

**Political-Organisational Report
Adopted At the 17th Congress
Hyderabad, 2002**

Part I

The CPI(M)'s 16th Congress while reviewing and assessing the developments in the world situation had noted that despite the shift in the balance of forces in favour of imperialism, providing opportunities for the consolidation and expansion of capitalism, the international developments were characterised by, a) growing economic crisis, b) the incapability of the world capitalist system to solve the basic problems facing humanity, and c) vicious attacks being mounted by US imperialism to establish its unrivalled hegemony. These resulted, on the one hand, in intensifying all the four fundamental contradictions that characterise our epoch, and, on the other, in imposing unprecedented burdens on the majority of the world's population.

The period since, has vindicated this understanding. The draft political resolution for the 17th Congress has noted that the present international situation is being dominated by two factors: a) the attempts by US imperialism to use the post-September 11, 2001 situation to further strengthen its hegemony -- economic, political and military -- world wide, and b) the current global economic recession and the attempt by imperialism to transfer the burdens of this crisis on the developing countries. This will lead to the further intensification of the exploitation of the third world.

World Capitalist Crisis

The 16th Congress Political-Organisational report had noted: "Notwithstanding the ideological offensive that continues to parrot the so-called invincibility and eternality of capitalism, the capitalist economy worldwide is on the verge of a serious crisis." The beginnings of the crisis were noted in the last Congress with a major financial crisis that shattered the so-called South Asian tigers. This crisis had spread to Philippines, Indonesia, South Korea, Japan, Russia and Brazil. All these together ballooned towards a major world economic recession from early 2001. Such is the intensity of this crisis that the OECD, comprising the world's richest 30 countries, is expected to grow at a mere one per cent in 2001 and 1.2 per cent in 2002. The global economy is predicted to grow by not more than 2.4 per cent compared to 4.2 per cent in 2000.

The 16th Congress had noted two specific features of the present phase of capitalist development, viz., jobless growth and sharp widening of inequalities, both within the country and amongst the countries. The intensification of both these features has led to the impoverishment of a vast majority of world's population. The basic contradiction of capitalism -- the social nature of production and the individual nature of appropriation -- is leading the system towards a deep overproduction crisis. With the majority of the population increasingly being kept out of the international market, the current phase of globalisation is bound to be unsustainable. This is precisely what is happening. The current global recession is the direct result of the current globalisation which seeks to earn super-profits at the expense of the impoverishment of the majority of the world's population. In simple terms, the global market to consume is shrinking.

The striking feature of the current global recession is the fact that all the three major capitalist centres are in the grip of a severe crisis. In the USA, the growth rate of the economy fell by more than half since the recession set in, i.e., between 2000 and September 2001. In the European Union, it fell from 3.4 per cent to 1.9 per cent and in Japan for the year 2001, it fell from 1.8 per cent to -0.5 per cent. As a result, the pre-tax corporate profits of all non-financial firms put together fell by 26 per cent in the USA during this period -- the sharpest decline since the great depression. Apart from Enron, 352 publicly traded US companies folded up in 2001. In 2002, nearly 1,400 companies are at high risk. These include companies such as Ford and Xerox. It is estimated that over 1.4 million people have lost their jobs so far in the USA.

Similarly, in the 12 nations of the European Union, the industrial production has fallen by 4.1 per cent. Unemployment had already reached 8.4 per cent and is headed for double digits. For every dollar of the GDP, these countries together have piled up \$ 1.82 in public and private debt. Japan, the world's second largest economy, is virtually at a stage of collapse. Its debts are staggering -- \$ 7.5 trillion or 2.4 times their GDP. Of this, the government debt alone is 1.3 times the GDP. The recession has set in the process of deflation where consumer prices are coming down virtually non-stop for the last 24 months, bankruptcies reaching to 18,000 per month, the worst in 17 years and unemployment is the highest in 55 years.

Internationalisation of Finance Capital

The 16th Congress while noting the enormous growth and mobility of international finance capital had indicated that this was a huge balloon waiting to burst. The speculative financial activities had reached such gigantic levels that they were simply unsustainable. There were cases of shares whose value increased 800 times in a period of only eight years with an initial investment of \$ 1000. This "virtual" wealth being amassed created many illusions that today lie shattered. All the major stock markets around the world have suffered massive collapse. The NASDAQ listing the shares of 4,000 odd IT companies fell by a whopping 66.42 per cent in 2001. All the companies put together showed negative earnings wiping out all the profits made by these companies in the last six years. All other major stock market indexes have also sharply fallen. The Dow Jones fell by 18.06 per cent and Standard & Poor's (S & P) by 28.48 per cent in 2001. While speculators made hay, the common individual householders have lost trillions of dollars of their investments in share markets in less than a year.

The 16th Congress Political-Organisational report had noted that: "The emergence of this finance capital is an important factor that explains the relatively low growth rates accompanied by high unemployment rates in the advanced countries. This happens because in order to appease international speculators, there is a competitive reduction in tax rates and restrictions on the size of the fiscal deficit. In other words, governments are forced to cut back expenditures and thereby deflate both employment and domestic demand leading to lower rates of growth."

In the United States, the interest rates had been lowered nine times in 2001. Despite this, the recessionary tendency could not be checked.

Such deflation of the economy forces many a government to go in for larger debts as their revenue earnings shrink. It is this combination of debt and deflation that is feeding the global recession today and hurting the third world countries the most.

Argentina

Like many third world countries, Argentina was forced to open its economy under the present phase of globalisation to capital flows. It undertook a massive privatisation programme and pegged its currency to the dollar. As a result of this familiar IMF recipe under globalisation, by the end of 2001,

Argentina amassed a massive \$ 155 billion in debt. This was so, like in all third world countries like India following the IMF and World Bank prescriptions, due to the policies that led to deflation and the loss of public assets through privatisation. By the end of 2001, Argentina announced that it was officially defaulting on this debt, devastating the assets of hundreds of banks and tens of thousands of investors around the world.

That the economy has been ruined is one part of the story. The other inhuman part is that during this decade, tens of thousands of Argentineans lost their jobs, most of the population was pushed into penury and starvation. The food riots set in motion a political turmoil with three Presidents being changed in a fortnight.

The IMF insisted on further cuts in government expenditure and greater privatisation as conditions to bail out Argentina. This would have further aggravated the debt-deflation syndrome. This was not possible since much of the country's economy had already been ruined. More importantly, this would have meant further attacks on people's livelihood. Such is the logic of the current phase of globalisation and liberalisation being pursued by imperialism.

Argentina's crisis is only the beginning. Brazil's debt is thrice as large as Argentina's. Colombia has \$ 38 billion debt with unemployment of 17 per cent. Venezuela suffers from a similar situation. Turkey and Indonesia had to be bailed out by the IMF in 2001. The consequent conditionalities imposed have assaulted the livelihood of the people and further eroded the economic sovereignty of these countries.

Former Socialist Countries

As noted in the 16th Congress, the embrace of capitalism by the former socialist countries has led to a colossal economic devastation unknown in human history, to the extent that population itself is declining in absolute numbers. The average poverty in these countries increased from about two to more than 21 per cent in the late nineties. Unemployment is rising sharply. In Russia alone, it is estimated to be over 30 per cent. Worse still, the real wages are one-third in 1999 of what they were in 1989. The conclusion that the CPI(M) drew at its 14th Congress that the restoration of capitalism in these countries will only worsen the living conditions of the people is being resoundingly vindicated.

Further Assault on the Third World

Under these conditions, world imperialism led by the USA is seeking to emerge from this crisis by further intensifying the exploitation of the third world. In search for its predatory profits, in the post-September 11, 2001 world situation, using the 'war against terrorism' as the pretext, imperialism is launching a new economic offensive. Apart from stricter IMF conditionalities and arm-twisting methods forcing the third world economies to open up further, the WTO's fourth ministerial meeting at Doha saw a renewed economic offensive. The triumvirate of IMF, World Bank and WTO are the main instruments being used to legalise such an exploitative order. The net result is the sharp intensification of the contradiction between imperialism and the third world.

WTO Doha Meeting

The US and European Union have been able to bully the developing countries into accepting a new round of negotiations where the developed countries will demand greater control of the developing country markets. At the same time, the developed countries have not made any credible commitment either to allow developing countries an easier access to their markets or to reduce the exorbitant levels of protection that their producers enjoy. The functioning of WTO betrays all norms of democracy and transparency and there has been no improvement on that account whatsoever. In fact, the ways in which the developing countries and their representatives were bullied over the six days of the Doha meeting – through pressure tactics and verbal abuse to virtual buying out – displayed the extent to which international capital could go in undermining the sovereignty of the developing countries. UNDP estimates that 70 per cent of the gains of the Uruguay Round of GATT have been absorbed by the advanced industrial countries, further impoverishing the rest of the world.

Regional Economic Groupings

Another method being employed by imperialism to strengthen its economic stranglehold is the formation of regional economic groupings under its hegemony. Such a process which we had noted earlier has been strengthened with the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas

(FTAA) aimed to be fully operative by 2005. The FTAA promises more deregulation and privatisation while affording global capital ever-greater power and profit-making potential. This means further consolidation of corporate power, erosion of popular gains, exploitation of resources and labour in the countries of the South, and dismantlement of already insufficient environmental protections--all in the name of "free trade." The act even gives statutory powers to the corporations to object to any law that any member country might enact that prevents companies from entering into the market of that country. To put it simply, the whole of Central and Latin America, will be laid bare for exploitation and loot by US capital. At the same time, there is no discussion on labour rights, human rights, consumer safety, environmental protection, democracy or sovereignty.

Renewed Political-Military Offensive

During this period, US imperialism had mounted a political and military offensive brazenly assaulting the national sovereignty of various countries. The US-led NATO intervention in Yugoslavia, the continued attacks against Iraq, the continued depravation of the Palestinians for their right to a homeland etc are being strengthened in the post-September 11, 2001 situation. As noted in our Political Resolution, the 'war against terrorism' is replacing the cold war slogan of the 'war against communism', as the new war cry of US imperialism.

The meaning of the ominous call by Bush for a "war without end" to fight global terrorism is unfolding.

After the war on Afghanistan, the US is extending its military operations to other regions in the name of fighting terrorism. 850 US soldiers and special forces have been despatched to the Philippines to combat the Abu Sayaff rebels in the South-Western region. This violates the Filipino Constitution which prohibits foreign troops conducting military operations in the country.

The US has decided to keep military bases in Central Asia. An airforce base in Turkmenistan to station 3000 personnel is getting readied.

The US is also sending 200 special forces to Georgia to fight militants in the Pankisi Gorge. President Bush has also approved sending 100 soldiers to Yemen to operate with the Yemini military against suspected Al Queda elements.

Most dangerous of all, the US has begun preparations, political and military, to launch another war on Iraq. It has plans to assemble 250,000 troops and support forces for an invasion of Iraq. The US vice-president has already visited the West Asian countries to drum up support for another attack on Iraq.

National Missile Defence

The National Missile Defence (NMD) programme, given the thrust since George Bush's ascendancy to US Presidency, is being pursued more aggressively in the post-September 11 situation. The NMD threatens to destabilise the international situation by removing the hitherto restraints on the use of nuclear weapons and by taking the nuclear arms race to space. This virtual 'star wars' programme negates the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty signed in 1972. For three decades, this treaty has been responsible for maintaining nuclear peace. The USA has unilaterally walked out of this treaty. Both Russia and China have objected to the negation of the ABM treaty and the NMD. They have indicated that they would be forced to launch joint efforts for countering the NMD.

More recently, the Bush administration has ordered for new types of nuclear weapons that can be used for smaller strikes against whom US imperialism defines as 'rogue states'. Some countries have been specifically named for such targetted attacks, viz., Russia, China, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, North Korea, etc. The "axis of evil", as defined by George Bush, is going to be the pretext to launch new military attacks. Using September 11th and the war against terrorism as the excuse, US imperialism is clearly bracing itself for a renewed military offensive against sovereign third world countries to establish its supreme hegemony.

Towards this end, the Pentagon has prepared a secret report called the Nuclear Posture Review. This is a comprehensive blueprint for developing and deploying nuclear weapons. USA is clearly reneging on its hitherto commitment of not using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states that have signed the non-proliferation treaty. All countries mentioned by USA have signed this treaty. Accordingly, the US defence budget has been enormously hiked. In 2002, it was increased by \$ 33 billion and for 2003, the proposal is to increased by \$ 48 billion taking the total to \$ 379

billion -- the highest in 20 years. The USA alone accounts for 36 per cent of all global military expenditure.

Palestinian Uprising

The Palestinians continue to be cruelly denied their fundamental right to a homeland. For almost 55 years now, the State of Israel, backed by the United States, has waged a brutal war of aggression and occupation against the Palestinian people. Israel's war against the Palestinian people is one of the most flagrant examples of the determination of US imperialism to ignore international opinion and support the bloody and inhuman suppression of a people in order to pursue its policy of hegemony.

As pointed out in the past, the Oslo agreements of 1993 did not constitute a "peace process". They were used, in practice, by Israel to subvert UN Resolution 242, to push the Palestinian people into isolated enclaves, to legitimise continued Israeli settlement in the occupied territories, to deny the Palestinian people their right to Jerusalem, and to strangle the socio-economic viability of the Palestinian State. The Palestinian Authority, far from being permitted to exercise autonomous authority, was expected to participate, ironically, in policing the aspirations of the Palestinian people themselves for self-determination, independence, a distinct national identity and a decent standard of living.

By the end of the 1990s, the situation had reached a flash point. The spark of the second Intifada was lit on September 29, 2000. Ariel Sharon (then leader of the opposition), in an act of provocation designed to bring on a fresh round of revolt and repression, came to the Haram-al-Sharif compound in Jerusalem, home of the Al-Aqsa mosque, surrounded by hundreds of riot police and a handful of die-hard Likud Party colleagues. Before the day was out, what was to become the second Intifada had begun.

Over the 18 months since the second Intifada began, Israel has prosecuted, with US support and arms and financial aid, a policy of unprecedented barbarity against the Palestinian people. It has used Apache helicopter gunships, F-16 fighters, artillery, tanks and infantry to kill and maim Palestinian people, to destroy the infrastructure in Palestinian territories and, indeed, to confine Yasser Arafat in house arrest (and, most recently, to

destroy his office and office compound). It has pursued a carefully planned policy of extermination of key Palestinian leaders.

By early March 2002, the official death toll of the second Intifada was 1,443 persons, of whom 1,093 were Palestinians. Israeli ruthlessness has known no bounds: among those killed by security forces and settlers include defenceless civilians, pregnant women and children (the youngest of whom was three months old), killed by direct fire and shrapnel, and even bludgeoned and clubbed to death. By the beginning of this year, more than 11,000 had been injured, 1,500 of whom were permanently crippled.

In the first year of the Intifada, the revenues of the Palestinian Authority declined by 57 per cent. While 46 per cent of the Palestinian population lived under the poverty line of \$2 a day, Israel refused to pay \$350 million in taxes that it owed to the Palestinian Authority. Palestinian authorities put the overall unemployment rate among the Palestinian work force at 60 per cent.

Palestinians, under the leadership of the PLO, are continuing to wage a glorious battle. All peace-loving and progressive forces in the world stand by their just cause and express solidarity.

Growing Protests

The period since the 16th Congress has seen growing global protest against globalisation as well as against US military interventions in pursuit of its efforts to strengthen its global hegemony. The global protests ranging from Seattle to Genoa; the international calls by trade union organisations for anti-WTO protest; the struggles and joint resistance in many third world countries etc have characterised this period. Newer forms of struggles are also emerging.

In Latin America, for instance, the democratic and anti-imperialist movement is gaining momentum. The "Bolivarian Revolution" in Venezuela has inflicted a tough defeat on the dominant and retrograde classes and their decayed institutions. The insurgent movement is being intensified in Colombia. The Wide Front, gathering all Left-wing forces, has become the main political force in Uruguay. The ethnic Indian-popular revolution emerged in January 2000 in Ecuador. The Fujimori dictatorship was defeated in Peru. Working class led popular struggles are blooming in Argentina and may turn into a huge movement in the country, which is

undergoing a serious economic and social crisis under an unstable government. The Sandinista Front in Nicaragua and the Farabundo Marti Front in El Salvador are becoming important political forces in Central America. In Mexico, the ethnic Indian movement has gathered strength and the Left forces are consolidating. In the Caribbean colonies, the movement for independence is gathering strength, especially in Martinique and Guadalupe. In Panama, the patriotic movement has achieved a great victory when the North Americans withdrew from their strategic canal.

This period has also seen the strengthening of the process of the regrouping of Communist forces in various parts of the world. Various regional groupings of Communist, Left and progressive forces such as the Sao Paulo Forum which brings together the Left forces in the Americas are also being strengthened. This period also saw growing interaction amongst the Communist parties and a larger number of occasions for international Communist gatherings.

Conclusion

The world, thus, finds itself facing a new imperialist offensive in all spheres. That such an offensive is being mounted in the midst of a grave economic crisis in itself sets in motion the process for greater resistance and sharpening of contradictions. The offensive being mounted against the peoples of the third world will be met by increased resistance. The efforts to emerge quicker from the economic recession by rival world capitalist centres will set in motion a process of sharpening inter-imperialist rivalries.

The massive offensive against the working people through lay-offs and subsequent unemployment and misery will set in motion a process of intensified struggles sharpening the contradiction between labour and capital. The launching of the NMD specifically targetting the People's Republic of China; the continuing criminal economic blockade against Cuba; the declaration of DPRK as a 'rogue state'; are all indicators pointing to the sharpening of the contradiction between imperialism and socialism.

Thus, we find imperialism intensifying its predatory offensive. This is creating conditions that will be met with growing resistance and popular struggles. The popular discontent that will continue to sharply mount against such imperialist aggressiveness needs to be channelised behind revolutionary struggles and movements. Our experience during this period

shows that in many countries where the Communist parties have intervened in channelising this popular discontent, they have succeeded in forging deeper and stronger links with the people of their country. The electoral victories of the Japanese Communist Party in Osaka or that of the PDS in Berlin shows that even in the most developed and advanced cities of the world, the Communists are succeeding in strengthening their links.

The 16th Congress Political-Organisational report's observations continue to be relevant on this score: "This however, is not to suggest that the advance of the Communist forces would be automatic. But the objective conditions open up possibilities which the Communists can utilise in strengthening the popular movement for ending a system based on exploitation of man by man. The responsibility of strengthening the subjective factor -- the revolutionary ideological struggle led by the working class, uniting other exploited classes and its decisive intervention under the leadership of a party wedded to Marxism-Leninism -- falls on our shoulders. It is imperative to utilise the objective situation and intervene to advance our movement for social emancipation.

Reaffirming its commitment to Marxism-Leninism, proletarian internationalism and anti-imperialist solidarity, the CPI(M) pledges to intensify the ideological and political struggles to meet the enemy's offensive." In particular, the CPI(M) shall strive to strengthen the global anti-imperialist movement. It shall work for greater coordination in action and cooperation in forging stronger bonds of solidarity with people's struggles, the world over, against the US imperialism's drive to establish unrivalled hegemony.

Part-II

Section A

Implementation of the Political Line Since the 16th Congress

Soon after the 16th Congress held in October 1998, elections to four state assemblies in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi and Mizoram were held. The first three states are strong bases of the BJP and in two of them, Delhi and Rajasthan there were BJP governments.

In these three states, the Congress and the BJP are the only two major political forces. In such a situation, our Party decided to fight a few seats in these states and conduct a campaign calling for the defeat of the BJP. The elections resulted in a sweeping defeat for the BJP. It lost in Rajasthan and Delhi where it had governments and it failed to dislodge the Congress in Madhya Pradesh.

The defeat of the BJP in its strong holds sharpened the conflicts within the coalition at the Centre and aggravated the crisis which led finally to the fall of the government in April 1999.

Party Stand on Alternative Government After the Fall of the Vajpayee Government

Ever since the BJP-led government at the Centre was formed in March 1998, it was evident that the government was fragile and the inner-conflicts could threaten its existence. It was taking this into account and when Jayalalitha threatened to withdraw support to the Vajpayee government, that the Central Committee in July 1998 addressed the question of an alternative government. The CC report stated: "Our Party indicated that in the eventuality of the downfall of the Vajpayee government, there has to be a secular alternative government as mid-term elections cannot be thought of immediately. In such a situation, we reiterated the stand taken at the time of the confidence vote, that we would extend support from outside to the formation of a Congress-led government in the framework spelt out in the last Central Committee Report."

The Political-Organisational report of the 16th Congress referring to this stand stated "underlying this stand was the understanding that we should not enter into any alliance with the Congress, but have an approach of issue based support to the Congress government from outside". Along with this, our Party was to strive to get all other allies of the erstwhile United Front to adopt a similar position which would help us to rebuild the third alternative in the coming days. The DMK defected to the BJP, when it became clear that the AIADMK would break all relations with the BJP

and join the opposition. Despite the best efforts of the BJP it could not succeed in winning the vote of confidence.

After the fall of the government, differences arose amongst the opposition parties on the question of the alternative government to be formed. The PB met immediately after the fall of the Vajpayee government and decided that we should extend support to a Congress-led government from outside and try to rally all our allies to adopt a similar position to us. Within the Left parties itself, differences arose. While the CPI agreed with our approach, the RSP and Forward Bloc stated that they cannot extend support to a Congress government.

The failure to form an alternative government was the result of the refusal of the Samajwadi Party to extend support to a Congress-led government. The Samajwadi Party was motivated by the concern to preserve its influence over the minorities in Uttar Pradesh rather than recognising that the interests of the minorities lie foremost in the defeat of the BJP government and the installation of an alternative government. The adamant attitude of Mulayam Singh spoilt the efforts for the formation of an alternative government. The RSP and the Forward Bloc's stand combined with the Samajwadi Party's opposition created a deadlock.

The CPI(M) had been consistently opposing the Congress party's policies particularly in the realm of economic policies. It had clearly stated that given the priority to dislodge the BJP from power at the Centre, there is no other way but to allow the second largest party, the Congress to make a bid for government while the Left gives it issue-based support from outside. This would have helped us to accomplish our main task of removing the BJP government while at the same time safeguarding the interests of the working class and the common people at this particular juncture. The sectarian stance of these two parties harmed the interests of Left unity.

The Polit Bureau met again to take stock of the situation. It reiterated its resolve to prevent the BJP making a comeback to government. It decided to back the efforts to form a Congress-led alternative government even at this late stage. If this failed, then an alternative from the third force should be considered. Such a proposal would have some basis only if the Congress extended support to it.

While the Congress Party had the right to try and form the government, when these efforts failed due to the stand taken by the Samajwadi Party, the Congress refused to consider any other option such as support to a government of the third force or of a non-Congress character. By this narrow stand, the Congress acted against the wishes of the secular forces who wanted a non-BJP government installed.

The failure to form an alternative government gave the BJP an advantage to accuse the opposition of being irresponsible and unable to even cooperate in forming an alternative government.

Our Line On Lok Sabha Elections

The Central Committee decided our line for the 13th Lok Sabha elections which were held after six months in October 1999. The electoral line worked out was: "In the coming general elections, our main task is to defeat the BJP and its allies. We have to work to strengthen the Party and the Left and rally all the secular and democratic parties and forces who are opposed to the Congress policies too. While directing the main fire against the BJP, we should also oppose the Congress Party's politics and policies in such a manner as to project the need for a third alternative. The Left will have to advocate the alternative policies which can attract all sections of the working people and the ordinary citizens."

The CPI(M)'s main slogans were to defeat the BJP alliance, strengthen Left and democratic forces and aim for the formation of a secular government at the Centre. Reviewing the results of the Lok Sabha elections, the Central Committee noted the success of the BJP-led alliance resulting in the return of the Vajpayee government was a setback for the secular and democratic forces in the country. The five main reasons for the success of the BJP were:

- a) The failure to set up an alternative government after the Vajpayee government collapsed in April 1999.
- b) The unanticipated conflict which erupted in Kargil after the Pakistani intrusion.
- c) The wide-ranging nature of the alliance formed by the BJP. Many regional parties of secular character being in the alliance blunted to a large extent the exposure of its communal character.
- d) The role of the Congress, with the split on the eve of the elections and the formation of the NCP, the BJP's campaign against Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin also had an impact.
- e) The absence of a viable third force at the national level particularly affected the Left forces.

The review noted that the big bourgeoisie and imperialism was openly in favour of the return of a BJP-led government. In reviewing our own performance the CC review noted that the performance of our party in general outside the three strong states shows that we have not been able to either expand or consolidate the Party's influence in any manner commensurate to the various activities of the Party and the mass organisations. The Central Committee also self-critically noted

"By and large the line was implemented keeping in mind the different situation prevailing in the states. However, soon after the May meeting itself, an impression was created by some statements of the Party leadership that our fight against the Congress is confined to the three states of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. This

implied that we were cooperating with the Congress elsewhere, which was not true. We were fighting both the Congress and BJP in many places as in Assam, Andhra, Karnataka, UP etc.

"Some remarks of extending support to a Congress-led government, after the elections, also reinforced the impression that we were adopting a pro-Congress line. It must be self-critically noted that such statements created the impression that we were keen for cooperation with the Congress and was not serious about rebuilding a third alternative after the election. Such an impression among the Left sympathisers and the media projections created difficulties according to the reports of many state committees. There was an overestimation of the strength of the Congress in the assessment made by the Party Centre in the course of the election campaign."

"Another point of self-criticism is that though we stated that we should popularise alternative policies, we hardly reflected this in our campaign. Our alternative policies are different and opposed to both the BJP and the Congress and other bourgeois parties. This aspect was hardly projected. Anti-BJP propaganda alone does not constitute the comprehensive alternative platform of the Party. This amounts to a failure to project the independent line of the Party".

The CPI(M) won 33 seats and polled 5.4 per cent of the votes. In 1998, the Party had won 32 seats polling 5.2 per cent. However, the overall strength of the Left came down from 48 seats in 1998 to 43 seats.

Approach to Congress

Our attitude to the Congress was clarified in the 16th Congress political resolution. We consider the BJP and its alliance to be the main target to defeat. While doing so we should not enter into any alliance or united front with the Congress. We should evolve suitable tactics to rally all the secular and democratic forces to defeat the BJP and its allies. This is not a line of equidistance between the BJP and the Congress. With the BJP in power at the Centre, it has emerged as the main threat. The Congress party and policies have also to be opposed and fought not only in the states where the Left is strong. In states where the main fight is between the BJP and the Congress and the Left and other parties of the third force are weak, the Party had evolved suitable electoral tactics as in early as in 1993. The Party and the Left would fight a limited number of seats and generally campaign for the defeat of the BJP. This does not warrant any joint platform or campaign with the Congress Party.

Both the BJP and the Congress have the same class character. However, the BJP is also a communal party which is guided by the RSS which has a fascistic ideology. Since 1998, the BJP has been in the Central Government. Therefore, for the CPI(M) fighting the BJP has priority. Both the BJP and the Congress cannot be treated as equal dangers. As the political resolution points out, the Party will oppose the

policies of the Congress at the national level and of the state governments run by it. At the same time, within Parliament on various issues, the Left has to coordinate with the Congress to oppose the BJP-led government and thwart its anti-democratic and anti-secular policies. There has to be concerted opposition on POTO, Ayodhya and communalism which require coordination both within and outside parliament.

Both the Forward Bloc and the RSP are not in agreement with this tactical approach of the Party, as reiterated by them in their national conferences held recently. They continue to maintain that the line of equidistance between the BJP and the Congress is the correct one and criticise the CPI(M) for characterising the BJP as the main threat. These two parties do not appreciate the changed situation which has come about with the rise of the BJP and the shift which has taken place with a substantial section of the big bourgeoisie and landlords supporting it. The danger of a communal party assuming power at the Centre is not properly appreciated. It is this failure which leads them to harp on equidistance between the BJP and the Congress.

Unlike the RSP and the Forward Bloc, the CPI agrees with our assessment of the danger from the BJP. Where they differ is their approach of going in for electoral alliances with the Congress party wherever it finds it suitable.

We have to continue our struggle within the Left forces to see that a correct approach is adopted on the one hand against the danger from the BJP and the communal forces and on the other on the attitude towards the Congress party.

Left Unity: CPI-CPI(M) Relations

Since the 16th Congress of the Party, on most important national political issues, there has been a common approach between the CPI(M) and the CPI. However, there were some differences in the states and in the recent period on the question of attitude towards the Congress there is a divergence of views.

During the Bihar assembly elections, the CPI failed to come to an understanding with the RJD as the RJD allotted only a few seats to it. After the elections, the CPI state leadership adopted a totally hostile attitude to the RJD which resulted in its opposing the RJD's efforts to form a government to the extent that the CPI voted against the Rabri Devi government in the vote of confidence.

In subsequent assembly elections, the CPI has shown its preference for allying with the Congress where the Left and non-Congress secular forces are not strong. In Andhra Pradesh the CPI wanted to go with the Congress. We strongly opposed such a move. It was only after their talks with the Congress failed that it was possible to have an understanding between our two parties. In the draft political resolution of the CPI for their 18th Congress, it is stated that it was a mistake to have accepted the

CPI(M)'s pressure not to go with the Congress and this resulted in a setback with the TDP-BJP alliance registering a big victory.

For the assembly elections to Assam in May 2001, the CPI state unit again negotiated with the Congress for an alliance. We came out against any alliance with the Congress and argued for unity of the Left forces and other forces who can be rallied. Here again it was after the Congress refused to have an alliance with the CPI that they joined hands with us. In the recent elections to Punjab assembly we had proposed that the CPI(M) and the CPI alongwith some other secular and independent groups and individuals should contest the elections. Instead, the CPI had an alliance with the Congress Party and even contested one of our better seats with the support of the Congress against us.

On the one hand, the CPI at the national level is part of the efforts to form a third alternative and in UP elections they were allied to the Samajwadi Party; on the other hand, the CPI's is going with the Congress, wherever possible, if it benefits it electorally. Such a contradictory approach cannot help in strengthening Left unity, or, forging a third alternative. This issue must be taken up and thrashed out with the CPI leadership.

Mass Struggles and Campaigns

The 16th Congress had given a direction to develop mass movements and struggles with Left initiative as a way to advance the Left.

Two general strikes were organised in the period since the last Congress. The first general strike was held on December 11, 1999 called by the National Platform of Mass Organisations. The strike was a highly successful mass protest action. It got the support from new sections of people and political forces. It assumed the form of a total bandh in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura and affected normal life in Tamilnadu and Assam too. The main feature was the industrial strike by the workers in most states.

Following the general strike another important protest action took place on February 9, 2000. The Vajpayee government announced a savage hike in the prices of essential commodities supplied through the public distribution system. The Left parties gave a call for protest action. General strikes were held in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura alongwith big protest actions in Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh. In West Bengal, trade unions gave a call for strike on 8th February. The success of the protest actions on 9th February was an expression of the type of mass discontent against the attacks on the people's livelihood. The Party also took up the struggle against the communal forces and the attacks on the minorities.

After this a convention was held at Delhi on February 20, 1999 at the initiative of the Left parties. It was attended by the leaders of the Samajwadi Party, the RJD, DMK, JD(S) and AGP. The convention decided to collect one crore signatures from all over the country from March 6 onwards on a memorandum to be submitted to the President of India. The signature collection drive took place in many states but it got interrupted with the fall of the government in April.

The second general strike called by the NPMO was held in May 11, 2000 against the policies of the BJP-led government. The strike took the form of a complete shut down in West Bengal, Kerala, Bihar, Assam and Tripura. A notable feature was the participation of state government employees, lakhs of whom joined the strike in many states. In many places owners of small scale units closed down their establishments in protest against the government's policy on de-reservations and withdrawal of quantitative restrictions on imports.

There were other important working class struggles and mass actions during the last three years. The notable ones being the three-day coal strike which took place twice in November 2000 and December 2001. The second strike being against the proposed privatisation of the coal industry. The state and central government employees went on strike in July 2001 against downsizing and privatisation. The insurance employees conducted a determined struggle against the Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill. They collected one crore 54 lakh signatures and went on a one-day strike when the bill was introduced in parliament.

After the May 11, 2000 general strike, it was not possible to have a countrywide general strike action despite our efforts, especially after the 2001 budget which launched many attacks on the working class and different sections of the people. The preoccupation with the assembly elections in West Bengal, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Assam was one of the reasons. Another reason was that the efforts to forge a wider trade union unity for a general strike inclusive of the BMS and the INTUC did not succeed. It is important to strengthen the NPMO and make it the initiator of more widespread mass actions.

Seven Left-led kisan and agricultural workers union organisations held a national-level convention in Delhi on August 21, 2000. The convention adopted a charter centering around the demands of the rural poor. A big rally of peasants and agricultural workers was held in Delhi on November 30 at the call of the convention. The 3-day picketing call given by the rally in February had to be postponed due to the Gujarat earthquake.

Two struggles conducted by the Party in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu deserve note.

In Andhra Pradesh, the Party alongwith other Left parties conducted a sustained and militant agitation against the steep increase in electricity tariff which attracted national attention too. For three months militant protests were organised all over the state against the huge burden imposed at the dictates of the World Bank. Mass demonstrations, picketting of state ministers and local one or two hour bandhs took place in many towns. The police unleashed brutal repression against the movement. Two persons were shot in Hyderabad and hundreds were injured in the lathi-charges which took place in various centres.

This is an example of a sustained and militant movement which evoked a good response from the people and enhanced the prestige of the Party and the Left.

Both in Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu, serious efforts were made to take up anti-caste issues. In Andhra, a committee against caste discrimination was set up. It conducted surveys in 15,000 villages. Conventions, demonstrations and dharnas were held followed by a big mobilisation of 30,000 dalit men and women in Hyderabad which led to formation of a commission by the state government. Direct action against untouchability and the two-glass system was also conducted in 250 villages by the committee.

Similarly, in Tamilnadu, the state committee decided to take up a campaign against untouchability. For this, a sub-committee on dalit issues was constituted. Detailed surveys were conducted in fourteen districts in hundreds of villages on anti-dalit practices prevalent. Conventions against untouchability were conducted in ten districts. In select villages in eight districts, the Party staged direct action against separate glasses in tea shops for dalits, ban on dalits wearing chappals and entry into temples. Another issue taken up by the Party was for retrieving *panchamar* land which originally belonged to the dalits. The experience gained in this anti-untouchability struggle has been a positive one and many people from dalit sections were attracted to the Party. This is a good instance of the Party taking up social issues.

The experience gained in both these states show the necessity to take up such movements in other states, particularly in the Northern states. The campaign begun in UP on a charter of demands of the dalits in the year 2000 met with a good response. The political resolution has stressed the importance of the Party taking up social issues and this is to be concretely worked out.

September 2001 Campaign of the Party

Taking into account the growing mass discontent against the BJP-led Central government, the Central Committee decided to launch a countrywide struggle in September 2001. The CC gave a call for a month-long campaign against the anti-people economic policies, the pro-imperialist stance of the Vajpayee government,

its patronage and involvement in corruption scandals and communalisation of education and attacks on minorities. The Party conducted a fortnight long campaign from September 7 to 21 for which four pamphlets were prepared by the Party Centre. The next stage of the programme involved mass picketting and court arrest programmes between September 25 to 27 at state/central government offices.

While the campaign was in full swing, the September 11 terrorist attacks took place in the USA and it became the main focus of attention worldwide and in our country. This detracted from the full impact that this campaign and struggle had on the country. Despite this, the campaign met with a good response. As per the reports collected, over lakh people participated in the picketting and court arrest programmes. This does not include the mobilisation in the demonstrations/dharnas held in West Bengal and Tripura where there were no court arrest programmes but where lakhs of people participated.

Anti-Imperialist Campaigns

Clinton Visit: When US president Clinton visited India in March 2000, the Left parties gave a joint call for observing protests against the imperialist pressures on India and its aggressive actions around the world such as the blockade of Cuba and the attacks of Yugoslavia and Iraq. Demonstrations were held all over the country at various centres including the places visited by Clinton such as Delhi, Agra, Mumbai and Hyderabad.

Campaign Against US War and Terrorism: A new situation developed with the US launching its "global war against terrorism" after the September 11 attacks. With the military attack on Afghanistan being imminent, our Party took the initiative for the Left parties to issue a joint call for observing October 12 as protest day to demand a halt to the war and to wage the struggle against terrorism in accordance with international laws. The Party Centre sent out the points to be taken up for the campaign. In West Bengal, prior to the call itself on September 27-28, sit-in demonstrations were held for two days in Kolkata and Siliguri. On October 12, protest demonstrations were held in a number of cities and towns in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Delhi, Bihar, Haryana etc. This campaign culminated with a big peace march in Kolkata on October 13 which saw the participation of a lakh of people from different walks of life.

May 2001 Assembly Elections

The elections to four state assemblies and one Union Territory in May 2001 were of political significance. It was important for the Left as West Bengal and Kerala which were ruled by the Left went to the polls. In two states, important allies of the BJP, the DMK in Tamilnadu and the AGP in Assam which opportunistically joined the NDA at the last moment were facing the elections. The results of the assembly

elections were a blow to the BJP and the NDA. They were not able to win in any of the states. The BJP could not win a single seat in either West Bengal or Kerala.

The massive defeat of the BJP and its allies clearly reflect the people's discontent and disapproval of the Vajpayee led NDA's policies and performance. In all the states, the BJP's vote share has declined substantially. The BJP could not win a single seat both in West Bengal and Kerala. It was badly mauled in all the three by-elections to the Lok Sabha, losing its sitting Trichy seat in Tamilnadu.

West Bengal

The victory of the Left Front for the record sixth time with a two-thirds majority in the West Bengal assembly elections is a significant event. It took place at a time when the reactionary BJP-led government is in office at the Centre whose hostility to the Left Front government is well known. All the ruling class forces ganged up to project the Trinamul Congress and its leader Mamata Banerjee as the popular choice. This campaign was backed up with a vicious plan of violence targeted at the CPI(M) which was put in place well before the assembly polls. Practically the entire print and electronic media was mobilised for a slanderous anti-Left campaign.

The 13th assembly elections in West Bengal saw a determined effort to dislodge the Left Front from office. Having failed in five successive elections to defeat the Left Front, there was an element of desperation in the anti-Communist and reactionary forces in the state. Their plans for the elections went beyond the realms of an electoral struggle. It should be noted that during the last 24 years of Left Front government more than 3500 workers of the CPI(M) have been murdered. For these elections, with the BJP in power at the Centre, the Trinamul hatched a plan more than a year ago to physically attack the CPI(M) and its bases. Gangs of goondas armed with guns were utilised in a region covering border areas from the three districts of Midnapore, Bankura and Hooghly. Villages were "liberated" and in a matter of a few months, more than 100 CPI(M) workers were murdered; thousands of houses torched and property looted. The Panskura bye-election was held in this background and the success of the Trinamul-BJP candidate there emboldened them to try and extend these tactics.

At the same time with the slogan of Kamtapuri, terrorist gangs began a campaign of terror and murder against the CPI(M) cadres in Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal. All this was being done under the cover of a high pitched campaign against the "CPI(M)'s terror tactics" and the demand for Central intervention.

The Party had to meet this offensive politically and organisationally. It was able to regain the initiative in the terror-hit regions of Midnapore and to mobilise the rural poor to fight back the jotedar-anti social combine. The political campaign of the CPI(M) and the Left Front was successful in exposing the Centre's anti-people

policies, highlighting the pro-people policies of the Left Front government despite the constraints of the state government. We warned the people against the communal forces and the threat from the terrorist-authoritarian anti-Left Front combination. The Left Front polled 48.99 per cent of the vote and won 199 seats. The Left Front won 48 out of the 59 SC seats and 16 out of the 17 ST seats. In the working class areas, Left Front won 42 seats as against 49 last time. The efforts by a small group of Party members who went out of the Party challenging the ideology and discipline of the Party was also successfully countered by the state leadership. The CC's election review while appreciating the excellent work of the Party in West Bengal during the elections underlined the fact that "We must not forget that nearly 50 per cent of the people are with the ruling class parties. We must function in the government and orient the Party's work in such a way as to win over the maximum number of people, the bulk of whom are poor".

Kerala

The defeat of the LDF in Kerala was a setback. The scale of the defeat was also unexpected as the difference between the LDF vote and the UDF vote is 5.5 per cent. The review of the Kerala State Committee and the Central Committee have highlighted the major weakness in the work of the Party and the shortcomings of the LDF government which we were leading. The General Secretary and three PB members from the Centre attended the discussions in the Kerala State Committee to finalise the election review. The Central Committee in its review has stressed the following points:

1. There is stagnation in the independent strength of the Party in Kerala for a long time.
2. In the current election, some sections who were traditionally supporters of the Left have turned away. The Party should take adequate steps for winning back these sections of peasants, agricultural workers, workers in traditional industries etc.
3. The Party in Kerala should address seriously the expectation of the Party amongst the minorities amongst whom we have not made any significant headway.
4. The caste and communal forces are not only able to rally their supporters but also influence a section of our supporters. The Party has to evolve effective tactics in approaching the masses rallied around the caste leaders and conduct political propaganda against the caste and communal forces in order to win over the masses behind them.
5. The socio-economic changes which have taken place in Kerala must be properly studied and suitable tactics evolved to meet the changed situation.

The review further pointed that while the LDF government had some achievements to its credit, the financial crisis which was faced by the government in the last one year led to a ban on treasury payments before the elections. This affected the interests of the working people. The new liquor policy was hastily implemented

which also alienated sections of our traditional voters. While firmly dealing with factional trends the state committee should scrutinize the Party membership and weed out all ineligible members. In the mass organisations also steps should be taken to activise the membership.

Tamilnadu

The Central Committee meeting held in Bhubaneshwar in January 2001 finalised the election tactics to the four assembly elections to be held in May 2001. The situation in Tamilnadu was specifically discussed. After the DMK opportunistically joined hands with the BJP in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections, this combine was able to get a majority of the Lok Sabha seats. The Party had decided to have an electoral understanding with the AIADMK and fought two seats of which it won the Madurai seat. For the assembly elections, it was necessary to defeat the DMK-BJP combine. The Central Committee worked out the line to be adopted which was as follows:

"In Tamilnadu the alliance of the DMK with the BJP poses a serious threat of the penetration of the communal forces in such a state which has been traditionally free from such influence. It is essential therefore to defeat the DMK-BJP combine which will help in weakening the BJP coalition at the Centre. The major opposition force is the AIADMK which has a substantial mass base. Alongwith the TMC which has inherited the bulk of the Congress base, these are the two major parties which can play a role in defeating the DMK-BJP combine.

"We have to work out suitable tactics so that all the opposition votes are pooled to defeat the DMK-BJP combine without projecting a state-level alliance which includes the Congress."

The understanding arrived at between the AIADMK, the TMC, CPI(M), CPI and some other small groups helped to inflict a decisive defeat on the DMK-BJP combine. The AIADMK won an absolute majority by itself.

A few months after the assembly elections, local body elections were held. The AIADMK refused to come to a reasonable understanding on seat sharing with our Party. The state committee decided to contest the election independently, a stand endorsed by the Polit Bureau. Soon after, the AIADMK state government announced a series of policies which amounted to a full-scale attack on the people through sharp increase in the prices of milk, electricity and rice supplied through the PDS. The state transport workers strike was also suppressed in an authoritarian fashion. Against all these measures, the Party and the mass organisations launched struggles unitedly with other parties including the TMC and the CPI.

Subsequently, in February the by-election to the Andipatti seat was held where Ms. Jayalalitha contested. The PB endorsed the stand of the state secretariat that we should not support the AIADMK. The PB was also of the opinion that we should not contest this seat nor support another candidate given the fact that Jayalalitha was contesting as leader of the AIADMK to become the Chief Minister after getting judicial clearance. We had earlier taken the stand that she has the right to be elected and be the Chief Minister. The Tamilnadu State Committee was of the opinion that we should support an independent if necessary in this constituency. The PB did not agree with this stand. It was of the view that we would be making our political position clear by not supporting the AIADMK because of the policies of its state government. Putting up a candidate or supporting any other candidate would not be understood by the people given the Party's stand till recently.

The state leadership consulted the TMC and the CPI who also were not prepared to put up a candidate in this seat. The state secretariat, therefore made a joint announcement with these parties that it was not participating in the elections in the Andipatti seat.

People's Front

The 16th Congress had called for the reforging of the third alternative in view of the disruption of the United Front which was constituted in 1996. Towards the end of 2000, discussions with the leaders of some of the opposition secular parties made progress. It was decided at an informal meeting in Kolkata that efforts should be made to form a new combination. In pursuance of this, in March 2001, the People's Front was formed consisting of the Left parties, the Samajwadi Party and the JD(S). V.P. Singh also joined the Front. The Front has Comrade Jyoti Basu as the Chairman and Mulayam Singh as the Convenor. The RJD has not joined the front because of differences with Mulayam Singh. As a first step, the Front decided to formulate a common programme. So far this combination has confined its joint campaign to Uttar Pradesh in view of the assembly elections to be held. On certain issues joint statements have been issued. Under the initiative of the People's Front so far no joint campaigns or movements have been conducted. The combination has not yet taken full shape to present itself as an effective third alternative.

Left Front Governments

The CPI(M)-led Left Front governments are working in conditions which are very different from that of the eighties. Since the advent of liberalisation policies and especially from the mid-nineties, when these policies were extended to the states, the state governments are being forced to adopt the neo-liberal framework. The Central Government has cutback on public investment and is compelling the states to fall in line. Privatisation of PSUs, downsizing government expenditure and staff, privatisation of public services including education and health are all being pushed

through. All the states are in a financial crisis given the cut-back of funds by the Centre. It is in these circumstances, that the Left Front government of West Bengal and Tripura have to function.

It is important to understand the constraints under which these governments work. Failure to deal with them, led to the financial crisis towards the end of the term of the LDF government in Kerala, which had a direct impact on the elections. How to resist the anti-people and anti-working class onslaughts from the Centre while at the same time adopting policy measures which will help the state government to streamline its administration apparatus, cutdown on wasteful expenditure and seek investment to ensure industrial development and augment productive capacities is a big challenge before the Left Front governments.

The Party State Conference in West Bengal has adopted a resolution "Left Front Government and our Tasks" to deal with the current situation. It takes forward the understanding on industrial policy contained in the CC resolution on the subject adopted in 1995 and has also dealt with new factors which emerged thereafter. The discussions on the resolution in the state conference have enriched the understanding of the state Party on how to tackle the problems posed by the Central policies while striving to implement alternative policies which show that the Left Front government is different from the bourgeois-run governments in other states. The resolution adopted in the state conference should be discussed in the Central Committee. After that the entire Party must be made aware of the role the Left Front government can and should play in the context set out in the Draft Political Resolution which states: "Both the West Bengal and Tripura governments have to work under the severe constraints imposed by the economic policies of the Centre and the withdrawal of the State from economic activities. We should explain to the people frankly the situation and devise measures which can effectively fulfill our commitments to them."

In Tripura, the main task of the Left Front government has been to meet the challenge of the extremist violence, maintain tribal-non-tribal unity and ensure that developmental work goes on. The fact that the people, both tribal and non-tribal repose confidence in the government, as seen in the recent Lok Sabha by-election which covers half the assembly seats in the state, is an indication of the successful efforts of the government in these tasks. However, there is no scope for complacency. The Congress has allied with the newly formed Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura (out of the merger of the IPFT and TNP) which has become the platform of the extremists, and more dangerously, an instrument for the banned NLFT. The bid is to dislodge the Left Front government in next year's assembly elections slated to be held by February 2003.

Updated Party Programme

The work of Updating the Programme which was interrupted in 1995 was resumed after the 16th Congress. It was after the November 1999 Lok Sabha elections that the PB took up the work in right earnest. The draft prepared by the Commission was taken up for consideration. The PB finalised a draft by January 2000 after two rounds of meetings to be placed before the CC. The CC discussed the draft twice in March and April 2000 for finalising the draft. It was released for three months inner-Party discussions between June and August. The CC met again in September to consider the amendments received and the Special Conference was held in Thiruvananthapuram in October 2000 to discuss and adopt the Programme.

The wide inner-Party discussions resulted in 5725 amendments and 530 suggestions being sent to the Central Committee.

The Special Conference attended by 393 delegates adopted the Updated Programme. With this the Party accomplished an important goal. The Programme has been updated keeping in mind the changed world situation, after the setbacks to socialism, the change in the international correlation of forces and the new offensive of imperialism. The programme has taken into account the developments in the country during the 36 years since 1964 when the Programme was adopted. The new stage in the path of capitalist development with liberalisation and its impact on the various classes in society have been analysed. The Programme reiterates the strategy of People's Democratic revolution and calls for a people's democratic front headed by the working class to accomplish this strategic task.

The CC called for a three month long reporting campaign within the Party on the Updated Programme from December 2000 to February 2001. A note for reporting was prepared by the PB for the purpose.

The PB and CC gave priority to the year long effort to adopt the Party Programme. These discussions at all levels have renewed and strengthened the political-ideological unity of the Party.

On Statement of Policy

The special conference held at Thiruvananthapuram had endorsed a resolution placed by the Central Committee regarding the Statement of Policy of 1951. The resolution stated: "The 14th Congress of the Party had directed the CC to update the Statement of Policy alongwith the Programme. The Central Committee discussed the issue. In the light of the profound changes in the international and national situation since 1951, the question requires further discussion. The CC decided to take up the matter later.

"The Statement of Policy is, therefore, not being attached to the updated Programme.

"The special conference endorses this course of action."

The Central Committee in its meeting on January 2002 discussed the question subsequently. The Statement of Policy was adopted alongwith the 1951 Programme. This was done at a time when the Party had been divided on both strategy and tactics to be pursued after the second Congress line was implemented.

The 1951 Statement of Policy served the purpose at a historical juncture to clarify and settle certain controversies which arose in the Party in the 1948-50 period.

Later, it played a useful role in countering the ultra-Left deviation of the naxalites who harped on armed struggle to the exclusion of mass movements and building of a strong all-India Communist Party.

In 1975-76 itself, the CC after discussions found it necessary to modify and reinterpret some sections of the document.

The updated Party Programme has dealt with all the strategic questions and the path for developing the revolutionary movement. The leading role of the working class, the worker-peasant alliance, the revolutionary path which will not be peacefully allowed by the ruling classes etc are contained in the Programme.

The Central Committee concluded that more than fifty years after it was originally adopted, the Statement of Policy cannot be carried alongwith the updated Programme as a companion document setting out the perspective tactical line.

The resolution adopted by the Central Committee on the Statement of Policy has been sent to all the state committees for reporting.

It is in the background of the major exercise of updating the Programme, a process which took one year, that we should assess how we have implemented the organisational tasks before the Party.

Section B

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.

II

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 polices 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.

Part III

ORGANISATION

A serious review of the experiences of the implementation of the organisational tasks set out by the 16th Party Congress, the rectification campaign and also the 14th and 15th Congresses, the gains achieved, the persisting shortcomings and weaknesses etc is necessary to formulate concrete organisational tasks for a steady expansion of the influence and independent strength of the Party.

The major task -- Expansion of the Party and its influence

The 14th Congress held at Madras in January 1992 made a thorough review of the implementation of the tasks set out at the Salkia Plenum for achieving an unprecedented growth in organisation and struggles of all sections of the working people. The conclusions arrived after the review is summarised in the following words by the 14th Party Congress.

"It was noted in the analysis of successive Party Congresses resolutions and in the reviews of the ninth and tenth general elections that there has been no basic change in the correlation of forces in the country despite many political changes and formation of successive governments at the Centre. The independent strength of the Left and the working class and its allies have not grown to such an extent at the all India level as to bring about any such change. A change in the correlation of forces requires apart from the rapid expansion of the political influence of the Party, organisational consolidation of that influence which we are gaining through the Party's innumerable activities. In that sense the basic perspective set out in Salkia of the urgency of expanding the Party, enormously enhancing its influence at the all-India level with the fighting mass organisations drawing in lakhs of workers, peasants and other sections of the working people remains all the more valid today."

How far the Party has been able to achieve expansion of its influence and strength should be the starting point of the review of the organisational condition. The growth of the Party and mass organisations membership, the

level of consciousness of the members, the rallying strength of the Party and mass organisations in agitations and struggles, the electoral strength of the Party in elections are certain important indicators for assessing the overall growth and political influence of the Party among the people.

Growth of the Party membership

	<u>1991</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>2001</u>
Membership	5,79,666	6,31,171	7,17,645	7,96,073
% of increase from one Congress to next Congress		8.8	13.7	10.9

The Party membership increased from 5,79,666 in 1991 to 7,96,073 in 2001 and the percentage of increase is 37.3. At the time of the Salkia Plenum in 1978, the membership from Kerala and West Bengal accounted for 68.5 per cent of the total membership and it is 68.67 per cent in 2001. The Party membership increased from 7,17,645 in 1998 to 7,96,073 in 2001. Out of the increase of 78,428 membership from the 16th Congress, the share of West Bengal and Kerala accounts for 68.91 per cent. Other than West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, only Tamilnadu has registered an impressive increase of 15.9 per cent from 1998 to 2001. Thus, unevenness in development and influence of the Party continues.

The membership figures of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi show a continuous declining trend. The fall in membership in Uttar Pradesh is 15 per cent. The membership from Bihar also declined after the last Party Congress.

Situation in Hindi-speaking states

	<u>1991</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>2001</u>
Membership	30,820	31,675	36,926	35,830
% of increase from one Congress to next Congress		2.8	16.6	-2.9

In the Hindi-speaking states -- Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan -- the Party membership increased from 30,820 in 1991 to 35,830 in 2001. But from 1998 to 2001, there is a decline of 1,096 members

(2.9 per cent). There is no substantial growth in membership in any of the Hindi-speaking states.

Mass Organisation

	<u>14th congress</u>	<u>15th congress</u>	<u>16th congress</u>	<u>17th congress</u>
Total Membership of the mass organisations	2,87,79,569	3,23,78,121	3,73,45,535	4,05,94,829
% of increase from one Congress to another Congress		12.5	15.4	8.7

The total membership of the mass organisations increased from 2,87,79,569 at the time of the 14th Congress to 4,05,94,829. The percentage of increase from 14th Congress to the 17th Congress is 41 per cent. The following tables show the membership figures of different mass organisations:

Trade Union Front

	<u>1989</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1999</u>
Membership	23,86,242	23,57,766	27,89,587	32,68,528
% of increase/decrease from one Congress to next Congress		-1.2	18.3	17.2

Kisan Front

	<u>1990-91</u>	<u>1993-94</u>	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2000-01</u>
Membership	1,17,63,811	1,23,27,742	1,44,49,063	1,46,86,579
% of increase from one Congress to next Congress		4.8	17.2	1.6

Agricultural Workers Front

	<u>1991</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2000-01</u>
Membership	18,90,488	21,42,541	23,07,976	25,77,108
% of increase from one Congress to next Congress		13.3	7.7	11.7

Youth Front

	<u>1990</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2000</u>
Membership	76,30,740	92,79,605	1,02,74,260	1,12,71,248
% of increase from one Congress to next Congress		21.6	10.7	9.7

Student Front

	<u>1990</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2000</u>
Membership	19,89,054	21,49,679	22,12,632	24,64,005
% of increase from one Congress to next Congress		8.1	2.9	11.3

Women's Front

	<u>1990</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2001</u>
Membership	31,19,234	41,20,788	52,12,017	63,27,361
% of increase from one Congress to next Congress		32.1	26.5	21.4

There is increase in the membership of all mass organisations. But the rate of growth varies from one organisation to another organisation, from one state to another state and from one Congress to another Congress. The women's front shows a robust growth of 21.4 per cent from the 16th Congress.

Mass organisation membership in Hindi-speaking states

Mass organisation membership

	<u>14th Congress</u>	<u>15th Congress</u>	<u>16th Congress</u>	<u>17th Congress</u>
Total Membership of the mass organisations	12,83,564	10,21,311	12,64,391	12,71,188
% of increase from one Congress to another Congress		-25.7	23.8	0.5

The total membership of the mass organisations in the Hindi-speaking states registered a slight decline from 12,83,564 at the time of the 14th Congress to

12,71,188 at the 17th Congress. A steep decline of 25.7 per cent happened during the intervening period between the 14th and 15th Congresses. The following tables show the membership figures of different mass organisations in Hindi-speaking states.

TU Front

	<u>1989</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1999</u>
Membership	2,27,600	1,78,682	2,48,220	2,69,281
% of increase/decrease from one Congress to another Congress		-27.4	38.9	8.5

Kisan Front

	<u>1990-91</u>	<u>1993-94</u>	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2000-01</u>
Membership	5,23,300	3,60,787	4,71,522	4,12,564
% of increase from one Congress to another Congress		-45.0	30.7	-14.3

Agricultural Workers Front

	<u>1991</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2000-01</u>
Membership	1,44,566	1,24,696	1,65,013	1,38,500
% of increase from one Congress to another Congress		-16	32.3	-19.1

Youth Front

	<u>1990</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2000</u>
Membership	1,89,246	1,68,205	1,63,762	1,86,569
% of increase from one Congress to another Congress		-12.5	-2.7	13.9

Student Front

	<u>1990</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2000</u>
Membership	1,50,532	1,05,554	86,069	99,002
% of increase from one Congress to another Congress		-42.6	-22.6	15.0

Women's Front

	<u>1990</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2001</u>
Membership	48,320	83,387	1,29,805	1,65,272
% of increase from one Congress to another Congress		72.6	55.7	27.3

The membership of the women's front alone shows a healthy growth from 48,320 in 1990 to 1,65,272 in 2001. The TU front shows an increase from 2,27,600 in 1989 to 2,69,281 in 1999. The total membership of kisan, agricultural workers, youth and student fronts declined from the position of the 14th Party Congress. The total membership of the Party and mass organisations is declining in the Hindi-speaking states. It is also to be noted that the situation varies from state to state in the case of the Party and the different mass organisations.

Stagnating electoral strength

Percentage of votes polled by CPI(M) in general elections to Lok Sabha

<u>Year</u>	<u>Seats contested</u>	<u>Seats won</u>	<u>% of votes</u>
1967	62	19	4.4
1971	85	25	5.1
1977	53	22	4.3
1980	63	36	6.1
1984	64	22	5.7
1989	64	33	6.6
1991	60	35	6.2
1996	75	32	6.12
1998	71	32	5.16
1999	72	33	5.4

The Party polled 1,96,91,311 votes and 6.6 percent of the total valid votes in the general elections to Lok Sabha in 1989; 1,69,54,797 votes and 6.2 per cent of votes in 1991; 2,04,96,810 votes and 6.12 per cent votes in 1996; 1,89,91,867 votes and 5.16 per cent of votes in 1998; and 1,96,95,767 votes and 5.4 per cent of votes in 1999.

The Party has not made any substantial increase in electoral strength in any state. Except for the three strong states of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, the Party's electoral strength is declining in other states. Another important aspect is that the increase in Party and mass organisation membership is not reflecting in the electoral influence of the Party. The Party has been able to poll only about half of the membership strength of the Party and mass organisation taken together.

The reports from the states show that the influence of caste and communal parties is gradually eroding our political influence in certain states. The 'Review of the Assembly Elections' adopted by the Central Committee meeting in August 2001 noted the growing caste influence even in Kerala. "The state review report states that the casteist forces can not only rally their supporters but also can influence a section of our supporters. The growth of the caste influence in Kerala after the long years of activities of social reform movements and Left parties is a very serious matter. Failure to politically educate our masses and the weaknesses in conducting political propaganda among the masses behind the communal and casteist forces in order to win over them can be a reason for the emergence of the present situation. The Party has to evolve effective tactics in reaching the masses rallied around caste leaders by taking up economic and social issues and also by exposing the vested interest of the leadership."

The regional political parties, with whom the Party had electoral understanding, were able to influence and wean away a small section of the sympathisers and supporters of the Party.

A considerable section of the members of the mass organisations are not politically with the Party, particularly in weaker states. They join mass these organisations as they recognise that these mass organisations stand for their economic demands. There is no serious attempt in many places to politically educate them and draw them as sympathisers and members of the Party.

Rallying strength of the Party and mass organisations

The Party and mass organisations conducted innumerable agitations and struggles during this period. It cannot be said that the Party or mass organisations could rally the entire or substantial membership even in some important agitations or struggles. There are even reports from states that a small section of the Party members were inactive during important activities including election work. Despite the multifarious activities and the prestige of the Party at the all-India level, why it has not achieved expansion of its influence and strength is a matter that demands serious review of the various aspects of the Party organisation. It cannot be said that there is substantial growth in the rallying strength of the Party and mass organisations compared

to the pre-1991 period. A considerable section of the members of the mass organisations are inactive and their participation is confined mainly to the payment of membership fees.

Party members

The reports from the states show that there is improvement in the class composition of the membership. The 14th Party Congress stressed the importance of recruitment from the working class, poor peasants and agricultural labourers. The percentage of Party members from these strata are: Andhra Pradesh - 50.82, Bihar - 76.8, Delhi - 76.3, Haryana - 73.3, Jharkhand - 80.1, Kerala - 85.6, Madhya Pradesh - 72, Maharashtra - 92.3, Rajasthan - 65, Tamilnadu - 68.7, Tripura - 62.3 and West Bengal 51.6.

The proportion of Party membership from the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes increased during the period after the 14th Party Congress. The percentage of scheduled castes in different states are: Andhra Pradesh - 19.89, Bihar - 20.7, Delhi - 18, Haryana - 25.6, Jharkhand - 9.9, Kerala - 12.5, Madhya Pradesh - 20, Maharashtra - 7.3, Rajasthan - 18.1, U.P. 22.6 (based on partial figures) Tamilnadu - 30.2, Tripura - 17.9 and West Bengal - 20.9. The substantial increase achieved by the Tamilnadu state committee from 17.2 per cent to 30.3 per cent is noteworthy. The percentage of scheduled tribes in different states are: Andhra Pradesh - 10, Bihar - 1.4, Delhi - 0.4, Jharkhand - 17.5, Kerala - 1.04, Madhya Pradesh 14.3, Maharashtra - 50.8, Rajasthan - 20.3, Tamilnadu - 1.5, Tripura - 27.4 and West Bengal - 5.8. This shows that the Party's work among the socially oppressed and rural poor has grown.

The percentage of the Muslim minorities in different states is: Andhra Pradesh - 3.24, Bihar - 11.8, Delhi - 11.8, U.P 12.8 (based on partial figures), Haryana - 0.83, Jharkhand - 8.7, Kerala - 8.3, Madhya Pradesh - 4.4, Maharashtra - 5, Rajasthan - 5.3, Tamilnadu - 7.4, Tripura - 5.2 and West Bengal - 15.2. The state unit of West Bengal is giving sufficient attention for recruiting minorities into the Party. The Kerala report has noted a decline of 1.78 per cent of Party members from the Christian minorities after the 16th Party Congress. Kerala should pay more attention for increasing Party membership from both Muslim and Christian minorities.

The age-wise classification of the Party members shows the positive sign of more young people joining the Party. The percentage of members who are

40 years and below in different states are: Delhi - 52.6, Haryana - 60.6, Kerala - 63.7, Madhya Pradesh - 55.9, Maharashtra - 58.9, Rajasthan - 51.8, Tamilnadu - 59.2, Tripura - 52.6 and West Bengal - 64.7. The situation in Bihar cannot be assessed as the state unit has not given the figures of Party members between 30 and 40 years. But the figures supplied from Bihar show that the composition of youngsters in the Party is relatively less than from most of the states. About one-fourth of the members from Bihar are above 60 years.

A big majority of members have joined the Party after 1985 and a substantial bulk has been recruited in the 1990s. For instance, in West Bengal 57.8 per cent of members have joined after 1985 and 22.8 per cent after 1995. In Tamilnadu it is 76.5 per cent after 1985 and 43.5 percent after 1995. In Tripura, it is 78.5 per cent after 1985 and 43.9 per cent after 1995. Those joining after 1995 constitute 56.8 per cent of membership in Haryana, 59.3 per cent in Delhi and 35.7 per cent in Rajasthan. In Maharashtra 60.4 per cent of Party members joined after 1990. In Bihar 58.3 per cent of the Party members joined the Party before 1985. The large percentage of older members, both in terms of age and date of joining in Bihar, shows new members joining the Party is insufficient. The preponderance of Party members who have joined the Party in the 1990s shows the urgent need for giving political and organisational education to the members.

There is some improvement in the recruitment of women in the Party. In the five major states of West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh, the position now in terms of percentage of women members as compared to the 16th Congress is as follows: West Bengal 7.56 (6.5 in 1998); Kerala 7.8 (7.5), Tripura 15.96 (14.2), Tamilnadu 9.8 (7.3) and Andhra Pradesh 7.5 (6.8).

The position in other states is: Maharashtra 10.7, Delhi 21.7, Punjab 3.1, U.P 3.5 (partial figures) Haryana 5.9, Jharkhand 2.9, Madhya Pradesh 10.4.

The five big states must pay more attention to recruiting women from the class and mass organisations. The state committees should discuss the matter before the next renewals of Party membership.

The number of wholetimers in different states are: Andhra Pradesh - 1042, Bihar - 167, Delhi - 45, Punjab 115, Goa - 4, Haryana - 45, Jharkhand - 73,

Kerala - 4697, Madhya Pradesh - 57, Maharashtra - 151, Chattisgarh 23, Rajasthan - 23, Tamilnadu - 741, Tripura - 363 and West Bengal - 3695.

There is improvement in the functioning of the Party members. But a considerable section of Party members do not carry out the basic tasks expected from them. Even though there is improvement in the attendance of the Party members in branch meetings, the reports from certain states show that the attendance in branch meetings and Party general body meetings in many places is generally less than 50 per cent. A section of Party members are inactive. Some of them even do not take up the issues affecting the masses or try to strengthen their bonds with them. They will go to the masses when there is an important activity or election. There are reports that a small number of the Party members even do not take part in important electoral battles, important agitations or struggles. Some of the Party members do not enroll as members in mass organisations or take active part in mass organisation activities.

The reports from states also show that the yearly droppage from full membership varies from five to 20 per cent and candidate membership upto 30 per cent in some states. The floating nature of the Party membership shows the weakness in recruitment, training and education.

The recruitment process is liberal and sometimes anarchic in certain states. The new recruits are not given elementary education in Party organisation, Party programme and Party policies. Due to this, their political-organisational level is very low. Some of them are guided by utopian ideas. Some of the members are coming to the Party with the vices in the society. Due to lack of proper check-up and training, the overall quality of Party membership is declining. The factional tendencies existing in certain parts is also vitiating the process of recruitment and ineligible persons are enrolled in the Party for factional purposes and to capture Party positions. The low level of political and ideological consciousness, the non-participation in the regular activities of the Party and mass organisation in the case of a considerable section of the Party members are restricting the efforts of the Party for making rapid expansion. The Kerala state committee has decided to scrutinise and tighten up membership based on the review of the assembly elections which showed that some Party members were inactive even during the elections.

Party Levy

There were reports that certain Party committees are not collecting levy as per the levy rates fixed. Many salaried members expressed their difficulties to pay levy at the fixed rates. Considering the increase in the living expenditure and the difficulties of the salaried members, the Central Committee revised levy rates in August 2000. After this, there should be no liberal attitude to payment of levy. Each Party member should submit correct information regarding his income at the time of renewal. All Party committees should insist that levy should be collected from all Party members strictly as per the revised rates.

Party branches

The concept of the primary unit as a living link with the people, doing agitation and propaganda work among the masses, drawing militants and sympathisers into activities and enrolling them as Party members, transmitting its experience to the higher committees and participating in Party's policy making by holding discussions are being performed only in the case of about 30 per cent of the branches. A large number of branches meet only once or twice in a year and get activated only at the time of elections, some conferences or some special programmes.

One of the important tasks of the branches in the rural countryside, to organise peasants and agricultural workers, is being ignored. There is also weakness in recruiting working class militants into the Party. Many of the branches do not consider the difficulties of the women members when they call the meeting of the branches.

Many branches do not keep records about the discussions and decisions. Some of the branches do not make any review of the activities of the members even at the time of their renewal. If any member pays his membership fees and levy, his membership is renewed.

The auxiliary groups are organised under the branches and it is the responsibility of the branches to provide political and organisational training to the new recruits and to monitor their activities. The defects in the functioning of the auxiliary groups continue due to the defective functioning of the branches and the higher committees.

The 14th Congress decided that there should be an annual review of the branch functioning at the time of renewals by the district or intermediate committees based on the guidelines chalked out by the state committees. It also stressed the need and importance of giving training to branch secretaries and holding meetings of the branch secretaries by the higher committees. In some states, meetings of the branch secretaries are being called. But many state committees have not taken up the decisions of the 14th Party Congress for implementation. This needs to be done.

Local/zonal/area/district committees

The situation of the local, zonal, area or district committees vary from state to state. In some weaker states, there is no intermediate level committee between branches and district committees. In most weaker states, there are local committees above branches but no zonal or area committees between local committees and district committee.

In West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura and in the strong districts in Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and in some other states, where there is considerable membership in districts, the pattern of branches, local committees, zonal or area committees, district committees is in existence. In order to bring uniformity in the organisational set-up, the Central Committee issued a circular for the re-organisation of the various level committees.

In some weaker states, it was found that district committees were formed even where there were very few Party members and branches. The Central Committee formulated new norms for constituting district committees. District committees should be constituted only when there are 200 Party members and atleast ten to fifteen branches. Till that, only district organising committee will be constituted. Where there are three to five branches in an area within such a district, a local committee can be constituted. The state units of Andaman & Nicobar, Manipur, Goa, Sikkim, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttarakhand will be state organising committees, as the membership is below one thousand.

The weakness of the branch functioning persists because of the weakness of the district committee or area/zonal or local committees. In most of the weaker states, there is shortage of capable cadres at the district centre in many districts. Inactivity or inefficiency of the district centre is the main reason for the persisting weakness of the functioning of the branches.

Sincere attempts should be made to strengthen the functioning of the committees at different levels.

State Committees

The reports from states show that state committees meet regularly once in two or three months and the meetings of the state secretariats are held more often. The practice of submitting written reports is valid in most of the states. The decision that the available members of the state secretariat should meet regularly at the state centre and discuss all important matters are followed in many states. There are complaints that secretaries of certain state committees are not taking initiative in calling the meetings of the available members of the secretariat. The main responsibility to ensure the collective functioning of the secretariat and the state committees lies with the secretary. Some of the state centres do not have sufficient number of cadre at the state centre. Some state centres lack initiative in making political interventions. The style of functioning of the state centres of most of the Hindi-speaking states has to be strengthened.

Different types of weaknesses are in existence in the functioning of committees. Some committees do not show any initiative in taking up the various issues affecting the people living in that area but only ritually carry out certain campaigns or programmes decided by higher committees. Some committees do not make plans for future but carry out the activities on the basis of current pressing requirements. There is also weakness in taking up the matters continuously for achieving or even for aiming at some solution. Some committees take up matters casually and leave it there unfinished. Some committees do not fix responsibilities for its members or review the work of its members.

Some committees do not organise any review of experience it achieved during a specific period or after the performance of a particular activity. Periodical review is the mechanism for improving the performance of the committee and also its individual members. Some committees do not encourage criticism and self-criticism as its internal mechanism for reviewing the experiences and for learning lessons. This is necessary for strengthening the collective functioning of the Party and common understanding.

Polit Bureau

After the 16th Party Congress, a 17-member Polit Bureau was elected. Sailen Dasgupta and M. Hanumantha Rao died during this period. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya was elected to the Polit Bureau subsequently. Out of the present 16 Polit Bureau members, four members -- Jyoti Basu, Anil Biswas, Biman Basu and Buddhadeb Bhattacharya -- are concentrating in West Bengal, three members -- V.S. Achuthanandan, E.K. Nayanar and Pinarayi Vijayan -- are concentrating in Kerala and Manik Sarkar is working as Chief Minister in Tripura.

Biman Basu is helping the state committees of Orissa and North-Eastern states and is in-charge of the North-East sub-committee and convenor of the tribal sub-committee.

Eight PB members are working from the Party Centre. The following specific responsibilities have been assigned to them.

Harkishan Singh Surjeet -- General Secretary and state responsibilities of Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir.

E. Balanandan -- President of CITU and convenor of TU sub-committee.

Prakash Karat -- Party Centre coordination, convenor of Organisational sub-committee, in-charge of Progressive printers, Leftword publications, state charge of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Delhi.

S. Ramachandran Pillai -- Convenor of Agrarian sub-committee, finance sub-committee, parliamentary Party committee, president of All India Kisan Sabha, state charge of Assam.

Sitaram Yechury -- Editor of People's Democracy and Loklakshmi, in-charge of international department, in-charge of student-youth sub-committee, state charge of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Maharashtra.

P. Ramachandran -- Convenor of Education sub-committee, state charge of Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Karnataka.

R. Umanath -- In-charge of women's front, bank and insurance fraction.

M.K. Pandhe -- General Secretary of CITU, state charge of Himachal Pradesh and Goa.

The Polit Bureau is meeting on an average of once in two months. The PB is reacting to major political developments, intervening in important organisational matters in states, keeping in touch with other political parties and leaders, taking initiative for joint stand and activities, guiding Party leaders working in mass organisations, guiding the parliamentary group, maintaining contacts with Communist parties in other countries etc. The daily meetings of the available PB members of the Centre are held regularly, they discuss the current political developments, issue statements on them, intervene on urgent organisational issues, give day-to-day guidance to the parliamentary group, make preparations for the meeting of the full PB and CC, hear reports of the meetings of the state committees attended by the PB members and decide on intervention from the Centre etc.

One of the important tasks performed by the Party was the holding of the special conference in Thiruvananthapuram in October 2000 and the adoption of the updated Party Programme. The Polit Bureau played an important role in leading the Party for carrying out this important task. The Polit Bureau had to give more attention to tackle certain organisational problems in Kerala and Punjab. The PB also gave guidance and help on political and organisational matters to the state committees.

The rectification work of the PB, CC and the Party Centre apparatus has not been done yet. The Party was not able to organise a Central Party school after October 1993. On the ideological front, our work is minimal. The help given to state committees is mainly confined to political reporting and giving guidance in the meetings of the state committees. The Centre has not been able to undertake serious study jointly with the state committees about the socio-economic changes happening in various states, the specific experiences of the different activities, the potentialities and weaknesses of the cadres, the political and ideological work done by the state committee and the district committees, the organisational situation, the potentialities and the weaknesses etc.

Eventhough it was decided that the Party Centre should give more time and attention to building and expanding the movement in Hindi-speaking areas, the PB was not able to give sufficient time for that. It was also decided that the Party should study the developments taking place in socialist countries

and try to evolve a common understanding. This is yet to be done. Many decisions of the earlier Congresses have only been partially implemented. The main weakness of the Party lies in the non-implementation of decisions and tasks. This weakness is existing both at the top and at the lower levels.

The organisational subcommittee met four times during this period including a meeting with the Punjab state secretariat.

The agit-prop sub-committee's functioning needs to be regularised.

The tribal sub-committee of the Party met thrice and a policy document on the tribal question was prepared. This document was discussed and finalised at a meeting of the tribal comrades on 10-11 November, 2001 in Kolkata for placing before the Central Committee. The CC adopted the 'Policy Document on Tribal Problems' in its March 2002 meeting and it is being circulated to the Party Congress.

The North-East sub-committee also prepared a report but the Polit Bureau could not consider this document and take decisions.

Despite repeated decisions to constitute an all-India cultural fraction, the PB failed to do so. Such a committee for the cultural front has to be constituted immediately and coordinated work in the cultural front should be organised.

Due to paucity of comrades at the Centre, the Polit Bureau was not able to discharge some of its important responsibilities. The style of work of the available PB members working at the Centre also needs restructuring.

Secretariat

A seven-member secretariat was constituted consisting of General Secretary, Prakash Karat, S. Ramachandran Pillai, Sukomal Sen, Hari Singh Kang, Hannan Mollah and K. Varadharajan.

After the 16th Party Congress, the secretariat met and decided to hold weekly meetings of the secretariat and an initial work division was made. The PB members and Hari Singh Kang are working from the Party Central Committee office. It was also decided that the other secretariat members, whenever they are in Delhi, should attend the Party CC office and get themselves involved in the work of the Party Centre. This practice was

started and continued for some time. Due to elections and mass organisational responsibilities of some of the secretariat members' the meetings of the secretariat became irregular. But the secretariat members are discharging their responsibilities in states. Sukomal Sen is looking after the organisational matters in Gujarat and Hannan Mollah is looking after the organisational matters in Rajasthan, Haryana and Andaman & Nicobar.

The secretariat members should be whole time functionaries of the Party Centre to make it a cohesive body.

Central Committee

The 16th Party Congress elected a 66-member Central Committee. Benoy Krishna Chaudhury, Sainen Dasgupta, M. Hanumantha Rao, Vimal Ranadive, Niren Ghosh, Shailendra Shailey and Suseela Gopalan died during this period. Mangat Ram Pasla was expelled from the Party for anti-Party activities. Kanai Banerjee, Mithali Kumar, P.K. Sreemathi, T.K. Rangarajan and Brinda Karat were co-opted to the Central Committee. Mithali Kumar resigned from the Central Committee due to health reasons. Suneet Chopra is concentrating in agricultural workers front, Kanai Banerjee is working in the TU front and Brinda Karat is working in the women's front. Jogendra Sharma, while mainly concentrating Party work in the Delhi state, helps the Party Centre in some works such as the construction of houses for the earthquake-affected people in Gujarat, office work during general election time etc. Mohd. Salim who was convenor of student-youth sub-committee and worked in the youth front from the Centre has been shifted to West Bengal. All other Central Committee members are mainly concentrated in the work in their respective states.

The Central Committee has held 18 meetings during this period. The Party Centre has not been able to review the activities of the members of the Central Committee working from the Centre. The CC has not been able to do the review of the activities of the mass organisations. There is improvement in the functioning of the sub-committees and fractions during this period.

The Party collected an amount of rupees one crore and 16 lakhs as Gujarat earthquake relief fund. Out of this, the collection from Kerala through Deshabhimani was 91 lakhs. The Party selected Chancha Vadarda village in Maliya taluk in Rajkot district for earthquake rehabilitation work.. The plan

involves construction of 150 houses, a primary school, a community centre, and a park for children. Now the house construction work is in progress. The construction work is expected to be completed by mid-2002.

Party education

The 16th Party Congress decided to organise Party education with a syllabus keeping in mind the consciousness of the ordinary Party members and also to ensure that all members get Party education. The Party education sub-committee held three meetings during this period. In the first meeting, it prepared a tentative programme for Party education.

The proposed Central Party school was postponed due to the fast changing political situation, fall of the BJP ministry and the elections to the Lok Sabha in October 1999. The panchayat and municipal elections in certain states also influenced the postponement of the holding of Central Party school. Again the Party educational sub-committee decided to organise a Party school after the updating of the Party Programme. After the special conference in Thiruvananthapuram, the educational sub-committee held its meeting and decided to organise Party school on seven subjects meant to explain the various aspects of the Party Programme. Meanwhile the elections to four state assemblies of West Bengal, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Assam took place in May 2001. Due to this, the proposed Central Party school was postponed again. The failure to conduct Central Schools is a major lapse on the part of the Party Centre.

Many state committees organised state Party schools during this period. Polit Bureau and Central Committee members attended these schools to help the state committees. Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh state committees have taken commendable steps to improve schooling.

In Kerala, the EMS academy was inaugurated in November 2001. The aim is to establish an informal university for study and research. This will be a permanent teaching centre for cadres of the Party. An amount of Rs. 4,27,68,439 has been collected for this purpose. 36 acres of land has been purchased near Thiruvananthapuram city and building construction is in progress.

The PB members also attended state and district level cadres meeting for reporting on the updated Party Programme.

The Polit Bureau and the Central Committee members attended many seminars and symposia in many places of the country and tried to project the Party's views on various issues.

Ideological work

All the previous Party Congress documents have stressed the importance of strengthening the ideological work.

The ideological work done by the Centre is insufficient compared to the rapidly growing needs. The tremendous growth in information technology has facilitated the spreading of all sorts of pernicious ideologies among the people. Our propaganda is reaching only a small portion of the population. Without successfully combating the ideologies of the enemy classes and winning over people through the projection of the Party's alternative views and positions, it is not possible for the Party to expand its influence and strength.

The 16th Party Congress examined this aspect and noted the failure of the Party to develop political-ideological work both in terms of its range and effectiveness. It also noted the growing appeal of the communal forces among the urban middle classes and the corroding effect on the social consciousness of the middle classes through liberalisation and consumerism. Considering all these aspects, the 16th Party Congress decided to expand the Party's ideological and agit-prop work, improve the content and circulation of the Party's papers both at the Centre and states, set-up a Central publishing house to cater to the need for a wide range of literature. It also decided to step-up the ideological work with particular emphasis on countering the pernicious ideas put out by the RSS combine, conduct anti-caste movements, take up social issues to ensure a democratic atmosphere etc.

As per the decision of the 16th Party Congress, a new publishing house -- Leftword Books -- was established in early 1999. It has published 15 titles till January 2002. Progressive Printers and Leftword Books have been brought under Naya Rasta Publishers, a private limited company registered for this purpose. The Leftword Books serves as a broad Left publishing centre.

Agit-Prop Work

For Party publications, the National Book Centre has been wound up and a new set-up -- CPI(M) Publications -- has been established for Party publications. The CPI(M) Publications has published 25 titles as agit-prop material other than Party and CC documents.

In order to avoid delay in distribution, *People's Democracy* is now printed and published simultaneously from Calcutta and Hyderabad alongwith New Delhi. Eventhough the Central Committee called for a campaign for increasing the circulation of *People's Democracy* and *Loklakar* in September 2001, it did not yield any result. The circulation of People's Democracy is the same as at the time of the last Congress while there is a decline in the Lok Lehar circulation.

The *India News Network* (INN) news service could not be developed in the absence of a qualified journalist to look after it for the last two years.

The theoretical quarterly, *The Marxist* has been regularised and after the 16th Congress, nine issues have come out. There is need for activating the editorial board and planning the issues.

There is expansion and strengthening of the dailies in states and other propaganda channels. *Deshabhimani* in Kerala has started a new edition from Thrissur. At present, *Deshabhimani* has six editions. The present circulation of *Deshabhimani* is 2.13 lakhs. Two weeklies -- one is political weekly *Chintha* and another is cultural weekly *Deshabhimani Weekly* -- are published in Malayalam. AKG Study and Research Centre is publishing a quarterly *Marxist Samvadam* which contains scholarly articles of Left and progressive writers. Kerala state committee has published 34 pamphlets during this period. The Chintha Publishing Centre is publishing Marxist, Left and progressive books.

Ganashakti in West Bengal has begun its new edition from Siliguri. The present circulation of *Ganashakti* is 1.4 lakhs. Two weeklies -- one in Bengali, *Deshhitaisee* and another in Hindi, *Swadhintha* -- are also being published regularly. *Nandan* is the cultural monthly published in Bengali. *Marxvadipath* is the theoretical quarterly published in Bengali. The publishing centre, National Book Agency, is publishing Marxist, Left and progressive books.

Prajasakthi is the Telugu daily published in Andhra Pradesh. Its present circulation is 35,000. 20 pamphlets and 214 booklets were also published in Andhra Pradesh.

The present circulation of daily *Desarkatha* in Tripura is 13,000. One cultural quarterly is also published in Tripura.

Theekkathir is the Tamil daily published from Tamilnadu. Its present circulation is 12,000 copies. A theoretical monthly *Marxist* and a cultural monthly *Semmalar* are also being regularly published in Tamil.

Lok Jatan, a new fortnightly in Hindi has started its publication from Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh.

As far as weeklies are concerned, *Jeevanmarg* in Maharashtra, *Ganashakti* in Assam, *Aikya Ranga* in Karnataka, *Samyabadee* in Orissa and *Chintan* in Gujarat are being regularly published.

A new television channel, *Kairali* began in 2000 its 24-hour telecasting in Malayalam. It was set up at the Party's initiative by democratic and progressive sections with the support of Party members and sympathisers.

Democratic Centralism

The previous Party Congresses noted the erosion in the practice of democratic centralism and its different facets and causes.

The state of democratic centralism cannot be healthy as a majority of the Party branches are not functioning properly and a large section of the Party members are not fulfilling their minimum responsibilities. These conditions provide fertile grounds for nurturing of individualism, bureaucratism and groupism.

Some units consider the lower units as instruments for carrying out the decisions and directions of the higher organs. The important aspect of encouragement of criticism from below is neglected. The reporting from top to bottom and bottom to the top is defective and there are serious defects in the flow of information and communication.

Instead of evolving common will through collective discussions and functioning, there are attempts to avoid differing views through factional elimination in elections in conferences. The need to strengthen the collective functioning through discussions and consultations is ignored by certain comrades. Some view differing views as inconvenient and devise wrong organisational practices to overcome them.

There are reports about the growing trend of federal tendencies in the Party in some places. Some committees tolerate violations of the principles of Party organisation by individual comrades and units as they do not wish to touch the influential sections. Some higher committees show hesitation to intervene to correct the mistakes or wrongs.

The Party has taken certain steps for strengthening inner-Party democracy in the conduct of elections to Party committees and positions. This has, to a certain extent, helped in meeting the problem of over-centralism, bureaucracy and inefficiency. In certain places, however, certain factional leaders are making use of the present low political and organisational level of Party members for capturing Party committees and positions for factional purposes. There are also attempts at recruiting ineligible persons into the Party in order to increase the number of their factional supporters. In some places, the mistakes and wrongs committed by certain comrades are being ignored to gain their support in factional fight. In certain places, the Party committees are divided on factional lines. Some higher committees ignore such instances, or, in some places encourage such wrong practices.

The 16th Party Congress had expressed serious concern at the growing leakage of inner-Party discussions to the bourgeois press. Such leakage reflects the serious erosion of the Communist consciousness at the leadership levels. Some steps were taken to check this problem in Kerala and efforts to root out such activities must continue.

Factionalism

As stated in the 15th Party Congress document, factionalism denudes the Party of its essentially revolutionary character as the embodiment of common will, making the Party incapable to discharge its revolutionary task and converts the Party into any other bourgeois-political party.

The Central Committee document on rectification campaign pinpointed the growth of factionalism, careerism, individualism and the erosion of the principles of democratic centralism. Erosion of communist morality is a major cause. The rectification campaign document stressed the need to fight against the trend of factionalism.

The 16th Party Congress noted the growth of factionalism in Kerala, Punjab and in some other places. The Party Congress gave certain specific directions to the state committees of Kerala and Punjab for fighting factional tendencies and taking steps to unify the Party.

Kerala: With the help of the Polit Bureau, the Kerala state committee and state secretariat held many rounds of meetings and prepared a document for fighting against the factional tendencies and also for taking steps for the unification of the Party. On the basis of this, 13 comrades were included in district committees and about 500 comrades were included at various level committees who were excluded at the time of last Party conference. K.N. Ravindranath has now been included in the state committee.

There is overall improvement in the functioning of the state committee, district committees and lower level committees and a process of unification is slowly gaining strength. But the recently held Party conference showed factional tendencies particularly in two districts. There are complaints about the exclusion of eligible comrades in some places.

Review of the assembly elections adopted by the Central Committee in August 2001 instructed the Kerala Party leadership to thrash out the differences through discussions inside the Party and not to express their differing views outside. Sometimes leakage of discussions in secretariat and state committee are also taking place. The bourgeois press in Kerala is very vigilant to pick up even small differences inside the Party and to pose as serious differences and also capable to plant stories to effect factional division. It seems that a section of comrades are influenced by the propaganda of bourgeois press. The persons who were expelled from the Party for their factional and anti-Party activities can even now influence a small section of Party members.

Efforts are to be intensified to eradicate factional tendencies and also the damage done to the Party and its influence among the masses. The Party leadership should consciously and consistently work for strengthening the

collective functioning. The Party should not tolerate any violation from anybody. A serious political and organisational education campaign should be launched.

The recently held state conference expressed the strong desire of the Party members to eradicate factionalism and strengthen unity in the Party. All decisions of the state conference were taken unanimously including the election to the new state committee. The spirit of the state conference has to be carried forward to eradicate the evil of factionalism and to strengthen unity. The collective effort of the state leadership is all the more necessary in this regard.

Punjab: The 16th Party Congress noted the sharp factional division within the Party and other inner-Party problems in Punjab. Immediately after the Party Congress, some attempts were made to unify the Party. Certain comrades who were factionally excluded from the committees during the pre-Congress conferences were co-opted. However, the situation did not improve and began to deteriorate.

The Central Committee took up this matter in 1999 and adopted a report on the inner-Party situation in Punjab. The CC gave instructions to the Punjab Party for taking steps to eliminate factionalism, unify the Party and ensure proper relations between the Party and mass organisations. In order to implement the CC decisions, the Polit Bureau decided that the organisational sub-committee of the CC should monitor the situation and suggest appropriate steps.

Many meetings of the secretariat and state committee were held. The situation did not show any improvement. Many unions were split and started parallel functioning. Many mass organisations were affected by inner-Party problems. A section of comrades kept away from the activities of the Party and mass organisations and even from the all-India calls.

Again, the PB discussed the deteriorating situation in Punjab and addressed a letter to the Party members in Punjab in March 2001. The letter called upon the comrades to take steps to re-forge unity in the Party and mass organisations. The PB also instructed the Party leadership not to take any vindictive or arbitrary action and pointed out the responsibility of the two CC members to re-forge unity by resolving differences on a principled basis. The General Secretary and two PBMs from the Centre attended the state

committee and reported on the PB and CC decisions. Nine state committee members walked out of the PC meeting demanding summary disciplinary action against a comrade.

Party General Secretary attended many district general bodies and explained the PB letter and the need for unification. There was good response from ordinary comrades in all districts. Mangat Ram Pasla did not attend the general body meetings, even though it was decided that he should attend the general body meetings with the General Secretary.

The situation did not improve, but began to deteriorate further when the preparations for the conferences started. Factional meetings and parallel functioning of the mass organisations increased. A section of the factional leaders, against whom disciplinary actions were taken, forcibly captured a vehicle of the Party state committee. In some places, they also forcefully occupied some Party offices. Mangat Ram Pasla did not implement the direction of the PB and CC that he should disassociate with certain persons against whom disciplinary actions were taken.

All these issues were discussed in the meeting of the Central Committee held in October 2001. The CC decided to call a meeting of the state committee and take all appropriate steps for unification. General Secretary and two PBMs from the Centre attended the meeting of the Punjab state committee. Mangat Ram Pasla did not attend the meeting of the PC. Nine other state committee members who had been boycotting state committee meetings also did not attend. They held parallel conferences in certain tehsils and districts. Mangat Ram Pasla attended many of these factional conferences. Subsequently, Mangat Ram Pasla held a press conference on December 3, 2001 and announced the formation of a parallel state committee. The Polit Bureau, on December 4, summarily expelled Mangat Ram Pasla for his anti-Party activities.

The disrupters held their so-called conference one day before the Punjab state conference. They announced the formation of a state committee with Mangat Ram Pasla as state secretary and claimed to be the real CPI(M). They also had stated that they do not accept the updated Programme.

The Punjab state conference was held from 14th to 16th December. It was attended by 324 delegates. A 43-member state committee has been elected. The General Secretary and two PB members attended the state conference.

Reports show that about 1,500 Party members attended the parallel conferences held by the disrupters at various levels. The factional fight and the disruption had done damage to the Party. The state Party leadership should take appropriate steps to unify the Party and to win over the members of the Party and mass organisation who were misguided by the disrupters. A serious political and organisational education covering the entire Party membership should be organised. Wherever re-organisation is needed, that should be addressed immediately.

Rectification campaign

The rectification campaign for strengthening democratic centralism, for maintenance of Communist norms, fighting against the evil of parliamentarism etc attained certain definite achievements at various levels. During this period, the recurrent elections and the time spent for updating the Party Programme have put many constraints in our efforts to continue the rectification campaign. We should continue our efforts in all areas.

Communist norms: One of the important issues taken up at the rectification campaign was the maintenance of Communist norms and the inculcation of Communist morality and progressive values in the life and practice of Party members. A serious attempt was made for rectification in some states notably West Bengal. Many comrades were asked to change their lifestyle and confirm to Communist norms. In the case of a small number of comrades, disciplinary actions were also taken. Some were dropped from the Party. There are also complaints of corruption against certain comrades. All such cases should be examined immediately and appropriate disciplinary action should be taken against all those who are found guilty.

Parliamentarism: The rectification campaign called for fighting the evil of parliamentarism and parliamentary opportunism as a central task. The Central Committee resolution on rectification campaign stated that parliamentarism should not be seen merely as a deviation of some leaders or cadres for holding elected positions and power. It explained the reformist nature of the parliamentarism in the following words:

"It is totally reformist outlook that confines the Party's activities to electoral work and the illusion that the Party's advance can be ensured solely through fighting elections. Neglecting the work of organising the mass movements,

launching struggles and building the Party is a result of this parliamentary outlook."

Now elected members are there at all levels, from parliament to panchayat and cooperative societies. The fight against parliamentarism should be extended to all levels and is a continuous one. There should be regular monitoring of the activities of elected representatives by the respective Party committees. The different level Party committees should constitute appropriate organisational mechanism for this purpose.

Cadre Policy

The expansion of the Party and the mass organisation requires a continuous increase in the availability of efficient cadres at all levels. The Party should find proper cadres, train them and deploy them into appropriate areas. Their work should be monitored continuously. The promotion of cadres should be on the basis of objective assessment of their efficiency in Party and mass organisation work, their level of political consciousness and their devotion to the Communist cause. The Party is facing shortage of cadres at all levels.

The 16th Party Congress had decided to monitor the performance of the wholetimers and their requirements. It was also decided to give adequate attention to their political development and also to recruit more women wholetimers.

The composition of the Party membership from the basic classes is declining at the higher level committees. If the Party does not pay sufficient attention to recruit cadres from the basic classes, train them and promote them to higher responsibilities, their numbers will further decline at the higher levels.

The wages of wholetimers is an important factor to maintain a better composition of cadres from the basic classes. Party committees should give sufficient importance to this aspect and see that the minimum requirements of the wholetimers can be fulfilled from the wages. The Party should periodically review the performance of the wholetimers and their wages.

The factional tendencies existing in certain parts are creating difficulties for objective evaluation of cadres and their appropriate deployment. In some places, genuine cadres are eliminated from committees through elections.

All such cases should be examined by the higher committees and effective remedial measures should be taken.

Party and mass organisation

The 16th Party Congress reviewed the relationship between the Party and mass organisations and formulated the following guidelines for remedying the shortcomings and failures:

- "1. Ensure the independent role of the mass organisations and their democratic functioning.
- "2. The day to day work of the mass organisation must be conducted by the office bearers of the relevant elected committees.
- "3. The principles and methods of Party functioning should not be imposed on the mass organisations which have their own rules and procedures. Party cadres should be educated about the correct role of Party subcommittees and fraction committees of the mass organisations.
- "4. Party members working in the mass organisations are bound by the discipline of the Party and they should abide by the decisions taken in the Party forums. They should contribute to the development of the Party apart from their mass organisation work, by doing the specific political and organisational work for the Party.
- "5. A regular report should be submitted to the Party committees about the work done in every mass front for building the Party and a review of the general direction and implementation of the policies of the Party must be undertaken by the Party committees at least once a year."

The Party made some efforts in all states for improving the relationship between the Party and mass organisations. The failure of the Polit Bureau and Central Committee in reviewing the activities of the mass organisations is restricting the efforts for rapid expansion of struggles, strength and influence of mass organisations particularly in the Hindi-speaking states.

Some state committees prepared review reports of the work of some of the mass organisations and tried to rectify the wrong understanding and wrong practices. Much more has to be done in evolving correct understanding and correct practices in the relation between the Party and mass organisation.

Parliamentary work

The essential thrust of the Party's work in Parliament was directed to expose and mobilise against the BJP-led government and its harmful policies. As this involved the mobilisation of a very broad array of forces on the floor of the Parliament, the Party tried to ensure that differences within the opposition did not benefit the government. Inspite of the difficulties involved, the Party's efforts have started yielding results and earned a very crucial role.

While concentrating on the effort to build united opposition against the BJP, the Party raised issues pertaining to economic policy of the government. In this regard, Party was particularly successful in linking the issue of large scale corruption in high places in the government and scams with the manner in which the government was going ahead with its economic policy initiatives of disinvestment, privatisation or developments in the financial sector with respect to banking, insurance, share market and major public financial institutions like UTI. More concerted efforts are needed to project the Party's alternative policies distinct from other bourgeois landlord political parties.

The Party's initiatives were also there on the questions of national security and strategic affairs, particularly with respect to the undermining of independent policy-making with a pronounced pro-US shift. Corruption in defence procurement in the wake of the tehsalka exposure and the CAG report on procurement in connection with the Kargil campaign could be successfully raised.

The Party's initiative also included articulation of important class issues concerning the attack on the labour and peasantry. And social issues relating to the women and the dalit question where these rights came under increased attacks were raised. Important in these was question of the government attempt to change the basic character of education along Hindutva lines.

The Party did not get any support from other parties other than Left parties in raising issues concerning working class and agricultural workers. There are certain shortcomings in adequately reflecting mass issues and struggles in Parliament. More concerted efforts are necessary in raising issues concerning the working class and agricultural workers.

In the organisational front, some headway was made as well. The political organisational report of the 16th Congress had noted: "To ensure more efficient functioning in Parliament, it is necessary to revamp the parliamentary office and the personnel. This should be immediately undertaken. The parliamentary sub-committee must organise its work more effectively with the assistance of the Party Centre."

In keeping with this direction, the functioning of the Party parliamentary committee was significantly systematised. The committee is now meeting twice a week during the parliament session. Apart from the Party committee, separate Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha committees have been created. After the Party committee decisions, these committees meet to work out the specific details for implementing them. The general body of all the members of the Lok Sabha belonging to the Party are taking place unfailingly on each Wednesday during the session. In the case of Rajya Sabha, all major decisions are being worked out in similar general body meetings. In short, the internal functioning has been considerably improved.

Coordination with the Party Centre has also been strengthened. Apart from participation and guidance by the Party Centre in parliamentary committees on the eve of every session and the general body of all members of both houses, the comrades from the Party Centre are also attending meetings whenever crucial political questions comesup during the session.

Altogether there is improvement in the performance of Party's MPs in Parliament. But there is much scope for further improvement and that is needed for projecting the Party's distinct identity. The parliamentary party is holding two regular press briefings in a week during session.

In the sphere of improvement of the functioning of the parliamentary Party office, certain important changes have been made. Number of personnel have been increased by taking advantage of the facilities provided to our group. The output has improved. However, there is still a large area for improvement in this regard.

We must be able to send MPs more promptly to the weaker states whenever struggles are going on or major problems arise.

Conclusion and Immediate Tasks

The review of the organisational situation draws attention to the importance of implementing the following immediate organisational tasks:

Tasks

1. Strengthening the Party Centre:

The Party Centre should be sufficiently strengthened with the addition of more comrades as whole time functionaries working at the Centre. Necessary sub-committees and departments should be constituted and specific responsibility should be assigned to individual members which should be periodically assessed. The PB and CC should chalk out time-bound programmes for implementation of the tasks, constantly reviewing the pace and extent of implementation, monitoring of the work at all levels and report to the entire Party about the gains made and the shortcomings and weaknesses.

The PB and CC should undertake the task of updating the document 'Certain Ideological Issues' adopted by the 14th Congress.

The Party should undertake the important task of writing the history of the Party by constituting a competent commission and the work should be completed on a time-bound basis.

The PB and CC should review the implementation of the resolution on Party and mass organisation, assess the present state of relations and prepare a document updating the resolution on Party and mass organisation. This should be completed within one year.

2. Rapid expansion of the Party:

The PB and CC should prepare concrete plans for expansion of the Party and mass organisations both in weak and strong states. The PB should take the initiative of discussing plans with state committees and finalise them on a time-bound period. Review of united front tactics and experience should also be undertaken. Some states should be identified as priority states and Party should concentrate its efforts on these states. In the states priority districts/areas should be selected to concentrate work.

3. Strengthening the ideological work:

The growth of the Party and its influence to a greater extent depends on the effectiveness of the ideological struggle. The Party at all levels should take serious efforts for strengthening ideological work.

As decided earlier, a Central Party school for educating the different aspects of the Party Programme should be organised within three months from the Party Congress.

A syllabus should be prepared for Party education covering the entire Party members. The circulation of *People's Democracy*, *Loklakshar* and *The Marxist* should be increased on a time-bound basis. Agit-prop committee should be activated and more material should be published for meeting the ideological attacks of enemy classes and projecting our views. A plan for increasing the circulation and improving the content of Party publications, including dailies and weeklies in states should be made within a period of six months. The PB should act as the initiator of this process. The PB should monitor the progress with the help of state committees.

4. Membership recruitment, functioning of auxiliary groups and branches:

Special efforts should be made to raise the quality of the Party members enabling them to discharge the minimum tasks expected from them. Recruitment of Party members should be streamlined and a uniform guideline should be evolved. Concrete plan should be made for activating auxiliary groups. The Party branches should hold a meeting atleast once in a month. The renewal of the Party membership should be based on the attendance of the Party members in branch meetings, general body meetings, Party classes and Party and mass organisation activities. Branches should keep a record of the activities of each member. Yearly review of the activities of branches should be organised by higher committees at the time of renewal every year.

5. Rectification campaign

Strengthening democratic centralism: A rectification campaign should be organised throughout the Party for fighting against the evil of factionalism and for strengthening democratic centralism and collective functioning. Each Party committee should review the condition of democratic centralism and collective functioning at its level and formulate tasks for remedying and rectifying shortcomings and failures. This review should be completed at all levels within a period of one year. The work for strengthening democratic centralism is a continuing process and periodic reviews should be organised.

Fight against parliamentarism: Party should be geared up to fight against all forms of parliamentary deviations. The fight against parliamentary opportunism is a continuous one and periodic reviews should be organised.

Communist norms: Violations of Communist norms should be curbed. Party should make a review of the situation at various levels and tasks should be formulated for time-bound implementation. If any allegation is raised against a comrade, a decision should be taken on it within a maximum period of six months.

Statement of Party Membership

<u>Name of State</u>	<u>Year</u>			
	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>
Andhra Pradesh	38,958	41,395	37,731	40,785
Assam	10,443	10,520	10,318	10,480
Andaman & Nicobar	148	154	137	172
Bihar	20,529	21,185	19,445	17,672
Chattisgarh				1,211
Delhi	1,450	1,361	1,112	1,162
Goa	248	65	65	172
Gujarat	2,576	2,531	2,572	2,799
Haryana	1,264	1,325	1,293	1,357
Himachal Pradesh	892	866	943	1,005
Jammu & Kashmir	575	625	650	625
Jharkhand				2,552
Karnataka	6,106	6,010	6,327	6,574
Kerala	2,68,183	2,87,088	2,93,141	3,01,562
Madhya Pradesh	3,053	3,203	3,160	2,243
Maharashtra	7,575	8,145	8,122	8,545
Manipur	266	305	344	340
Orissa	2,911	3,110	2,978	3,091
Punjab	12,307	13,514	14,510	14,328
Rajasthan	2,934	2,786	2,628	2,602
Tamilnadu	73,051	78,934	83,142	86,868
Tripura	32,664	35,262	38,222	38,737
Uttaranchal				700
Uttar Pradesh	6,804	6,841	5,691	5,169
West Bengal	2,24,468	2,34,794	2,38,829	2,45,026
Sikkim	210	220	200	200
CC staff	90	96	95	96
Total	7,17,645	7,60,338	7,71,655	7,96,073

Membership of TU Front

<u>Sl No.</u>	<u>Name of State</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1999</u>
1	Andaman & Nicobar	1,768	1,681
1	Andhra Pradesh	1,48,990	1,84,500
2	Assam	40,269	45,450
3	Bihar	82,311	75,094
	Chattisgarh		20,952
5	Delhi	52,039	48,634
6	Goa	3,529	1,319
5	Gujarat	17,185	13,704
6	Haryana	18,370	34,951
7	Himachal Pradesh	4,996	9,213
8	Jammu & Kashmir	602	581
10	Karnataka	82,311	85,322
11	Kerala	7,31,096	9,73,102
12	Madhya Pradesh	29,726	19,614
13	Maharashtra	39,662	60,944
15	Orissa	26,985	21,816
16	Punjab	63,361	78,463
17	Rajasthan	32,463	33,523
18	Tamilnadu	2,28,869	2,66,501
19	Tripura	41,667	59,688
20	Uttaranchal		8,677
21	Uttar Pradesh	28,315	18,623
22	West Bengal	11,14,767	12,06,176
	Total	27,89,587	32,68,528

Membership of Kisan Front

<u>Sl No.</u>	<u>Name of State</u>	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2000-2001</u>
1	Andhra Pradesh	2,25,234	1,83,360
2	Assam	1,44,545	1,67,709
3	Bihar	2,00,000	1,24,393
4	Chattisgarh		3,790
5	Gujarat	6,000	7,300
6	Haryana	13,000	17,500
7	Himachal Pradesh	7,000	11,200
8	Jammu & Kashmir	5,000	4,000
9	Jharkhand		22,760
10	Karnataka	92,568	85,667
11	Kerala	13,23,562	17,96,520
12	Madhya Pradesh	37,482	39,897
13	Maharashtra	92,273	1,40,334
14	Manipur	5,140	10,000
15	Orissa	21,700	30,850
16	Punjab	90,000	1,39,700
17	Rajasthan	54,040	68,524
18	Tamilnadu	3,00,000	3,50,000
19	Tripura	2,12,000	2,27,820
		(KS+GMP)	(KS+GMP)
20	Uttaranchal		
21	Uttar Pradesh	1,60,000	1,24,500
22	West Bengal	1,14,59,519	1,11,29,955
	Total	1,44,49,063	1,46,86,579

Membership of Agricultural Workers Union Front

<u>Sl No.</u>	<u>Name of State</u>	<u>1996-97</u>	<u>2000-2001</u>
1	Andhra Pradesh	5,15,000	4,40,000
2	Bihar	76,453	47,000
3	Haryana	10,500	11,500
4	Karnataka	13,500	8,730
5	Kerala	12,74,044	15,49,233
6	Madhya Pradesh	4,650	3,000
7	Maharashtra	42,520	49,800
8	Orissa	9,164	4,620
9	Punjab	45,350	67,000
10	Rajasthan	11,410	7,000
11	Tamilnadu	1,55,385	2,09,225
12	Tripura	88,000	1,10,000
13	Uttar Pradesh	62,000	70,000
	Total	23,07,976	25,77,108

Membership of Youth Front

<u>Sl No.</u>	<u>Name of State</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2000</u>
1	Andhra Pradesh	3,64,403	2,22,000
2	Assam	96,982	56,264
3	Bihar	52,862	71,804
4	Chattisgarh		
5	Delhi	13,064	6,755
6	Gujarat	11,040	8,006
7	Haryana	16,294	17,005
8	Himachal Pradesh	4,153	12,364
9	Jammu & Kashmir	----	21,200
10	Jharkhand		15,100
11	Karnataka	43,046	39,705
12	Kerala	35,30,535	44,03,081
13	Madhya Pradesh	9,820	10,190
14	Maharashtra	73,042	71,794
15	Manipur	----	3,321
16	Orissa	22,500	34,882
17	Punjab	54,322	67,518
18	Rajasthan	31,049	29,345
19	Tamilnadu	4,97,920	6,09,305
20	Tripura	1,70,000	2,63,331
21	Uttaranchal		
22	Uttar Pradesh	36,520	24,006
23	West Bengal	52,46,700	52,84,272
	Total	1,02,74,252	1,12,71,248

Membership of Student Front

<u>Sl No.</u>	<u>Name of State</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2000-2001</u>
1	Andhra Pradesh	2,97,528	3,17,515
2	Assam	20,315	24,057
3	Bihar	24,385	21,627
4	Delhi	1,585	2,038
5	Gujarat	----	5,275
6	Haryana	3,491	11,479
7	Himachal Pradesh	19,870	17,723
8	Jammu & Kashmir		250
9	Jharkhand		1,521
10	Karnataka	57,268	75,054
11	Kerala	6,32,270	8,15,896
12	Madhya Pradesh	7,500	7,500
13	Maharashtra	36,599	31,518
14	Manipur	----	6,100
15	Orissa	16,627	3,701
16	Punjab	9,100	8,300
17	Rajasthan	17,844	27,050
18	Tamilnadu	81,396	95,766
19	Tripura	55,416	70,000
20	TSU		8,000
21	Uttar Pradesh	11,394	10,064
22	West Bengal	9,20,044	9,03,571
	Total	22,12,632	24,64,005

Membership of Women's Front

<u>Sl No.</u>	<u>Name of State</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2001</u>
1	Andhra Pradesh	2,43,000	3,04,900
2	Assam	53,631	25,000
3	Bihar	25,500	25,000
4	Chattisgarh		
5	Delhi	40,780	60,746
6	Gujarat	8,520	35,000
7	Haryana	14,070	17,326
8	Himachal Pradesh	3,440	2,000
9	Jammu & Kashmir	----	
10	Jharkhand		7,500
11	Karnataka	14,068	11,333
12	Kerala	11,00,000	17,37,240
13	Madhya Pradesh	8,115	6,100
14	Maharashtra	36,123	50,099
15	Manipur	----	-----
16	Orissa	7,340	10,500
17	Punjab	29,000	40,000
18	Rajasthan	12,900	15,300
19	Tamilnadu	2,88,597	3,28,219
20	Tripura	1,85,566	2,05,000
21	Uttaranchal		3,800
22	Uttar Pradesh	25,000	35,000
23	West Bengal	31,16,367	34,07,298
	Total	52,12,017	63,27,361

Circulation of People's Democracy and Lok Lahar

State	People's Democracy (average per week)					Lok Lahar (average per week)			
	1998 August	1999	2000	2001	1998 August	1999	2000	2001	
Andaman & Nicobar	--	3	2	1	--	--	--	--	--
Andhra Pradesh	464	657	994	914	3	1	2	2	
Arunachal Pradesh	1	1	1	1	--	--	--	--	
Assam	650	536	590	554	11	11	27	13	
Bihar	334	253	218	195	1643	1479	1184	1196	
Chandigarh	64	59	56	59	77	75	65	74	
Chattisgarh	--	--	--	6	--	--	--	119	
Foreign	58	47	48	47	1	2	3	2	
Goa	6	8	10	5	--	--	--	--	
Gujarat	24	21	18	16	79	63	62	64	
Haryana	16	16	14	17	533	511	487	553	
Himachal Pradesh	51	38	42	71	293	199	210	331	
Jammu & Kashmir	24	49	41	37	39	40	36	36	
Jharkhand	--	--	--	41	--	--	--	104	
Karnataka	376	306	319	330	27	24	29	13	
Kerala	458	479	468	304	2	1	11	1	
Madhya Pradesh	91	65	46	41	1101	946	863	777	
Maharashtra	432	395	433	413	397	361	375	375	
Manipur	1	9	10	12	--	--	--	--	
Meghalaya	18	21	19	19	--	--	1	--	
New Delhi	373	303	299	293	873	471	554	550	
Orissa	351	296	294	267	26	24	22	13	
Pondicherry	16	21	27	12	--	--	1	--	
Punjab	132	119	130	116	123	137	133	135	
Rajasthan	32	30	25	25	644	555	483	520	
Sikkim	--	--	1	1	--	1	1	--	
Tamilnadu	1374	1220	1253	1239	--	1	24	--	
Tripura	567	509	558	610	5	5	11	--	
Uttar Pradesh	164	132	131	124	1347	1430	1413	1345	
Uttaranchal	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	111	
West Bengal	6530	6576	6943	6901	3492	3614	2892	2979	
Total	12607	12169	12990	12672	10717	9951	8889	9313	

Circulation of *The Marxist*

Sl. No	States	1999 Vol. 15 (3)	2000 Vol. 16 (3)	2001 Vol. 17 (2)
1.	Assam	91	80	91
2.	Andhra Pradesh	184	229	184
3.	Bihar	47	51	47
4.	Chandigarh	30	30	30
5.	Delhi	189	180	189
6.	Goa	5	6	5
7.	Gujarat	16	8	16
8.	Haryana	3	3	3
9.	Himachal Pradesh	2	25	2
10.	Jammu & Kashmir	22	23	22
11.	Karnataka	152	181	152
12.	Kerala	165	160	165
13.	Madhya Pradesh	2	3	2
14.	Maharashtra	177	198	177
15.	Manipur	7	12	7
16.	Orissa	97	94	97
17.	Punjab	45	54	45
18.	Pondicherry	10	10	10
19.	Rajasthan	9	16	9
20.	Tamilnadu	347	329	347
21.	Tripura	100	100	100
22.	Uttar Pradesh	44	52	44
23.	West Bengal	971	937	971
24.	Foreign	7	6	7
	Total	2722	2767	2722

