

Communist Party of India (Marxist)

Programme

Introduction

1.1 The Communist Party inherited the progressive, anti-imperialist and revolutionary traditions of the Indian people. Since its formation in 1920, by a small group of determined anti-imperialist fighters inspired by the October Socialist Revolution in Russia, the Party had set before itself the goal of fighting for complete independence and basic social transformation. The Party pledged to work for the establishment of a socialist society in India, free from class exploitation and social oppression.

1.2 True to the cause of proletarian internationalism, the Party consistently supported the national liberation movements against the imperialist order and the struggles for democracy and socialism the world over, which were major features of the twentieth century. The Party adopted the principles of Marxism-Leninism as the guide to action for winning national independence, to attain the objective of socialism and to advance towards the ultimate goal of communism. The Communists were the first in the country to raise the demand for complete independence and put forward a resolution for this in the Ahmedabad session of the Indian National Congress in 1921.

1.3 The Communists, while demanding complete independence, also stressed the need for giving a radical content to the slogan of swaraj through a definite programme for social and economic change by including such vital questions as abolition of landlordism, end to feudal domination and elimination of caste oppression.

1.4 The Communists while participating in the freedom struggle, from the outset, devoted their energies to the task of organising workers in trade unions, peasants in the Kisan Sabha, students in their unions and other sections in their respective mass organisations. It was due to these efforts that national organisations like the All India Kisan Sabha and the All India Students Federation were founded and the All India Trade Union Congress strengthened. The Communists took the initiative in founding progressive, cultural and literary organisations

like the Progressive Writers' Association and the Indian People's Theatre Association.

1.5 The British rulers were determined to stamp out communism in India. They unleashed brutal repression on the fledgling Communist groups and banned communist literature to prevent the spread of revolutionary ideas. They conducted a series of conspiracy cases against the young leadership of the communist movement -- Peshawar (1922); Kanpur (1924) and Meerut (1929). The Party was declared illegal soon after its formation in the 1920s and had to work in conditions of illegality for over two decades. In spite of severe repression, the Party made steady progress in mobilising people for complete independence and for fundamental social change.

1.6 The militant and consistent anti-imperialist stand of the Communist Party attracted the various revolutionary currents and fighters to join the Party. Among them were the Ghadar heroes of Punjab, the colleagues of Bhagat Singh, the revolutionaries of Bengal, the militant working class fighters of Bombay and Madras presidencies, and the radical anti-imperialist Congressmen from Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and other parts of the country. Thus the Party was enriched by the entry of the best fighters from all over the country. The Communist Party while working in close cooperation with the independence movement led by the Indian National Congress and later the Congress Socialist Party, consistently worked for building and strengthening itself as an independent party of the proletariat.

1.7 The post Second World War period saw the powerful anti-imperialist and anti-feudal upsurge of the Indian people. The Communist Party was in the forefront leading this upsurge in various parts of the country. Such significant struggles were those of Tebhaga, Punnappra Vayalar, North Malabar, the Warli adivasis, Tripura tribal people and above all the historic Telangana peasants' armed struggle. The Communist Party also played a leading role in the people's movements for responsible government in many princely states. The Party played an active role in organising and supporting the liberation struggles in the French and Portuguese enclaves of Pondicherry and Goa. The wave of struggles by workers, peasants and students and the demand for release of INA prisoners saw a new peak in the Naval Mutiny of 1946. In the international background of the defeat of fascism and the mounting tide of national liberation movements, faced with this popular upheaval, British imperialism and the leaders of the major bourgeois parties -- the Congress and the Muslim League -- struck a compromise. As a result, the country was partitioned and

India and Pakistan as independent states under the leadership of the bourgeois-landlord classes came into existence. The fact that the national movement was under the leadership of the bourgeoisie helped this compromise. Thus, the stage of general national united front chiefly directed against foreign imperialist rule came to an end.

1.8 The Communist Party continued to face repression even after the country achieved independence. The fierce attacks by the Congress rulers between 1948 and 1952, particularly in Telangana, and the repeated bouts of repression, especially the period of semi-fascist terror in West Bengal, and later in Tripura, and the murderous attacks against the Party cadres in Kerala and in different parts of the country could not deter the Party from carrying forward the revolutionary movement. The Party was in the forefront of the struggle to defend the unity of the people when threats arose to national unity in the form of disruptive separatist movements. Hundreds of courageous Party activists sacrificed their lives in the struggle against the separatist and divisive forces in Punjab, Tripura, Assam, West Bengal and Kashmir.

1.9 The Communist movement has thus played a progressive role in Indian politics since its inception. With its mass base, popular appeal and its alternative policies to the bourgeois-landlord regime, the Communist movement is a significant force in the country's political and social life. The first Communist ministry in Kerala formed in 1957 and later the succession of CPI(M) and Left-led governments in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura showed the way by striving to implement pro-people policies. These governments implemented land reforms within the existing framework, decentralised powers and revitalised the panchayat system, ensured democratic rights for the working people and strengthened the democratic forces in the country struggling for alternative policies. In the course of arduous struggles, the Party registered substantial achievements. As a Party committed to self-critical analysis of its successes and failures, the Party consistently strives to learn from its mistakes and improve its capacity to apply Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of our society.

1.10 The Communist Party of India (Marxist) was formed after a prolonged struggle against revisionism. It adopted the Party programme in 1964 and subsequently defended the strategy and tactics based on this understanding from both revisionism and dogmatism. The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed major reverses for the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and the world communist movement. This has necessitated a reappraisal of the international developments and the experiences of the movement.

Major changes and developments have taken place in our country during the half-century after independence. The CPI(M) has reviewed these developments and experiences since 1964 to update its programme.

1.11 The CPI(M) presents before the Indian people the strategic objective to be achieved by the revolutionary forces in the present stage of the revolutionary movement. The Party sets out a programme which will guide the workers, peasants, all sections of the working people and the progressive, democratic forces in their fight against the ruling classes to achieve People's Democracy as a step towards the goal of a socialist society.

II

Socialism in the Contemporary World

2.1 The twentieth century was marked by momentous changes in the world. It has been a century of struggle against imperialism. The century was witness to great revolutionary events, beginning with the October Socialist Revolution of 1917. The victory over fascism in the Second World War in which the Soviet Union played a decisive role, was a major event. The historic Chinese revolution, the success of the revolutionary forces in Vietnam, Korea and Cuba and the formation of the socialist states in Eastern Europe were a product of the titanic clash between imperialism and socialism. This was also a century of national liberation movements leading to the political independence of the colonies. These victories marked a new epoch in world history as was projected by the theory of Marxism-Leninism. The revolutionary events of the century and the major developments in science and technology opened up grand prospects for the advance of humanity on a scale never envisioned before.

2.2 The countries which adopted the socialist system blazed a new path. With the creation of the Soviet Union, for the first time in human history, the working people could live in a society free from class exploitation. Rapid industrialisation, elimination of feudal vestiges and all round progress in the fields of economy, culture and science led to a new life for the vast mass of the people and the empowerment of the working people. The eradication of poverty and illiteracy, the elimination of unemployment, the vast network of social security in the fields of health, education, housing and big strides in science and technology -- these were the path-breaking achievements of the socialist countries. Such remarkable progress was registered in

societies where capitalism had not yet developed significantly and were relatively backward. Socialism had to be built in the difficult circumstances of overcoming socio-economic backwardness and countering the aggression, subversion and threats of imperialism. The achievements registered in the Soviet Union had their effect on the capitalist countries as well. The ruling classes were forced to introduce and extend social security for their own citizens under the concept of a welfare State.

2.3 However, in the course of building socialism on an uncharted path, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in Eastern Europe committed serious mistakes. Such mistakes flowed from the improper understanding of the protracted nature of building socialism; the wrong notion of the role of the party and the State; the failure to effect timely changes in the economy and its management; the failure to deepen socialist democracy in the party, State and society; the growth of bureaucratism; and the erosion of ideological consciousness. These facilitated the sustained efforts of imperialism at subverting socialism. These distortions do not negate the validity of Marxism-Leninism, rather they represent the deviations from revolutionary theory and practice. The dismantling of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and the setbacks suffered in Eastern Europe resulted in a new situation. At the end of the 20th century the forces of socialism had to once again face the challenge posed by an emboldened imperialism. The CPI(M) is confident that notwithstanding the setbacks, the communist movement and the revolutionary forces will learn from the mistakes, regroup and meet the challenge of countering the offensive of imperialism and the reactionary forces.

2.4 Despite the twists and turns, successes and reverses, the developments of the twentieth century, particularly since 1917 reflect the profound impact of socialism and the people's struggles in the evolution of human progress. The revolutionary transformations have brought about qualitative leaps in history and left an indelible imprint on modern civilisation. The process of social emancipation and socialist transformation will be a protracted and complex one. History has shown that the transformation from capitalism to socialism is not a one-stroke transformation but a prolonged period of intense struggle of classes even after acquiring State power.

2.5 World capitalism is incapable of solving the basic problems affecting humanity. The tremendous growth of productive forces utilising the scientific and technological advances has resulted in growth taking place in the advanced capitalist countries without

increasing employment and sharply accentuating income and wealth disparities. It has led to intensified exploitation of the workers by expropriating increased rate of surplus value. The advances in science and technology are utilised to perpetuate concentration of wealth and assets in the hands of a few individuals and multinational corporations. Imperialism has proved to be a predatory and destructive system. In the twentieth century it plunged humanity into two barbaric world wars claiming millions of lives. The armaments industry has become an integral part of the advanced capitalist economies, which serves to keep the aggregate demand afloat. The neo-liberal prescriptions advocating the withdrawal of the State have led to savage cuts in social security and welfare benefits for the working class and the ordinary citizens. Jobless growth, casualisation of labour, and growing disparities in incomes and wealth are a marked feature. The volatility of the financial system, the stagnant and low rates of growth in the advanced capitalist countries and the growing irrationality and wastage in the use of resources are all symptoms of the in-built crisis in the capitalist system. The rapacious drive for profits by the multinational corporations and the extravagant consumption of the rich countries have devastated the environment and is seriously threatening the world's ecology in general and that of the third world in particular. The fundamental contradiction inherent in capitalism between the ever-growing socialisation of production and the increasingly private appropriation of the surplus has become more acute.

2.6 The concentration and internationalisation of finance capital has reached unprecedented heights in the current phase of capitalism. Globally mobile finance capital is assaulting the sovereignty of nations, seeking unimpeded access to their economies in pursuit of super profits. The imperialist order in the service of this speculative finance capital breaks down all barriers for its free flow and imposes the terms favourable to such capital in every part of the globe. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation are the instruments to perpetuate this unjust post-colonial global order. The new hegemony of speculative finance capital results in sluggish growth in the advanced capitalist countries. For the third world it spells a vicious cycle of intensified exploitation and growing debt. The terms of trade, industrial and agricultural production, technology flows, and the services sector in the lesser-developed capitalist countries are all forced to dovetail the interests of imperialist capital. The imperialist system has divided the world into two: the rich advanced capitalist countries and the developing countries where live the vast mass of humanity. The gap between the rich and poor countries began to

sharply widen in the last two decades of the twentieth century. With the onset of the imperialist driven globalisation it has grown further.

2.7 With the dismantling of the Soviet Union, imperialism which was pursuing a neo-colonial strategy since the end of the old style colonialism, has stepped up its efforts for global domination. US imperialism is using its economic, political and military power aggressively to establish its hegemony. The imperialist driven globalisation is sought to be buttressed by the expansion of NATO and military intervention around the world to impose the imperialist order. The socialist countries China, Vietnam, Cuba, Korea and Laos, faced with adverse conditions created by the change in the correlation of forces are steadfastly committed to the cause of socialism. Imperialism actively seeks to subvert the existing socialist countries and wages a relentless war in the ideological, economic and political spheres against them. Utilising the global communications revolution, imperialism with its control over the international media, aggressively seeks to discredit and suppress anti-capitalist ideas and socialism.

2.8 Despite the fact that the international correlation of forces favour imperialism at the end of the twentieth century and capitalism continues to develop productive forces with the application of new scientific and technological advances, it remains a crisis-ridden system apart from being a system of oppression, exploitation and injustice. The only system, which is an alternative to capitalism, is socialism. The central social contradiction therefore remains that between imperialism and socialism for the epoch. The contradiction between the imperialist countries and the third world countries rapidly intensifies under the neo-liberal global offensive and it is coming to the forefront. Given the uneven development under capitalism, the contradictions between imperialist countries continue to exist. The contradiction between labour and capital aggravates with the current features of capitalism as noted above. All these contradictions continue to intensify and exert their influence on world events.

2.9 The working class and its parties have to equip themselves ideologically, politically and organisationally to wage a relentless struggle against imperialism and its exploitative order. The unity of the Left, democratic and progressive forces around the world must be forged to fight against imperialism and defeat the ruling classes who seek to sustain and perpetuate the present unjust global order. As a Party based on proletarian internationalism, the CPI(M) is committed to fight against imperialist hegemony and expresses solidarity with all the forces in the world who are fighting against the imperialist-driven

economic order of globalisation and for peace, democracy and socialism.

III

Independence and After

3.1 The broad masses of the Indian people had enthusiastically participated in the freedom struggle and made it a success. They were fired by patriotism and they looked forward to a free India and a new life for the people. They expected an end to the miserable conditions of poverty and exploitation. Independence for them meant land, food, fair wages, housing, education, health care and employment. Freedom meant emancipation from social evils like casteism and communal hatred and the fulfillment of the cultural needs of the people in a democratic setting.

3.2 The national movement for independence succeeded because of the mass participation of the working class, the peasantry, the middle classes, the intelligentsia, women, students and youth. But the leadership remained in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The big bourgeoisie which headed the new State, refused to complete the basic tasks of the democratic revolution. The path to the regeneration of Indian society lay in breaking the shackles on the productive forces. Parasitic landlordism had to be abolished and land distributed to the agricultural workers and poor peasants. The development of industry freed from the stifling domination of foreign capital, would have laid the base for an advanced industrial nation with a self-reliant economy. Afraid of the possible outcome that might follow a thorough going implementation of the tasks of the democratic revolution, the big bourgeoisie forged an alliance with the landlords and compromised with imperialism. The Congress rulers' policies reflected this bourgeois-landlord alliance. The nature of the capitalist path in the following decades was determined by this character of the ruling classes.

3.3 India is endowed with enormous natural resources necessary for the all-round development of the country, with abundance of cultivable land, irrigation potential, favourable conditions in various regions for a vast variety of crops, immense mineral wealth, as also vast potential for power generation. India's huge manpower strength and the scientific, technical, managerial and intellectual skills of the Indian

people constitute a reservoir of great potentialities. Instead of developing these potentialities, the big bourgeoisie which acquired State power embarked upon a type of capitalist development suited to serve its own narrow interests.

3.4 After independence the dual character of the bourgeoisie manifested itself through conflicts and collusion with imperialism. The big bourgeoisie which acquired the leadership of the State adopted a particular type of capitalist development. It compromised with imperialism and maintained its alliance with landlordism. It utilised its hold over the State to strengthen its position by attacking the people on the one hand and seeking to resolve the conflicts and contradictions with imperialism and landlordism by pressure, bargain and compromise on the other. In this process, it has forged strong links with foreign monopolists and is sharing power with the landlords. With liberalisation, the big bourgeoisie is the strongest advocate of opening up the economy to foreign capital and forging strong links with international finance capital; it is the prime mover behind the demand to privatise the public sector and the economy as a whole.

3.5 In the early years after independence, failing to get a fair deal from the Western countries, the Indian bourgeoisie turned to the Soviet Union for assistance. They adopted a path of building capitalism which was State sponsored capitalism. They began using the existence of the two blocs -- imperialist and socialist -- as a useful bargaining counter to strengthen their position. Economic planning was resorted to as a part of the capitalist path. The budgetary and general economic policies were determined primarily from the point of view of favouring a narrow stratum of the exploiting classes. The public sector was developed in heavy industries and infrastructure as the private sector was not in a position to provide the required resources for such huge projects. The building of these public undertakings helped therefore to a certain extent to industrialise the economy and to overcome the abject dependence on the imperialist monopolies.

3.6 Economic planning in an under-developed country like India backed by the State power in the hands of the bourgeoisie, certainly gave capitalist economic development a definite tempo and direction by facilitating more expedient utilisation of the resources available under the limitations of the policies of the government. The most outstanding feature of these plans is to be seen in the industrial expansion, particularly in the setting up of certain heavy and machine-building industries in the State/public sector. These gains were possible because of the steady support from the socialist countries,

mainly the Soviet Union. The State sector was expanded by the nationalisation of the financial sector like banks and insurance and the oil and coal industries.

3.7 Certain other policy measures, though in a half-hearted manner, were also adopted for industrialisation. There was emphasis on research and development, adoption of a new Patents Act, regulation on entry of foreign products and capital in our market and protection to small-scale industries. In the conditions prevailing in India, all these measures helped to overcome, to a certain extent, economic backwardness and the abject dependence on the imperialist powers, and in laying the technical base for industrialisation.

3.8 Alongside the development of the public sector and State intervention through limited planning, the policies pursued by successive governments saw the increasing concentration of wealth and the rapid growth of monopolies. Under the leadership of the big bourgeoisie, the State sector itself became an instrument for building capitalism. The bulk of the credit from the public financial institutions was cornered by the big bourgeoisie. The budgetary and taxation policies of successive governments were designed to transfer resources from the people to a narrow stratum of the bourgeois-landlord classes. The large-scale evasion of taxes spawned huge amounts of black money and was a method to promote the private accumulation of capital. The common people, workers, peasants and the middle class were put to ruthless exploitation in the name of financing the plans for capitalist development. In the absence of basic land reforms the domestic market remain limited and domestic industry could not grow and expand without reliance on foreign capital. The huge external and internal borrowings financed this form of State capitalism. The growth of monopolies and increasing penetration of foreign finance capital became a marked feature of this path.

3.9 The specific path of capitalist development adopted by the ruling classes from the fifties was bound to be crisis-ridden and reached a stalemate. The big bourgeoisie's compromise with landlordism led to the domestic market not being expanded as the purchasing power of the peasantry could not grow sufficiently. Increasing reliance on borrowings, both external and internal, to finance industrialisation and the expenditure of the State led to a serious crisis both in the external balance of payments and the fiscal deficits. The financial crisis finally led to the Congress government accepting the IMF-World Bank conditionalities. The Indian big bourgeoisie sought to meet this crisis

by increasing collaboration with foreign finance capital and opening up the economy.

3.10 The big bourgeoisie, which earlier favoured State intervention to build infrastructure for capitalist development due to its weak capital base, accumulated sufficient capital over the decades and fattened itself on State assisted development and subsidies. By mid-eighties the big bourgeoisie was prepared to enter the core sector reserved for the State, take over the public sector and expand to new areas in collaboration with foreign capital. This accompanied by the crisis in the State sponsored capitalist path formed the internal base for liberalisation. Externally, the collapse of the Soviet Union hastened the process of shift in policies and the acceptance of the IMF and World Bank dictates.

3.11 The pressure to open up and liberalise the economy brought about a shift in the economic policies from the mid- eighties during the Rajiv Gandhi regime. Import liberalisation and growing short-term borrowings led to huge fiscal deficits. This along with the changed international scene led to a situation where the Congress government in 1991 accepted the IMF-World Bank conditionalities for getting a structural adjustment loan. The policies of liberalisation were pushed further forward by the BJP when it came to power. The liberalisation and structural adjustment policies pursued by successive governments since 1991 have led to the opening up of the economy to foreign capital, the process of dismantling the public sector and liberalisation of imports. The areas of operation so long reserved for the State/public sector have been opened up to foreign and Indian monopoly capital. With a view to liquidating the public sector, the shares of public sector units are disinvested and sold out cheaply to private monopolies. Through reduction of import duties, indigenous products are displaced by foreign goods resulting in large-scale closures and throwing out tens of thousands of workers from their jobs. International finance capital has exerted relentless pressure for opening up the financial sector. The privatisation process in the banking industry and the opening up of the insurance sector have been given priority. The signing of the GATT agreement in 1994 led to India having to accept the WTO regime. Changes in the Patents Act and the opening up of the services sector, serve the interests of imperialist capital. All these developments have led to the erosion of economic sovereignty.

3.12 The path of liberalisation and privatisation has enormously benefited the big bourgeoisie. Its ranks have been expanded by the

entry of new business houses. The assets of the top 22 monopoly houses shot up from Rs. 312.63 crores in 1957 to Rs. 1,58,004.72 crores in 1997 which is a five hundred-fold increase. Under liberalisation, major concessions have been given to the big business houses and the affluent sections by the reduction in the rates of income tax and the abolition of other taxes such as wealth tax. Such policies have enormously enriched the affluent classes and expanded the market for luxury goods for their consumption. To meet this demand, goods are produced domestically in collaboration with foreign capital, or, are imported. The indiscriminate entry of foreign capital is affecting vital sectors of domestic industry. Multinational companies are buying up Indian companies. Even though some sections of the non-big bourgeoisie appear willing to collaborate with foreign capital, large sections of the medium and small capitalists are badly hit by liberalisation.

3.13 The period of liberalisation has seen an increase of both external and internal debt. A major share of revenue expenditure is spent for making interest payments alone. Public investment and expenditure have been going down which have affected developmental activities and poverty alleviation schemes. Liberalisation has seen a sharp growth in social, economic and regional inequalities. Those below the poverty line even according to official statistics have registered an increase, especially in the rural areas. The continuing rise in the prices of essential commodities, particularly food items, has hit the poor the hardest especially in the background of the curtailment of the public distribution system. The cutbacks in social sector expenditure in education, health, employment and welfare schemes have a disastrous effect on the working people.

3.14 The working class has borne the brunt of the heavy burdens imposed by the capitalists and the government. The real wages of the workers do not rise because of the ever-increasing prices. With the crisis in the industrial sphere becoming endemic, the workers face the onslaught of closures and retrenchment. The labour laws supposed to safeguard the rights of the workers are defective and even these are not enforced; violation of laws by the employers is the norm. The recognition of trade unions by secret ballot and the right of collective bargaining are denied. The offensive of liberalisation and privatisation has rendered lakhs of workers jobless without any social security to fall back upon. The deregulation of the labour market is demanded as part of the policy of liberalisation. Benefits and rights earned by workers through prolonged struggles are sought to be curtailed. Permanent jobs are being converted to contract or casual jobs.

Working women get less wages and are the first to be retrenched. Child labour has increased and working children are subjected to the worst forms of exploitation. Outside the organised sector millions of workers get no protection from the labour laws and are deprived of even the minimum wages set by the government. The plight of the labouring men and women in the huge unorganised sector is one of drudgery. They work for a pittance for long hours, often in hazardous conditions with no social security. It is the unremitting labour and the exploitation of the working class which has provided the profits for the bourgeoisie, the big contractors and the multinational corporations.

3.15 The agrarian question continues to be the foremost national question before the people of India. Its resolution requires revolutionary change, including radical and thoroughgoing agrarian reforms that target abolition of landlordism, moneylender-merchant exploitation and caste and gender oppression in the countryside. The bankruptcy of the bourgeois-landlord rule in India is nowhere more evident than in its failure to address, much less solve, the agrarian question in a progressive, democratic way.

3.16 After independence, instead of abolishing landlordism, the Congress rulers adopted agrarian policies to transform the semi-feudal landlords into capitalist landlords and develop a stratum of rich peasants. The legislative measures for abolishing the old statutory landlordism permitted them to get huge compensation and retain big amounts of land. Implementation of tenancy laws, which provided for the right of resumption of land under the pretext of self-cultivation led to the eviction of millions of tenants. Land ceiling laws provided sufficient loopholes to maintain large holdings intact. Millions of acres of surplus land were neither taken over, nor distributed to the agricultural workers and poor peasants. The record of the Congress party is one of monumental betrayal of the historic opportunity for rural transformation. Land reforms under the existing laws have been implemented only in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura by the Left-led governments headed by the CPI(M).

3.17 The agrarian policies of the Congress governments and their successors were designed to benefit the landlords and rich peasants in the allocation of funds for investment and government loans. Bank and cooperative credits were cornered by these sections. From the late sixties, the application of technology, introduction of high-yielding seeds in new varieties of wheat and rice and chemical inputs enhanced the productivity of foodgrains and other non-food crops. This growth in agriculture was accompanied by widening inequalities. Though India

produced more foodgrains and was capable of achieving self-sufficiency in food, millions remained deprived of sufficient food and prey to hunger and malnutrition.

3.18 In agrarian relations, the major trend has been the development of capitalist relations in the countryside which is characterised by: The proletarianisation of large sections of the rural working masses and a huge increase in the number of agricultural workers as a proportion of the rural population; the accelerated differentiation of the peasantry; production for the market; the large-scale eviction of tenants holding traditional leases; and increased levels of re-investment of capital in agriculture and agriculture-related activity by the rural rich, particularly landlords, laying the basis for the reproduction of capital on a scale that did not hitherto exist.

3.19 If the development of capitalist relations in agriculture is clearly the major all India trend, it is equally evident that agrarian relations are marked by greater regional and sub-regional diversity and by unevenness in the development of capitalist relations of production and exchange. There are regions of the country where capitalism in agriculture has advanced and where commercial agriculture and cash transactions dominate the rural economy; there are regions where old forms of landlordism and tenancy and archaic forms of labour service, servitude and bondage still play an important part in agrarian relations. And all over the country, caste divisions, caste oppression, the worst forms of gender oppression and the exploitation of the poor by usurers and merchant capital continue unabated. Capitalist development in Indian agriculture is not based on a resolute destruction of older forms, but has been superimposed on a swamp of pre-capitalist production relations and forms of social organisation. The development of the "modern" does not preclude the continued existence of the archaic: India is a vast and living example of the rule that capitalism penetrates agriculture and rural society in a myriad ways.

3.20 Five decades after independence, owing to the bourgeois-landlord agrarian policies, 70 per cent of the peasantry comprises poor peasants and agricultural workers whose lack of productive assets, low incomes and wretched conditions of life characterise mass poverty. The monumental scale of rural poverty in India has no parallel among the nations of the world. Even according to official data, more than 285 million people in rural India were below the poverty line fifty years after independence. Poverty, however, has many dimensions. It is not confined to income destitution. For the masses it manifests itself in a

multitude of ways. The rural poor have little or no access to land and other means of production. Concentration of land and inequality in ownership continues without major change. This is accompanied by a similar concentration of irrigation water resources largely in the hands of the rural rich. The peasantry and agricultural workers have no access to credit at reasonable rates and they are deep in debt at usurious rates of interest. Low wages and wage discrimination against women is a prominent feature. The average number of days of employment available to agricultural workers is less than 180 days a year. More than 50 per cent of the rural population is undernourished, the rates of rural literacy are abysmally low and the rural poor live in unhygienic conditions in poor housing with no drinking water and health facilities.

3.21 Most of the rural areas have seen the rise of a powerful nexus of landlords-rich peasants-contractors-big traders who constitute the rural rich. They dominate the panchayati raj institutions, co-operative societies, rural banks and credit agencies except in the Left-dominated states, and control the rural leadership of the bourgeois-landlord parties. The surplus extracted by these sections are ploughed into money-lending, speculative activities, real estate development and also to establish agro-based industries. The dominant class in the rural areas utilise caste affiliations to mobilise support and resort to violence to terrorise the rural poor into submission. Even after 50 years of the promulgation of the Constitution, no government has adopted a central legislation to guarantee minimum wages and improved living conditions and social security for the agricultural workers, due to the opposition of the landlords.

3.22 With rapid commercialisation of the rural economy, the market for foodgrains and agricultural commodities has grown enormously. The grip of the monopoly trading concerns over agricultural produce has tightened. With liberalisation, the MNCs which operate in the world market with advanced technologies at their command have a greater and direct control over the prices of agricultural commodities. The intensification of the exploitation of peasants through unequal exchange and violent fluctuations of prices has become a permanent feature. As a result, the peasant is fleeced both as a seller of agricultural produce and as a buyer of industrial inputs.

3.23 The liberalisation policies which followed the exhaustion of the State-sponsored capitalist development have led to the agricultural and rural development policies taking a dangerous and reactionary turn in the last decade of the twentieth century. These policies include

decline in public investment in agriculture, in irrigation and other infrastructural work; credit from the formal sector has also sharply declined which hits the poor rural households the most. Schemes for rural employment and poverty alleviation have been cut back. The policy thrust towards export-oriented agriculture has led to changing land use and cropping patterns to meet the demands of the imperialist countries. De-emphasising foodgrain production and undermining India's self-sufficiency in food production is a direct threat to sovereignty. Under the WTO regime, all quantitative restrictions on the imports of agricultural commodities have been removed which seriously affects the livelihood of farmers. Pressure is being mounted for the dilution of land ceiling laws by the states and for leasing out lands to Indian big business and foreign agri-business. MNCs are entering the sphere of agricultural production in the seeds, dairy and other sectors. Under pressure from the WTO and the MNCs, policies, which surrender India's independence in respect of its biological resources and relinquish the rights of farmers and genuine plant breeders, are being pursued. The State sponsored agricultural research and extension systems are being weakened.

3.24 The development of capitalism in agriculture under State sponsorship has led to a sharp division between the rural rich comprising the landlords, capitalist farmers, rich peasants and their allies and the mass of the peasantry mainly agricultural workers, poor peasants and the artisans. The subsequent policies of liberalisation in agriculture have further increased the burden on the rural poor. It is this exploitative order which is responsible for mass poverty. Without breaking the land monopoly and ending the debt burden of the poor peasants and agricultural workers, the basis for the economic and social transformation of the country cannot be laid.

3.25 The imperialist driven globalisation and the policies of liberalisation adopted by the Indian ruling classes have heightened the imperialist penetration in all spheres of our country. The opening up of the economy to the multinational corporations and imperialist finance capital has been the basis for the penetration and influencing of all spheres of Indian society. The bureaucracy, the educational system, the media and the cultural spheres are being subjected to imperialist penetration.

3.26 With the changed correlation of forces in the world as a result of the setback to socialism, the growth of fundamentalist, reactionary and ethnic based chauvinism has its impact on India too. Imperialism seeks to exploit the growth of such forces for weakening the unity of

the country so that its hold and influence can be strengthened. The growth of a powerful international media controlled by transnational corporations enables imperialism to directly intervene and influence social and cultural life. The purveying of consumerist, egoist and decadent values through the transnational media has a direct impact on our society. The media in India controlled by the big bourgeoisie and other commercial interests systematically spread the same values. The development of healthy, democratic and secular values requires the combatting of such retrogressive trends.

3.27 The Constitution of the Republic of India which was adopted in 1950 had laid down a set of directive principles to be followed by the State. These include: adequate means of livelihood for every citizen and the right to work; an economic system which does not result in the concentration of wealth; right to education and provision of free and compulsory education for children; living wage for workers and equal pay for equal work for men and women. None of these principles have been realised in practice. The glaring gap between the Constitutional precepts and the practice of the bourgeois rulers is a scathing indictment of the bourgeois-landlord system instituted after independence.

IV

Foreign Policy

4.1 The foreign policy of any State and its government, in the final analysis, is nothing but the projection of its internal policy and it reflects, in the main, the interests of the class or classes that head the government and the State in question. The foreign policy of the Government of India naturally reflects the dual character of our bourgeoisie, of opposition to as well as compromise and collaboration with imperialism. An overview of the evolution of foreign policy over the last five decades exhibits this duality. In the initial phase upto the mid-fifties, the Indian government followed a timid policy of appeasing Britain and the other imperialist powers. However, from the mid-fifties, a new orientation began. In a world which was sharply divided between the imperialist and socialist blocs, the possibilities of steering clear from joining the imperialist alliance opened up. The foreign policy changed in favour of non-alignment, against military blocs and for

peace and support for the national liberation struggles of the colonial peoples.

4.2 This policy resulted in friendly relations with the Soviet Union and the socialist countries. However, the border conflict with China in 1962 saw a phase of collaboration with the US and the western powers when India sought their military assistance. After this period, foreign policy once again assumed an anti-imperialist orientation. The support to the liberation struggle in Bangladesh in 1971 and the treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union marked a new stage. India played an active role in the international arena in the seventies in support of the national liberation movements and for world peace.

4.3 In the context of external policy, the contradictions between the Indian bourgeoisie and imperialism manifested on the Kashmir issue and the US strategic design to use Pakistan as a base for its operations. As a leading country among the newly independent nations, the Indian bourgeoisie pioneered the policy of non-alignment, which by and large served the country's interests well. However, given the class character of the ruling classes, this policy was subject to vacillations. Contradictions between the domestic policies favouring foreign capital and an independent foreign policy were ever-present.

4.4 With the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the adoption of economic policies of liberalisation domestically, foreign policy in the last decade of the 20th century entered a new phase. The process of reversing the long held position of non-alignment and anti-imperialist foreign policy was begun during the Narasimha Rao government. The turn away from self-reliance and recourse to foreign capital and liberalisation helped imperialism to further pressurise India which was manifested in several foreign policy positions. In the nineties, the Indian government signed a military cooperation pact with the USA for military training and joint exercises. With the BJP-led government coming to power in 1998, the pro-imperialist trend has got strengthened. The BJP regime has brought about a major shift by advocating a policy of becoming a junior partner of the United States. It has abandoned many of the long-held non-aligned positions in order to accommodate the global designs of the US. The danger to foreign policy is real as the United States has long term plans to draw India into a strategic alliance to subserve its global designs against China and Russia. A consistent foreign policy based on non-alignment and anti-imperialism which would serve the real interests of the Indian people, cannot be guaranteed with the big bourgeoisie leading the State and pursuing pro-imperialist economic policies.

4.5 The decision of the BJP-led government to go in for nuclear weaponisation after the tests in Pokhran in May, 1998 marked a dangerous new phase in India's external and nuclear policies. It has created the situation for a nuclear arms race in the sub-continent with Pakistan responding to India's nuclear tests. The jingoistic nuclear policy has undermined the long-standing policy of non-alignment and peace. It has made India more vulnerable to imperialist pressures headed by US imperialism.

4.6 A major struggle lies ahead for the Left and democratic forces to fight back the pro-imperialist direction in foreign policy and ensure that foreign policy regains its non-aligned basis and orientation to ward off imperialist pressures. Only such a policy will help India to retain its independent role in world affairs and protect economic independence.

V

State Structure and Democracy

5.1 The present Indian State is the organ of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and landlords led by the big bourgeoisie, who are increasingly collaborating with foreign finance capital in pursuit of the capitalist path of development. This class character essentially determines the role and function of State in the life of the country.

5.2 Although the State structure is federal in name, most powers and resources are concentrated in the hands of the Central government. Though the big bourgeoisie initially resisted the demand for formation of states on the basis of commonality of language, the intense pressure of mass movements and agitations compelled it to agree to the formation of linguistic states. A fresh attack on the principle of linguistic states was mounted by the BJP-led government, which advocates smaller states based on administrative convenience. This will further weaken the federal structure. The repeated use by the Centre of the inherently anti-democratic provisions of Article 356 of the Constitution to dismiss elected state governments and dissolve the elected state assemblies has been a major instrument for subverting the federal system and attacking the autonomy of states. The constituent states enjoy little power, which makes them dependent on the Central government, restricting their development.

5.3 It is natural that in such a situation, the contradictions between the central government and the states have grown. Underlying these contradictions often lies the deeper contradiction between the big bourgeoisie on the one hand and the majority of the people including the bourgeoisie and landlords of this or that state on the other. This contradiction gets constantly aggravated due to the accentuation of uneven economic development under capitalism. A political manifestation of this is the emergence of regional political parties, which reflect the linguistic-nationality sentiments of the people of these states and generally represent the bourgeois-landlord classes of the region.

5.4 The problems of national unity have been aggravated due to the bourgeois-landlord policies pursued after independence. The north eastern region of the country which is home to a large number of minority nationalities and ethnic groups has suffered the most from the uneven development and regional imbalances fostered by capitalist development. This has provided fertile ground for the growth of extremist elements who advocate separatism and are utilised by imperialist agencies. The violent activities of the extremists and the ethnic strife hamper developmental work and democratic activities.

5.5 Jammu and Kashmir was provided with a special status and autonomy under article 370 of the constitution. Over the decades the provisions for autonomy were drastically curtailed and the alienation of the people in the state grew. This has been utilised by the separatist forces who are backed by Pakistan. Imperialism headed by the USA, uses this dispute to pressurise India and increase its intervention in the region. The problems of the North eastern region as also Kashmir, exemplify the failure of the bourgeois-landlord classes to address the vital issue of national unity in a democratic manner.

5.6 The Adivasi and tribal people who constitute seven crores of the population, are victims of brutal capitalist and semi-feudal exploitation. Their lands are alienated from them, the right to forests denied and they are a source of cheap and bonded labour for the contractors and landlords. In some states there are compact areas inhabited by tribal people who have their own distinct languages and culture. The tribal people have been roused to new consciousness to defend their rights for advancement while preserving their identity and culture. Due to the threat to their identity and very existence and the callous policies of the bourgeois-landlord rulers, separatist tendencies have grown among some sections of the tribal people. Regional autonomy for protecting their rights in the areas which are contiguous and where

they are in a majority is a democratic and just demand. The capitalist-landlord-contractor nexus constantly seeks to disrupt their traditional solidarity with some concessions to their leadership, denies their legitimate rights and suppresses them with brutal force.

5.7 The secular principle is enshrined in the Constitution and the values of secular democracy are proclaimed by the big bourgeois leadership of the State. However, the practice of secularism by the bourgeoisie has been flawed. They try to distort the whole concept of secularism. They would have the people believe that instead of complete separation of religion and politics, secularism means freedom for all religious faiths to equally interfere in the affairs of the State and political life. Instead of firmly combating the anti-secular trends, the bourgeoisie often gives concessions and strengthens them. The threat to the secular foundations has become menacing with the rise of the communal and fascistic RSS-led combine and its assuming power at the Centre. Systematic efforts are on to communalise the institutions of the State, the administration, the educational system and the media. The growth of majority communalism will strengthen the forces of minority communalism and endanger national unity. The support of sections of the big bourgeoisie for the BJP and its communal platform is fraught with serious consequences for democracy and secularism in the country.

5.8 Our Party is, therefore, committed to wage an uncompromising struggle for the consistent implementation of the principles of secularism. Even the slightest departure from that principle should be exposed and fought. While defending the right of every religious community -- whether it is the majority or the minorities -- as well as those who have no faith in any religion to believe in and practice any religion or none at all, the Party should fight against all forms of intrusion of religion in the economic, political and administrative life of the nation and uphold secular and democratic values in culture, education and society. The danger of fascist trends gaining ground, based on religious communalism must be firmly fought at all levels.

5.9 In conditions of capitalist exploitation the guaranteed rights to the minorities provided in the Constitution are also not implemented. There is the lack of equal opportunities and discrimination against the Muslim minorities both in the economic and social sphere. Communal riots and violent attacks against the Muslims have become a permanent feature. The RSS and its outfits constantly instigate hatred against the minorities and they target the Christian community also. This fosters alienation and insecurity among the minorities, which

breeds fundamentalist trends and weakens the secular foundations. Minority communalism isolates the minorities and hampers the common movement of all oppressed sections. Defence of minority rights is a crucial aspect of the struggle to strengthen democracy and secularism.

5.10 The bourgeois-landlord system has also failed to put an end to caste oppression. The worst sufferers are the scheduled castes. The dalits are subject to untouchability and other forms of discrimination despite these being declared unlawful. The growing consciousness among the dalits for emancipation is sought to be met with brutal oppression and atrocities. The assertion by the dalits has a democratic content reflecting the aspirations of the most oppressed sections of society. The backward castes have also asserted their rights in a caste-ridden society.

5.11 At the same time a purely caste appeal which seeks to perpetuate caste divisions for the narrow aim of consolidating vote banks and detaching these downtrodden sections from the common democratic movement has also been at work. Many caste leaders and certain leaders of bourgeois political parties seek to utilise the polarisation on caste lines for narrow electoral gains and are hostile to building up the common movement of the oppressed sections of all castes. They ignore the basic class issues of land, wages and fight against landlordism, which is the basis for overthrowing the old social order.

5.12 The problem of caste oppression and discrimination has a long history and is deeply rooted in the pre-capitalist social system. The society under capitalist development has compromised with the existing caste system. The Indian bourgeoisie itself fosters caste prejudices. Working class unity presupposes unity against the caste system and the oppression of dalits, since the vast majority of the dalit population are part of the labouring classes. To fight for the abolition of the caste system and all forms of social oppression through a social reform movement is an important part of the democratic revolution. The fight against caste oppression is interlinked with the struggle against class exploitation.

5.13 With India's independence the women of India, equal participants in the freedom struggle, had hoped for emancipation from the shackles of centuries old feudal and gender oppression. But leave alone advance, five decades of bourgeois-landlord rule have perpetuated patriarchy in every sphere. Women are exploited at different levels, as women, as workers and as citizens. The process of liberalisation has

brought in its wake newer forms of gender exploitation, in both the economic and social spheres, leading to increased violence against women. Economic independence and an independent role in social and political life are basic conditions for the advance of women. Resistance against this unequal status and the women's movement for equality are part of the movement for social emancipation.

5.14 Fifty years of bourgeois-landlord rule have corroded all the institutions of State power. The administrative system being based on a highly centralised bureaucracy reflecting the growth of capitalist development, power is concentrated at the top and exercised through privileged bureaucrats who are divorced from the masses and who obediently serve the interests of the exploiting classes. The enormous growth of the bureaucracy, its strong links with the ruling classes and the rampant corruption of the bureaucracy are factors weakening the democratic structure of society.

5.15 The judiciary is weighted against the workers, peasants and other sections of the working people. Though formally, both the rich and the poor are equal in principle, the system of justice in essence, serves the interests of the exploiting classes and upholds their class rule. Even the bourgeois democratic principle of separation of judiciary from the executive is not fully adhered to and the judiciary is subjected to the influence and control of the latter. Instances of judgements, which uphold democratic principles and fundamental rights under the Constitution, are subverted by the ruling classes. In the absence of any effective mechanism to ensure accountability of the judges, certain corrupt practices are also reported within sections of the judiciary which undermine the faith of the people.

5.16 The structure of the armed forces in independent India still bears the traces of the colonial legacy. While it is expected to defend the borders of the country, the ruling classes tend to rely more and more on the armed forces and the para-military forces when its class interests come into open conflict with the interests of the exploited masses. The soldiers in the armed forces hail from the peasantry and the working people and they have to perform arduous duties. The ruling classes keep the rank and file of these forces insulated from the people and deprived of democratic rights. The police forces are used as instruments of repression against popular movements. They have become prey to political manipulation and corruption and in many places are part of the exploitative mechanism against the poor.

5.17 The bourgeoisie and its landlord allies are a small minority in the whole country compared to the working class, the peasantry and the middle classes, over whom they rule and whom they exploit by virtue of their ownership of land, capital and all means of production. Capitalist State power and its governments even when elected by a majority vote in the parliamentary system of democracy, represent in their political and economic essence the power of the minority.

5.18 The Constitution of the Republic of India provides for a parliament elected on the basis of adult franchise and confers certain fundamental rights on the people. Many of these rights are misinterpreted, distorted and even violated by the authorities of the State. When it comes to the struggle of the workers, peasants and other sections of the democratic masses, the fundamental rights virtually cease to apply for them. Freedom of assembly is denied to whole areas and regions embracing lakhs of people by putting them under prohibitory orders even for months and years. The violence of the State organs becomes practically savage against the workers, peasants and other democratic masses, when they act in defence of their political and economic rights and demands. Draconian legislations providing for detention without trial have become quite common. Similarly, the provisions of national emergency provided for in the Constitution are misused and ordinances promulgated to suppress democratic struggles. The internal Emergency declared in 1975 was the most severe threat to democracy.

5.19 Under pressure of the democratic movement, the government was forced to legislate steps for decentralisation of administration to the panchayats and local bodies. The Left-led governments of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura took important steps to ensure decentralisation of powers and devolution of powers to the three-tier panchayat system. But except in the Left-led states, panchayati raj institutions are being used not to expand democracy but to perpetuate the power of landlords, moneylenders and contractors in the countryside.

5.20 The cultural development of the Indian people has been stunted by decades of bourgeois-landlord rule. Pernicious customs and values are perpetuated in the name of tradition and religion, which are degrading to women and the oppressed castes. What is progressive and healthy in the cultural heritage is sought to be denigrated by the communal ideologies. The bourgeois culture retains much of the obscurantist and casteist values. The State displays a callous disregard even for literacy, leave alone providing for the cultural well being of

the people. Freedom of press, assembly and propaganda, is made full use of by exploiting classes and by imperialist agencies who dominate the print and electronic media, the radio and television networks. The working people cannot compete with their vast resources and are thus disabled in the exercise of these rights formally given to everyone.

5.21 The degeneration in the instruments of the bourgeois-landlord State has taken place in the background of the enormous growth of black money which has pervaded society and the phenomenal growth of corruption. The liberalisation process increased large-scale corruption at the highest levels. Holders of public office, top bureaucrats and bourgeois politicians are part of a corrupt nexus which subverts the law and facilitates loot of public funds. This makes a mockery of democracy and the rights of citizens. The enormous growth of money power in elections, the criminalisation of politics, rigging and capture of booths constitute a serious threat to the parliamentary democratic system.

5.22 However, universal adult franchise and parliament and state legislatures can serve as instruments of the people in their struggle for democracy, for defence of their interests. When there have been attacks on parliamentary democracy, such as the internal emergency, the people have opposed such authoritarian measures. Although a form of class rule of the bourgeoisie, India's present parliamentary system also embodies an advance for the people. It affords certain opportunities for them to defend their interests, intervene in the affairs of the State to a certain extent and mobilise them to carry forward the struggle for democracy and social progress.

5.23 The threat to the parliamentary system and to democracy comes not from the working people and the parties which represent their interests. The threat comes from the exploiting classes. It is they who undermine the parliamentary system both from within and without by making it an instrument to defend their narrow interests. When the people begin to use parliamentary institutions for advancing their cause and then move away from the influence of the big bourgeoisie and landlords, these classes do not hesitate to trample underfoot parliamentary democracy as has been done many times in the dismissal of elected state governments by the Centre. The semi-fascist terror in West Bengal and Tripura and the naked violation of all constitutional provisions in these states provide vivid examples of the vicious extent to which the ruling classes can go. The talk of adopting a Presidential form of government and truncating parliamentary democracy are authoritarian symptoms which have grown with the

regime of liberalisation and the increasing pressure of international finance capital. It is of utmost importance that parliamentary and democratic institutions are defended in the interests of the people against such threats and that such institutions are skillfully utilised in combination with extra parliamentary activities.

VI

People's Democracy and its Programme

6.1 Experience shows that there is no hope of emancipation of the people from backwardness, poverty, hunger, unemployment and exploitation under the present bourgeois-landlord rule. The big bourgeoisie since independence has been continuously in State power and has been utilising that State power to strengthen its class position at the expense of the mass of the people on the one hand and compromising and bargaining with imperialism and landlordism on the other. Unlike in the advanced capitalist countries where capitalism grew on the ashes of pre-capitalist society, which was destroyed by the rising bourgeoisie, capitalism in India was super-imposed on pre-capitalist society. Neither the British colonialists during their rule nor the Indian bourgeoisie assuming power after independence attempted to smash it, which was one of the most important preconditions for the free development of capitalism. The present Indian society, therefore, is a peculiar combination of monopoly capitalist domination with caste, communal and tribal institutions. It has thus fallen on the working class and its party to unite all the progressive forces interested in destroying the pre-capitalist society and to consolidate the revolutionary forces within it so as to facilitate the completion of the democratic revolution and prepare the ground for the transition to socialism.

6.2 The Communist Party of India (Marxist) firmly adheres to its aim of building socialism and communism. This, it is evident, cannot be achieved under the present State and bourgeois-landlord government led by the big bourgeoisie. The establishment of a genuine socialist society is only possible under proletarian statehood. While adhering to the aim of building socialism in our country, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), taking into consideration the degree of economic development, the political ideological maturity of the working class and its organisation, places before the people as the immediate objective,

the establishment of people's democracy based on the coalition of all genuine anti-feudal, anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist forces led by the working class on the basis of a firm worker-peasant alliance. This demands first and foremost the replacement of the present bourgeois-landlord State by a State of people's democracy. This alone can complete the unfinished democratic task of the Indian revolution and pave the way for putting the country on the road to socialism.

The tasks and programme which the peoples' democratic government will carry out are:

6. 3 In the sphere of State structure: The Communist Party of India (Marxist) works for the preservation and promotion of the unity of the Indian Union on the basis of real equality and autonomy for the different nationalities that inhabit the country and to develop a federal democratic State structure as outlined below:

i) The people are sovereign. All organs of State power shall be answerable to the people. The supreme authority in exercising State power shall be the people's representatives elected on the basis of adult franchise and the principle of proportional representation and subject to recall. At the all-India Centre, there shall be two Houses -- House of the Peoples and House of the States. Adequate representation to women will be ensured.

ii) All states in the Indian Union shall have real autonomy and equal powers. The tribal areas or the areas where population is specific in ethnic composition and is distinguished by specific social and cultural conditions will have regional autonomy within the state concerned and shall receive full assistance for their development.

iii) There shall not be upper Houses at the states level. Nor shall there be Governors for the States appointed from above. All administrative services shall be under the direct control of the respective States or local authorities. States shall treat all Indian citizens alike, and there shall not be any discrimination on the ground of caste, sex, religion, community and nationality.

iv) Equality of all national languages in parliament and Central Administration shall be recognised. Members of Parliament will have the right to speak in their own national language and simultaneous translation will have to be provided in all other languages. All Acts, government orders and resolutions shall be made available in all national languages. The use of Hindi as the sole official language to

the exclusion of all other languages shall not be made obligatory. It is only by providing equality to the various languages that it can be made acceptable as the language of communication throughout the country. Till then, the present arrangement of the use of Hindi and English will continue. The right of the people to receive instruction in their mother tongue in educational institutions upto the highest level shall be ensured. The use of the language of the particular linguistic state as the language of administration in all its public and State institutions shall also be ensured. Provision for the use of the language of the minority or, minorities or, of a region where necessary in addition to the language of the state shall be made. The Urdu language and its script shall be protected.

v) The people's democratic government will take measures to consolidate the unity of India by fostering and promoting mutual cooperation between the constituent states and between the peoples of different states in the economic, political and cultural spheres. The diversity of nationalities, languages and cultures will be respected and policies adopted to strengthen unity in diversity. It will pay special attention and render financial and other assistance to economically backward and weaker states, regions and areas with a view to helping them rapidly overcome their backwardness.

vi) The peoples' democratic State, in the field of local administration, shall ensure a wide network of local bodies from village upward directly elected by the people and vested with adequate power and responsibilities and provided with adequate finances. All efforts shall be made to involve the people in the active functioning of the local bodies.

vii) The people's democratic State shall strive to infuse in all our social and political institutions the spirit of democracy. It extends democratic forms of initiative and control over every aspect of national life. A key role in this will be played by the political parties, trade unions, peasant and agricultural workers' associations, and other class and mass organisations of the working people. The government will take steps to make the legislative and executive machinery of the country continuously responsive to the democratic wishes of the people, and will ensure that the masses and their organisations are drawn into active participation in the administration and work of the State. It will work for the elimination of bureaucratic practices in the State and administration.

viii) The people's democratic State will unearth black money; eradicate corruption, punish economic crimes and corrupt practices by public servants.

ix) Democratic changes will be introduced in the matter of administering justice. Prompt and fair justice shall be ensured. Free legal aid and consultation will be provided for the needy people in order to make legal redress easily available to such persons.

x) The people's democratic government will infuse the members of the armed forces with the spirit of patriotism, democracy and service to the people. It will provide them good living standards, conditions of service, cultural facilities and education for their children. It will encourage all able-bodied persons to undergo military training and be imbued with the spirit of national independence and its defence.

xi) Full civil liberties shall be guaranteed. Inviolability of persons and domicile and no detention of persons without trial, unhampered freedom of conscience, religious belief and worship, speech, press, assembly, strike, the right to form political parties and associations, freedom of movement and occupation, right to dissent shall be ensured.

xii) Right to work as a fundamental right of every citizen shall be guaranteed; equal rights of all citizens and equal pay for equal work irrespective of religion, caste, sex, race and nationality shall be ensured. Wide disparities in salaries and incomes will be reduced step by step.

xiii) Abolition of social oppression of one caste by another and untouchability and all forms of social discrimination shall be punished by law. Special facilities for scheduled castes, tribes, and other backward classes shall be provided in the matter of service and other educational amenities.

xiv) Removal of social inequalities and discrimination against women, equal rights with men in such matters as inheritance of property including land, enforcement of protective social, economic and family laws based on equal rights of women in all communities, admission to professions and services will be ensured. Suitable support systems in childcare and domestic work will be part of the thrust to democratise family structures.

xv) The secular character of the State shall be guaranteed. Interference by religious institutions, in the affairs of the State and political life of the country shall be prohibited. Religious minorities shall be given protection and any discrimination against them will be forbidden.

xvi) Public educational system shall be developed to provide comprehensive and scientific education at all levels. Free and compulsory education upto the secondary stage and the secular character of education shall be guaranteed. Higher education and vocational education will be modernised and updated. Development of science and technology will be promoted through a whole range of R&D institutions. A comprehensive sports policy to foster sports activities shall be adopted.

xvii) A wide network of health, medical and maternity services shall be established free of cost; nurseries and creches for children; rest-homes and recreation centres for working people and old-age pension shall be guaranteed. The People's Democratic Government will promote a non-coercive population policy to create awareness for family planning among both men and women.

xviii) Comprehensive steps will be taken to protect the environment. Development programmes will take into account the necessity to sustain the ecological balance. The country's bio-diversity and biological resources will be protected from imperialist exploitation.

xix) The right of disabled persons to lead lives as full citizens, integrated in society shall be ensured. The right to a dignified life for elderly persons shall be taken serious care of by the State. On the whole, the social rights, considered as fundamental rights, constitute a basic principle of People's Democracy.

xx) The people's democratic State and government will foster the creative talents of our people for developing a new progressive people's culture which is democratic and secular in outlook. It shall take necessary measures to nurture and develop literature, art and culture to enrich the material and cultural life of the people. It will help people get rid of caste, gender bias and communal prejudices and ideas of subservience and superstition. It will promote a scientific outlook and help each linguistic-nationality including the tribal people to develop their distinct language, culture and way of life in harmony with the common aspirations of the democratic peoples of the country as a whole. It will also imbue the people with feelings of fraternity with

peoples of other countries and to discard ideas of racial and national hatred.

xxi) The media will be developed with emphasis on a public broadcasting system for the electronic media. Concentration of media assets in private hands and foreign ownership of Indian media assets will not be allowed. Democratic control and accountability will be ensured.

6.4 In the field of Agriculture and the Peasantry

India has an agriculture-based economy with over 70 percent of the people living in the rural areas. Hence, development of agriculture and raising the living standards of the peasantry is the key to the comprehensive development of the economy.

To achieve this objective, the People's Democratic government will:

1. Abolish landlordism by implementing radical land reforms and give land free of cost to the agricultural labourers and poor peasants.
2. Cancel debts of poor peasants, agricultural workers and small artisans to moneylenders and landlords.
3. Develop a State-led marketing system to protect the peasantry from big traders and MNCs and sharp fluctuation in prices. Ensure long term and cheap credit for the peasants, artisans and agricultural workers and fair prices for agricultural produce.
4. Maximise irrigation and power facilities and their proper and equitable utilisation; promote indigenous research and development in the agricultural sector; assist the peasants to improve methods of farming by the use of better seeds and modern technology for increasing productivity.
5. Ensure adequate wages, social security measures and living conditions for agricultural workers.
6. Promote cooperatives of peasants and artisans on a voluntary basis for farming and other services.
7. A comprehensive public distribution system to supply foodgrains and other essential commodities cheaply to the people shall be introduced.

6.5 India is a huge country with different levels of economic development and varying social, economic patterns. Hence the rapid growth of productive forces necessary for the development of the economy and the steady improvement of the people's living conditions will require that the people's democratic government play a decisive role through public ownership in the key sectors of the economy and the State performing a regulatory and guiding role in other sectors. The people's democratic economy will be a multi-structural one with

various forms of ownership, with the public sector having a dominating position. In view of the big changes in the world economy, the country will firmly strive to strengthen its self-reliant basis while making use of advanced technology from abroad.

6.6 In the field of Industry and Labour: Our industry suffers not only from the low purchasing power of the peasantry but also from the stranglehold of monopoly houses and the increasing penetration of foreign capital and the various forms of domination by the imperialist agencies in almost all spheres of production. Concentration of assets in the hands of monopoly concerns distorts economic development and breeds wide-scale disparities. Dependence on foreign capital and the dictates of international finance capital facilitates exploitation and a distorted form of development which will not meet the needs of the people. In the field of industry, therefore, the people's democratic government will:

1. Take steps to eliminate Indian and foreign monopolies in different sectors of industry, finance, trade and services through suitable measures including State take-over of their assets.
2. Strengthen public sector industries through modernisation, democratisation, freeing from bureaucratic controls and corruption, fixing strict accountability, ensuring workers participation in management and making it competitive so that it can occupy commanding position in the economy.
3. Allow foreign direct investment in selected sectors for acquiring advanced technology and upgrading productive capacities. Regulate finance capital flows in the interests of the overall economy.
4. Assist the small and medium industries by providing them credit, raw materials at reasonable prices and by helping them in regard to marketing facilities.
5. Regulate and co-ordinate various sectors of the economy and the market in order to achieve balanced and planned economic development of the country. Regulate foreign trade.
6. Improve radically the living standards of workers by: a) fixing a living wage, b) progressive reduction of working hours; c) social insurance against every kind of disability and unemployment; d) provision of housing for workers; e) recognition of trade unions by secret ballot and their rights of collective bargaining as well as right to strike; and f) abolition of child labour.
7. Provide maximum relief from taxation to workers, peasants and artisans; introduce graded tax in agriculture, industry and trade; and effectively implement a price policy in the interest of the common people.

6.7 In the sphere of foreign policy: In order to ensure that India plays its rightful role in the preservation of world peace, against imperialist

hegemony and democratisation of international relations, the people's democratic government will:

1. Develop relations with all countries on the basis of friendship and cooperation. Strengthen the solidarity and ties between all developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Promote South-South cooperation and revitalise the non-aligned movement to counter the domination of the imperialist countries. 2. Develop friendly relations and cooperation with the socialist countries and all peace-loving States; support to all struggles against imperialism, for democracy and socialism. 3. Work for eradicating the threat of nuclear war; work for universal nuclear disarmament; elimination of all types of weapons of mass destruction -- nuclear, chemical and biological-- and prohibition of their testing and manufacture; demand the abolition of all foreign military bases; promote international cooperation for the preservation of the environment and protection of the ecological balance. 4. Make special and concerted efforts to peacefully settle existing differences and disputes and strengthen friendly relations with India's neighbours -- Pakistan, China, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Burma. Promote South Asian cooperation.

VII

Building the People's Democratic Front

7.1 For the complete and thoroughgoing fulfillment of the basic tasks of the Indian revolution, in the present stage it is absolutely essential to replace the present bourgeois-landlord State headed by the big bourgeoisie by a State of people's democracy led by the working class.

7.2 The nature of our revolution in the present stage of its development is essentially anti-feudal, anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly and democratic. The stage of our revolution also determines the role of the different classes in the struggle to achieve it. In the present era, the proletariat will have to lead the democratic revolution as a necessary step in its forward march to the achievement of socialism. It is not the old type of bourgeois democratic revolution, but a new type of people's democratic revolution organised and led by the working class.

7.3 The first and foremost task of the people's democratic revolution is to carry out radical agrarian reform in the interests of the peasantry so as to sweep away all the remnants of feudal and semi-feudal fetters on our productive forces of agriculture as well as industries. This will have to be supplemented by sweeping measures of reforming the social system through which such remnants of pre-capitalist society as the caste and other social systems keep the villages tied to age-old backwardness. This task is inextricably bound up with the completion of the agrarian revolution which, in fact, is the axis of the people's democratic revolution. The second urgent task is to free the economic, political and social life of our people from the disastrous influence of imperialism and domination by the MNCs and various agencies of international monopoly capital. With this is also related the task of breaking the power of monopoly capital.

7.4 However, these basic and fundamental tasks of the revolution in today's context cannot be carried out except in determined opposition to, and struggle against, the big bourgeoisie and its political representatives who occupy the leading position in the State. They are allied with landlordism in order to buttress their class domination. They are also utilising their State power to protect foreign monopoly capital and facilitate its further penetration. Further, with their policies of compromise and collaboration with foreign monopolists and alliance with big Indian landlordism, they are vigorously pursuing the path of capitalist development which in turn is immensely facilitating the growth of monopoly capital in our country. Hence the people's democratic revolution is not only in irreconcilable opposition to landlordism and foreign monopoly capitalism, but together with them it is opposed to the big bourgeoisie which is leading the State and is pursuing the policies of compromise and collaboration with foreign finance capital and alliance with landlordism.

7.5 The people's democratic front cannot successfully be built and the revolution cannot attain victory except under the leadership of the working class and its political party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Historically no other class in modern society except the working class is destined to play this role and the entire experience of our time amply demonstrates this truth.

7.6 The core and basis of the people's democratic front is the firm alliance of the working class and the peasantry. This alliance is the most important force in defending national independence, accomplishing far-reaching democratic transformations and ensuring all round social progress. The role of the other classes in carrying out

the revolution crucially depends on the strength and stability of the worker-peasant alliance.

7.7 Due to the deep inroads of capitalism in agriculture, there is clear differentiation among the peasantry and different sections play different roles in the revolution. The agricultural labourers and poor peasants who constitute the overwhelming majority of the rural households are subjected to ruthless exploitation by the landlords and capitalists and will be basic allies of the working class. The middle peasantry, too, are the victims of the depredations of usurious capital, of feudal and capitalist landlords in the countryside and of the capitalist market controlled by MNCs and big bourgeoisie. Landlord domination in rural life so affects their social position in innumerable ways as to make them reliable allies in the people's democratic front.

7.8 The rich peasantry is an influential section of the peasantry. The bourgeois-landlord agrarian policies have undoubtedly benefited certain sections of them and they also gained under the rule of the post-independence regimes. They are inclined to join the capitalist-landlord class by virtue of their engaging agricultural labourers on hire for work in their farms. But, attacked by constant price fluctuations and subjected to ravages of the market under the grip of monopoly traders and MNCs they come up against the bourgeois-landlord government. At certain junctures, they can also be brought into the people's democratic front and play a role in the people's democratic revolution despite their vacillating character.

7.9 Both the urban and rural middle class suffers heavily under the capitalist-landlord rule. The large number of white-collar employees, teachers, professionals, engineers, doctors and new strata of intelligentsia constitute a significant and influential section. With the further development of capitalism and the policies of liberalisation, differentiation within the middle classes has deepened. An upper strata has benefitted and they do not share the outlook of the rest of the middle classes. However, the bulk of this section is plagued by ever rising prices of all necessities of life, the impact of mounting taxes imposed by the State, the acute problem of unemployment and lack of basic living facilities. These sections can and will be an ally in the people's democratic front and every attempt should be made to win them for the revolution. The role of the progressive intelligentsia in mobilising this strata for democratic causes is an important one.

7.10 The Indian bourgeoisie as a class, has its conflicts and contradictions with imperialism and also with the feudal and semi-

feudal agrarian order. But the bigger and monopoly section, after attainment of independence seeks to utilise its hold over the State power to resolve these conflicts and contradictions by compromise, pressure and bargain. In that process it is sharing power with landlords. It is anti-people and anti-Communist in character and is firmly opposed to the people's democratic front and its revolutionary objectives.

7.11 The non-big bourgeoisie which is non-monopolistic faces unequal competition from the big bourgeoisie and the foreign multinationals in a number of ways. With the crisis of capitalism and unhindered entry of MNCs, the contradiction between them and foreign capital will intensify. The big bourgeoisie using its economic power and leading position in the State, attempts to solve its crisis at the expense of its weaker class brethren; these strata of bourgeoisie will be compelled to come into opposition with the State power and can find a place in the people's democratic front. But it should be borne in mind that they are still sharing power alongwith the big bourgeoisie and entertain high hopes of advancing further under the same regime. Notwithstanding its objectively progressive role, by virtue of its weaker class position vis-à-vis the Indian big bourgeoisie and imperialism, it is unstable and exhibits vacillations between the big bourgeoisie and foreign capital on the one hand and the people's democratic front on the other. Owing to its dual nature, its participation in the revolution even as an unstable ally depends on a number of concrete conditions, on changes in the correlation of class forces, on the sharpness of the contradiction between imperialism, landlordism and the people on the depth of the contradictions between the big bourgeois-led State and the remaining sections of the bourgeoisie.

7.12 Every effort must be made to win them to the democratic front by a diligent and concrete study of their problems. No opportunity should be lost by the working class to render them support in all their struggles against both the Indian monopolists and foreign imperialist competitors.

7.13 The working class and the Communist Party of India (Marxist), while not for a moment losing sight of their basic aim of building the people's democratic front to achieve people's democratic revolution and the fact that they have to inevitably come into clash with the present Indian State led by the big bourgeoisie, do take cognisance of the contradictions and conflicts that exist between the Indian bourgeoisie including the big bourgeoisie and imperialism. Opening up the Indian economy to the unbridled and free entry of MNCs and

foreign finance capital will intensify this contradiction. The Communist Party of India (Marxist), while carefully studying this phenomenon, shall strive to utilise every such difference, fissure, conflict and contradiction to isolate the imperialists and strengthen the people's struggle for democratic advance. The working class will not hesitate to lend its unstinted support to the government on all issues of world peace and anti-imperialism which are in the genuine interests of the nation, on all economic and political issues of conflict with imperialism, and on all issues which involve questions of strengthening our sovereignty and independent foreign policy.

7.14 Reactionary and counter-revolutionary trends have existed even after independence. They make use of the backwardness of the people based on the immense influence of feudal ideology. In recent decades, making use of the growing discontent against the Congress leading to its steady decline, they are making serious efforts to fill the void left by the Congress Party. The Bharatiya Janata Party is a reactionary party with a divisive and communal platform, the reactionary content of which is based on hatred against other religions, intolerance and ultra-nationalist chauvinism. The BJP is no ordinary bourgeois party as the fascistic Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh guides and dominates it. When the BJP is in power, the RSS gets access to the instruments of State power and the State machinery. The Hindutva ideology promotes revivalism and rejects the composite culture of India with the objective of establishing a Hindu rashtra. The spread of such a communal outlook leads to the growth of minority fundamentalism. This has serious consequences for the secular basis of the polity and poses a serious danger to the Left and democratic movement. Besides, a substantial section of big business and landlords, imperialism headed by the USA, is lending all-out support to the BJP.

7.15 Basing itself on all these factors, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) keeps before itself the task of uniting with all the patriotic forces of the nation, i.e., those who are interested in sweeping away all the remnants of pre-capitalist society; in carrying out the agrarian revolution in a thorough manner and in the interests of the peasantry; in opposing unfettered entry of foreign capital; and in removing all obstacles in the path of a radical reconstruction of India's economy, social life and culture.

7.16 The struggle to realise the aims of the people's democratic revolution through the revolutionary unity of all patriotic and democratic forces with the worker-peasant alliance as its core, is a complicated and protracted one. It is to be waged in varying conditions

in varying phases. Different classes, different strata within the same class, are bound to take different positions in these distinct phases of the development of the revolutionary movement. Only a strong Communist Party which develops the mass movements and utilises appropriate united front tactics to achieve the strategic objective can make use of these shifts and draw into its ranks these sections. Only such a party bringing within its fold the most sincere and self-sacrificing revolutionaries would be able to lead the mass of the people through the various twists and turns that are bound to take place in the course of the revolutionary movement.

7.17 The Party will obviously have to work out various interim slogans in order to meet the requirements of a rapidly changing political situation. Even while keeping before the people the task of dislodging the present ruling classes and establishing a new democratic State and government based on the firm alliance of the working class and the peasantry, the Party will utilise the opportunities that present themselves of bringing into existence governments pledged to carry out a programme of providing relief to the people and strive to project and implement alternative policies within the existing limitations. The formation of such governments will strengthen the revolutionary movement of the working people and thus help the process of building the people's democratic front. It, however, would not solve the economic and political problems of the nation in any fundamental manner. The Party, therefore, will continue to educate the mass of the people on the need for replacing the present bourgeois-landlord State and government headed by the big bourgeoisie even while utilising opportunities for forming such governments in the states or the Centre, depending on the concrete situation, and thus strengthen the mass movement.

7.18 The Communist Party of India (Marxist) strives to achieve the establishment of people's democracy and socialist transformation through peaceful means. By developing a powerful mass revolutionary movement, by combining parliamentary and extra parliamentary forms of struggle, the working class and its allies will try their utmost to overcome the resistance of the forces of reaction and to bring about these transformations through peaceful means. However, it needs always to be borne in mind that the ruling classes never relinquish their power voluntarily. They seek to defy the will of the people and seek to reverse it by lawlessness and violence. It is, therefore, necessary for the revolutionary forces to be vigilant and so orient their work that they can face up to all contingencies, to any twist and turn in the political life of the country.

VIII

Building of the Communist Party

8.1 The Communist Party of India (Marxist) places its revolutionary programme before the people of India to establish people's democracy. A people's democratic revolution will open the way for the advance to socialism and an exploitation free society. Such a revolution to emancipate the Indian people has to be led by the working class in alliance with the peasantry. In order to achieve this goal, the Communist Party as the vanguard of the working class has to lead militant struggles against imperialism, monopoly capitalism and landlordism. By concretely applying the principles of Marxism-Leninism to the conditions prevailing in our country, the Party has to conduct prolonged struggles on all fronts – political, ideological, economic, social and cultural – till victory is attained.

8.2 It is an imperative task of the Communists to intensify the ideological struggle in the wake of the vigorous anti-Communist campaign conducted by imperialism headed by the United States of America following the setbacks to socialism. The Communists expose and fight anti-Communism which constitutes a principal ideological weapon of the ruling classes. The Communists wage a consistent struggle against feudal and bourgeois ideologies to free the people from their influences and heighten their political consciousness; to counter the propaganda of the protagonists of the imperialist-driven globalisation, liberalisation and free market economy.

8.3 Religious fundamentalism, obscurantism, communalism and casteism divide the people and retard their democratic consciousness. Along with bourgeois nationalism and chauvinism they are exploited by the reactionary forces who are abetted by imperialism to disrupt the growth of the democratic movement. The Communists must wage a determined struggle against these divisive ideas and forces.

8.4 It is essential to build a mass revolutionary party to wage the struggle on all fronts and to direct the revolutionary movement. Such a Party must constantly expand its base among the people by developing the mass movements and commensurately consolidate its influence politically and ideologically. This requires a strong, disciplined Party based on democratic centralism. To discharge its historic

responsibility towards the working class and all sections of the working people, the Party must constantly educate and reeducate itself, renew its ideological-theoretical level and build up its organisational strength.

8.5 The establishment of a people's democratic government, the successful carrying out of these tasks and the leadership of the working class in the people's democratic State will ensure that the Indian revolution will not stop at the democratic stage but will pass over to the stage of effecting socialist transformation by developing the productive forces.

8.6 The Communist Party of India (Marxist) places this Programme before the people and sets forth the principal urgent tasks of the day in order that our people have a clear picture of the objective they are fighting for a democratic national advance. Our Party calls upon the working people, the working class, the peasantry, women, students, youth, the intelligentsia and the middle classes interested in a truly democratic development and in creating a prosperous life to unite in a people's democratic front for the fulfillment of these tasks and for attainment of the objective.

8.7 The Communist Party of India (Marxist) carries forward the fighting traditions of our people and all that is fine and valuable in our culture and civilisation. The CPI(M) combines patriotism with proletarian internationalism. In all its activities and struggles, the Party is guided by the scientific philosophy and principles of Marxism-Leninism which alone shows the correct way to complete emancipation. The Party unites in its ranks the most advanced, the most active and most selfless sons and daughters of the working people and ceaselessly strives to develop them as staunch Marxist-Leninists and proletarian internationalists. The Party devotes all its energies and resources to the task of uniting all patriotic and democratic forces in the struggle for a democratic course of development -- to the great task of building a mighty people's democratic front for the realisation of the Programme.

8.8 Imperialism, headed by the USA, is striving for world domination. India's economy, political system and even sovereignty are under threat. In such a situation, it becomes the major task of the working class and its Party to unite all anti-imperialist and progressive forces to squarely and boldly meet this offensive. We can discharge our revolutionary responsibility only by upholding proletarian internationalism, by forging the unity of purpose and action between the Communist forces around the world and drawing proper lessons

from the experiences of the Communist movement in leading revolutionary struggles, in building socialism and analysing the reasons for the reverses suffered by socialism. The CPI(M) pledges to continue the fight against right revisionist and Left sectarian deviations. It shall carry forward the task of mobilising the Indian people in struggles to change the correlation of class forces to build the people's democratic front.

8.9 The Communist Party of India (Marxist) is confident that the people of our country, led by the working class and its revolutionary vanguard, guided by the teachings of Marxism-Leninism, will achieve this Programme. Our Party is confident that our great country, India, too will emerge as a victorious people's democracy and advance on the road to socialism.

* Adopted At the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of India held at Calcutta, October 31 to November 7, 1964 * Updated at the Special Conference of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) held at Thiruvananthapuram, October 20-23, 2000.