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## *On the Political-Tactical Line of the 20th Congress*

The twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) was held in Kozhikode Kerala from April 4 to 9, 2012. The Party Congress was held after four years during which period there were major changes in the political situation. At the time of the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Left parties were still supporting the UPA government from outside, though there was growing opposition to the policies of the UPA government. Within three months of the Congress, the Party withdrew support to the UPA government. After that the Central Committee worked out a tactical line of opposing the Congress and defeating the UPA government, along with the task of fighting the BJP.

The UPA-II government was formed after the Lok Sabha elections in May 2009. The three years of the UPA-II government have seen the continuing pursuit of the neo-liberal agenda. This period has been marked by the unprecedented price rise of food items, exposure of massive corruption scandals, continuation of pro-US foreign policy, and more intense exploitation of the working class, peasantry and other sections of the working people. In this period, the CPI(M) and the Left have suffered serious electoral reverses during the Lok Sabha

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elections and in the assembly elections in West Bengal, and to a limited extent in Kerala. The CPI(M) has come under severe repression in West Bengal aimed at isolating and weakening the Party.

There is growing discontent amongst the people against the UPA government. The united struggles of the working class as exemplified by the strike call given by all the central trade unions on February 28, 2012, is an important step in the growing resistance to the neo-liberal policies.

It is in such a situation that the Party Congress had to formulate the political tactical line. The political-tactical line is based on the assessment of the current political situation, the correlation of forces, the position of the ruling classes and the government, the role of the various political parties and the state of the working class movement and other mass movements. The tactical line should be formulated keeping in mind the strategic goal, in this case, the building of a People's Democratic Front which can take on the bourgeois-landlord order and replace it with People's Democracy.

### POLITICAL LINE

The Political Resolution adopted at the Party Congress has spelt out the political line to be pursued. The Party has reiterated the call to fight the Congress and the BJP. In terms of their class character, both the parties represent the big bourgeoisie and landlords. They are the main advocates of the neo-liberal policies. There is no difference whatsoever in the economic policies of the two parties. On the attitude to US imperialism, the Congress and the BJP have a similar approach. The six year rule of the BJP-led NDA government and the eight years of the UPA government have seen the strategic relationship with the USA taking shape. Given the record of the UPA government, its corruption and anti-people and anti-working class policies, it is necessary to defeat the Congress and oust the UPA government from power. The BJP represents a more rightwing alternative. Further, it is based on the Hindutva ideology. Hence it has to be isolated politically and its aim of coming back to power at the Centre thwarted.

The key issue is how to fight against the policies which are advocated by the Congress and the BJP which represent the interests of the big bourgeoisie and the landlord classes. This can be done only by mobilizing the classes and social groups who are affected by the

neo-liberal policies and by uniting the political forces who are committed to work for alternative policies. The CPI(M) and the Left parties are the consistent opponents of neo-liberal policies and the bourgeois-landlord order. However, at present, their strength and mass influence is limited. The question is how to mobilise the classes and political forces to build an alternative alliance.

#### ON THE THIRD ALTERNATIVE

The 20<sup>th</sup> Congress reviewed the efforts to forge a third alternative and the experience of rallying the non-Congress, non-BJP forces against the Congress and the BJP. From the 16th Congress onwards, after the collapse of the United Front, the Party had called for the formation of a third alternative. In subsequent Party Congresses, it was clarified that such an alternative should be programme based and it cannot be on the basis of an electoral alliance alone. Given the role and character of the regional parties, it was also clarified that it is only by developing widespread joint struggles and movements that these parties can be influenced to shift their positions and brought to an understanding on a common programme. The third alternative slogan came to be seen as an interim front in between the formation of a left and democratic front.

More than a decade later, the Party Congress has reviewed the experience with regard to the formation of a third alternative. Most of the non-Congress secular parties are regional parties. Their role and character has changed over time. These parties which are primarily representing the regional bourgeoisie and the rural rich are not consistently opposed to the neo-liberal policies. When they come into state governments, they pursue the same neo-liberal approach as that of the central government. With the advent of coalition governments at the Centre, the possibilities for the regional parties to join governments at the Centre have increased. This has resulted in their taking opportunist political positions from time to time. Many of the regional parties have joined hands with either the Congress or the BJP to be in the central government. These parties are also often reluctant and unwilling to join united struggles and movements. Further, given the fact that the Left strength has not increased, it is difficult to influence these parties and draw them into any durable alliance. Given all these factors, it is not feasible to create a third

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alternative based on a programme with these parties.

There are differences between the regional parties and the all India parties of the big bourgeoisie, such as on Centre-state relations. We should utilise these differences and conflicts. What the political line envisages is joint actions with these parties on issues directly affecting the people such as price rise, defence of secularism and federalism, both inside and outside Parliament. With the concerted efforts to isolate and weaken the CPI(M) and the Left, it is necessary to maintain relations with the non-Congress secular parties. At the time of elections, when required, there can be electoral understandings with some of these parties. The electoral tactics may require rallying some of the non-Congress non-BJP parties. But this should not be construed or projected as a third alternative.

### IMPORTANCE OF LEFT & DEMOCRATIC FRONT

If we have to take up the major tasks set forth in the political resolution, viz. the resolute fight against the neo-liberal policies; fight against communalism; and penetration by the imperialist forces, what is required is the building of a Left and democratic alliance. The left and democratic programme which will consist of the alternative policies and demands of the working class and other sections of the working people represent the real alternative to the bourgeois-landlord policies. The Left and democratic front can be built up through a process of movements and struggles of different sections of the working people. The strengthening of Left unity and the rallying of all democratic forces around the Left and democratic programme has to be undertaken.

The tenth Congress of the Party had clearly spelt out what the role of Left and democratic front will be:

“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 these 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

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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.”

The Left and democratic front should not be seen as a long term perspective slogan. It has an immediacy linked to the fight against the neo-liberal policies and the defence of people’s rights. The building of a Left and democratic front should be given primacy. The political resolution has spelt out the Left and democratic platform which should form the basis for rallying of all these forces. While undertaking this task of forging the Left and democratic alliance, in order to develop and widen the mass movements, we should strive for joint actions with the non-Congress secular parties on issues. The emergence of such joint platforms should aid and help the process of building the alliance of the Left and democratic forces. It should not be seen an electoral platform consisting of various political parties. The exigencies of having temporary electoral alliances should not be elevated to a political alliance based on a programme.

#### LEFT UNITY

The strengthening of Left unity is a necessary step towards forging the Left and democratic alliance. The cooperation between the CPI(M) and the CPI has to be strengthened. Along with that the coordination of the four Left parties should be enhanced. Efforts should be made to draw in the Left groups and individuals outside the fold of these four parties onto joint platforms.

#### INDEPENDENT ROLE OF THE PARTY

The key link in the political-tactical line is the strengthening and expansion of the independent role of the Party. In the present situation when the Party has suffered electoral reverses and when the strongest base of the Party in West Bengal is under attack, it is of crucial importance to expand the influence and base of the Party in the states outside West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. The independent activities of the Party should span the political, economic and social issues. The political-ideological work of the Party should be developed based on the class outlook. There should be more independent political

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campaigns and mass mobilisations around the political platform of the Party which should help to counter the ideology and politics of the bourgeois parties. The Party's work among the basic classes should be given priority. The lag in the work among the peasantry and the rural poor in building class and mass struggles has to be overcome. The specific issues of the dalits, tribals, minorities and women should be taken up by the Party in a consistent fashion. The mass organisations should become broadbased forums for mobilising the people and developing united movements which will draw in the masses outside their fold.

On the question of developing struggles and movements, it is necessary to concretely study the impact of the neo-liberal policies on different classes and sections of the people. We have to take up the problems of those sections of the people who have been most adversely affected by the neo-liberal regime. In the working class, the growing numbers in the unorganised sector are the most exploited. Contract workers are employed both in the organised and unorganised sectors and their struggles for regular jobs and social security benefits should be taken up seriously. In the agrarian sector, the crisis has badly hit the poor peasants, agricultural workers and the rural workforce. The landlords and the rural rich are passing on the burdens of the crisis on to the poorer sections. Small tenant farmers are badly exploited. Along with the struggle for land the other issues of exploitation have to be taken up.

The fight against the neo-liberal policies can advance only when we take up the various local issues of the people and develop sustained struggles on that basis. The issues of livelihood, land, job security, fair wages, education and basic services, are all affected by the neo-liberal policies. These should be taken up for conducting sustained struggles locally. The development of the Party's influence and base among the working people will depend on how successfully we conduct such sustained struggles and consolidate them.

The Party has to pay special attention to work in the urban areas, particularly in the slums and among the poorer sections. The growing urbanization and the lack of housing and basic facilities for the large mass of the working people needs urgent attention. Environmental degradation and pollution affect the people and these problems are often the creation of the corrupt nexus between capitalists and the

bureaucracy. The Party should take up the environmental issues and protect the rights of the people.

#### AGAINST COMMUNALISM

The BJP suffered a second consecutive setback in the Lok Sabha elections in 2009. However, this electoral loss should not lead to an underestimation of the communal forces and their influence. As the Political Review Report adopted at the Congress has pointed out:

“The activities of the communal forces are not confined to the ‘political field’. They influence the people with the communal ideology by their work through social, cultural, and religious institutions and the use of festivals where people gather. The RSS runs a wide network of schools and educational institutions. Muslim communal organisations are also doing so. It is the latent communal consciousness which is developed through this work that feeds the communal politics and support base of the BJP-RSS combine. Our campaigns against communalism are mainly directed at the political agenda of the communal forces and our intervention is mainly at the time of incidents of communal violence. It is necessary to address the continuous activities of the communal organisations in the social and cultural spheres. We should devise ways for doing so and step up our work in these spheres.”

In the coming period, we should endeavour to combat the communal forces, in the political, ideological and cultural spheres.

#### SOCIAL ISSUES

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Party, we have been emphasizing on the Party directly taking up social issues. In our society there are some sections and communities who suffer not only class exploitation but also various forms of social oppression. The ruling classes extract surplus through capitalist and semi-feudal exploitation while utilising the various forms of social oppression for the maintenance of their hegemony. That is why it is necessary that the fight against social oppression is taken up along with the class struggle. The issue of caste oppression of the dalits is intertwined that their brutal exploitation as agricultural workers and other forms of tied labour,

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the rapacious exploitation of the adivasis is accompanied by the destruction of their habitats and culture; feudal and patriarchal values perpetuate the discrimination and social oppression of women while the neo-liberal regime has intensified the exploitation of the labour of women.

The Party in recent years has taken the lead in the fight against untouchability and various forms of oppression of dalits in Tamilnadu; it has struggled against caste discrimination in Andhra Pradesh; in Haryana the Party has opposed the khap diktats on women and in states like Karnataka and Odisha the Party has defended the rights of the minorities. The 20<sup>th</sup> Congress has given a call to carry forward and take up such issues all over the country particularly in the Hindi-speaking region. This struggle must become part of the Left and Democratic Platform.

The growth of divisive identity politics is posing a serious challenge to the Party and the Left movement. The politics based on caste, religion, tribe and ethnic identities fragments and divides the people. Identity politics has become a potent weapon to divert the people's attention away from uniting to fight against the ruling classes and the exploitative order. It is therefore imperative that the Party intervene and take up the issues of social oppression and discrimination faced by these groups and communities and strive to bring them into the fold of the common movement.

### DEFENCE OF PARTY IN WEST BENGAL

Since the Lok Sabha elections in May 2009 there has been a concerted and sustained attack on the CPI(M) and the Left Front in West Bengal. Altogether 450 members and supporters of the CPI(M) have been killed since May 2009. Hundreds of Party offices, trade union and other mass organisation offices have been captured or damaged. The panchayat bodies are being prevented from functioning and the elected members intimidated. Despite the violence and the sustained terror tactics, the Left Front could get 41 per cent of the vote in the assembly elections. The attacks have continued with the aim of weakening and isolating the Party.

A vital element in the strengthening of the CPI(M) and the Left is the recovery of lost ground by mobilizing the people on their issues and against the misrule of the TMC-led government. The attack in



West Bengal will not be confined to the CPI(M). It will develop as a general onslaught on democracy and democratic rights. It therefore becomes an urgent task of the entire Party to mobilise public opinion and all democratic forces in the country to expose and condemn these attacks and to extend support to the Party and Left Front in West Bengal.

#### COUNTER ULTRA-LEFT DEVIATION

The disruptive violence and tactics of the Maoists came to the fore when they began to target and kill CPI(M) cadres and supporters in the three districts of West Bengal bordering Jharkhand. Soon this murderous spree got harnessed by the Trinamul Congress. The open alliance of the Maoists and the Trinamul Congress was seen in the two years between the Lok Sabha elections and the assembly elections. More than 200 members and supporters of the CPI(M) and the Left Front were killed by the Maoists. In the tribal and other remote areas where the Maoists operate in states like Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar and Odisha, due to the indiscriminate violence and terror tactics of the Maoists on the one hand and the state repression unleashed as a result on the other, the popular struggles and movements get disrupted and suppressed. The Maoists have to be fought politically and ideologically. Their anarchist and terrorist methods should be exposed as disruptive and inimical to the Left. This campaign has to be particularly directed at the students and intelligentsia, sections of whom tend to be attracted by ultra-Left positions.

#### MAIN TASKS

The political-tactical line has set out seven main tasks to be taken up in the coming period. They are: (i) a resolute fight against neo-liberal policies by taking up issues affecting the working class, the peasantry, agricultural workers, workers in the unorganised sector, artisans and other sections of the working people; (ii) waging a continuous struggle against the communal agenda of the RSS-BJP combine and combating the Hindutva ideology in the social, cultural and intellectual spheres. At the same time, the Party should counter minority communalism and extremism. (iii) Mobilise the patriotic and democratic sections

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against the Indo-US strategic alliance and its growing influence on domestic policies. This requires the pursuit of an independent foreign policy. (iv) Taking up the rights of the dalits, tribals, minorities, women and the fight against social oppression. (v) Rallying the people and the democratic forces against the violence against the CPI(M) in West Bengal and to defend democracy and democratic rights there. (vi) Strengthening Left unity and uniting the broadest democratic forces in defence of the people's rights and livelihood. Waging a determined struggle against the disruptive activities of the Maoists. (vii) Building the Left and democratic alliance by mobilizing the working class and other sections of the working people around the Left and democratic platform of demands.

Internationally, the prolonged global capitalist crisis, the growing protests and resistance of the working people in the advanced capitalist countries, the advance of the Left forces in Latin America and the increasing trend towards multipolarity – in which the growing economic power of China is a factor – have all created a more favourable situation for the struggles and movements against neo-liberalism and imperialist globalisation.

In India, the economic slowdown and the drift in the UPA government is a reflection of the bankruptcy the neo-liberal path being pursued and their collaboration with imperialist finance capital. The implementation of the political-tactical line adopted at the Party Congress should pave the way for the advance of the Left and democratic forces in the country.