

CPI(M) 20<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS DOCUMENTS

*Extracts from Political Review Report  
(Part I of the Political-Organisational  
Report)*

The four year period since the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress was marked by sharp changes in the political situation. Within three months of the Party Congress, we had to withdraw support to the UPA government. After the Lok Sabha elections in May 2009, the UPA-II government was formed. Its three year tenure so far has been marked by its determination to push ahead with neo-liberal policies. There has been an unprecedented spell of price rise of food items and other essential commodities during this time. The neo-liberal policies have had its adverse effect on the peasantry and the rural poor. There has been a spate of corruption scandals which have engulfed the UPA government. The UPA government is still pursuing a pro-US foreign policy which has hindered the effective use of growing trend towards multipolarity in India's interests. The BJP has been trying to cash-in on the discontent engendered by the problems of price rise and corruption. But it is yet to regain its credibility among wide sections of the people.

The period saw the Party and the Left suffering two successive electoral reverses – first in the Lok Sabha elections followed by the Assembly elections in West Bengal and Kerala. There was a new

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political situation after the Lok Sabha election. There was a concerted attack on the Party in West Bengal. This required us to formulate the political-tactical line to meet the situation. For this, an extended meeting of the Central Committee was held in August 2010 in Vijayawada. It adopted a political resolution which we have been following.

### POLITICAL TACTICAL LINE OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS

“1.1 The Political Resolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress had set out four major tasks to be taken up in the coming period. They are:

“(i) The Party should ceaselessly struggle to defend national sovereignty, resist the neo-liberal policies and defend the interests of the working people; it should work for alternative policies.

“(ii) The Party should continue the efforts to isolate the BJP-RSS combine who spearhead the communal forces.

“(iii) The Party should mobilise all the patriotic and democratic sections to thwart the US designs to convert India into a strategic ally.

“(iv) The Party should champion the cause of the dalits, tribal people, women, minorities and other oppressed sections for social justice as part of the Left and democratic programme.”

“1.2 Among the current tasks spelt out was the priority to be given for developing the independent strength and expanding the political base of the Party. For this, the Party was to take up class and mass issues to develop movements and struggles. The Party was to continue to adopt tactics for isolating and defeating the BJP. It would not enter into any alliance or united front with the Congress.

“1.3 Further the Party would maintain relations with all non-Congress secular parties for developing united struggles and joint actions on common issues. The Party was to work for the building of a third alternative.

“1.4 Left unity should be strengthened and the Party should have a clear perspective for building movements and platform of the Left and democratic forces by taking up the issues of the basic classes.”

### WITHDRAWAL OF SUPPORT TO THE UPA GOVERNMENT

The decision to withdraw support to the UPA government in July 2008 was correct and warranted. We could not continue to extend

support to a government which had grossly violated the Common Minimum Programme and gone ahead with the implementation of the nuclear deal. As a Communist Party, we could not facilitate the implementation of the nuclear deal which was the key factor in the Indo-US strategic alliance. We withdrew support when the Congress betrayed the agreement not to proceed to finalise the IAEA Safeguards Agreement to operationalise the deal.

By the end of the second year of the UPA government in 2006, the Party and the Left were opposing the government's failure to tackle the agrarian crisis and the price rise of essential commodities and conducting campaigns and movements against the government's policies. The Left parties suspended their participation in the UPA-Left Coordination Committee in July 2005 on the question of disinvestment in BHEL, a navaratna company. After going back, in November 2006, the Polit Bureau decided that we need not revive the functioning of UPA-Left Coordination Committee. The forging of the strategic alliance with the United States and the nuclear deal were a flagrant violation of the CMP. Finally, when the UPA government decided to go ahead with the nuclear deal with the United States despite repeated warnings, the Party decided to withdraw support to the government.

The UPA government began entering into a strategic alliance with the US which was not envisaged in the Common Minimum Programme. Violating the CMP, the Government signed a defence cooperation agreement with the US in June 2005 during the visit of the defence minister Pranab Mukherjee to Washington. This ten year agreement was unprecedented in the history of the country and it provided the framework for a comprehensive military tie-up. This was followed by the Joint Statement by President Bush and the Indian Prime Minister during Manmohan Singh's visit to Washington in July 2005. This spelt out the areas of strategic cooperation including defence, economic, political and nuclear. The Indo-US nuclear deal was to cement the strategic alliance. In December 2006, the US Congress adopted the Hyde Act which set out the terms and conditions that India would have to follow if it wanted nuclear cooperation.

The nuclear deal emerged as the touchstone for the alliance. The US was offering a quid pro quo – nuclear cooperation and an end to the sanctions, in return for India's cooperation with the US in the

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strategic and military spheres. This was a dangerous development. The Party began a resolute struggle against the strategic alliance with the US with the nuclear deal as the centre-piece.

Three months after the adoption of the political-tactical line, a major change took place with the withdrawal of support to the UPA government by the CPI(M) and the Left parties. The Political Resolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress endorsed the decision of the Party and the Left to do “*whatever necessary to block the agreement*” as it was the cementing factor for the Indo-US strategic alliance. At the same time, the assessment given in the Political Resolution was that the Congress leadership had decided not to proceed further with the operationalisation of the agreement. The Resolution stated: “*Faced with the political consequences of such a confrontation with the Left, the Congress and the UPA decided not to proceed further with the operationalisation of the agreement.*” (Para 2.32)

In the Political-Organisational Report of the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, which reviewed the implementation of the tactical line, it was stated that:

*“The government has been holding discussions with the IAEA from November onwards. Till the end of February five rounds of talks have been held. It is only when the government brings the outcome of the talks to the committee that the Left will take the stand that they should not proceed further to finalise the safeguards agreement or go to the Nuclear Suppliers Group. The successful conduct of the struggle to block the nuclear deal should help the Party and the Left to rally other anti-imperialist forces to go forward with the struggle to prevent the strategic alliance with the United States”.*

The assessment made in the Party Congress did not prove to be correct. We have to review the events that took place and the stand taken. When the government ignored the objections of the Left and went ahead and signed the 123 Agreement in July 2007, the Party took the stand that the agreement should not be operationalised. Hence, the next step for proceeding with the agreement, i.e. going to the International Atomic Energy Agency for negotiating a safeguards agreement should not be undertaken. The Central Committee had met on August 24-25, 2007 and authorized the PB to take whatever steps necessary to block the agreement, including withdrawal of support.

After six rounds of talks in the Committee set up to negotiate with the left on the nuclear deal, the Government by end September was

insisting on going to the IAEA for talks. At the CC meeting held in September 29-October 1, 2007, the decision to withdraw support if the government went ahead to the IAEA was reiterated. But along with that it was also decided to try and postpone a confrontation with the government through negotiations. It was on this basis that after negotiations held with the Congress leadership, an understanding was reached on November 10. It was agreed that the government would hold talks with the IAEA but would not initial or sign any draft. The draft would be placed for consideration before the joint committee and if the Left objects, they would not proceed to get it ratified by the Board of Governors of the IAEA. But the Prime Minister and the Congress leadership unscrupulously went back on their word.

In May 2008, the government concluded its negotiations with the IAEA for the draft safeguards agreement. It then insisted that it had to be sent to the Board of Governors for approval. The Congress leadership refused to abide by the understanding arrived at with the Left that they will not go to the IAEA Board of Governors for approval of the agreement, if the Left does not agree to it.

The Congress won over the Samajwadi Party which had been opposing the nuclear deal. After that, the government was prepared to go ahead with the IAEA agreement and face the withdrawal of support by the Left. In view of this situation the Polit Bureau met on June 29, 2008 and took the decision to withdraw support whenever the government announced its decision to go ahead. The Prime Minister while traveling abroad on July 7, 2008 announced that they would go to the Board of Governors of the IAEA for ratification of the agreement. The Left parties met on July 8 and decided to withdraw support on July 9, 2008.

The Central Committee endorsed the decision of the Polit Bureau to withdraw support in its meeting held on June 29, 2008. After the 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election held in May 2009, the Central Committee reviewed the decision and summed it up as follows: *“The decision to withdraw support when the UPA government decided to go to the Board of Governors of the IAEA for approval of the safeguards agreement was correct and there was no other option but to do so.”* After the withdrawal of support, the Left parties gave a call for a nationwide campaign to explain our stand on the nuclear deal, the reasons for withdrawal of support and the government’s failure to curb price rise. We conducted an extensive campaign amongst the people between August and

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September 2008. The review of the election campaign pointed out that the nuclear deal was an issue which was difficult to explain to the people. Though we tried to link it to the overall strategic alliance with US imperialism, it could not be made an issue in the election to rally the people around the stand of the Party. We could not succeed in bringing out the linkage between the domestic economic policies and foreign policy and its adverse impact on the people.

The Election Review of the Central Committee summed up this point as follows:

*“The decision to withdraw support to the government when it decided to go ahead to operationalise the nuclear deal was correct. It was based on our understanding that the Party cannot support a government which is entering into a comprehensive strategic tie up with United States imperialism in which the nuclear deal was as the Party Congress put “the cementing factor”. However, we could not mobilise people on the nuclear issue and rally them during the election.”*

The decision to withdraw support should have been implemented in October-November 2007, when the government had to go to the IAEA for talks. That was the time, any chance existed for blocking the deal. Not doing so at that time was a mistake. Given the deep commitment of the Prime Minister and the Congress leadership to the Indo-US nuclear deal and the strategic alliance with the US, they preferred to break with the Left rather than jeopardize the nuclear deal. The PB and the CC underestimated the determination and the capacity of the ruling classes and US imperialism to pursue the nuclear deal as part of the strategic alliance. We also overestimated our own strength and capacity to influence events. Allowing the government to go to the IAEA for talks and the expectation that the Congress would abide by an understanding not to proceed with the operationalisation of the deal was wrong.

Subsequent developments including the close military collaboration with the United States, the continuing pro-US orientation on the foreign policy, growing American influence in domestic economic policies and the obnoxious Civil Nuclear Liability Bill, which is the last step in the implementation of the nuclear deal, have confirmed the correctness of the decision to withdraw support.

ELECTORAL TACTICAL LINE IN LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

The Central Committee meeting at Kochi in January 2009 concretized the electoral-tactical line. It was formulated as follows:

*“We should call for the defeat of the BJP and the NDA alliance to ensure that the communal forces are kept out of power at the Centre. The BJP’s communal approach to terrorism should also be exposed. The campaign should attack the UPA government’s anti-people economic policies and the harmful consequences of the strategic alliance with the United States for national sovereignty. We should call for the defeat of the Congress and the rejection of the UPA in the election. We should demand alternative policies to protect the jobs and livelihood of the workers, peasants and all sections of the working people. The Left parties alongwith the secular parties should work together to make a non-Congress, non-BJP alternative realizable.”*

Following this, the Central Committee while finalizing the Election Manifesto called for an alternative political platform which would work for the formation of an “alternative secular government”.

REVIEW OF ELECTION & ELECTORAL-TACTICAL LINE

The self-critical review made on the implementation of the political-tactical line summed up the experience as follows:

*“It was necessary for us to enter into electoral understandings with non-Congress secular parties wherever possible and give the call along with them to defeat the Congress and the BJP. However, the state-level alliances that were forged could not be projected as a credible electoral alternative at the national level.*

*“The call for an alternative secular government comprising non-Congress, non-BJP parties was a slogan which could not be believed by the people. It would have been more appropriate to call for an alternative by strengthening the Left and the non-Congress-non-BJP combination that we had forged.”*

The review pinpointed the two factors. Firstly, the alliance forged with the non-Congress secular parties in three or four states could not be the basis for projecting a national level electoral alternative. Secondly, we should not have called for the formation of an “alternative secular government” and should have stuck instead to the call for strengthening the non-Congress, non-BJP alternative.

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The electoral-tactical line worked out by the Party of rallying the non-Congress secular parties helped in weakening the BJP-led NDA. The BJD left the NDA in Orissa and cooperated with the non-Congress secular parties. The BJP was also left with no worthwhile ally in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Orissa. This contributed to the defeat of the BJP-led alliance.

The UPA was able to win the election though it did not get a majority. It won 262 seats, of which the Congress got 206. Various parties like the SP, BSP, RJD and JD (S) extended support to the government. The BJP suffered a second successive defeat. It won 116 seats and the NDA got 159. The CPI(M) and the Left parties suffered a serious reverse. The Party won only 16 seats and the Left parties together got 24.

The setback suffered in West Bengal was analysed in the election review. There was a reduction of 7.42 per cent in the vote share of the Left Front compared to 2004. There was an erosion of support among the rural and urban poor and the middle classes. Apart from the national factors which influenced the people, the state factors have been spelt out in the election review. The reasons were in the political, organizational and government sphere. In Kerala too, the review identified the various factors in the state which led to the success of the Congress-led UDF and the weaknesses in the Party and the LDF. The disunity in the Party leadership and the LDF had an adverse impact on the people. Only in Tripura was the CPI(M) and the Left Front victorious getting an aggregate of 61.7 per cent of the vote.

### NEW SITUATION AFTER THE LOK SABHA ELECTION

**Attack in West Bengal:** The post election situation saw a concerted attack against the Party in West Bengal by the Trinamul Congress-led combine in collaboration with the Maoists. 112 comrades were killed in between March 2009 (when the election process began) and September 2009. The Maoists targeted the Party cadres and supporters in West Midnapur, Bankura and Purulia. Imperialist agencies also played a role in the manoeuvres against the CPI(M) and the Left.

The Political Resolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress had warned that West Bengal, the bastion of the Party and the Left, has come in for special attack. This was due to the prominent role played by the CPI(M) in national politics in opposing the strategic alliance with US



imperialism and waging determined struggles to check neo-liberal policies. The CPI(M) had to be weakened and the Left isolated. Hence the targeting of West Bengal.

The election review identified the shortcomings and weaknesses. The Party decided to adopt corrective measures – political, organizational and at the government level – to overcome the situation.

The Central Committee decided that the defence of the movement of Bengal and exposure of the anti-Communist gang-up and the role of the Maoists should be taken for a widespread campaign all over the country and democratic opinion mobilized. The attack in West Bengal is to be seen as an attack on the entire Party.

#### EXTENDED C.C. MEETING — TACTICAL LINE

Given the fact that the Party Congress was postponed for a year in view of the assembly elections in West Bengal and Kerala, an extended meeting of the Central Committee was convened to formulate the political-tactical line in the new situation. The Political Resolution adopted at the extended meeting held in Vijayawada in August 2010 spelt out the tactical line to be pursued by the Party.

Unlike in the political-tactical line set out in the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, the line now set out was that of opposing the UPA government and defeating the Congress. The Party stressed on the independent role and activities of the Party as the key task to overcome the weakness and strengthen the Party. The struggle to bring about a turn around in West Bengal where we had suffered setbacks gained importance. The forthcoming assembly elections in West Bengal and Kerala had to be successfully fought. The Vijayawada resolution also called upon the entire Party to go to the people and rally the democratic forces to defend the CPI(M) and the Left in West Bengal to help fight back the attacks. The Party should also wage a determined struggle against the disruptive activities of the Maoists.

The Vijayawada resolution reiterated other aspects of the political line which were there in the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress resolution viz. (i) the key task is to fight against the whole gamut of neo-liberal policies which are being pursued by the Congress-led UPA government for the past six years since coming into office in 2004. Movements against the neo-liberal policies should be launched at the all India level, in the states and at the local level where the lives of the people are affected.

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(ii) Communal politics continued to pose a danger. Therefore the struggle against communalism and Hindutva based activities should be carried on. (iii) The Party should step up the opposition to the Indo-US strategic alliance and its various manifestations and mobilise the people for an independent foreign policy and against imperialism. (iv) The Party will champion the rights of the dalits, tribals, minorities, women and other oppressed sections as part of the general democratic platform. (v) The Party should fight against the Congress which is the prime mover of the neo-liberal policies of the UPA government and the Party should fight the BJP which practices communal politics and has a rightwing economic policy. (vi) The Party should stress on the independent role and activities and based on the Left and democratic platform and demands, mobilise the working class, peasantry, agricultural workers and other sections of the working people.

### REVIEW OF WEST BENGAL & KERALA ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

The assembly elections resulted in a serious defeat for the Left Front in West Bengal. In Kerala, the LDF lost narrowly even though it succeeded in retaining substantial mass support. The Central Committee reviewed the assembly election results in June 2011. Some of the main conclusions of the review were as follows:

“Seven successive Left Front governments formed since 1977 have many historical achievements. Among these are land reforms which benefited over 3 million peasants and 1.5 million bargadars (sharecroppers); a decentralized and democratized panchayat system which enabled the involvement of the rural masses in local administration and development that became a model in the country; the firm implantation of democratic rights for the different sections in the working people; the creation of a stable secular administration marked by communal harmony and peace. “Despite these important gains, the Left Front government was working within the limitations of a bourgeois-landlord system. Notwithstanding these achievements, the limitations and difficulties of working under an overall neo-liberal set-up also became evident.

“The Assembly elections were held in a situation marked by the concerted efforts of the ruling classes and imperialism to weaken the CPI(M) and the Left. These efforts began due to the role played by the Left during the

UPA-I government in opposing the neo-liberal policies and the strategic alliance with the United States. They got intensified after the withdrawal of support to the government in July 2008. The ruling classes and imperialist agencies worked to assemble a range of forces to attack the Left in West Bengal, the strongest base of the Left in the country.

“The prolonged rule of the Left Front government for 34 years has led to an accumulation of various negative factors which have impelled the people to vote for change. A preliminary review indicates the reasons why this mood for change occurred. Some of them are as follows:

“(i) There were various shortcomings in the performance of the Left Front government in the recent years. Most of these shortcomings were noted during the Lok Sabha election review. They pertain to the public distribution system, health, education, rural electrification and other developmental and welfare measures. Some of the programmes and schemes were not taken up for implementation. The deficiencies in basic services and their delivery caused discontent among the people.

“(ii) At the political level, there was an all-in-opposition unity ranging from the rightwing forces to the extreme Left. Apart from the TMC combine which included the Congress and the SUCI, forces like the GJM and the Greater Coochbehar movement supported the TMC combine. The TMC-Maoist nexus was in operation. This anti-Left combination gained momentum in the last three years and was seen by sections of the people as an alternative to the Left Front.

“(iii) The Singur and Nandigram events brought the issue of land acquisition to the fore. It was used effectively against the CPI(M) and the Left Front by the TMC-led combine to propagate that the Left Front government would snatch away the lands of the farmers. As the Lok Sabha Election Review of the Central Committee stated: “The TMC-led combine has been effectively using this issue to drive a wedge between the Party and sections of the peasantry”. The administrative and political mistakes in this regard proved costly. Despite the assurances that none of the lands would be taken without the consent of the people, the campaign against the Party and the Left Front government on this issue contributed to the erosion of support among the rural masses. The Nandigram events and the subsequent police firing alienated sections of the intelligentsia and the middle classes.

“(iv) The organisational aspect is also an important factor. The image of the Party amongst the people has been dented by manifestations of

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highhandedness, bureaucratism and refusal to hear the views of the people. The existence of corruption and wrong-doing among a small strata of Party leaders and cadres due to the corrosive influence of being a “ruling party” and running the government for a prolonged period was also resented. Links with real estate promoters and other unhealthy elements in some instances have met with an adverse reaction from the people. All these have affected the Party in the elections.

“(v) The erosion of support amongst the working class and the rural and urban poor indicates the failing to consistently take up the class issues. The independent role of the Party and the mass organisations was impaired due to the dependence on the administration.

“(vi) There was a systematic and concerted campaign against the Left Front and the CPI(M) in particular in the mass media controlled by the corporate sector. This sustained campaign over the last three years has influenced a section of the people particularly the middle classes. Identity politics was fostered to weaken the class based unity of the people. This election saw the use of money in a big way, not seen before in West Bengal. Various NGOs and imperialist agencies were active against the Left Front.”

In Kerala, The UDF won the elections to the Kerala Assembly very narrowly. The UDF got 72 seats which is just one more than the majority mark of 71. The LDF got 68 seats which is three short of majority. The LDF polled 44.94 per cent of the vote. This is an increase of 3 per cent compared to the Lok Sabha polls when the LDF got 41.95 per cent. The difference between the UDF and the LDF is only 0.89 per cent.

The elections were held at a time when the image of the Congress-led UPA government was tarnished by the massive corruption scandals and their failure to curb price rise. The corruption issue also rose prominently in Kerala with a former minister being sentenced by the Supreme Court. There was no anti-incumbency feeling among the people. The record of the LDF government with its pro-people development and comprehensive social welfare measures found appreciation among the people. A notable feature was the support of the working class to the LDF. The coir workers, cashew workers, fisher folk and other sections of the working people voted in large numbers for the Party and the LDF candidates. The UDF benefited from the various caste and religious organisations. There was a Muslim consolidation in favour of the Muslim League in Malappuram district.

Here the UDF could win 14 out of the 16 seats. This was one of the reasons for its narrow victory. The review states that we have to chalk out plans regarding work among the Muslim masses. There were some organisational shortcomings which led us to lose some seats with very small margins.

In Tamilnadu, the DMK alliance was routed and there was a sweeping victory for the AIADMK and its electoral partners. The big corruption scandals in which the DMK was embroiled at the Centre and the domination of the Chief Minister's family in various spheres of business evoked widespread anger among the people. Our Party had an electoral understanding with the AIADMK and contested 12 seats. We won in ten of them.

#### WEAKNESSES IDENTIFIED

We must identify the reasons for this weakness and failure to build and expand the base. The political-tactical line formulated by the Party in the 18th & 19<sup>th</sup> Congresses stressed the importance of developing the independent role and activities of the Party. One of the key tasks set out was the fight against the adverse effects of the neo-liberal policies on different sections of the people by launching movements and struggles. It is through this that our Party's base can expand. A review of our work in this regard will show that we have not been able to take up this task adequately and develop widespread movements and struggles. The Vijayawada extended meeting of the CC had pointed out that the fight against the neo-liberal policies has to be at two levels. One, at the level of policies of the Centre and concerned state government and second by taking up the various issues among the people concerning their livelihood, land, employment, wages, basic services etc. This is linked to our capacity to develop sustained struggles on local issues. We have been lagging behind in developing such struggles. At the all India level and at the states levels too (outside the strong states) we are not able to conduct movements which are of widespread nature and which attract new sections of the people.

The other aspect concerns how we consolidate the influence from these struggles into the mass organisation and draw those people into the Party's fold. As has been pointed out in earlier Political-

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Organisational Reports such as the 16<sup>th</sup> Congress, while the struggles and movements on the economic issues of the people are the foundations for the Party's influence, that alone is not sufficient. It must be accompanied by the political and ideological work of the Party among these sections of the people.

### ORGANISING & DEVELOPING STRUGGLES AFTER CONCRETE STUDY

The political resolution adopted in the Vijayawada extended CC meeting had made some analysis of the impact of the two decades of economic liberalisation on the various classes of Indian society. There has been a differential impact. While inequalities have grown rapidly, there are some sections who have been more adversely impacted. Some sections have benefitted like a section of the middle class. Under the neo-liberal regime a big section of the working class is in the unorganised and informal sector. Those who are on contract work and other irregular forms of employment constitute the bulk of the urban poor. There is also a large section of self-employed persons in the services sector who eke out a subsistence living.

An important area for our further study and chalking out proper tactics is in the agrarian field. Which are the classes and sections which are today most affected by the policies of liberalisation and the intensified exploitation in the countryside. The landlords, big capitalist framers, contractors, moneylenders who constitute the rural rich have intensified the exploitation of the poor peasants, the agricultural workers and the rural poor. We have to identify these sections and build our movements based on them. Only by this can we overcome the lag in developing class and mass movements in the rural areas. The weaknesses and inability to develop widespread and sustained struggles against the neo-liberal policies – the key task in the political line – can be overcome only when we concentrate our work on the vast mass of workers in the unorganised sector along with the organised sector working class; the agricultural workers and the sections of the peasantry worst affected by the agrarian crisis.

The other feature which is relevant in some of the states where our electoral performance is poor is that coupled with our failure to develop the Party in the new areas, the continuous association with

the bourgeois-regional parties has eroded our independent base and identity.

#### ALL INDIA MOVEMENTS & UNITED PROTESTS

##### *Anti price-rise Movement*

In the period after the Party Congress, the Party has been constantly taking up the issue of price rise. The Party gave a call for protests against price rise on May 15, 2008 in which five lakh people participated. After the Lok Sabha elections, in August 2009, the Left parties gave a call against the price increase of petrol and diesel. Subsequently, after the National Convention on Price Rise and Food Security organized by the Party in August 2009, the Left parties gave a call for joint state conventions followed by state rallies on the issues of price rise, food security, PDS and drought. Various state level conventions and rallies were held. Upto then, the mobilization was mainly of the supporters and mass base of the Party and the Left.

It is only after the all-India joint rally of the Left parties in Delhi on March 12, 2010 that the anti-price rise movement picked up momentum. The call for the April 8 picketing and court arrest programme and the April 27 hartal call by 13 parties met with a good response. In the April 8 picketing, 20 lakh people participated and the hartal was a good success in at least nine states. The July 5 hartal against the second successive increase in petroleum prices had the widest sweep all over the country. This was the biggest protest action in the recent years.

The Party and the Left parties have been conducting protests whenever there have been increase in prices of petroleum products like in January and May 2011.

##### *Working Class & Other Struggles*

During the last four years there have been three general strikes of the working class. There was a general strike called on August 20, 2008 by the central trade unions except the INTUC and the BMS. The central trade unions came together to hold a national convention in September 2009 in with both the INTUC and the BMS participated.

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Subsequently, there was a strike on September 7, 2010 in which a call was given by the central trade unions including the INTUC with the exception of the BMS. The joint platform of all the central trade unions conducted a jail bhara in November 2011. This was followed by a general strike on February 28, 2012 in which for the first time all the central trade unions including the INTUC and the BMS participated. All the successive strike struggles have shown wider participation of the workers at every stage. While there has been definite progress made in developing the united struggles of the working class, still the overall sweep and intensity of the movements and struggles are still inadequate to counter the neo-liberal policies.

### *Taking Up Social Issues*

The 19<sup>th</sup> Congress had enjoined the Party to take up the cause of the tribals, dalits, women, minorities and other oppressed sections for social justice. We have been stressing on the Party directly taking up social issues since the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress.

During this period some specific efforts were made to take up some of the major issues concerning these sections. A convention was held in Delhi in 2010 on the implementation of the Sachar Commission and the Ranganath Mishra commission reports for the Muslim minorities. Some state level conventions were also organised. And in some districts in certain states. But this could not be taken up in many states.

There has been more progress in taking up the adivasi issues. The Party has been stressing the importance of work in the tribal areas where in some areas Maoists are active and in other RSS and other reactionary forces are entrenched. With the setting up of a National Platform for Adivasi Rights (Adivasi Adhikar Rashtriya Manch) at a national convention held in Delhi in June 2010, there has been more attention on tribal issues. Prior to this convention, for the implementation of the Forests Rights Act a day was observed. There have been struggles on the issue of forest land rights in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. In Andhra Pradesh there has been struggle against the displacement related to mining licences. A national convention was held in New Delhi in March 2012, which was well attended, to highlight some of these demands.

The Party held a workshop on the sub-plan for scheduled castes



and scheduled tribes in Delhi in December 2011 to demand that the allocations be utilised properly and not be diverted and be made non-lapsable. Compared to the period between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Congresses, when there was a spurt in the activities on dalit issues, in the current period under review there was no such thrust except in a few states. Tamilnadu conducted effective campaigns through the Eradication of Untouchability Front. During this period, seven walls built to segregate dalits and one gate were demolished in different parts of the state as a result of the agitation conducted by the Front. In Andhra Pradesh, the issues of caste discrimination were taken up through the anti-caste discrimination organisation.

There is still a lack of realization in the Party at various levels on the importance of the Party directly taking up social issues whether it concerns dalits or women. We have to take up social issues and mobilise people on issues of social oppression if we are to draw these sections into the class based movements. Such an integrated approach of combining class and social issues is also needed if we are to counter narrow identity politics.

#### ON LAND ACQUISITION

During this period, the issue of large scale acquisition of agricultural land for special economic zones, real estate development and for various corporate projects became an acute problem. In the Vijayawada Extended meeting of the CC in August 2010 it took stock of the problem and the struggles which were going on against forcible land acquisition. The review report stated:

Given the nature of land relations, the nature of capitalist development and the agrarian crisis, the peasantry face the constant threat of land being alienated from them. The small peasantry see no other means of livelihood except their land holdings. In such a situation, the acquiring of agricultural land by corporates for setting up industries is seen as a direct attack on their basic rights and livelihood. We should keep this in mind and take a firm stand against acquisition of fertile agricultural land of peasants against their will. The acquisition of land by the government for public purposes like highways, railways, irrigation, state-run power stations and other basic development may be necessary. When doing so, adequate compensation and proper rehabilitation measures should be assured. The

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Land Acquisition Act of 1894 does not protect the interests of the farmers and land owners adequately. There must be new suitable legislation which protects the right of farmers and ensures adequate compensation. This should be accompanied by a law on rehabilitation.

The issue of land acquisition has acquired a new dimension after the onset of the neo-liberal regime. As part of the capturing of natural resources the corporates and the real estate companies are out to grab land cheaply with the aid of the State apparatus. The peasantry, particularly the small peasantry sees this as a serious threat to its livelihood and especially when corporates and real estate speculators are going to make huge profits out of such lands. In West Bengal when the Left Front government adopted the policy of industrialisation, we could not properly assess or understand the apprehensions and the depth of opposition which land acquisition would engender. That is why the opposition to the Singur project and the proposed petrochemical hub in Nandigram and the issue of land for other projects in West Bengal became the source of alienation of sections of the peasantry from our Party. The campaign against the Party and the Left Front government all over the country on this issue damaged our image and it posed difficulties in our stand on the SEZs and against large scale acquisition of agricultural land.

The Party or the Kisan Sabha have been involved in struggles in various states like Andhra Pradesh, UP, MP, Haryana and Odisha etc. against forcible land acquisition.

In the coming days, we should take up the land issue seriously, stress the struggle for land distribution and land reforms, protect land rights of the peasantry and oppose the dispossession of their land by corporates. We have to safeguard the rights of the tribal people over their lands which is threatened by large-scale, indiscriminate and illegal mining by foreign and Indian companies.

The Land Acquisition & Rehabilitation Bill replacing the 1894 Act is before parliament. Our party has set out the changes that are required in the Bill to make it an effective instrument to protect the rights of the farmers and those dependent on land and also to ensure that they get adequate compensation and rehabilitation if their lands are acquired. We have to mobilise support for these changes.

LEFT UNITY

At the time of the last Party Congress we had noted two features in the united work of the Left parties. At one level, the CPI(M), CPI, Forward Bloc and the RSP had worked closely during the period of extension of support to the UPA government. In formulating policy issues, in conducting struggles and mobilisation there was close coordination. At another level, there were differences aired with regard to the events in West Bengal like the Singur and Nandigram issues and about the functioning of the Left Front government. It was noted that we had been able to confine these issues to West Bengal and tried to settle the problems there. The national level coordination continued without any difficulties.

During the period under review this cooperation of the four Left parties has continued. They unitedly decided to withdraw support to the UPA government in July 2008. Subsequently, the Left parties have taken a joint stand on major national political issues. After the UPA government came back to power, the Left parties have conducted joint campaigns and struggles against price rise, for food security and against corruption. The United Left initiative on price rise which began with the March 12, 2010 rally helped to galvanise other non-Congress secular parties to come together for joint actions.

After the electoral setbacks in West Bengal there have been discordant voices among the Left Front partners, some of whom have publicly put the blame wholly on the CPI(M) for the electoral reverses. Such criticisms have been voiced at a time when there is a severe attack on the CPI(M) with a large number of comrades being killed. We have seen vacillations on the part of some of the Left parties earlier too at the time of severe attacks by the ruling classes. We should patiently deal with the criticisms and the situation and so that Left unity is maintained and strengthened.

There is need for further discussion and improving of mutual relations between the CPI(M) and the CPI. This is needed at the states level too. It is crucial for strengthening and broadening Left unity.

We have emphasized the building of the Left and democratic alliance as the real alternative in the political resolution. In order to accomplish this we have to further strengthen and broaden Left unity.

One aspect of broadening Left unity is the need to draw in the

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Left minded individuals and groups who exist outside the fold of the Left parties. Some of these intellectuals and groups were alienated after the Singur and Nandigram episodes in West Bengal. The situation is changing since then. All the Left-minded sections can be brought together on various joint platforms forged to take up various issues and struggles. Issues such as anti-imperialism, defence of national sovereignty, defence of secularism, forcible land acquisition, the setting up of imported nuclear plants; and issues of patents and intellectual property rights etc.

### RELATIONS WITH NON-CONGRESS SECULAR PARTIES AND THE THIRD ALTERNATIVE

The political-tactical line of the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress had provided the direction that as against the Congress and the BJP we should strive to build a third alternative. For this the Party should work for joint actions and build united struggles with the non-Congress secular parties on commonly agreed issues.

In the current tasks set out in the political resolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress it was stated:

“The Party will maintain relations with all the non–Congress secular parties for developing united struggles and joint actions on common issues. The building of a third alternative must be undertaken. The Party should take the initiative for this and strengthen Left unity to facilitate this work.”

Earlier in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> Congress and 18<sup>th</sup> Congresses too we had set out the tactical goal of building a third alternative as against the Congress-led alliance and the BJP-led alliance. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Congress, summing up the experience of such third formations being attempted, it was stated that it should be based on some common programme. The process of formation of such a third alternative as distinct from electoral understandings for specific elections must begin by drawing the non–Congress secular bourgeois parties and other democratic forces into campaigns and struggles on common issues.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress we further clarified that a third alternative will materialize only when there is a change in the stand of the political parties which are today either with the Congress or the BJP. As far as economic policies are concerned, most of the regional parties adhere to the policies of liberalisation. Without affecting a change in the

outlook of these parties it will not be possible to form an alternative political combination. This can be brought about only by building big movements and unleashing struggles which can bring about change in these political parties. The resolution stated: "It is only through such movements and struggles that the masses following these parties will be influenced so that the shift will take place".

We have to review the experience of our efforts to forge such a third alternative in the past one decade. We have been noting the change in the character and role of the regional parties since the 16<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1998. The regional parties represent mainly the interests of the regional bourgeoisie and the rural rich. As such they are not against the liberalisation policies which have benefited the regional bourgeoisie too. They may oppose some of these policies while in the opposition but adopt the same when they are in state governments. Further, with the advent of coalition politics at the Centre, the regional parties aspire to be in the central governments in order to strengthen themselves in their states. This has led to their taking opportunist positions. They join hands either with the Congress or the BJP whenever it suits them and they can be in the central government.

We have to keep these factors in mind while striving to have joint actions and joint platforms with these parties. The regional parties have a substantial mass base. The Congress and the BJP seek to rally these parties into their all India alliances – the UPA and the NDA. It is necessary for us to maintain relations with the non-Congress secular parties which include the regional parties. It is possible to have joint struggles and united actions with some of these parties on people's issues to widen the mass movements. At the national level our experience has been that on some issues like price rise, farmers' issues and Centre-state relations we can join hands with these parties. We did so in the anti-price rise movements. The joint calls given by the 13 Left and secular non-Congress parties for the April 27, 2010 hartal and the subsequent hartal on July 5 are such examples. We had given also a joint call against corruption and on the Lokpal Bill with some of these parties in August 2011. Inside parliament, we have been cooperating with the non-UPA, non-NDA parties like the TDP, AIADMK, BJD and the JD(S).

At the same time, we have to note the vacillations and the opportunist changes in the position of these parties, both the Samajwadi Party and the RJD, while they participated in the all India

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hartal on price rise, backed out when it came to the question of supporting the cut motion on the Union Budget in 2010. The RLD led by Ajit Singh joined hands with the Congress on the eve of the UP Assembly elections. The AIADMK has recently distanced itself from participating in joint campaigns and struggles outside parliament and is keeping its options option before the next parliament elections.

The other experience in the states is that many of the regional parties are reluctant or averse to joint actions and struggles in any consistent way. The 19<sup>th</sup> Congress resolution had said that it is only by joint struggles and campaigns with these parties that we can influence their mass and build pressure on these parties to bring about a shift in their policy positions. But such sustained struggles and joint movements with these parties are not happening. Further, as many of these parties are in a position to come into state governments, it is difficult to forge a common programme which they will adhere to once they are in government.

Moreover, as it was pointed out earlier in the 16<sup>th</sup> Congress, the formation of a stable third alternative can come about only when the Left gets further strengthened at the all India level. Without this, such combinations are short term measures. In the present situation where the Left has not been strengthened it becomes all the more difficult to rally these parties and to retain them in any stable formation.

At the time of elections it may be necessary to have electoral understanding with some of these parties. But as pointed out in the review of united front tactics with bourgeois parties in the 17<sup>th</sup> Congress, it should be confined to the election concerned and should not be extended to a long term one.

Given all these circumstances it is not feasible or practicable to project the slogan of a third alternative with these parties. It is not possible to have a third alternative based on a common programmatic platform with these parties at the national level and to expect that it will emerge through building widespread united struggles and movements with them.

Not putting forth the political slogan of a third alternative does not mean however that there is no need to maintain relations with the non-Congress secular parties. In the present situation, particularly when serious efforts are on to isolate the CPI(M) and weaken the Left, we should strive to maintain relations with these parties.

In the present situation our attitude to the non-Congress secular

parties should be as follows:

We have to strive to draw such parties into joint actions and struggles on people's issues which will help us to widen the movements and help us to have access to the masses following these parties. There are other issues such as the defence of secularism, Centre-State relations and defence of democratic rights on which joint actions are possible. Along with this, it is important to coordinate and maintain relations with the non-Congress, non-BJP parties inside parliament. During elections, whenever possible we may enter into electoral understandings with some of these parties depending on the Party's interests.

We have been setting out the Left and democratic alternative as the real alternative to the bourgeois-landlord policies. Since the tenth Congress we have been putting out the tactical goal of building the Left and democratic alliance. This should be our main focus. In the course of our efforts to build the Left and democratic alliance, we may have to forge joint platforms with some of the secular, non-Congress parties from time to time. But this should help us in our endeavours to rally all the forces which need to be brought into the left and democratic front.

In the present situation wherein the CPI(M) and the Left have suffered electoral setbacks and the key to overcome our weakness and to strengthen the Party's influence lies in the expansion of the Party's independent role and activities, we must ensure that our tactics of entering into electoral understanding and joint platforms with these parties should not hamper or blur the Party's independent identity and activities among the people.

The international situation has undergone a change after the prolonged global capitalist crisis. There is growing opposition and struggles against the neo-liberal policies by the working class and other sections of the working people, youth and students. The neo-liberal ideologues are on the defensive. There is greater scope for developing movements and put forth alternative policies. It is in this context that the tasks we are setting out in the political resolution have to be taken up for implementation. The struggle against the neo-liberal policies, the movements and struggles of the working people, the fight against the communal forces and imperialism are all to be taken up with renewed vigour. We have to develop the independent strength and base of the Party all over the country. We have to recover

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the lost ground in West Bengal and fight back attacks by mobilizing the people on their basic demands and in defence of their democratic rights. This is part of our endeavour to strengthen the Party. The Party has to take up the organisational work to build and expand the mass movements and the Party all over the country.