the Party organisation and expanding it, it will not be possible to strengthen the Left forces and thereby go towards building the Left and democratic front.

So, the independent activity of the Party, the projection and building of the Left and democratic front and united front tactics go hand in hand.

VI

Correct Approach to United Front

Need for Allies: While concentrating on building the Party through our political, ideological and organisational work and launching struggles and movements to forge unity of the Left and democratic forces, we will constantly need allies. We will need allies for united struggles for developing the mass movements on a wider scale, for meeting immediate political-tactical goals and for achieving our electoral aims and utilising the electoral forums for expanding our Party's influence.

The struggle to overcome the lopsided emphasis on the unity with bourgeois parties leading to the erosion of our Party's independent activities and political-ideological work should not lead us to a sectarian approach of shunning allies or the quest for allies.

In the present situation when the BJP-RSS combine is running the Central Government it becomes all the more important to rally more allies to isolate the BJP and defeat it. The self-critical lessons that we have drawn about our experience with bourgeois parties and the emphasis we should give to develop the independent activities of the Party and projecting and building the Left and democratic front must be integrated into our united front tactics.

We should in the coming days:

(i) Give priority to the independent activities of the Party. This involves stepping up our work in the political, ideological and organisational spheres.

(ii) Along with this, we should take up the demands contained in the Left and democratic programme adopted in the 17th Congress resolution for launching struggles and developing movements. Attention should be paid to developing struggles in the grassroots and local area which can be sustained. For this, concrete study of the local conditions should be made.

(iii) Give emphasis to the strengthening of the Left and democratic forces by mobilising through political campaigns and mass struggles. We should break with the notion that the Left and democratic front is an electoral alliance.

(iv) Adopt united front tactics with bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties according to the tactical needs for specific issues and specific periods. Here

again, the emphasis should be on joint actions on mass issues and for political campaigns on agreed political issues, so that we get the opportunity to approach their masses. Even when we have united platforms, we have to demarcate ourselves from the policies of these parties which we consider to be wrong. Implement correct tactics of united platform and independent activities and demarcation whenever necessary.

(v) In electoral tactics, seat adjustments and alliances involving joint campaigns with other parties will be repeatedly undertaken. Such an understanding should not be converted into a permanent united front which militates against our independent activities and assertion on policy and political issues. Where state governments are formed by parties we electorally ally with, we should without hesitation stand by and lead the masses who struggle against wrong policies and champion their demands.

(vi) The PB and CC must constantly address themselves to the basic political and ideological questions and equip the Party so that the difference between the communal and Left parties and all other bourgeois parties on various positions reach the people and help them to differentiate us from other parties.

The PB and CC and the state committees must review their own approach and practice in the light of this self-critical review and educate the entire Party to adopt a correct orientation. The CPI(M) has to be shaped into a fighting and politically well-equipped party which is rapidly growing to become the fulcrum for a strong Left movement and developing the Left and democratic forces to present a real alternative.