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VOL. XXVI
(1997-1998)

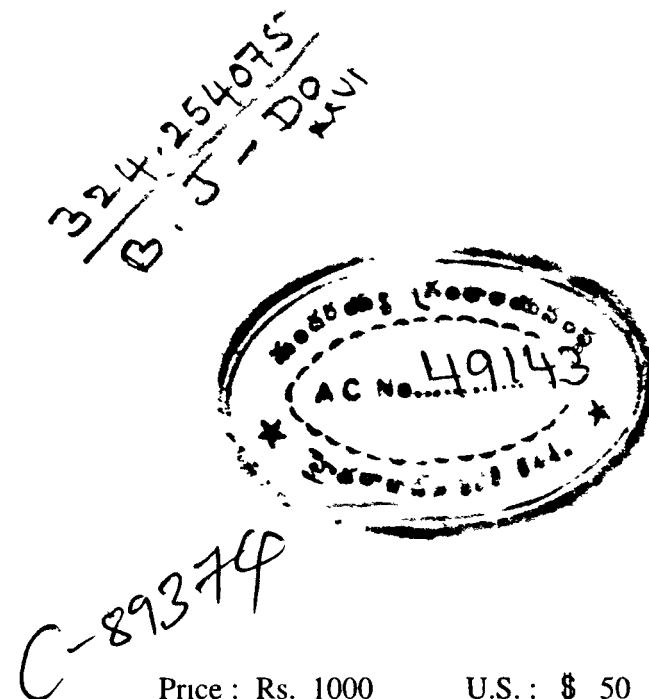


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List of Abbreviations Used

CI	—The Communist International
ECCI	—The Executive Committee of The Communist International
CPI	—Communist Party of India
CPI(M)	—Communist Party of India (Marxist)
LM	—The Labour Monthly, Published from London
CPGB	—Communist Party of Great Britain
CPSU	—Communist Party of Soviet Union
CPC	—Communist Party of China
INPRECOR	—International Press Correspondence of the Communist International
JCP	—Communist Party of Japan
BCI	—Bulletin of the Communist International
CC	—Central Committee
PB	—Political Bureau
Polit Bureau	—Political Bureau
INC/Congress	—Indian National Congress
Congress (R)	—Ruling Congress
AITUC	—All India Trade Union Congress
INTUC	—Indian National Trade Union Congress
CITU	—Centre of Indian Trade Unions
AIKS	—All India Kisan Sabha
CKC	—Central Kisan Council of All India Kisan Sabha
WFTU	—World Federation of Trade Unions
AISF	—All India Students' Federation

SFI	—Students' Federation of India
DYFI	—Democratic Youth Federation of India
Govt.	—Government
UF	—United Front
RSS	—Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha
BJP	—Bharatiya Janata Party
VHP	—Vishwa Hindu Parishad
JP	—Janata Party
JD	—Janata Dal
RSP	—Revolutionary Socialist Party
FB	—Forward Bloc
SP	—Socialist Party
EMS	—E.M.S. Namboodiripad
BTR	—B. T. Ranadive
PS	—P. Sundarayya
PR	—P. Ramamurti
MB	—M. Basavapunnaiah
PDG	—Promode Das Gupta
JB	—Jyoti Basu

Introductory Note

This Volume (Volume No. XXVI) is the last Volume of this series and includes documents of the Communist Movement in India during the most eventful years of 1997 and 1998.

The political developments in India during 1997 and 1998 were most portentous and of far-reaching consequences. The first United Front Government was saddled in power at the Centre with H.D. Deve Gowda as the Prime Minister with support of the Congress(I) from outside. The Congress(I), under the leadership of Sri Sitaram Kesri, suddenly withdrew support and laid claim to form the government although it did not have the requisite number of MPs in the Lok Sabha. Later as a face-saving device, it agreed to continue support to United Front if Sri Deve Gowda was replaced. In order to continue the government the United Front had to accept this unreasonable demand and chose Shri I.K. Gujral as the Prime Minister. After sometime once again the Congress(I) withdrew support most irresponsibly demanding the removal of the DMK ministers on the false ground that the Jain Commission had made some observations implicating the DMK in Rajiv Gandhi's murder. The United Front Government refused to accept this unjustified demand leading to its resignation and General Elections for the Lok Sabha in March 1998. The communal BJP emerged as the single biggest party. It could form a government of 18 parties with its opportunist alliance. This posed a serious threat to unity, democracy and secularism in India.

This United Front Government, which for the first time came to power at the Centre in India, was a novel experiment in so far as it was a combination of secular and Left and democratic parties and it was committed to implement the 'Common Minimum Programme' (CMP) agreed upon by the constituent parties. A Steering Committee and a Core Committee were set up to guide this government. Whilst it played some positive role in some

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spheres, some negative features developed particularly in regard to economic policies.

The documents contained in this Volume (Volume No. XXVI) will reveal before its readers the correctness of the stand taken by the CPI(M) on these developments. The political reports and resolutions adopted by the Central Committee of the CPI(M) during these two years will confirm how correctly our Party assessed the outcome of these political developments in India and how seriously CPI(M) directed its policies and all its activities to fight against the attacks on secularism and democracy in India and confront pro-imperialist and the anti-people and non-secular policies of the BJP-led Government, now in power.

The Central Committee of our Party, in its meeting held in Calcutta on December 21-22, 1997, correctly assessed the role and intentions of the BJP in 1998 Lok Sabha elections and said in the document adopted in this meeting (vide Document No. 85 of this Volume):

“The BJP is trying to do everything to emerge as a major force, if not getting majority, and is developing alliances with regional parties.”

The results of 1998 Lok Sabha elections confirmed the correctness of the assessment of the Central Committee of our Party. So, we were not caught unaware when BJP-led Government was formed in April, 1998 with the active support and participation of 17 other regional and small parties.

The main strength behind BJP is RSS and its (RSS) frontal organizations viz. VHP, Bajrang Dal etc. The success of BJP in March 1998 Lok Sabha elections, in raising its strength in the Lok Sabha from 161 to 180 seats, was in reality the success of RSS and its frontal organizations. It was very clearly stated in the document of our Central Committee adopted in its meeting on December 21-22, 1997 (vide Document No. 85 of this Volume) that:

“The BJP has a well oiled apparatus with the RSS at its core. It has many fronts which compliment and supplement each other like the VHP, Bajrang Dal etc. and its allies like the Shiv Sena which has the same ideological approach. Its standard slogan remains that of temples with the slogan of Hindutva which at times it tries to cover up with various other slogans including that of Swadeshi, self-reliance etc. Simultaneously they

are supporting the IMF-World Bank dictated policies. With the disintegration of the Congress sections of the big business, who do not want the Left to play a significant role, has started supporting the BJP. They do not have any dearth of money and they have the support from certain imperialist countries particularly America.”

The BJP-led Government has been a total failure during the last 9 months. It lost State Assembly elections in Delhi, Rajasthan (where it was in power) and in Madhya Pradesh (where the Congress(I) was in the government).

The Pokhran nuclear blasts undertaken by the BJP-led Government, purported to create an impression that this government is a strong government and thereby to cover up the failures and deficiencies of this government, proved to be a wreckless gamble and created a situation of isolation for India internationally. The BJP-led Government is now trying to woo the imperialist powers, particularly the US imperialism, by giving them various concessions which will ensure greater penetration of multinational companies in Indian economy. The proposed move to change the Indian Patent Act and introduction of Insurance Regulation Authority Bill are some of the mechanism adopted by this government to please the imperialist powers.

Not only that, this BJP-led Government is carrying on secret negotiation with the US Government with a view to compromising India's declared stand on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The attacks on the minorities under the BJP-led Government reveal its real character and confirm the apprehensions of all democratic-minded people of India that BJP is set to destroy the age-old Indian tradition of tolerance of all religions. Thus, in its bid to establish 'Hindu Rashtra', the BJP-led Government is dead set to destroy the foundations of secularism and democracy of the Indian Constitution. The most brutal attacks on the Christians in Gujarat recently by the Hindu chauvinists foretell the great danger ahead of us if BJP continues to remain in government.

It was very correctly formulated in the 'Political Resolution' adopted by the 16th Congress of the CPI(M), held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998, that:

"The formation of the Vajpayee Government is part of the continued rightward shift in Indian politics which

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began a decade ago. The BJP has grown stronger with an increased percentage of votes and seats. With its allies it has added on more than 60 seats since the previous election. The growth of the BJP is accompanied by the continuing decline of the Congress Party. The erosion of the Congress has resulted in a shift in class terms of considerable sections of the big bourgeois-landlords in favour of the BJP. It is this shift towards the reactionary party with a communal platform that has brought about a major change in the situation.

(Ref: Document No. 154 of this Volume)

While 'the BJP-led Coalition Government has quickly abandoned its "swadeshi" platform', it is encouraging "liberalization" as its main plank of economic policy and a large number of Public Sector Units are being closed throwing tens of thousands of workers out of employment. The main aim of this policy orientation is to please the imperialist powers, particularly the US imperialism on which we are becoming more dependent. The 'Political Resolution' of the 16th Congress of the CPI(M) has very clearly categorized the purpose of this 'liberalism' of the BJP-led Government in the following lines:.

"Under liberalization, the process of dismantling of the public sector is on, completely reversing the basis of self-reliant development in post-independent India. This will remove the only bulwark the country has against domination by imperialist capital. It hands over virtually free to the foreign and Indian monopolists assets which were created by the people with great sacrifice. The experience of the last few years shows that proceeds from the sale of PSU shares have been used for bridging the budget deficit and not for modernization and upgradation of the PSUs. The BJP Government's policy of privatization of the oil industry and opening up the mineral reserves for exploitation by multinational mining companies is most harmful for the country's interests as it leads to the looting of its exhaustible natural resources."

(Ref: Document No. 154 of this Volume)

The BJP-led Government has also negated the accepted norms of the policy of non-alignment followed by India in its bid to please the imperialist powers and the consequence of this

surrendering rôle is far-reaching. It was very clearly pointed out by our Party in the Communiqué issued following the Central Committee Meeting held in New Delhi on August 20-21, 1998 (*vide* Document No. 140 of this Volume) that:

“The Central Committee of the CPI(M) strongly denounced the endorsement given by the BJP-led Government to US imperialist brazen military attacks in Sudan and Afghanistan. India, over the last half a century, has firmly opposed all imperialist military interventions that violate the sovereignty of independent nations. The BJP-led Government has thoroughly and completely exposed itself as one upholding the interests of US imperialism violating the overwhelming anti-imperialist sentiments of the Indian people.”

The present situation is a great turning point in the contemporary Indian politics. Every patriotic Indian is confronted with the question—if the BJP-led Government continues to remain in power, what will be the future of secularism and democracy in India? How the country can avert the disunity that follows from the aims and policies of the BJP-led Government?

The ‘Political Resolution’ adopted by the 16th Congress of the CPI(M) very correctly and clearly enunciated the task before our Party in the following lines:

“In the present situation, the struggle against the BJP-RSS combine and the communal forces assume utmost importance. There must be a proper appreciation of the danger posed by a communal party holding the reins of State power. The Party will have to make the fight against these forces its central task in the coming days.

In the present conditions, the struggle against the communal forces, their designs to disrupt national unity and the democratic movement assume importance. This can be done only on the basis of a broadbased mobilization. The efforts to forge and strengthen the third alternative, in electoral terms, will have to be renewed. While there is no question of an alliance, or United Front with the Congress with its present policies, efforts must be made to reach out to its mass following which has a sizeable section of people adhering to secularism.”

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"In order to advance the struggle to isolate the communal forces and to resist the attacks on the livelihood of the people, it is necessary to project a third alternative despite the setback to the United Front in the last elections. The forging of a third alternative is still relevant. The reforging of the unity of all the Left, democratic and secular forces to meet the immediate situation is essential. The formation of the third alternative is a continuing struggle."

(Ref: Document No. 154 of this Volume)

The documents contained in this Volume will convince its readers that our Party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), is determined to use all its strength and all its resources to unite all Left and democratic and secular forces to create the THIRD ALTERNATIVE which alone can combat the present dangers and help to preserve the unity and democracy and secularism in India and stimulate the entire people of our country to step into the next century with robust optimism of building a united and prosperous India based on democracy, secularism and ultimately a society free from exploitation.

With the publication of this Volume the present series of the 'Documents of The Communist Movement in India' is completed. It includes twenty-six volumes covering documents of a period of eighty-two years—from 1917 to 1998. It was a stupendous task completed by our comrades within a span of 20 months. On behalf of the Editorial Board I thank each and every one of our comrades who have worked in this project and ensured publication of these volumes in a record time. I also thank the employees and managements of the printing units who have made tireless efforts to bring out these volumes and make this project a successful one.

These volumes will fulfil the needs of the historians, scholars, political workers and thinkers and research workers and will remain useful for such people for a long long time. I hope, these volumes will be considered as a great work by the contemporary people as well as by the posterity.



Calcutta,
January 11, 1999.

(JYOTI BASU)
Chief Editor

Foreword

The documents contained in this Volume covering the period 1997 and 1998 will reveal before its readers that the political developments during these years in India were of far-reaching consequences and it was a major turning point in the contemporary political history of this country.

These documents will also reveal how seriously the Communist Party of India (Marxist) carried on its struggle to build massive unity of the Left and democratic and secular forces to fight against the most disruptive and reactionary communal forces in order to defend democracy, secularism and unity of India.

The Indian National Congress, now Congress(I), which was in power at the Centre for nearly 45 years since independence, lost its support base for wrong policies pursued by it and most blatant involvement in various types of corruptions and initiation of the policy of liberalization in subservience to the imperialist powers and it created a situation when it was no more possible for a single political party to form a government at the Centre on its own strength. It was in this background that the general elections to Lok Sabha was held in 1996 when the first United Front Government was formed at the Centre with support of Congress(I) from outside. The BJP became the biggest party in the Lok Sabha in 1996 elections and it was first called upon by the President of India to form the government and they did form the government to remain in office for 13 days only as they failed to muster requisite support from other parties. Thereafter the United Front Government was formed with Sri H. D. Deve Gowda as the Prime Minister.

But the first United Front Government headed by H. D. Deve Gowda could not survive for more than 11 months as the Congress(I), under the presidentship of Sri Sitaram Kesri, suddenly withdrew support from this government on a pretentious ground. The Congress(I) actually wanted to form a government and so it wanted to withdraw support from the United Front Government. When this created an uproar against the Congress (I) all over India, it revised its stand suggesting change of Prime Minister for continuance of its support to the United Front Government. These developments were recorded in detail in the 'Report on Political Developments since the Last Central Committee Meeting', adopted by the Central Committee of our Party in its meeting held on May 12-14, 1997, where it was stated:

"The Polit Bureau held consultations about the stand to be taken to meet the situation. In the Steering Committee our Party took a firm position and came out with the suggestion that there should be no question of change of leadership, no coalition with the Congress and that the United Front should remain united. This was supported even by those who had certain reservations. This was followed by discussions with several Congress leaders. It was evident that the dominant section of the Congress was insisting on change of leader of the United Front to disrupt its unity. On April 3 and 4 a special meeting of the PB was called to discuss the situation and it endorsed the stand taken by the Party Centre."

"The President in the meanwhile asked Deve Gowda to seek a confidence vote in the Lok Sabha on April 11. After three to four days the Congress president himself came forward with the proposal that he will be content with change of leader of the United Front and that he is prepared to withdraw his letter to the President staking claim to form the government."

"However, after the vote of confidence the situation changed. While the Congress party was in no position to form the government unless it could acquire support

from sections of the United Front, this was not possible as no one could leave the United Front at this stage as the people would not tolerate such a defection. The BJP was also not in a position to muster enough strength to get a majority. The whole emphasis of the non-Left United Front partners including a majority of the Janata Dal MPs was to form a government under a new leader with the Congress support. When the Janata Dal leadership itself decided in favour of change of leadership and no partner of the United Front barring the Left and the AGP was prepared to go in for elections, the Left had to yield on the question of change of leadership for the sake of the unity of the United Front.”

(Ref: Document No. 26 of this Volume)

After the exit of Deve Gowda Government a new United Front Government was formed with I. K. Gujral as the Prime Minister and the Congress(I) supported it from outside. But the Congress(I) again withdrew its support from the Gujral Government leading to a fresh Lok Sabha elections in March, 1998. These important developments were properly recorded in the ‘Note on Present Political Developments and Election Tactics’, adopted by the Central Committee of our Party in its meeting held in Calcutta on December 21-22, 1997, where it was stated:

“The Jain Commission submitted its interim report to the government about two months back. It was natural that a demand arose for a discussion on the report. But a section of Congress was feeling that this report can help them to rehabilitate the party among the people and they would be able to derive mileage in elections.”

“The Congress party demanded that the report be tabled in Parliament on the first day of the winter session. Our Party also raised the same demand. The Congress Working Committee which met on 9th of November, welcomed the decision of the government to table the report. But certain Congressmen began raising the question of removal of DMK ministers from the

Union Cabinet. According to them the Jain Commission had indicted the DMK in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. They were demanding action against the DMK without waiting for the tabling of the report and a discussion on it. They forced the Congress president to convene the meeting of the parliamentary party which adopted a similar resolution demanding the removal of the DMK ministers.”

“Our opinion was that priority be given to a discussion on the misdeeds of the BJP in Uttar Pradesh where the BJP clung to power by indulging in large-scale horse-trading by luring defectors with ministerial berths and money. In the 93-member jumbo sized cabinet, the BJP has inducted all the defectors, many of them who have criminal backgrounds. This action of the BJP was condemned by the national press and had put the BJP on the defensive. A discussion on this would have exposed the BJP. It was suggested that after a discussion on UP developments, the ~~Jain Commission report~~ could be taken up.”

“To break the deadlock the Congress president and the Prime Minister wrote to each other. The Prime Minister did his best to accommodate the Congress party without yielding to the central issue of the removal of the DMK ministers which on the basis of the report could not be held responsible for the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. But the Congress was bent upon creating a crisis and was not amenable to any reasonable solution.”

“Our Party had taken a principled stand in this crisis. We rightly did not come out till the report of the Commission was tabled. After studying the report, we found the complete fallacy in the arguments of the Congress and took a firm position to defend the unity of the United Front. Though there were certain pressures on the United Front to seek a compromise with the Congress, the Left took a firm position which did not

allow submitting to the dictates of the Congress or its blackmail. We also told the United Front constituents that since the Congress had raised the issue to a high pitch and did not allow the functioning of Parliament, it would not be able to go back on this issue and hence the UF have to be prepared for the challenge. Our Party therefore suggested that the Prime Minister should submit his resignation and seek the dissolution of the Lok Sabha because the people's verdict is the only solution."

"After the withdrawal of support, the United Front Core Committee met and considered submitting resignation of the ministry. This was immediately followed by a letter from all constituent parties to the President stating that they will not support any government headed or supported by the BJP or any Congress led government. After the Prime Minister submitted his resignation a delegation consisting of all parties of the UF met the President and these letters were handed over to him barring the way for the formation of a Congress or BJP-led Government. The BJP began luring individual MPs from some constituents of the UF apart from a huge chunk from the Congress party. Certain monopoly houses entered the fray. The machinery which was used to carry out the operation in Lucknow was brought into action here also. Things went to such a pass that a party which talked of high "principles" was openly indulging in horse-trading. Vajpayee came out openly inviting MPs from other parties to cross over and enjoy the benefits. He even stated that what will happen in New Delhi will not be Lucknow type but New Delhi style."

(Ref: Document No. 85 of this Volume)

To fully elaborate this complex situation these lengthy quotations are given here.

The United Front Government was formed to ward off the danger of BJP. But the manoeuvres of Congress(I) leading to fall of

United Front Governments actually benefited the BJP inasmuch as the BJP increased its strength in the Lok Sabha from 161 in 1996 to 180 in 1998. The BJP also formed the Government at the Centre after the elections in March, 1998 by roping in majority through most unprincipled alliances with several communal and regional parties and they are now in the Union Government for more than nine months.

The BJP is the political platform of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha (RSS) and the BJP's real strength lies in the strength of RSS. The RSS has several other frontal organizations like VHP, Bajrang Dal etc. and all these frontal organizations worked in unison in 1998 Lok Sabha elections, as in previous elections, for the success of BJP candidates.

The main intention of the RSS is to establish 'Hindu Rashtra' in India and the BJP is working for it assiduously though the BJP leaders are camouflaging it by giving diversionary statements from time to time to create the impression as if the BJP is a separate organization and it is committed to democracy and secularism.

It is true that the BJP-led coalition ~~Government at the Centre~~ is a motley combination of 17 other parties with different views and aims but one must not overlook the fact that the BJP is the leading and dominant guiding force of this coalition and other constituent are not in a position now to oppose the BJP on major policy matters. So, the BJP is trying to consolidate its position through this coalition government and thus fulfil the objective of the RSS.

The danger of communal threats have increased following the formation of the BJP-led coalition government at the Centre and it is very clearly analyzed in the 'Political Resolution' adopted in the 16th Congress of the CPI(M) held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998 wherein it is stated:

"The build up of the communal threat since the BJP-RSS-VHP offensive on the Ayodhya issue has now acquired a new dimension with the BJP-led government at the Centre. What was being sought to be achieved through injecting communal poison and arousing communal feelings among the masses will be supplemented by the use of State power and the

penetration of the State apparatus by the RSS outfits. The agenda of the BJP-RSS will now be sought to be advanced through the government in both an overt and covert manner. The “National Agenda” of the BJP and its allies does not contain some of the key aims of the Hindutva forces. The building of the temple at Ayodhya, the abrogation of Article 370 and Article 30 which gives protection to minorities and the imposition of a uniform civil code are some of the measures which have been kept outside the official agenda but which are being pursued by other means.”

“The RSS fronts like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal are going ahead with their communal agenda utilizing the advantage of having the BJP in power at the Centre.”

(Ref: Document No. 154 of this Volume)

The most barbaric attacks on the Christian in Gujarat in December, 1998 and thereafter confirm the correctness of the analysis of the ‘Political Resolution’ of the 16th Party Congress of the CPI(M). The BJP is in the Government of the Gujarat State. The most tolerant attitude of the Vajpayee Government shown in this regard has earned the condemnation of the whole country.

The reactionary character of the BJP and the method adopted by it to pursue and fulfil the aims of RSS are also very clearly analyzed in the ‘Political Resolution’ adopted by the 16th Congress of the CPI(M) in the following lines:

“Even in the “national agenda” the BJP is pushing for those measures which will advance the aims of the RSS. The nuclear tests and weaponization is one such step. The other is the review of the Constitution which has been promised both in the BJP election manifesto and in the “national agenda”. Under the cover of making a comprehensive review of the Constitution, the BJP wants to legitimize the change of the present parliamentary system and replace it with the presidential form of government. Such a move will facilitate an

authoritarian system, undermining the federal character and trampling upon the rights of the states, which will suit the RSS in its pursuit of a Hindu Rashtra.”

(Ref: Document No. 154 of this Volume)

The RSS believes in ‘unitary form of government’ and it is totally against ‘federalism’. Its testimony will be found in the writings of Guru Golwalkar in the ‘Bunch of Thoughts’. The BJP-led Government at the Centre is fully committed to it and it cannot be confused by the diversionary tactics adopted by the Vajpayee Government to conceal its real motive in this sphere. The ‘Political Resolution’ of the 16th Party Congress of the CPI(M) correctly analyzed the role of the BJP-led Government in this direction in the following lines:

“Despite the facade of a coalition and alliance with many state-based parties, the BJP’s talk of devolving more powers to the states is deceptive. Its conception of more powers to the state is confined only to the financial sphere while in the political sphere it seeks to reduce the role of state governments and force them to kowtow to the Centre. The arbitrary use of Central teams despatched to opposition ruled states to enquire into the law and order situation illustrates this anti-federal approach. The moment the BJP feels confident to go it alone it will ride roughshod over the rights of states especially those which have ruling parties politically opposed to it. The promise to form smaller states beginning with three new states is designed to break the linguistic basis of states so that an authoritarian Centre can dominate the smaller states.”

(Ref: Document No. 154 of this Volume)

Immediately after taking office the Vajpayee Government took a deliberate decision to conduct nuclear tests at Pokhran, in Rajasthan, on May 11 and 13, 1998 and this well calculated jingoistic move was purported to increase the mass-support in favour of RSS-BJP combination and give an impression that the BJP-led Government is capable of wielding power in the interests

of the country. This was a deliberate reversal of the long-standing nuclear policy followed by India in order to fulfil the chauvinistic goal of RSS which was giving slogans for making India's atom bomb right from the 1950s. The letter written by Vajpayee to the American President, Clinton, on the day of the nuclear tests 'cited the security threat from China as the main reason for India acquiring nuclear weapons'. This letter became public in the United States immediately and the Indian press also carried it. By doing so, the Vajpayee Government damaged India's relations with China which had been improving since Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1988. It began with statements by George Fernandes, the present Defence Minister of the BJP-led Government, attacking China as the main threat to India and making all sorts of wild charges. The targeting of China was not accidental, it was motivated to 'try and win favour with the US by offering a strategic alliance against China'. The objective behind the new nuclear policy of the BJP-led Government was also to 'adopt an aggressive anti-Pakistan position' befitting the communal stance of the RSS-BJP combination against the Muslims.

This irresponsible and adventurist policy of the BJP-led Government has led to isolation of India internationally and the image of India as the leader of the Non-Aligned Movement was tarnished. It created an atmosphere of 'nuclear arms race in the subcontinent' with Pakistan conducting its tests in response and provided scopes for further interventions by the US imperialism in the Indian subcontinent. Now, 'while maintaining a facade of firmness, the BJP Government is showing every sign of succumbing to the pressures and trying for an unprincipled compromise with the United States by signing the CTBT'. This is the meaning of the secret Strobe Talbott-Jaswant Singh talks.

The Central Committee of our Party pointedly said in the 'Report on Political Developments since the April 1998 Central Committee Meeting', adopted in its meeting held in New Delhi on July 16-18, 1998, that:

"Signing of the CTBT at this stage will mean capitulation and giving up our principled objection to the discriminatory nuclear regime. It will also mean that

the Vajpayee Government after conducting an aggressive nuclear policy has gained nothing by the tests as the USA is not prepared to give India nuclear weapon status which was what the BJP aimed for."

(Ref: Document No. 130 of this Volume)

Thus, whatever the United Front Governments at the Centre had achieved in improving relations with our neighbours as well as with China, received a setback.

The documents contained in this Volume will confirm that our Party, the CPI(M), while strongly opposing the sanctions imposed on India by the USA after the nuclear tests in May, 1998, also carried on consistent exposure campaigns against the irresponsible and chauvinistic policies of the BJP-led Government in this sphere.

In economic policies the BJP-led Government has revealed its all-out commitment to the policy of 'liberalization', initiated by the Narasimha Rao Government, which has practically ruined the Indian economy. This government has abandoned the facade of 'swadeshi' preached both by the BJP and the RSS and is showing clear tendencies to woo the multinational **companies and imperialist** powers, particularly the US imperialism, and the introduction of the Patent Bill and the Bill on Insurance Regulation are the indications as to how far this government wants to go to please the imperialist powers and open unfettered penetration of the MNCs in the vital economic sectors of India. The policy pursued by the BJP Government in dismantling of the public sector and privatization in oil industry and 'opening up the mineral reserves for exploitation by the multinational mining companies' is most harmful to the country's interests and it will drag the Indian economy to a stage of domination by the imperialist capital. The General Strike of December 11, 1998, most successfully observed all over the country revealed the wrath and anger of the people of India against the policies of the BJP-led Government and clearly indicated that the people will not silently bear it.

The BJP has introduced in Indian politics new tenets of immorality to remain in power, both at the Centre and also in the states. The performance of Shiv Sena-BJP Government ⁱⁿ Maharashtra and its attitude to Srikrishna Commission's Report,

the formation of Kalyan Singh Government in Uttar Pradesh and organized defections shamelessly conducted by the BJP with money power to manipulate majority in the Assembly, attacks on Christians in Gujarat where BJP is running the State Government—are some of the dark examples. The BJP can stoop very low and can carry on any type of intrigue to remain in power. The continuance of the BJP-led Government at the Centre are being used by the State Governments, run by this party, in complete subversion of democracy and secularism. The BJP-led Government will ruin the future of India beyond redemption.

The democratic people of India are gradually realizing how harmful are the policies of the BJP-led Government at the Centre. The most abnormal rise in the prices of essential commodities during the BJP-led Government, an unprecedented development in independent India, has exposed the anti-people policies of this government before the common people all over the country. The opinion of the common people had its reflections in the massive defeat of BJP and its allies in the recent Assembly elections in Delhi, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. In Delhi and Rajasthan BJP was in the government. But there is no scope for complacency that the danger of BJP will be over on its own.

The 16th Congress of our Party, held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998, gave a call to build up massive unity of the Left and democratic and secular forces to fight against the danger posed by the BJP-led Government. The 'forging of a third alternative' with all the Left and democratic and the secular forces is the clarion call of the 16th Congress of the CPI(M) and it is a continuing struggle to safeguard and protect democracy and secularism in India and free the country from the menace of BJP-RSS combination.

The documents of the 16th Congress of the CPI(M), contained in this Volume, will reveal before its readers how seriously CPI(M) is striving to work out the real feasibility of the THIRD ALTERNATIVE in order to combat the danger this country never faced in 51 years of its independence. With confidence in the ultimate victory of democracy and secularism, our Party, the CPI(M), will tenaciously endeavour to build and strengthen the THIRD ALTERNATIVE and unite all the Left and democratic and

secular forces under its banner. We are now on the verge of completion of this century and we will soon step into a new century holding before us the promise of culmination of the united struggle of the democratic and secular people of India to maintain and preserve democracy and secularism in this ancient land and generate enough strength through struggles to create a society free from all types of exploitation.

This is the last Volume of the series of 'DOCUMENTS OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA' and thus it completes documentation of Communist movement in India for 82 years in 26 Volumes, from 1917 to 1998. These documents are of great historical values and reveal the most significant role played by the Communists in Indian politics at every turn of events, before independence and after independence, for liberation of man from class exploitation, for freedom and for democracy and secularism. The Communists made immense contributions in the struggle for the rights of workers, peasants and the toiling masses and carried on consistent campaigns for achieving socialism in our country—which alone can eliminate all types of class exploitation. In these struggles the Communists sacrificed their lives in hundreds and braved imprisonment and most brutal tortures and the people of India remember them.

The publication of these Volumes was an enormous job, splendidly done by the Comrades of the West Bengal State Committee of our Party in record time and I congratulate them from the core of my heart for this great achievement. These Volumes contain vital parts of the contemporary political history of India and will be treated as a great treasure by all who would be concerned about the past, present and future of India.

Harkishan Singh Surjeet

(HARKISHAN SINGH SURJEET)

General Secretary

Communist Party of India (Marxist)

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CPI(M) On Joint Airline Venture*

**Statement Dated January 7, 1997 Issued by The
Polit Bureau of The Communist Party of India
(Marxist)**

It is surprising that the Foreign Investment Promotion Board(FIPB) has cleared the proposed Tata-Singapore joint venture to set up a domestic airline. This approval goes against the stated position of the minister for civil aviation that foreign participation in domestic airlines will not be permitted. It is also contrary to the view of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Civil Aviation which had studied the question.

The FIPB clearance has to be approved by the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Investment. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) wishes to draw the attention of the government that this joint venture would be a major departure from the policy so far adopted not to allow foreign investment into the domestic airlines sector. There is no reason whatsoever for this policy to be changed. The Polit Bureau requests the Union Cabinet not to reverse this stand.

CPI(M) On Meerut Massacre of Dalits*

**Statement Dated January 8, 1997 Issued by The
Polit Bureau Demanding Arrest of Culprits**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the brutal massacre of six persons belonging to the Dalit community in Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh by an armed gang on the night of January 5. According to reports, six persons including a 15-year-old boy from the villages of Pali and Ikwara in the Hastinapur region of the district were accosted by members of a local gang and hacked to death. The SHO at Hastinapur police station has been suspended.

Though an FIR was lodged naming the members of the gang and Rs. one lakh announced for clues leading to the killers, the gang leader Karori Gujjar and his henchmen have yet to be arrested. Meanwhile, there is growing tension in the entire region and fears of a caste war between members of rival communities breaking out. In this background, it is imperative that the district authorities immediately arrest the culprits and take precautionary measures to prevent any further escalation of violence. The CPI(M) demands that the Uttar Pradesh administration take all necessary steps to defuse the tension in Hastinapur and neighbouring areas, provide a sense of security to the Dalit community which is gripped by fear, and ensure that caste tension does not spread to other parts of the state.

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, January 12, 1997.
'Dalits' belong to the lowest rung of the 'caste system' of the Hindus in India.

CPI(M) Polit Bureau's Communique On Observance of Protest Week During February 1-7, 1997*

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M), following its two-day meeting, has given a call for a PROTEST WEEK against price rise from February 1 to 7, 1997, and called upon all Party units throughout the country to observe this week through mass mobilization and protest actions. The week will focus attention on the spiralling prices of foodgrains, especially wheat and atta, and warn against the proposed hike in the prices of petroleum products and levy sugar. It will also reiterate the CPI(M)'s long-standing demand for strengthening the PDS.

Apart from the issue of price rise, the Polit Bureau expressed serious concern at the continuation of the economic policies of the Rao regime which include dismantling the public sector, disinvesting PSU shares, allowing indiscriminate entry to foreign companies and opening out the insurance sector. It expressed full support for the protest actions being undertaken by trade unions and other mass organizations against these measures.

The Polit Bureau also urged the United Front Government to implement the positive aspects of the Common Minimum Programme such as distribution of foodgrains at half the issue price, comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers, one-third reservation for women, increased allocation for health, education etc.

In reply to questions at a Press conference, January 14 afternoon, the CPI(M) General Secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, said the

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, January 19, 1997. This was released by the Polit Bureau of CPI(M) following its the meeting held on January 12-13, 1997 in New Delhi.

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Party's strong criticism of some of the UF Government's policies did not mean that the CPI(M) was trying to dissociate itself from the government. "Not at all, there is no question of dissociating from the government, it was not on the agenda at all. On the contrary, we want to strengthen the United Front Government through strengthening the Left, democratic and secular forces".

Asked why the CPI(M) was not joining the government in order to strengthen it, Surjeet replied, "We feel we are more useful outside. We can take up issues concerning the people and we can be much more vigilant. We are fulfilling our role to the people much better by being outside".

He said it was not true that the CPI(M) saw only negative features in the UF Government. The government had several major achievements to its credit—the radical change in Centre-state relations with no state facing any interference or discrimination of any kind was a major departure from before. The resolution of the Kashmir problem was another big achievement which could not have been achieved under a Congress regime which always had a narrow partisan approach instead of one in national interest. The historic treaty with Bangladesh was another major achievement. He emphasized that while the CPI(M) was critical of the government's policies which went against the interests of the people, it was not blind to its many achievements either.

Regarding the periodic threats meted out by the Congress Party under Sitaram Kesri of withdrawing support from the government, he said, "This government will last whatever Sitaram Kesri says. Why don't you ask them: are they prepared to face elections? They are not. I am satisfied that this government will continue. My concern is different; my concern is that the maximum things are done for the common people so that we can justify our support and strengthen the government and the Left, secular and democratic forces".

Apart from the issue of United Front Government, Surjeet spoke of the impending Punjab elections where the CPI(M) along with the CPI, JD and Samajwadi Party will fight both the Congress(I) and the Akali Dal-BJP combine. He also referred to the periodic

crises being faced by the BJP in state after State and said now it was crystal clear that the BJP had no principles except the principle of somehow staying in power. The contradiction between the upper casteist Hindutva outlook and the aspirations of the backward and scheduled castes within the party was one of the key causes for the deep-rooted crisis of the BJP, he said.

The text of the Polit Bureau communique follows.

Observe Anti-Price Rise Week

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses its serious concern at the continuous price rise, especially of food items. The sharp increase in the prices of wheat and atta with stocks disappearing due to hoarding by big traders is creating immense hardships for the people.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) therefore demands that the United Front Government pay urgent attention to arrest this price rise by strengthening and expanding the public distribution system by distributing 14 essential commodities.

The export of foodgrains should not be considered until adequate supply for the domestic market is ensured and the efforts at procurement must be strengthened. Effective steps against the hoarders must be immediately taken and stocks unearthed.

The Polit Bureau also expresses its serious concern at the reports of an impending hike in the petroleum prices. Such a hike coming soon after the earlier hike imposed by the United Front Government will have a cascading effect on the overall price situation. The inflationary process that this will set in motion will impose further burdens on the people. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon the United Front Government to desist from such a move.

It is reported that the increase in the price of levy sugar is under consideration. The CPI(M) calls upon the government to refrain from such a move.

In view of all this, the Polit Bureau has given a call for a Protest Week against price rise from 1st to 7th of February, 1997. All CPI(M) units all over the country will observe this week through mass mobilization and protest actions on the above issues.

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Economic Policies

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expressed serious concern at the fact that there has been no reversal of the ruinous economic policies of the Rao regime. The pursuance of these policies is resulting in growing discontent amongst the people. This is in direct conflict with the Indian people's cherished goal of building a self-reliant economy. The continuation of the Narasimha Rao Government's approach of dismantling the public sector, cutting their budgetary support and starving them of orders is heaping miseries on the workers. The announcement of expanding the list of automatic entry of foreign capital to more industries and raising their equity to 74 per cent in some cases constitutes a serious erosion of the self-reliant basis of our economy. Even the FICCI and the Assocham have expressed reservations on this score. The attempt to privatize the insurance sector was seen on the last day of the last Parliament session when the Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill was introduced. The insurance employees have already gone on a total one-day strike in protest against this. The CPI(M) opposes this move and calls upon the United Front Government to refrain from the efforts to privatize the insurance sector.

In protest against the deteriorating economic conditions, many sections of the people have gone into actions. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) endorses the call given by the National Platform of Mass Organizations against these measures, as also the call for a strike by the public sector workers.

List Out Priorities

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon the United Front Government to list out its priorities on matters concerning the welfare of the people and the promises made in the Common Minimum Programme. The distribution of foodgrains at half the issue price to people below the poverty line must be implemented urgently. The promises regarding the Bill for women's reservation, legislation for agricultural labour, implementation of land reforms, electoral reforms, increased allocation for education and health, implementation of poverty alleviation schemes and many others must be implemented urgently. Additional resource mobilisation

for this must be undertaken. The CPI(M) demands immediate action to recover the whopping Rs.47,000 crore of outstanding bank loans.

The urgent need is to implement the long-standing promise of establishing the institution of the Lokpal. The spate of exposures of corruption by top bureaucrats and businessmen continues. It is essential that all these cases are expeditiously investigated and action taken against those found guilty. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly opposes any move to curb the work of the investigating agencies such as the requirement for prior approval to investigate ministers and ex-ministers. The Polit Bureau reiterates that the purview of the Prevention of Corruption Act must not exclude MPs and MLAs. No person can be absolved of being accountable to the country and its people.

Punjab Elections

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) discussed the electoral strategy to be adopted in Punjab in the forthcoming elections. In view of the serious danger of the communal combination of the Akali Dal-BJP alliance and the loss of credibility of the Congress, the Polit Bureau decided to fight the elections with other Left, democratic and secular forces, viz, CPI, Janata Dal and Samajwadi Party.

Political Developments

The crisis within the Congress(I) continues. Though forced to make changes in the leadership due to loss of credibility on corruption charges, nowhere in the ongoing power struggle for control of the party was there any meaningful debate of the need to change the policies which led to the dismal defeat of the Congress in the last general elections. As long as the Congress sticks to these harmful economic policies and does not show willingness to check corruption amongst its leaders, it will not be able to regain the mass support it has lost.

All efforts by the BJP to project itself as a "principled", "responsible" party have come to a nought. Following the Gujarat debacle, the factional infighting in Madhya Pradesh and Delhi, growing differences with Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and the serious differences amongst its leaders in Uttar Pradesh has now come the

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crisis in Rajasthan. Underlining these developments is the serious ideological and organizational crisis within the party. A narrow upper caste dominated party based on a communal ideology sought to widen its base by appealing to the OBCs and the dalits. The contradiction between the Hindutva outlook and the aspirations of these sections, apart from the opportunistic power struggles is a major factor for the divisions in the party.

In the background of these developments, the Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) has reiterated the need to strengthen the United Front and the unity of Left, democratic and secular forces to meet the challenges posed by both those forces.

Central Committee Meeting

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) decided the Central Committee will meet on 14,15 and 16 February, 1997 at New Delhi.

On Misleading Report Published in Delhi Newspaper “Pioneer”*

Statement Dated January 20, 1997 Issued by Harkishan Singh Surjeet, General Secretary of The Communist Party of India (Marxist)

The Pioneer of January 20, 1997 has carried a story on its front page titled ‘Surjeet Also Asked PM to Rein In CBI’. The report is misleading.

It is true that the CBI had called Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi for interrogation on the plea that he had asked for an extension for one of those involved in the fodder scam. Nothing could be found against Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi by the CBI. In such cases, some verification should be made before interrogating anybody and giving unwanted publicity.

I have never approached the Prime Minister seeking to curb the powers of the CBI. In fact, the CPI(M) has been demanding that the government should not interfere in the functioning of the CBI and give it a free hand to investigate matters of corruption.

The effort made to drag in my name is unwarranted.

CPI(M) on Pay Commission Report*

**Statement Dated January 31, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The main thrust of the Fifth Pay Commission is to institute a drastic reduction in government employment. The commission has recommended a 30 per cent cut in the present strength of the workforce in the next ten years and the abolition of 3.5 lakh vacant posts. It has also proposed a freeze on further employment in the lower categories, particularly class IV employees. The implications are clear. The class IV employees are to be phased out and these services privatized with contract jobs. While it is necessary to pay due attention to increasing efficiency of the government services, the continuing freeze on recruitment and the proposed cuts in employment will affect services like the postal, telecommunications and railways which require expansion and improvement in services. This approach will exacerbate unemployment, a problem which has been aggravated by the policy of liberalization. The United Front Government cannot accept this basic recommendation which goes against its commitment to generate more employment.

The report is lopsided in providing benefits to the employees as a whole. The lower categories in services are provided lesser benefits while some inessential allowances are made for the higher categories of officers. The eligibility for bonus has been pegged at Rs. 4500 which undermines the gain made by the employees through their strike struggle recently. This ceiling must not be accepted.

CPI(M) Opposes Sugar Price Hike*

**Statement Dated February 11, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) disapproves the decision of the Government of India, hiking the issue price of levy sugar distributed through the public distribution system by Rs.1.45 per kg. This will further add to the acute sufferings of the people on account of steep rise in prices of essential commodities. It is further deplorable that this administered price hike should have been resorted to, without taking into confidence the Parliament which is due to meet in about a week.

CPI(M) Opposes Union Government's Decision to Open up Coal Mining to Private Sector*

**Statement Dated February 12, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) condemns the decision of the Union cabinet to open up coal mining to the private sector, and to deregulate the pricing and distribution of up to 'D' grade non-cooking coal, hard coke and soft coke from immediate effect. The Polit Bureau considers that this is the preliminary step to privatize the entire coal industry.

It is well-known that, prior to nationalization, the private sector resorted to most unscientific methods of extraction, plundered the mineral wealth of the country, which led to major accidents, endangered the safety of workers and destroyed the environment. The Union cabinet's decision to open up the coal production to private sector and deregulate prices will in due course restore the pre-1973 anarchic conditions that prevailed in the industry, and rise in coal price. Coal being a main source of energy, the decision and its consequences will affect the development in all other sectors of the economy, jeopardize the interests of the people and the lakhs of workers involved in the industry. The Polit Bureau demands that this retrograde decision be rescinded.

CPI(M) Central Committee's Commuque Issued After Its Meeting in New Delhi on February 14-16, 1997*

Announcing the CPI(M)'s decision to launch countrywide mass struggles against the adverse impact of the economic policies being pursued by the Deve Gowda Government, Harkishan Singh Surjeet sharply criticized the present direction on the economic front. Briefing the Press after the conclusion of the three-day Central Committee meeting (February 14-16) in the capital, the CPI(M) General Secretary said that the United Front Government's priorities on the economic front seem to have been turned upside down. On the one hand, the government seems to be very keen on implementing those aspects of the Common Minimum Programme about which the Left always had reservations, and which are essentially anti-people; on the other hand, those aspects are being ignored which could bring some relief to the suffering masses.

Answering a volley of questions about the CPI(M) continuing its support to the Deve Gowda Government in spite of its sharp criticism of its economic policies, Surjeet explained that his Party is still very much in the United Front, as the basic political situation in the country has not changed, and the threat of the communal BJP trying to capture power at the Centre has not decreased. Hence the CPI(M)'s continued participation in the United Front. At the same time the CPI(M) will launch agitations and mobilize the masses to put pressure on the present government so that it is forced to change its policy priorities in a pro-people direction. Surjeet also listed the issues on which the CPI(M) wants the government to give top priority, as well as the proposed anti-people measures that the Left would like the government to avoid. The CPI(M)

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General Secretary recalled that some of the present government's liberalization steps are being resented even by Indian industry.

Surjeet began the Press conference by scoffing at various concocted Press stories about the acrimonious debate in the Central Committee meeting on some statements of a senior Party leader. The CPI(M) General Secretary said, "So far you have heard about a Central Committee discussion that was not there. Now I am telling you about the Central Committee discussion that did take place!"

Surjeet also briefed the Press about the serious situation that had developed in Tripura due to extremist attempts to break the exemplary tribal-non-tribal unity painstakingly built by the Party over the years, and underlined the necessity of taking all possible steps for meeting the extremist challenge to the unity of the people of Tripura. He suggested that the Disturbed Areas Act would be invoked in selected areas of the state to meet the extremist threat in Tripura.

Answering questions regarding the Congress Working Committee's announcement of altering its stance vis-a-vis the United Front Government, from unconditional support to issue-based support, Surjeet emphasized that this does not mean much. Since the political situation has not changed, the Congress cannot withdraw support. He characterized the Congress charge of the United Front failing to cooperate with the Congress to check the BJP as "frivolous". Surjeet also emphasized that recent developments do not signal any respite for the BJP also, which is now facing growing inner-party fights in Rajasthan.

The Central Committee communique issued on the occasion follows:

US Pressures

The Central Committee took serious note of the pressure being mounted by the US administration on Russia not to sell two nuclear reactors to India. This is a continuation of the US efforts to curb India's independent nuclear technology policy. As in the CTBT and other related issues which affect India's security, the USA seeks to browbeat India.

It is in such a situation that the fourth round of Indo-US joint naval exercises are going to be held off the West Coast.

Such military collaboration is totally unwarranted given the negative role of the United States towards India's security interests.

The Central Committee decided to step up its campaign against imperialist pressures on India and to ensure mass mobilization to defend India's vital interests.

India's Relations With Its Neighbours

The Central Committee noted with satisfaction that in the recent period further steps have been taken by the United Front Government which has improved relations with our neighbouring countries. The Indo-Bangladesh river waters agreement, Chinese President Jiang Zemin's visit to India, the visit of the Indian Foreign Minister to Sri Lanka are all positive steps in improving and strengthening India's relations with its neighbours and for promoting a harmonious atmosphere in South Asia. The offer of talks by the new Pakistan Prime Minister must also be viewed in this context.

Tripura

The Central Committee expressed its grave concern at the series of gruesome killings perpetrated by the extremist groups in Tripura. Innocent men, women and children have lost their lives to the inhuman attacks launched by the two major extremist groups. The diabolical aim of these random killings of non-tribal people is to stoke ethnic tensions and cause a communal conflagration. The Left Front Government and the CPI(M) are firmly committed to maintain tribal-non-tribal unity which has been the bedrock of the democratic movement and a shining exception amongst the ethnic conflicts in the north-east.

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) endorsed the stand of the Left Front Government in Tripura to take firm and extraordinary measures to tackle the menace of the terroristic killings. Because of the long international borders and the difficult terrain, the limited strength of the state police is insufficient to check the heinous activities of the well-armed extremists. Therefore, the Left Front Government has decided to declare selected places as disturbed areas so that the help of the army can be sought to protect the people from the depredations of the extremists. The Central

Committee appreciated the Central Government's prompt response to the State Government's request for assistance.

The CPI(M) state unit in Tripura is conducting a continuous political campaign to preserve tribal-non-tribal unity and to rebuff both tribal separatism and chauvinist elements among the majority Bengali community. The Central Committee extends its full support to the steps taken by the Left Front Government and the political campaign of the CPI(M) and the Left parties.

The Central Committee also expressed concern at the increasing scale of disruptive activities by various extremist groups in the north-east which are aided by foreign agencies.

Punjab Elections

The sweeping victory of the Akali Dal(Badal)-BJP alliance in the assembly elections has been mainly due to the people's disgust with the rampant corruption and misrule of the Congress(I) regime. The desire for peace to be maintained saw more people rallying to the Akali Dal-BJP alliance as it was expected to win. The projection in the election campaign that the Akali Dal represents the Sikhs and the BJP the Hindus can deepen the communal cleavage in the state.

A negative feature in the elections was the role of the CPI in the state. The CPI state leadership openly allied with the Congress and got ten seats allotted to them and conducted joint campaign with the Congress in many areas. By refusing to follow the CPI's national political line, they disrupted Left unity. This had a harmful effect on the electoral prospect of the Left. The Party should take steps to rebuild unity on the principled basis.

BJP

The recent Rajasthan BJP crisis which endangered the Shekhawat Government underlined the opportunistic wranglings and spreading factional fights gripping the party. It is a repeat exposure, after Gujarat, of the unprincipled power-mongering affecting the BJP. The BJP is targetting the CPI(M) and the Left as it is they which are playing a prominent role in politically isolating the communal forces. The communally motivated campaign against the Indo-Bangladesh treaty in West Bengal by the BJP, and the RSS efforts to provoke violence in Kerala are parts of this campaign.

The Central Committee called for continued vigilance to check the BJP's manoeuvre and for rebuffing the VHP's case to revive the agitation on the Mathura issue.

Pay Commission Report

The Central Committee opposed the main direction of the Pay Commission's report advocating a drastic cut in the workforce of the government. The report, in line with the thinking of the IMF and the World Bank, has recommended downsizing employment by 30 per cent reduction in the workforce over a period of ten years and an abolition of 3 lakh vacant posts. The report also widens the disparities between the upper categories and the lower categories of employees. The proposal to reimpose the ceiling on eligibility of bonus which was fought against by the recent central government employees' strike is unacceptable.

The Central Committee calls upon the government to consult the trade unions before coming to any conclusions about the report.

Corruption: Bofors Case

The Central Committee reiterated the CPI(M)'s well-known position that all cases of high level corruption must be investigated and the guilty prosecuted whoever they are. The Satish Sharma affair, the ITC scandal and the cases against Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu are all indications of how widespread and corrosive corruption has become in public life.

The receipt of the Swiss Bank records on the Bofors kickback case is a major step forward in the investigation of a scandal which has repeatedly been sought to be covered up and the investigation obstructed by previous Congress Governments. With the identification of the beneficiaries like Quattrocchi and Win Chadda, steps must be taken for their interrogation and their being brought to India. Effective steps should be taken to file charges and bring to book all those who are guilty, without any consideration for their political affiliations or powerful connections.

UF Government's Economic Performance

The Central Committee expressed its strong objection to the course adopted by the United Front Government in economic

policies. In the period since the last Central Committee meeting in October 1996, there has been a stepped up thrust towards privatization in many spheres: absence of measures to revive public sector units which are in difficulties; giving in to the pressure of the WTO on import liberalization; and indiscriminate opening up to foreign capital in various sectors.

In the privatization drive, the insurance sector is a prime target for opening up; the coal industry has now been opened to the private sector; power transmission is to be privatized and there is even talk of opening up the atomic energy sector to foreign companies.

On foreign direct investment, the Deve Gowda Government has gone ahead with the announcement of expanding the list for automatic entry of foreign capital up to 51 per cent equity to 16 more industries; it has also raised the limit of foreign equity allowed from 51 per cent to 74 per cent in nine industries in the core and infrastructure sectors. The government is considering further dilution of the FERA on the demand of the representatives of big business.

Within the framework of the WTO agreement, the Indian Government is going ahead with the liberalization of imports. It has committed itself to removing quantitative restrictions on imports. Recently, the commerce ministry has announced liberalization of imports affecting 162 items. Many of the items are luxury consumer goods like cars, air conditioners, perfumes and cosmetics. This announcement is in keeping with the demand of liberalization of imports of consumer goods made by the IMF-World Bank.

The United Front Government seems totally oblivious of the dangers of going in for full convertibility of the rupee on capital account. The decision to allow foreign institutional investors to hold debt instruments is a step towards full convertibility. The Approach Paper to the 9th Plan has clearly stated that the government should strive to achieve capital account convertibility. The disastrous experience of Mexico which saw an enormous flight of capital with similar measures does not deter the finance ministry from going ahead on this policy.

The CPI(M) is firmly opposed to the entry of private companies into the insurance sector. The foreign companies are going to enter into tie-ups with domestic companies. The enormous funds which

can be generated through insurance and which are now available through the LIC and GIC for public investment will be diverted into private channels for private ventures and for repatriation of profits abroad. The CPI(M) and the Left parties must mobilize other political parties to see that the government does not proceed along this path.

Mobilize Resources from the Affluent

Faced with serious resource crunch with the enormous burden of interest payment on external and internal debt, the growing import bill of petroleum products and the increasing revenue deficit, the government accepts the advice and wisdom provided by the international finance capital and its institutions that it must go in for outright privatization and liberalization for economic growth. The government does not want to address the real issues about resource mobilization. Instead of wilting under pressure from the corporate sector on the Minimum Alternative Tax (MAT) which was introduced in the last budget, the government must boldly raise the taxes on the gross profits of the corporate sector. Thousands of crores of rupees can be raised by better tax compliance. The ITC Ltd. along owes the government Rs. 800 crore as excise duties. The richer sections in agriculture must be brought into the tax net.

Instead of abandoning the state's commitment for resource mobilization, the government has to recover the Rs. 47,000 crore of defaulted loans due to the nationalized banks mainly by big business and influential persons. At the same time special measures are required to curb black money and to stop the flight of capital abroad.

If these measures are taken along with disciplining the top bureaucracy to cut down on wasteful administrative expenditure, enough resources can be found for public investment, state expenditure on social sector and provision for an extensive public distribution system.

It is this approach which, if reflected in the Union budget, will help to avoid the debt trap and mobilize resources for much needed public investment.

Check Price-Rise

The most serious problem faced by the people is the all-round price-rise which shows no signs of abating. The prices of food items in particular such as foodgrains, vegetables, pulses are constantly going up. The sharp increase in the prices of wheat and *atta* in north India and the non-availability of kerosene in many places through the PDS has intensified the sufferings of the people. The decision to raise the price of sugar in the PDS will further worsen the situation.

It is in this context that the Public Distribution System needs to be urgently strengthened. The scheme announced on January 26 providing foodgrains at 50 per cent less than the issue price for people below the poverty line needs to be immediately implemented. It will be counter-productive if the government increases the issue price of wheat and rice before implementing the scheme as the increased price will affect a large number of people above the poverty line who are themselves poor and victims of inflation. The Central Committee of the CPI(M), therefore, calls upon the government to immediately provide wheat and rice at 50 per cent below the issue price under the scheme committed in the Common Minimum Programme.

Implement Pro-People Measures

The record of the United Front Government so far shows that it is not earnest about implementing those measures in the Common Minimum Programme which constitute a departure from the Rao Government's policies and which can provide relief to the people. On the other hand, the government is vigorously pursuing policies such as indiscriminate opening up to foreign capital, disinvestment of PSU shares and opening up of the insurance sector which advances the IMF-World Bank agenda.

Call for Mass Struggles

The Central Committee decided that in view of the harmful economic policies and their adverse impact on the people the Party should launch country-wide mass struggles to defend the people's interests and launch a political campaign in association with the Left and democratic parties for alternative economic policies. With

this in view, the Central Committee decided to focus on the following issues:

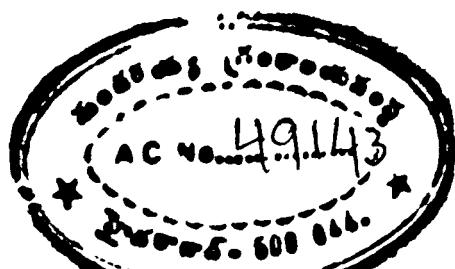
The Party and the Left should demand the implementation of the commitments made in the United Front's Common Minimum Programme concerning:

- Introduction of a strengthened public distribution system;
- Adoption of the Central Agricultural Labour Bill;
- Strengthening of public sector units;
- Implementation of land reforms and restoration of land to adivasis;
- Increased allocation for health, education and provision for minimum needs like drinking water;
- Stepped up public investment for infrastructure and agriculture;
- Adoption of reservation for women;
- Adoption of a revised Lokpal Bill;
- More devolution of powers to the states; and
- Recognition of trade unions by secret ballot.

The Party will launch a national movement against price-rise, to stop the privatization of insurance; defence of the public sector and saving jobs, revival of sick industries and implementation of land reforms. The issue of combating corruption by punishing all those guilty in the scams will also be taken up.

The Central Committee authorized the Polit Bureau to chalk out the concrete plans for the all-India movement.

The Central Committee extended full support to the call of the National Platform of Mass Organizations for a *rail/rasta roko* on March 27 and the public sector unions' call for a one-day all-India strike on April 2. It called upon all the Party units to actively work for their success.



Report On Political Developments Adopted by The Central Committee of the CPI(M) in its Meeting Held in New Delhi on February 14-16, 1997*

INTERNATIONAL

In the October 1996 meeting of the Central Committee some of the major international developments had been noted and analyzed. Amongst the advanced capitalist countries the year 1996 was mainly characterized by "jobless growth" and this also was uneven. Unemployment remained at high levels in most of the developed capitalist countries, particularly in Europe. The drastic cutback in the workforce in the name of flexible labour policies, marked this period of growth particularly in the United States. The overall trend of the internationalization of capital which is also popularly expressed in the term "globalization" saw the offensive continuing against the working people with attacks on social security expenditure and welfare benefits.

Within the advanced capitalist countries, the United States performed better economically with a 2.5 per cent growth in GDP in 1996. Compared to this Germany, the biggest European power, grew by only 1.4 per cent. The United States saw a lower unemployment rate as it successfully pursued the restructuring of labour through the shift to low-cost, low-paid contract and part-time jobs. The attack on wages, social security and emphasis on reducing budget deficits is now being cited by the ruling circles in the USA as the path to be followed by the European countries if they want to solve their problems. The current advantage gained by the United States is also reflected by the strong position of the

*Published as a booklet in March 1997. Also published in a compilation of documents in October 1998 entitled: "Reports on Political Developments and Some Documents Adopted in the Central Committee Meetings of CPI(M) since

dollar vis-a-vis the yen and the German mark. The American dollar appreciated 15 per cent against the yen and 12 per cent against the mark in the last 12 months. In contrast Germany's unemployment rate reached a record high of 10.8 per cent with 4.1 million people out of work. France, the other major European power had a jobless rate of 12.7 per cent with the figure expected to rise further. The difficulties of conforming to the conditions for the European monetary union and single currency has aggravated the problems of the French economy. Japan has also continued experiencing serious financial difficulties with many banks going bankrupt and the failure to revive the growth rate in any substantial manner.

In such a situation the US seeks to exercise its dominance both in the economic and political spheres. President Clinton being elected a second term, whose victory was also a result of the better performance of the economy, will now put the US administration on course to assert its policies globally. However, this temporary advantage gained by the United States cannot be a lasting phenomenon. The European countries are not willing to completely toe the US position on all international affairs. On Cuba for instance, the European Union has gone to the WTO with a complaint against the Helms-Burton Act which seeks to penalize third country companies and individuals who have economic and trade relations with Cuba. Both Canada and Mexico which belong to NAFTA have gone ahead with establishing economic ties and trade relations with Cuba defying the US ban.

The nature of the "globalization" sought to be imposed by the internationalization of capital is having adverse repercussions around the world. 1994 saw the Mexican crisis with the collapse of the economy after Mexico joined the NAFTA and opened up its economy with full convertibility of capital. The winter of 1995 saw the biggest working class struggle in the 1990s so far with the French working class going on general strike against privatization and the threat of dismantling the public sector. After that the longest protest action has taken place significantly in South Korea.

South Korean Workers Strike

The month-long general strike by the working class in South Korea was significant as it represents an important stage in the

struggle against the offensive of globalization, in a country which has been hailed as a success story of contemporary capitalism. In order to help the big monopolies to become competitive with other advanced capitalist countries, the South Korean Government got a law passed to give the freedom to fire workers and hire temporary labour. It is against this anti-worker law that the big struggle took place led by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions which is not recognized by the government. The sweep of the strike and the unity of the workers has forced the Korean President to refer the bill back to parliament for discussion. He hopes to buy time by such a move. The general strike is an indication of the growing maturity and combativeness of the working class in Korea who have long been suppressed by the authoritarian regimes backed by the United States which have been working openly as agents of the big business companies. The Korean struggle must be seen in the background of the worldwide struggle which is developing against the offensive of globalization and privatization. After the French working class struggle against privatization in the end of 1995, this has been the second major strike battle.

The dubious effects of globalization are being fully felt by the people in the third world countries. After the chorus of praise for globalization which is supposed to lead to the development of the backward parts of the third world with the flow of foreign investment and generation of employment, the World Bank has now to admit that the people living on less than \$1 a day have increased to 1.3 billion. In 1987 according to the World Bank 30 per cent of the population of the third world was earning less than \$1 a day, and this figure has gone down by only 1 per cent to 29 per cent in 1993. The bank has also admitted that poverty has increased in Latin America, Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa. The reality of the global capitalist offensive is that 40 per cent of Africa's people live on less than \$1 a day.

Ferocious attacks on the living conditions of the working people in the advanced capitalist countries through large-scale destruction of jobs, casualization, big cutbacks in social security and increasing immiserisation of the people of the third world have set the grounds for the fight back and struggles against the capitalist offensive. The last three months itself have seen apart from the South Korean

struggle, general strikes in Greece, Italy, Israel, Haiti, the French truckers strike and many such struggles which are primarily directed against efforts of the international imperialist capital and the domestic ruling class to impose structural adjustment or cutbacks on the living standards of the people.

At the political level, NATO is actively seeking to expand the alliance into central and eastern Europe. It would like to include Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic as members of NATO in the next two years. This move has raised serious objections in Russia and the Russian Government is resisting the Eastern expansion of NATO. The threat to the Russian security and national interest by this aggressive NATO move will become a rallying point for all patriotic and socialist forces within Russia where an ailing President Yeltsin has a tenuous hold.

Developments in South Asia and Neighbourhood

During the last three months there have been some important events which have a beneficial effect on India's relations with its neighbours. The UF Government's policy overall in this regard has played a positive role in improving relations with our neighbours.

Jiang Zemin's Visit

The visit of President Jiang Zemin of China has been a significant event for the ongoing process of improving India-China relations. The agreement on Confidence Building Measures and other agreements have advanced the normalization and widening of relations between the two countries.

Indo-Bangladesh Treaty

The other major initiative has been the signing of the Indo-Bangladesh Treaty on the sharing of Ganga waters. This agreement marks a breakthrough in solving the major irritant in Indo-Bangladesh relations and has sought to settle the problem in a just and equitable manner for both countries. The waters treaty helps in checking the fundamentalist forces in Bangladesh which thrive on an anti-India platform. The success in concluding this treaty was also due to the role played by the Left Front Government in

West Bengal and the contribution made by the visit of Jyoti Basu to Dhaka. The specific negotiations and details were worked out with this direct contribution by our Party and LF Government. The goodwill generated by this agreement will have its impact on the whole north-eastern region where extremist activities are being conducted by using sanctuaries in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The return visit of Deve Gowda to Bangladesh has resulted in the affirmation that both countries will take steps to see that extremist activities are not encouraged on their soil against each other.

Pakistan Elections

We had noted in the last Central Committee the growing confrontation between Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and President Leghari. This resulted in the dismissal of the Bhutto Government using the 8th amendment under the Constitution which arms the President with draconian powers. A result of this development has been the enhanced role of the armed forces in the running of the State in the political system. During the period of the interim government before the holding of the general elections, a Council for Defence and National Security Affairs (CDNS) was set up which includes the three service chiefs. Such a body has no sanction under the constitution but it indicates the new arrangement entered into by the President with the armed forces.

The widespread corruption which marked the government of Benazir Bhutto and the involvement of her husband in big scandals tarnished the image of the PPP. The economic crisis which deepened and the attacks on the people's conditions due to the conditionalities imposed by the IMF-World Bank further eroded support for the Benazir Government. On the eve of the elections the Supreme Court's upholding of the dismissal of the Bhutto Government was a further blow. The Pakistan Muslim League led by Nawaz Sharif has won a big victory and can form a government on its own strength. But the elections drew an apathetic response with only 25 per cent of the electorate voting. Given the right-wing orientation of Nawaz Sharif on economic policies as seen by the privatization drive initiated during his previous government, the problems besetting the country will only get aggravated if these policies are

pursued again. The only positive feature is Nawaz Shareif's call for a dialogue with India to solve outstanding problems including Kashmir. Given the state of the country and the growing economic and defence burdens such an approach is a realistic one. The Indian Prime Minister has responded positively to this offer of talks.

Among other developments in India's neighbourhood has been the ratification of the India-Nepal Treaty on Mahali waters by the Nepal Parliament which will open up a new area of cooperation for the benefit of the two countries. The visit of the Indian foreign Minister to Sri Lanka has also resulted in greater understanding and strengthening of ties between India and Sri Lanka.

Bhutan Refugees Problem

The refusal by Bhutan to take back legitimate Nepali-speaking citizens who are at present refugees in the border areas of North Bengal and Nepal has become a constant source of tension and potential conflict. According to the United Nations there are eighty thousand such persons whom Bhutan refuses to take back. The refugees from Nepal try to enter into Bhutan through West Bengal territory which puts the West Bengal State Government in a difficult position as it cannot allow these people to proceed and come into conflict with the Bhutanese border guards. The Central Government should talk to the Government of Nepal and the Bhutanese Government to find an amicable solution to the problem.

Afghanistan

In the past three months, the Taliban have consolidated their hold over Kabul and the surrounding region. Subsequently, they have sought to push forward to the north and the west and made some gains at the expense of General Dostum and the forces of Massoud. The Pakistani military and Saudi Arabia with the full connivance of the US administration are helping the Taliban forces actively. However, the Taliban regime in Kabul have so far failed to win international recognition with no country having accorded it diplomatic recognition. The US administration is maintaining contacts with the Taliban and will move for formal relations at the opportune time, as its aim is to use the regime for access to the resources of the Central Asian region. The consolidation of the Taliban in Afghanistan should be a matter of concern to India as the fundamentalist regime is hostile to all secular and democratic currents in the region.

Imperialist Designs

The US administration continues to follow a policy of curbing India's independent position and potential for defence and security. The current pressure being mounted on Russia not to sell two nuclear reactors to India is in line with the traditional US policy of curtailing India's independent nuclear technology policy. Along with the CTBT and other international issues on which the USA seeks to browbeat India, we must be vigilant to oppose and expose the US imperialist designs. The recent exposure of a senior intelligence officer, Rathan Sehgal's links with the CIA, underscores the imperialist penetration of the State apparatus.

Joint Naval Exercises

While the USA continues to pressurize India and take hostile positions regarding its security interests, it is inexplicable why India should continue to have military collaboration with the US armed forces. It has been recently announced that the 4th round of joint naval exercises by the Indian and US navies will be held in February or March. This exercise codenamed "Malabar IV" is expected to be bigger than the four-day exercise of 1996. Our Party has consistently maintained that there should be no military collaboration with the United States between the two armed forces. The Deve Gowda Government should review the agreement signed during the time of the Narasimha Rao Government.

There has been insufficient campaigning on anti-imperialist issues and mass mobilization on the manoeuvres of US imperialism in India. The Party should pay due attention to launching anti-imperialist campaigns both in terms of expressing solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles abroad and in taking up the issues where imperialism seeks to affect India's vital interests.

NATIONAL

UF Government's Economic Record

We had already noted in the last two Central Committee meetings that the Deve Gowda Government is essentially following the course set by the Narasimha Rao government on economic policies. Now the thrust has been stepped up in many spheres. The cumulative effect of the eight-month record in economic policies is the mounting discontent among the people. Continuous price

rise, especially of food items, non-availability of foodgrains of a minimum quality and kerosene in the public distribution system, non-payment of wages to thousands of employees in many public sector units and the threat of closure are leading to growing alienation.

As for the overall economic situation, the report on Currency and Finance 1995-96 prepared by the RBI shows that the Budget deficit for the year 1996-97 will be much higher than what is estimated. There is a slowdown in industrial growth and decline in the export growth rate in the current year. Though imports decreased substantially because of the recessionary conditions, the trade deficit for the first nine months of the current financial year is still at a high level of \$3.24 billion as compared to \$3.53 billion in the previous year. While on the agricultural front the foodgrain output is expected to be higher in the current year 1996-97 there has been no relaxation in the price rise of food items.

The framework of the IMF-World Bank dictated policies with its thrust on opening up the country for foreign investment, deregulation, opening up of the financial sector, disinvestment in the public sector units and privatisation have been pushed further ahead by the Deve Gowda Government.

On foreign direct investment, the Deve Gowda Government has gone ahead with the announcement of expanding the list for automatic entry of foreign capital up to 51 percent equity to 16 more industries; it has also raised the limit of foreign equity allowed from 51 per cent to 74 per cent in nine industries in the core and infrastructure sectors. This has been done despite the Party's opposition to this proposal being conveyed to the government. The government is considering further dilution of the FERA on the demand of the representatives of big business. The finance ministry has announced further liberalization of the gold import policy by doubling the quantity of gold allowed to be brought into the country by non-residents. Contrary to the claim that this will curb smuggling, it is well-known that gold imports by NRIs have become a substitute route for smuggling. With the depreciation of the value of the rupee, liberalization of gold import will encourage the trend to maintain assets in gold thus reducing availability of resources for economic activities.

At the Singapore ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization, the Indian Government became party to the agenda

thrust on the WTO by the advanced capitalist countries. The decision to form two working groups one on investment and trade and another on trade and competition marks the formal entry of issues such as foreign investment and competition into the WTO framework. It is the first step towards pursuing the Multilateral Agreement on Investment which is harmful to India and the third world countries.

Within the framework of the WTO agreement, the Indian Government is going ahead with the liberalization of imports. It has committed to removing quantitative restrictions on imports. Recently, the commerce ministry has announced liberalization of imports the restricted list to special licences and some from special licences to the OGL. Many of the items are luxury consumer goods like cars, air conditioners, perfumes and cosmetics. This announcement is in keeping with the demand of liberalization of manufactures of consumer goods made by the IMF-World Bank.

Sections of domestic industry are becoming more and more apprehensive about the entry of multinationals on favourable terms and its adverse, effects on Indian domestic industry. They have become openly voicing their concern. In the recent period the FICCI and a report prepared by a committee of ASSOCHAM called for a culling on foreign equity holdings and measures to prevent takeover of Indian companies. The lowering of import duties have also affected the chemical and other sectors and their associations have protested against the policies harmful to indigenous industry.

The Deve Gowda Government seems totally oblivious of the dangers of going in for full convertibility on the capital account. The decision to allow foreign institutional investors to hold debt instruments is a step towards full convertibility. The approach paper to the 9th plan has clearly stated that the government should strive to achieve capital account convertibility. The disastrous experience of Mexico which saw enormous flight of capital does not deter our liberalizers from going ahead on this path. A serious warning has been provided by a study by three US professors associated with the Florida International University in Miami. According to the study made by them they have estimated that a capital flight of about \$11.3 billion during 1994 and 1995 has taken place from India through the foreign trade route by over-invoicing/under-invoicing of exports/imports.

On the question of foreign investment, the issue is not whether we need foreign capital or not but what type of foreign investment

is required. The type of investment flowing into India which leads to takeover of Indian companies by enhancing their equity holding beyond the earlier 40 per cent allowed, the inflow of funds for acquiring Indian companies and for the production of luxury consumer goods are all not leading to enhanced foreign exchange earnings by the domestic affiliates of this investment but to increased outflow of foreign exchange payments on account of technical fees, royalties, dividends etc. It is essential that the government should adopt a policy of FDI investment which links foreign exchange expenditure with foreign exchange earnings. Automatic clearance does away with scrutiny of technical collaborations. This leads to doing away with the requirement that foreign firms undertake R & D locally and provide incentives to domestic industrialists to build indigenous technological capabilities. This will foreclose the possibility of India being able to generate its own internationally competitive companies and brand names.

Stepped Up Privatization Drive

After the drive to privatize the power generation sector and open it to foreign capital, the government has now announced its intention to allow power transmission by the private sector. This is clearly a bid to help out companies like the Enron and Cogentrix as the power generated by them has to be transmitted from far away places where their plants have been located.

Going beyond what was done in the Narasimha Rao Government period, the current privatization drive has resulted in the opening up of the nationalized coal mining sector for the first time. The government is going ahead full steam with privatization in the oil industry and downgrading the ONGC. There is even talk of allowing the private sector in the atomic energy sector which has dangerous implications for India's sovereignty and security.

Insurance Sector

The commitment to further open up the financial sector is now focussed on privatizing insurance. The government has assured foreign insurance companies that private companies will be allowed into the insurance sector after the setting up of a full-fledged

insurance regulatory authority with statutory powers. Faced with the strong resistance of the insurance employees and the Left parties the government introduced the IRA bill in the Lok Sabha on the last day of the winter session. The opening up of the insurance sector is one of the priority demands of the western countries. The British Prime Minister Major also highlighted this demand in a speech at the CII meet at Calcutta. The insurance employees unions have already gone on a one-day strike against the introduction of this bill.

Our Party is firmly opposed to the entry of private companies into the insurance sector. The foreign companies are going to enter into tie-ups with domestic companies. The enormous funds which can be generated through insurance and which is now available through the LIC and GIC for public investment will be diverted into private channels for private ventures and for repatriation of profits abroad. The CPI(M) and the Left parties must mobilize other political parties to see that the government does not proceed on this path. This is not just the issue for the trade unions but a major question of safeguarding the country's financial resources and giving priority for public investment and developmental schemes.

Agriculture

The continuous decline in public investment in agriculture is manifested in the slowing down of the rate of growth in agriculture despite nine successive good monsoons. There was a slight decline in foodgrains output this year. The fluctuations in prices of nonfood crops. Now accentuated by liberalization, has badly affected the poorer sections of the peasantry. For the rural poor, there is reduction in the number of wage days for agricultural workers and growing unemployment which leads to increasing pauperization.

PSU Disinvestment

The Central Government has referred 40 PSUs to the Disinvestment Commission for disinvestment of shares. Before referring list of do 40 companies, the government had announced the disinvestment programme for the VSNL and the LOC which are among the most profitable PSUs. However they have not been able to sell the shares because of the poor market conditions. The

Disinvestment Commission is expected to submit its proposals by the end of February about the 40 PSUs and the recommendations for their restructuring and selling of shares. There is no guarantee that the funds generated, from the selling of such shares, will be ploughed back into the public sector itself for upgradation of technology and modernization.

There is an acute problem for the public sector units which have been running at a loss. Here too, it is the continuation of the Rao Governments approach of dismantling the public sector by cutting budgetary support and starving them of orders which has resulted in the crisis. A prime example is the IDPL which is a vital drug industry which could provide cheap medicine for the people. Workers of the IDPL units have not been paid their wages since November 1996; neither are they getting orders for drugs from the government. The plight of the NTC mills is similar with many units not having paid their workers their full wages. Behind the thrust for privatization lies the systematic efforts to curtail the public sector.

Faced with a serious resource crunch due to the enormous burden of interest payment on external and internal debt, growing import bill of petroleum products and the increasing revenue deficit, the government accepts the advice provided by the international finance capital and its institutions that it must go for outright privatization and liberalization for economic growth. The recent report on infrastructure submitted to the government by the Rakesh Mohan Committee calls for handing over infrastructure development to the private sector and foreign capital and brazenly suggests that the State should take up only such infrastructure objectives which are not found to be profitable or attractive to private capital.

In fact it is the decline in public investment in infrastructure, agriculture and cutting of public expenditure in the social sector which has aggravated the crisis of the economy. The decline in public investment in infrastructure such as the power sector has led to serious shortages in power which is going to get worse in the coming days. The former Finance Minister Manmohan Singh who is the architect of the current policy has recently admitted that the current crisis in the power sector is due to the cutback in State investment in the power sector anticipating investment by the

private sector which has not materialized. It is this short-sighted approach which is being pursued by the Deve Gowda government and which is manifested in their policy towards public sector units.

Mobilize Resources from the Affluent

The government and in particular the Finance Minister, P.Chidambaram, do not want to address the real issues in resource mobilization. Instead of wilting under pressure from the corporate sector on the Minimum Alternative Tax (MAT) which was introduced in the last budget, the government must boldly raise the taxes on the gross profits of the corporate sector. Thousands of corers of rupees can be ensured by better tax compliance. The ITC Ltd alone owes the government Rs.800 crores as excise duties. There are no steps to curb and mop up black money which runs into lakhs of crores of rupees.

Instead of abandoning the State's commitment to public investment, the government has to recover the Rs. 47000 crores of defaulted loans due to the nationalized banks mainly by big business and influential persons.

If these measures are taken along with disciplining the top bureaucracy to cut down on wasteful administrative expenditure enough resources can be found for public investment, state expenditure on social sector and provision for an extensive public distribution system.

The CPI(M) and the Left parties must effectively put forward this alternative plan for resource mobilization. In this context the critique of the Approach to the Ninth Plan has to be made. The contributions of the Chief Minister of Kerala and West Bengal in this respect provide a basis for the alternative approach.

Acute Price Rise

In fact the most serious problem faced by the people in the recent period has been the sharp increase in the prices of foodgrains, vegetables, pulses and other items of consumption. The sharp increase in the price of wheat and atta in north India in the winter months led to atta selling at Rs.10 per kg. Rice has been selling at Rs.11 per kilo in West Bengal. Kerosene is not available in many

places through the PDS. This situation was created by stocks disappearing due to hoarding by big traders. The government bungled by continuing with the policy of export of wheat and the sale of FCI stocks to private traders when there was a shortfall of 3.1 million tonnes in the crop last year.

The annual rate of inflation has crossed the 7.5 per cent mark and has registered 7.66 per cent for the week ending January 25. In the corresponding week in 1996 the rate was 4.9 per cent. This of course does not indicate the much higher rate of increase of retail prices for the ordinary people.

Strengthen PDS

This underlines the urgent necessity to strengthen and enhance the public distribution system. Priority has to be given to implement the commitment in the Common Minimum Programme for providing foodgrains at 50 per cent less price to the people below the poverty line. The scheme which has been delayed has been announced on January 26. However, its implementation will be dependent on how the states will take up the work of identifying the beneficiaries i.e. persons below the poverty line and issuing them with the ration cards entitling them to the special scheme. In many states the PDS covers barely 5 to 10 per cent of the population. It is essential that the Party and the various mass organizations take up the issue and launch movements to see that the scheme is put into operation and reaches the actual beneficiaries. At the same time the demand to expand the network of the public distribution system and to include other essential items like pulses, Edible oil etc. should be taken up as per the 14 essential items listed earlier. It is in keeping with the serious price situation that the Party gave a call for observing an anti-price week from February 1 to 7. The movement to check price rise, strengthen public distribution system and to prevent hoarding by big traders must continuously be taken up.

Fifth Pay Commission Recommendations

The Commission report has advocated a drastic cut in the workforce of the central services. The report in line with the thinking advocated by the IMF and the World Bank has advocated

downsizing government employment in line with the philosophy that the State should withdraw from various activities and sectors. The report has called for a 30 per cent reduction in the workforce over a period of 10 years and for abolition of 3.5 lakh vacant posts. Most of these posts are in the lower categories of services like Class IV employees. The Commission would like to do away with Class IV category itself and give out such jobs on contract. This will affect SC/ST sections in particular. Already departments like the postal and audit and accounts have an acute shortage of staff which make it difficult for fulfilling the minimum services required of them.

The second major feature of the report is the lopsided recommendations in salaries and allowances. The lower categories have not benefited in comparison to the generous allowances made for the higher categories of officers. An example is the telephone attendant allowance at Rs.1,500 per month for senior officers which is just a provision for their having domestic attendants. The eligibility ceiling for the grant of bonus which was removed after the one week strike in October last year is now sought to be reimposed with the ceiling fixed at Rs.4,500. This will again deprive a large section of employees particularly Class III from getting bonus.

Our Party has demanded that there should be no cuts in employment and the discrepancies and disparities in the recommendations of salaries and allowances and the ceiling on bonus be not accepted. Any move for encouraging privatization in areas like railways and posts and telecommunications must be resisted.

Corruption

The spate of exposures and cases of corruption against top leaders, bureaucrats and businessmen continues. In this period, Satish Sharma was booked in the JMM affair. His assets run into hundreds of crores of rupees. Big bribes were paid by five big industrialists to him to get the oil-wells contracts. In Tamil Nadu, Jayalalitha was arrested with seven cases against her. Her fabulous wealth shows how public funds were brazenly looted during her regime. The ITC affairs has revealed the large-scale illegal activities in the corporate sector. The LOC scandal in Assam also involves hundreds of crores looted by a politician-bureaucrat-contractor nexus.

It is in this background that the move to exclude MPs and MLAs from the purview of the Prevention of Corruption Act was mooted at a meeting called by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. It was decided to prepare an amendment to the PCA. Our Party has opposed this move. It will be seen as a blatant step to protect corrupt MPs and MLAs.

With the uncovering of a large number of corruption cases among bourgeois political functionaries, bureaucrats and the banking system, pressures are mounting to stop further probes and prosecution of the guilty. The recent government directive to the CBI not to investigate charges of wrong doing by bank officials of the rank of general manager and above without prior permission of the government and the abortive move to include Union Ministers and former ministers in the directive to the CBI which would mean getting prior permission for investigation and prosecution are all indications of how efforts are being made to cover up and protect guilty persons.

Bofors Case

The Bofors investigation has reached a new stage with the handing over of the Swiss Bank records pertaining to the pay-offs made for the Bofors gun deal. Records of some accounts have been handed over to the CBI by the Swiss authorities and the last set of papers pertaining to the remaining accounts are expected to come after the final appeal is disposed off by May. The Bofors kickbacks marked the beginning of the struggle against corruption in high places and it was one of the issues which led to the downfall of the Rajiv Gandhi Government. Previous Congress Governments did everything possible to obstruct or slow down the investigations and to cover-up. It is now imperative that the investigation be speedily completed and there should be no cover-up at any cost. Suspects like Quattrocchi and Win Chadda must be brought back to India for interrogation. Effective steps should be taken to file charges and bring to book all those who are guilty without any consideration for their political affiliations or powerful connections.

The Party should continue to campaign against high level corruption and bring out how people suffer because of the loot of public money by the corrupt nexus.

Punjab Election

The assembly elections have resulted in a sweeping victory for the Akali Dal (Badal)-BJP alliance. They have won 93 seats out of a total of 117 seats. The Congress has won only 14 seats, the lowest ever in Punjab. That the Congress would do badly was widely anticipated as there was a strong anti-Congress trend among the people visible during the run up to the elections. The rampant corruption and misrule which symbolized the Congress regime, the naked factionalism and squabbling for power within the Congress and the rapid change in the Chief Ministers after the death of Beant Singh all led to discrediting of the Congress. The Akali Dal-BJP alliance could also do well because the people expected peace to be maintained by these two parties coming together. However, a dangerous feature in the situation is the fostering of the communal identity propagated that the Akali Dal represents the Sikhs and the BJP the Hindus. This will only strengthen the communal identification which can prove harmful in the future.

A negative feature in these elections was the role of the CPI in the state. The CPI state leadership openly allied with the Congress Party and got 10 seats allotted to them. They conducted a joint campaign with the Congress in many areas. This disrupted Left unity and the central leadership of the CPI could not make the state leadership follow their national political line. This disruption of Left unity has to be strongly condemned. It has had a harmful effect on the electoral prospects of Left. We have to examine the performance of our Party in the context of our inability to make any advance.

Bye-Election

Bye-elections for four Lok Sabha seats and certain assembly seats were held in eight states in February. Though these cannot be seen as conclusive trends they should be noted.

The results show that the TDP has retained its position in Andhra Pradesh by retaining all the three seats which went to the polls. In Karnataka the Janata Dal lost both the sitting seats including the Ramanagar seat which was held by Deve Gowda when he was the Chief Minister. This is a setback for the Janata Dal. The DMK

retained the Pudukottai assembly seat and the Congress the sole seat in Orissa. In Uttar Pradesh the Samajwadi Party and the BJP have won two seats each with the fifth going to the BSP.

The BJP has made gains by winning both the Lok Sabha and assembly seat in Rajasthan wresting them from the Congress. In Madhya Pradesh the Congress bastion of Chindwar (Lok Sabha) has been wrested by the BJP. It also retained the seat in Gujarat. The Congress has done badly except for wresting the seat in Karnataka and retaining its position in Orissa. It has lost all the four Lok Sabha seats. Former ministers Buta Singh in Ropar and Kamalnath in Chindwara, who are both accused in the Hawala cases and who were given tickets this time, have lost.

Uttar Pradesh

The Rajya Sabha elections provided an opportunity to isolate the BJP. An understanding was worked out between the United Front, the Congress and the BSP so that the BJP could win only as many seats as it was entitled to of the eleven seats for which elections were held. For the three bye-election seats, coordination between the anti-BJP forces resulted in the BJP losing all three seats. This further dented the BJP claim that it is in a position to form the government. Soon after this, the Allahabad High Court gave a judgment declaring President's Rule unconstitutional and asking the governor to take steps to see that a government is formed and if necessary to directly convene the assembly to elect a leader. The judgment however stated that the governor does not necessarily have to call the leader of the largest single party to form the government. The Central Government has gone in appeal against the high court verdict. In the meantime, the BJP talks with the BSP broke down because Kanshi Ram was not prepared for a coalition government and wanted BJP to support Mayawati from the outside. Kalyan Singh has not agreed to this and the BJP had to call off their efforts to form the government in alliance with the BJP.

Bihar

The investigation into the fodder scandal has resulted in Laloo Prasad Yadav being drawn into the inquiries. There are indications

that he will be chargesheeted. Meanwhile the state is suffering under gross misrule by his government. Tens of thousand of employees and teachers have not been getting wages for months. The Bihar state committee in consultation with PB decided to come out against all aspects of the anti-people policies. A joint Left rally was held in November in which a state bandh call was given for December 18. The bandh was very successful. The mass support for the Chief Minister is steadily eroding.

Increasingly desperate, Laloo Prasad has been attacking the Left parties. He insists he will continue as Chief Minister even if he is chargesheeted. It is necessary that the Left demarcate from the JD Government and independently launch struggles so that the discontent is not garnered by the BJP-Samata alliance.

Tripura

The situation in Tripura underwent a sharp deterioration in the recent months. The massacre of 25 persons in Kalyanpur in Khowai sub-division by a gang of extremists heightened tensions and threats of communal clashes. The NLFT and the ATTF are making concerted bids to provoke such a reaction by random killings of innocent people. The incidents in Taidu in Amarpur, the arson in Khowai and the recent massacre in Juralbachai show that they are bent upon destabilizing the situation through such violent incidents.

The Left Front and the Party had to take stock of this situation and it was decided that these conspiracies must be foiled by taking firm measures. At the request of the state government, the Centre agreed to deploy the Assam Rifles which is under the jurisdiction of the army to maintain law and order. Closer coordination between the state administration and the army has been established. The continuing incidents of deliberately provoked violence shows the necessity for special steps being taken to curb the extremist violence.

The Left Front Government had given a call to the extremist groups to surrender by 26th January. Though the NLFT and ATTF did not respond a section of the Tripura Resurrection Army led by Dhananjay Riyang has surrendered. The Party in Tripura is constantly conducting political campaigns amongst the people to explain to them the heinous designs of the extremist groups. It is

highlighting the negative role being played by the Congress and the TUJS which wants to foster ethnic divisions as a political weapon against the Left Front.

The Central Government and the democratic forces must extend full support to the Left Front Government and the Party in their efforts to maintain tribal-non-tribal unity and in their mobilization of the people to fight back the chauvinist forces among the non-tribals and the separatist forces among the tribal people.

North-East

The overall situation in the North-Eastern region continues to cause concern. In Assam there was the intensification of the attacks by the Bodo extremists. The bomb blast in the Bramhaputra Mail caused big loss of lives and injuries to innocent passengers. The ULFA is also stepping up its political and coercive activities. There was a bandh call by the ULFA on Republic Day in Assam which was observed. The situation in Manipur and Nagaland continues to be bad with large-scale extortion of regular payments by the extremist groups. There has been no progress at the political level for negotiations with various extremist groups. The recent river water agreement with Bangladesh and the improvement of overall relations has put pressures on the main extremist groups like the NSCN, ULFA, PLA etc. which have been sheltering in the border areas of Bangladesh. A proper approach which understands the political complexities and the ethnic problems in the North-East must be formulated by the Centre so that some of the major grievances of the people which manifest in extremist activities can be tackled, effective development measures taken, while at the same time law and order machinery is geared up to prevent ethnic clashes and violence.

Congress Developments

The tussle within the Congress(I) to oust Narasimha Rao from the leadership of the CPP intensified after Sitaram Kesri became President of the Party. With the growing uneasiness in the party over Rao's negative image due to corruption cases, more and more leaders rallied around Kesri and to remove Rao from leadership.

The CPP executive elections showed Rao's isolation with some of his firm supporters defecting. Despite a near unanimous demand for his resignation from the CPP executive, Rao tried to cling to his post. Finally, Kesri emerged successful in getting elected by consensus as the leader of the CPP. But the problems for the Congress are not over. Sharad Pawar being made leader of the Lok Sabha group has caused discontent among other leaders. Nowhere in this struggle for the control of the party was there any meaningful debate of the need to change the policies which led to the dismal defeat of the Congress in the last general elections. The Congress still harps on the continuation of the economic policies and sets this out as a major condition for its support to the Deve Gowda Government. As long as the Congress sticks to these harmful economic policies and does not show willingness to check corruption among its leaders, it will not be able to regain the mass support it has lost.

Developments in the BJP

The BJP has been struggling to reverse the successive setbacks it has suffered in the recent period. After the failure to win the UP elections, the party saw its government ousted in Gujarat and Vaghela installed as the Chief Minister. Its efforts to form a government in UP or to have an alliance with the BSP have come to nought. In UP, lost all the three bye-elections to the Rajya Sabha. Then it was faced with the crisis in Rajasthan for the Shekhawat Government with a band of dissidents challenging the Chief Minister. It was able to meet the situation in the assembly only by buying up some of the dissenters and forcibly keeping others under guard.

This crisis is the outcome of the efforts of the BJP to expand its base and political influence. A narrow upper caste dominated party based on Hindutva sought to widen its base by including OBCs and schedule castes. These sections have been asserting their right to leadership and the contradictions between the Hindutva outlook and the aspirations of these new sections, apart from the opportunistic struggles, is a major factor for the divisions in the party.

The BJP is striving to recover ground with alliances with regional parties and forces. It forged an alliance with the Akali Dal(B) in Punjab. It has come to an understanding with the Lakshmi Parvati

group in Andhra Pradesh and hoping for an ally in Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu. While the BJP is raising economic issues affecting the people, the VHP is making efforts to revive the Mathura temple-mosque issue which has so far been dormant.

Performance of the U F Government

A major disappointment has been the non-performance of the UF Government during the last winter session of Parliament. In this session, none of the major legislations which could have been adopted were taken up. The one-third reservation of seats for women bill was shelved despite the previous commitment that it would be passed after the Select Committee's recommendation; the central legislation for agricultural workers was not introduced on the plea of some legal difficulties. The Lokpal Bill which was earlier introduced and referred to the Select Committee of Home Affairs is a seriously flawed piece of legislation which can be interpreted as protection for the corrupt. No progress was made in the updating of the Prasar Bharati Act or electoral reforms. While these commitments made in the CMP were not taken up, the government has introduced instead the Insurance Regulatory Authority (IRA) bill which will pave the way for the privatization of the insurance sector.

The record so far of the UF Government shows that it is not serious about implementing any of the measures in the CMP which mean a departure from the framework of the Rao-Manmohan Singh policies and which can provide relief to the people. Apart from the non-implementation of the women's reservation and agricultural labour bill, the updating of the Sarkaria Commission recommendations on Centre-State relations, the recognition of unions through secret ballot of workers, increase in allocations for education, health care, drinking water supply etc. are still not taken up.

On the other hand, the provisions in the CMP to which we object such as disinvestment of PSU shares by setting up the Disinvestment Commission, opening up of the insurance sector, and indiscriminate entry of foreign capital into all sectors without any priority is being pursued vigorously.

Mass Actions

All this results in growing mass discontent. As discussed in the last CC meeting, the mass organizations representing different

sections of the working people have been mobilized for campaigns and movements. The Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU) has announced a phased agitation culminating in a one-day strike of all public sector units on April 2, 1997. Already, since the last CC meeting there has been a successful one day strike by over two lakh insurance employees on December 9 against the decision of the government to introduce the IRA bill. The joint Action Committee of the textile unions conducted a rail and rasta roko on December 30. The anganwadi workers went on a one-day strike on January 31st on their demands. The National Platform of mass organization at a convention in Delhi on December 16 has adopted a declaration where picketing of central government offices will take place on February 25 all over the country followed by rail and rasta roko on March 27 for two hours and then a march to Parliament during the second half of the budget session. The other all India mass organization have also worked out plans for movements and protest actions.

The one-week long strike by the P & T employees and other sections of central government employees for removal of ceiling on bonus ended in success with the government accepting their demand. Our Party's role in firmly supporting the just demands of the employees and intervening with the Centre to get the demands acceded has been widely appreciated by the employees. Because of the Left stand, no victimization whatsoever was resorted to by the government.

While supporting these actions, it is necessary for the Party to also independently organize its own campaigns and movements on issues affecting the people. The Left parties must take the initiative for such struggles and movements so that the discontent is not taken advantage of by the reactionary forces and for strengthening the Left and democratic forces.

All Party committees must realize and educate the activists that sole reliance should not be placed on getting concessions from the government. We must take the initiative to mobilize the people, launch struggles and build up the united movements of all sections of the working people against the negative and harmful policies of the UF Government and the various state governments which are pursuing the said path.

Budget Session of Parliament

In the forthcoming budget session of Parliament our parliamentary group must be alert to see that we raise all the issues affecting the people and demarcate and oppose all the economic policies which will go against the country's interests. While maintaining unity with the United Front constituents to face all attacks by the BJP, our MPs should be able to assert the independent stand of the Party on all such policy matters and people's issues which are within the framework of the old Congress policies. Our effort must be to see that the government fulfill its commitments made in the CMP with regard to legislation and policy measures such as the reservations for women, central legislation for agricultural labour, a proper Lokpal Bill, electoral reforms and so on.

Conclusion

Taking into account the entire situation, the Party must take up the following immediate tasks:

1. We must be vigilant to counter the US imperialist pressures which seek to subvert India's independent foreign policy and security interests. The Party should conduct anti-imperialist campaigns both in solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles abroad and for heightening the people's consciousness about imperialist manoeuvres against India and in South Asia.
2. The United Front government has yet to fulfil many commitments made in the Common Minimum Programme particularly with regard to progressive legislation and measures like the reservation for women bill, agricultural workers bill, Lokpal Bill, electoral reforms, recognition of trade unions by secret ballot and so on. The Party and the various united platforms of mass organizations should take up the movements and campaigns to make the government act on these.
3. The economic policies of the Deve Gowda Government are generating growing popular discontent. We must focus on them to demarcate from the wrong policies, project the Party's independent position and mobilize the working people for struggles. The defence of the public sector, saving jobs,

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fighting back privatization, strengthening public distribution system, implementation of land reforms are issues which require the Party's initiative and the development of class and mass struggles.

4. The communal forces represented by the BJP-RSS and its allies are seeking to utilize the decline of the Congress and the problems of the people to strengthen their position and to renew their bid for power. There should be constant alertness to foil any attempt to raise communal issues. Their divisive slogans must be met politically and ideologically. The opportunism and power mongering within the BJP in states governed by it must be exposed amongst the people.
5. The issue of corruption continues to occupy an important place in the country's affairs. The Party and the Left forces should continue to wage a principled fight to expose corruption in high places and to see that none of the guilty are spared. Campaigns must be conducted to mobilize people to see that all the scandals including Bofors lead to the prosecution of all the guilty person.

In order to take up all these major tasks, the Party at all levels must show initiative to build up different types of struggles. We should strive to strengthen Left unity and build up such movements so that wider sections can be mobilized. It is the popular mobilization and Left initiative which can help to mobilize other secular forces to counter the communal forces and to advance the Left and democratic forces.

CPI(M) Polit Bureau on Rail Budget*

Statement Dated February 26, 1997 Issued to Press

The Railway Budget for 1997-98, presented in Parliament, has tried to avoid increasing the burden on the common people in the matter of passenger fares. There has been no increase in the ordinary second class fares and for season tickets while adding a ten per cent increase for the upper categories. However, the five per cent increase in sleeper class fare is unwarranted, especially as there is a deterioration in the services for passengers in this category.

There is a steep hike of twelve per cent in freight fares, except for essential commodities such as foodgrains, which will further fuel inflation. The budget is commendable for continuing the initiative taken last year of development of railways in backward areas like the north-eastern region. The railway minister has, in a welcome departure from the approach of the Central Government in the recent years, committed to regularizing the fifty-six thousand casual labour employed in the railways by the end of the next financial year.

The budget has, unfortunately, pegged the annual plan outlay for 1997-98 at the same amount as the previous year, i.e., Rs. 8,300 crore. This is due to the absence of sufficient budgetary support for the development of the railways which will have a deleterious effect on improving the maintenance, augmentation of rolling stock and development of the railways. The government has failed to reverse the trend of reduction in outlay for infrastructure development by this retrograde policy of cutting down on budgetary

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support for the railways. With the growing burden of oil imports that will further push up the cost of road transport, it is all the more necessary to strengthen and expand the railway network. Hence the Polit Bureau requests the Central Government to reconsider this matter and increase the funds made available to the railways.

CPI(M)'s Homage to Comrade Deng Xiaoping*

**Statement Dated February 20, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses its deep sorrow at the death of Comrade Deng Xiaoping, a prominent leader of the Chinese revolution and one of the builders of Socialist China.

Comrade Deng Xiaoping, during his seven decades long political life, played an important role throughout the history of modern China. In pre-revolutionary China, Deng's activities included organizing the Communist Party, participating in the Long March and serving as one of the commanders of the People's Liberation Army. After the establishment of People's Republic of China, during the period of the socialist construction, Comrade Deng played a major role through the ups and downs of Chinese history. Deng was the architect of the post-cultural revolution reforms in China.

The CPI(M) recalls the long association that its leadership had with Deng Xiaoping. In 1983, it was under his leadership that the relations between both the parties were re-established.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) dips the Red Flag in homage to the departed leader. The CPI(M) conveys its heartfelt condolences to the leadership of the People's Republic of China, members of the family and the Chinese people. The CPI(M) conveys its condolences to the Central Committee and all members of the Communist Party of China and shares their grief on the passing away of this outstanding Communist leader.

CPI(M)'s Polit Bureau on Union Budget 1997-1998*

Statement Dated February 28, 1997 Issued to Press

Despite the concern expressed by the finance minister over the pro-poor commitments made in the Common Minimum Programme, the substance of the budget is disappointing. It does not make adequate allocations for rural development, infrastructure and the social sectors. And it fails to make a departure from the liberalization initiated in 1991.

While expressing concern over the small share of national income which gets collected as tax revenue, and particularly as direct tax revenue, the finance minister has chosen to provide a range of tax concessions mainly to the rich and resort to substantial reductions in customs duties. The personal income tax concessions amounting to nearly one-third of the current tax rate should have resulted in a fall in tax revenues to the tune of at least Rs. 5000 crore. This does not get mention in the finance minister's speech or in the budget figures, possibly because of the unrealistic presumption that better tax compliance would recoup this loss. Further, corporate tax rates have been reduced and the surcharge abolished, taxes on dividends have been dropped, and capital gains taxes have been reduced in the case of non-resident and foreign institutional investors. These concessions on the direct tax front amount to a significant bonanza for the rich.

The budget also addresses the other principal components of the ideology of liberalization which seeks to open up the domestic economy to foreign producers. Besides launching on the process of opening up the insurance sector, a range of customs duty reductions, resulting in a total revenue loss of Rs. 2625 crore, have

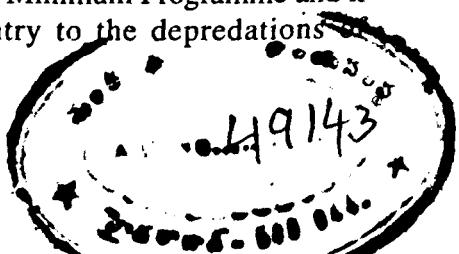
*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, March 9, 1997.

been announced, that cannot but have a deindustrializing effect on domestic industry and serious consequences for the trade deficit.

What this set of concessions adds up to is a strategy in which the state sector's finances would increasingly be based on administered price increases rather than tax revenue. For example, while railway freight and tariff increases have netted Rs.1800 crore and the postal hikes announced in the budget will fetch an amount in excess of Rs. 300 crore, the net loss on account of the tax proposals announced by the finance minister himself works out to Rs.1725 crore. This strategy is faulty, first because it has inflationary consequences.

Secondly, an inadequate tax effort and reliance on other forms of financing central plan outlays can well result in serious shortfalls as happened last year. The revised estimate of central plan outlay for 1996-97 is Rs.77,518 crore as against the budget estimate of Rs. 87,086 crore. The significant increase in central plan outlay as well as in specific sectors like rural development in the budget for the coming year, have been arrived at by making comparisons with these relatively low revised estimates rather than the budget estimates for 1996-97.

Thirdly, such shortfalls force desperate efforts to woo multinational companies to invest in crucial infrastructure sectors. Last year the ONGC's plan investments were Rs. 6190 crore in the budget and were cut down to Rs. 4451 crore in the revised estimates. To meet the consequences reflected in the sharp decline in domestic crude output, the finance minister has offered a range of concessions including seven years tax holidays to oil exploration companies from India and abroad. The implications of this strategy come through from a perusal of the indictment of the government by the CAG with respect to past experiments with such policies. The budget reflects the liberalization ideology in one other significant way, viz., the declaration that capital account convertibility constitutes the "cherished goal" of the country. This "cherished goal" did not figure in the Common Minimum Programme and if realized, would expose the country to the depredations of international speculators.



CPI(M)'s Homage to Comrade Cheddi Jagan*

Text of The Telegram Sent by The General Secretary of The CPI(M) to the Peoples' Progressive Party of Guyana

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) expresses its deep grief and sorrow at the untimely demise of Comrade Cheddi Jagan, President of Guyana.

Comrade Cheddi Jagan was associated with the Marxist movement for over four long decades. Son of an indentured Indian emigrant, Comrade Cheddi Jagan led Guyana to independence from British colonial rule in 1966. Earlier, he was first elected president in the colonially administered elections in 1953. As the head of the Peoples' Progressive Party, he played an important role in Guyana's transition. However, imperialism led by the United States of America and Britain conspired with the active involvement of the CIA to keep Comrade Cheddi Jagan and the Peoples' Progressive Party out of power despite their popularity. Overcoming all such conspiracies and the racial conflict that was sought to be injected by imperialism between people of the Indian origin and those of African origin, Comrade Cheddi Jagan triumphantly bounced back to power in 1992. The Peoples' Progressive Party won the elections ending nearly three decades of US supported administration.

The Central Committee conveys its deep-felt condolences to his wife Janet and children Cheddi Jr. and Nadira and to the people of Guyana.

CPI(M) Hails Agreement On Chakma Refugees*

**Statement Dated March 10, 1997 Issued by The
Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) welcomes the agreement for the repatriation of the 50,000 Chakma refugees to Bangladesh who are now staying in Tripura. The agreement signed by the Bangladesh authorities and the leaders of the Chakma refugees paves the way for the solution of the Chakma refugee problem. The terms of the agreement provides for financial assistance for rehabilitation and provision of land to the landless in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Apart from resolving the long-standing refugee problem, this agreement will contribute to further strengthening of relations between India and Bangladesh.

CPI(M) On Developments in Uttar Pradesh*

**Statement Dated March 19, 1997 Issued by
Harkishan Singh Surjeet, General Secretary
of The CPI(M)**

The BJP-BSP agreement to stake the claim to form the government should end the long period of uncertainty about the formation of the government in Uttar Pradesh. Politically, both the BJP and the BSP have once again exposed their cynical opportunism. It may be recalled that such a short-lived alliance was formed in 1995 also. Now the anxiety to be in power has resulted in a new creative act of opportunism in which the two parties will have chief ministers by rotation for six months each. What will happen when Mayawati's first term as chief minister ends remains to be seen.

The BSP has "defected" to the BJP, abandoning its electoral ally, the Congress(I). For the Congress(I) also, its opportunist stance of insisting that the BSP is consistently secular and Mayawati should be made chief minister, has landed it in an indefensible position. The BSP, as the CPI(M) has been maintaining, has proved to be totally unreliable in the fight against communalism.

CPI(M) Condemns Budgam Killings*

**Statement Dated March 23, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the killings of seven Kashmiri Pandits in Budgam district in Kashmir. The targeting of a particular community reveals the provocative intentions of the criminals. Their immediate motive, obviously, is to hamper the process of the return of the immigrants to the state. This barbarous act has been perpetuated by the extremist groups which are bent on disturbing the atmosphere of peace and normalcy that is developing in the state in the wake of the formation of an elected government. While the All-Party Hurriyat Conference has condemned the killings, it is necessary that the Hurriyat realizes at least now that there are sinister forces which are striving to utilize such incidents to destabilize the emerging peaceful situation in the state.

The Polit Bureau calls upon the people of Kashmir to realize the evil designs of the Pakistan backed fundamentalist groups and unitedly rebuff these provocative terrorist actions. The CPI(M) is confident that the J&K Government will take all necessary measures to strengthen the security of the people and to facilitate the return and re-settlement of the immigrants in the valley.

CPI(M) On Developments in Uttar Pradesh*

**Statement dated March 20, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The BJP and the BSP have come together once again to form the government in Uttar Pradesh. While this decision puts an end to the prolonged stalemate after the assembly elections, there is not much hope that this ramshackle and cynical arrangement will lead to anything resembling stable governance in the interests of the people. That this is a thoroughly opportunistic alliance, forged solely with the aim of sharing power, is evident from the six-month long tortuous negotiations to cobble together this arrangement including denunciation of each other. It will not be able to resolve the basic contradiction between one partner propagating Hindutva and the other championing the Dalit cause and fighting the "Manuvadi" forces.

The BJP-BSP combination has come up with the novel proposal to rotate the chief ministership between the two parties after six months which, in itself, is an admission of their irreconcilable demands for the leadership of the government. The impact of such a cynical arrangement on the administration can well be imagined.

The BSP leadership's "defection" to the BJP side punctures the Congress(I)'s repeated claim that a secular government should be formed with Mayawati as chief minister. It vindicates the position of the United Front not to accept a government under the leadership of Mayawati because of the refusal of the BSP to stand by the principles of secularism. The BSP's second alliance with the BJP once again shows that it is a totally unreliable force to fight communalism.

CPI(M) On High Court Verdict in Hawala Case*

**Statement Dated April 9, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The judgement of the High Court quashing the proceedings against L.K. Advani, V.C. Shukla and the Jain brothers will have adverse repercussions in the prosecution of the hawala cases.

It is unusual for the higher court to quash an FIR or chargesheet when the matter is already before the trial court. It would have been better to leave it to the special court hearing the trial to decide what is admissible evidence. The Jain diaries and papers reveal a systematic account of foreign money received and payments made which is the basis on which chargesheets were framed against a number of top politicians and officials. Some of the recipients have admitted to receiving payments either wholly or in part. This judicial intervention will effectively nullify prosecution in the most serious case of corruption in high places which has come to light since independence.

It is therefore necessary, both in the interest of justice and the fight against corruption, that the CBI go in appeal to the Supreme Court against the judgement.

CPI(M) Condemns Murders of Samajwadi Party Workers*

Statement Dated April 8, 1997 Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses its deep concern at the spate of killings of Samajwadi Party workers in Uttar Pradesh since the BJP-BSP Government took office. In the past one week, eight Samajwadi Party workers have been killed in different parts of the state. The most gruesome incident was the killing of four Samajwadi Party leaders at Varanasi including the president of the Kashi Vidyapith Students' Union and the state vice-president of the Samajwadi Yuvjan Sabha. The Mayawati Government has done nothing to check these murderous attacks.

The BJP-BSP alliance, which was vociferously protesting the deterioration in the law and order situation under President's rule, is now bent upon adopting a vindictive attitude to its political opponents. The Polit Bureau demands immediate action by the Mayawati Government to end these political killings and ensure that the police take prompt measures to arrest the culprits responsible for these murders.

CPI(M)'s Condolence Message on Biju Patnaik's Death*

**Statement Dated April 8, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) expresses its deep sorrow at the passing away of Shri Biju Patnaik, veteran freedom fighter and a prominent political leader of the country. Shri Biju Patnaik was one of the last leaders of the generation who played an active role in the freedom struggle and who served the country in public office for over a period of three decades. His contribution to the anti-imperialist struggle in Indonesia by piloting the plane carrying Sukarno and other leaders out of the country during its independence struggle will always be remembered. In his various stints as the Chief Minister of Orissa beginning from 1961, he emerged as the tallest leader of the state. He also served in the Union Cabinet under different governments. As a leader of the Janata Party and the Janata Dal, he played an important role in building the non-congress secular coalition at the national level.

The Polit Bureau conveys its heartfelt condolences to his wife and family members.

Polit Bureau of CPI(M) Demands Punishment of Murderers of Comrade K. Leelavati*

**Statement Dated April 25, 1997 Issued
to Press**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) vehemently condemns the brutal killing of Comrade K. Leelavati, an elected CPI(M) woman member of Madurai Municipal Corporation, Tamil Nadu. Comrade Leelavati, who was a wholetime cadre of the party and vice-president of the Madurai unit of the AIDWA, was murdered by anti-social elements on April 23 as she proved to be an unrelenting champion of the people's interests and who fought to curb anti-social activities in her constituency.

All those involved in the murder of Comrade Leelavati must be brought to book. The state government must ensure that no one is spared whatever be their political affiliations.

The Polit Bureau pays homage to this valiant fighter of the communist movement and conveys its heartfelt condolences to her husband and daughters.

CPI(M)'s Condolence Message On The Death of Comrade Peng Zhen of China*

During his nearly seven decades long career of revolutionary activities, Comrade Peng played a leading role in the evolution and construction of modern China. He was one of the senior most proletarian revolutionaries of the older generation who steered China through its socialist revolution and the twists and turns of the later period. Comrade Peng steadfastly upheld the revolutionary tenets of Marxism-Leninism. After being purged during the cultural revolution and forced to spend 12 years in rural exile, Comrade Peng returned to the leadership in 1979 and was instrumental in founding the socialist legal system in China to check the arbitrary use of power. Though he gave up official positions in 1987, he continued to play an important role in influencing the policy direction of modern China.

In his death, the international Communist movement has lost a staunch defender of socialism. The Central Committee of the CPI(M) conveys its heartfelt condolences to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and its entire membership.

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, May 4, 1997. CPI(M) General Secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, sent this message on April 28, 1997 to the International Liaison Department of the Communist Party of China.

CPI(M) On Broadcast Bill*

**Statement Dated May 1, 1997 Issued
by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

It is unfortunate that the Union cabinet has decided to go ahead with the Broadcast Bill despite serious objections having been voiced regarding the direction and intent of the bill. The provisions of the Broadcast Bill would lead to a situation where, instead of providing for an autonomous public broadcasting system by updating the provisions of the Prasar Bharati Act, the entire electronic media would be privatized, with foreign media monopolies being allowed a free run. The provision for 49 per cent foreign holding in media companies in India and other facilities extended to foreign satellite channels will swamp the domestic media. It is strange that the aim of the Prasar Bharati Act to provide for autonomy for Doordarshan and AIR and to strengthen the public broadcasting system, initiated by the V.P. Singh Government, is now being undermined by a decision of the Gujral Government.

The CPI(M) calls upon the government not to proceed with the Broadcast Bill and the amendments to the Prasar Bharati Act without having a full discussion on the future of the electronic media in the country.

CPI(M) Polit Bureau's Communique*

Released in a Press Conference Held
in New Delhi on May 5, 1997.

The CPI(M) has warned the United Front Government against any further hike in petroleum prices and said this would have a "cascading effect" on prices at a time when the common man was already reeling under intolerable rise in the prices of even the most essential commodities. It also demanded that the UF Government immediately accept the CBI's proposal to appeal the Supreme Court against the decision of the Delhi High Court in the hawala case, and reiterated that "as soon as the chargesheets are served on all those holding office they should resign, including the Bihar chief minister."

Addressing a Press conference on May 5, 1997 after the two-days' Polit Bureau meeting of the Party held to discuss the political developments since its last meeting in April, CPI(M) general secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, criticized the UF Government for its failure to take steps to benefit the poor and refusal to implement the progressive proposals contained in the Common Minimum Programme.

Surjeet pointed out that the Common Minimum Programme contained "their agenda" (i.e. the pro-liberalization aspect) as well as "our agenda." But unfortunately, the UF Government had not taken a single step to implement our agenda which included land reforms, central legislation for agricultural workers, electoral reforms, the Lokpal Bill, the bill providing secret ballot for trade union membership, etc. "These decisions do not require any money, but the government is simply not bothered about them," he said. He pointed out that not a single minister ever mentioned the need of land reforms and on the question of central legislation for

agricultural labour, the government was adopting delaying tactics on the pretext of consulting the states. "The states, except the Left-ruled states, would never agree because they are dominated by feudal interests," he said, while asserting that the Centre must pass this long-pending bill.

He said not only were these aspects of the CMP completely ignored, the government was going ahead with its economic policies which were adversely affecting the vast majority of the people. Apart from the threatened hike in petroleum prices, the finance minister had also talked of removing subsidies which would take away even the limited relief available to the people. He said, Chidambaram claimed that by removing subsidies, the government would have more funds to spend on health and education. But these were false promises—the government only paid lip service to the idea of providing health, education, housing, etc. The CMP also contained these promises, but no steps had been taken in the direction. Chidambaram, Surjeet added, was least bothered about these measures but was interested only in serving the interests of and earning praises from big business and foreign multinational companies.

Regarding the finance bill, Surjeet said the Left was not just dissatisfied with the budget but had grave misgivings about its implications. The Left parties had already forwarded their amendments to the bill. In reply to a question, he said the opposition to the finance bill would be taken up outside parliament also and "we will mobilize the masses" in a big way against the government's anti-people policies and force them to change it.

Regarding corruption cases, Surjeet urged the government to allow the CBI to appeal against the decision of the Delhi High Court in the hawala case. He criticized the fact that the CBI proposal had been lying with government for the last three weeks and yet no decision had been taken. On the Bihar fodder scam, the Left had made its position very clear—all those who were responsible should be booked and action taken against them.

Surjeet also announced that the Polit Bureau had decided to put before the Central Committee the proposal for holding the next Party Congress in February 1998 at Calcutta. The Central Committee meeting is being held from May 12 to 14, 1997.

The text of the Polit Bureau's communique, issued on this occasion, follows:

Economic Situation

Considering the present economic situation, the Polit Bureau noted that burdens continued to be imposed on the common people through the relentless price rise. The statements by the Prime Minister and the finance minister indicating a further hike in the petroleum prices, will have a cascading effect on the overall inflationary situation thus imposing further burdens on the people. The latest proposal by the finance minister suggesting a drastic, across the board reduction of subsidies, will further contribute to the misery of the people. While such burdens continue to be imposed, the Polit Bureau noted with concern the failure of the United Front Government in implementing the various commitments made in the Common Minimum Programme for providing relief to the common people. Even the proposed PDS has not come into operation.

Apart from the proposals regarding the economic relief, the Polit Bureau expressed concern that many other commitments like the Lokpal Bill, reservation for women, agricultural labour legislation, etc, made in the Common Minimum Programme had also not been brought forward for legislation and implementation. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) urged the UF Government to prioritize its work and implement the promises made to the people.

With regard to the finance bill, the Polit Bureau reiterated the suggestions made by the Left parties in a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has assured to have discussions on the issues raised by the Left Parties before the passage of the finance bill. The Polit Bureau hoped that this would be done even at this late stage.

The Polit Bureau decided to carry forward and strengthen popular struggles against the negative manifestations of the present economic policies.

Corruption

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) called upon the United Front Government to immediately accept the CBI's proposal to appeal

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the Supreme Court against the decision of the Delhi High Court in the hawala case. It is, indeed, unfortunate that pressures from various quarters are being mounted to force the government not to go in for an appeal. Succumbing to such pressures would amount to reneging the assurance made by the United Front to cleanse the system of institutionalized corruption.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) called upon the UF government to immediately permit such an appeal and thus uphold its credibility and commitments.

The Polit Bureau reiterated the earlier demand of the Left parties that as soon as the chargesheets are served on all those holding office, they should resign, including the Bihar Chief Minister. Instead of facing trial, efforts are being made to scuttle the process of investigation. The Polit Bureau called upon the UF government to stand firm in the struggle against corruption and to bring to book at the earliest those found guilty.

16th Party Congress

The Polit Bureau decided to put before the Central Committee, the proposal for holding the 16th Party Congress in February 1998 at Calcutta. This Congress would coincide with the 150th anniversary of the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*. The details regarding the venue, dates and preparatory work will finalized by the Central Committee.

Communiqué Issued by The Central Committee of The CPI(M) Following Its Meeting Held in New Delhi on May 12-14, 1997*

The CPI(M) Central Committee had decided that it was no longer sufficient to fight against the economic policy measures of the United Front Government within the Steering Committee and in parliament and it was time to take the fight into the streets. It had therefore decided to launch a mass campaign from July 15 to 31 to mobilize the people for the implementation of the positive commitments made in the Common Minimum Programme and oppose the measures which went against the interests of the common man, the CPI(M) General Secretary, Harkisan Singh Surjeet, said at New Delhi, May 15, 1997.

Addressing a Press conference on the deliberations of the three-day Central Committee meeting of the Party from May 12 to 14, Surjeet said the CC had endorsed the PB's handling of the crisis following the withdrawal of Congress support from the Deve Gowda Government.

The CC was very critical of the Congress(I)'s decision to withdraw support. Surjeet explained that the CPI(M) went along with the decision to change the leader only because other parties in the UF were not prepared to face elections. The CPI(M)'s aim was to keep the UF united and prevent the Congress from joining the coalition, and it had succeeded on both counts.

Surjeet expressed the Central Committee's strong criticism of the UF's economic policies. While the UF Government had some positive achievements to its credit on the question of federalism, secularism, foreign policy and tackling of corruption, its economic policies were far from satisfactory. Surjeet said the priority for

the government is how to please the multinationals, the big business and foreign capital the priority is not how to help the common man. This was evident from the fact that no previous budget of the Government of India had been hailed by big business to the extent that Chidambaram's latest budget had been. The corporate sector was so happy with the budget that it exerted pressure on political parties to pass the budget even when the very future of the Deve Gowda Government was under a cloud. "They were not concerned about the country—only about the budget. The World Bank and IMF were also very happy with the budget," Surjeet said, pointing out how the government was catering to these narrow interests at the cost of the vast majority of the people.

The Central Committee also demanded resignation of all those involved in the Bihar fodder scandal including the Chief Minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav.

Speaking on the issue, Surjeet said, "We will not allow anyone to remain in office if he is chargesheeted." He said the recent campaign of the Left parties in Bihar calling for Laloo Yadav's resignation had been a big success.

In reply to a question as to why the issue of Laloo's resignation was not taken up in the UF Steering Committee last week, Surjeet said, "All the members of the Steering Committee openly demanded his resignation". They decided that once the chargesheet was filed, he must step down. At that time, members of the Steering Committee were unaware that the CBI had sought sanction from the Bihar governor for the prosecution of the chief minister. This information was received "only after we dispersed," Surjeet said.

Asked if the United Front would ensure his resignation once the chargesheet was filed, Surjeet said, "Yes, the UF is committed to a corruption-free government. The UF image (of fighting against corruption) has to be maintained."

In reply to a question, Surjeet also felt that the Bihar governor should take a decision on the chargesheet as soon as possible since it was an issue before the public with major implications. "He cannot sit on the issue for days together," Surjeet said.

Surjeet also referred to the slanderous charges levelled against him regarding amassing wealth and property. He said three days ago, Laloo Prasad Yadav had talked to him on the phone and said,

"You are my leader, if you bless me, I will make the UF strong." Surjeet said he told him that he did not believe in leaders and followers, but his party was firm on the principle that any person holding public office should resign if chargesheeted in a corruption case. The very next day, stories appeared in a number of newspapers alleging that Surjeet has amassed a lot of wealth. "Let my whole wealth be taken by him alongwith all the fodder," Surjeet said. He also expressed surprise that newspapers could publish such canards about him at this stage after he had spent decades in public life.

Surjeet also said, of late, there was a barrage of attacks against the CBI by a number of political parties because the investigating agency was pursuing cases against people in power. "The attack on CBI is a panicky reaction," he said, referring to the statements made in parliament on May 14, accusing the CBI of making selective leaks in the Bofors case. He said this allegation carried little weight because the whole country had been discussing Bofors for years and no secrets had been revealed. He said the BJP too had started attacking the CBI, perhaps because the CBI had called for a review of the decision to exonerate L. K. Advani of the hawala charges.

In reply to a question, Surjeet denied newspaper reports of an "understanding" between the CPI(M) and Congress in the Punjab Bye-election. He said in the Qila Raipur assembly seat which the Punjab chief minister Prakash Singh Badal had won in the assembly elections, the CPI(M) candidate had stood second securing over 28,000 votes while the Congress had come fourth with around 5,000 votes. Simranjit Singh Mann had got around 14,000 votes. In order to defeat the Akali Dal candidate, a one to one fight was necessary and it was only for this reason that the Congress, on its own, had decided not to put up a candidate in the seat. It was for the same reason that Simranjit Singh Mann was also not fighting this time but there could not possibly be any "understanding" with Mann or with Congress, Surjeet asserted.

In reply to questions, Surjeet said the CPI(M) had decided to consult other parties before chalking out a position on the forthcoming elections to the post of president and vice-president. He said the situation was such that the UF and Congress would have to have an understanding to elect a common candidate. The situation was the same during the last presidential elections but a

way was found out. The CPI(M) had played an important role at that time. This time, some way would have to be worked out, he said, but refused to go into any details at this stage.

Surjeet said the CC had heard a report on the ongoing rectification campaign being conducted inside the Party. He said a lot of deviations including corruption and other vices had entered into the Party and had to be weeded out. The campaign had been completed in most of the states.

On the decision to constitute a commission to update the Party programme as per decision of the 15th Congress. Surjeet said the first meeting of the commission would take place on June 16, 1997.

The Central Committee's communique issued on this occasion, follows.

Stand on Government Crisis

The Central Committee reviewed the political development at the national level since its last meeting held in February. The Central Committee endorsed the stand taken by the Polit Bureau with regard to the crisis created by the withdrawal of support to the Deve Gowda Government by the Congress(I). The Central Committee was of the view that the Congress Party took this indefensible step motivated by its narrow interests as many of the Congress leaders are faced with corruption charges and are unable to reconcile to the fact that it has been losing popular support because of the wrong policies it pursued when it was in government.

The Central Committee expressed satisfaction that the United Front could remain united and tackle the problem created by the Congress action. The formation of the I. K. Gujral Government is an expression of the resolve of the United Front to preserve the secular combination which was formed to fight the BJP and defend secular values. The United Front can be strengthened only if there are no unprincipled compromises made under Congress pressure.

Record of UF Government

It is now nearly a year since the United Front Government took office. The commitment of this government was to defend secularism, strengthen the federal system by restructuring centre-state relations and to provide relief to the people by initiating

suitable economic policy measures. The United Front Government has been able to take positive steps with regard to strengthening federalism, defence of secular values, combating corruption and foreign policy measures to improve the relations with the neighbouring countries. However, the record of the United Front Government in economic policy matters and providing relief to the people by fulfilling its commitments made in the Common Minimum Programme, are unsatisfactory.

Harmful Economic Policies

In the sphere of economic policy, the United Front Government continues on the course set by the preceding Congress Government. Whether it be the disinvestment of public sector shares, failure to revive sick industries, indiscriminate opening to foreign capital, concessions to big business and the affluent — the United Front Government's record is retrograde and harmful.

The Union budget, which has been hailed by big business and foreign capital, will further heighten inequalities and transfer resources from the common people to the rich; it will harm domestic industry, particularly the small scale sector. Except for the Left parties, the United Front constituents are unable to respond to the need for alternative economic policies which will assure a self-reliant economic growth which will also fulfil the aspirations of the common people.

The Central Committee expressed its concern at the steps taken by the United Front Government to denationalize the coal mining sector, privatize the oil industry and for opening up of the insurance sector. The Central Committee resolved to take the lead to oppose these measures.

Failure to Fulfil Commitments

Apart from initiating policies favoured by the IMF-World Bank and Indian big business, the United Front Government has shown a serious weakness to translate its commitments in the Common Minimum Programme which are democratic and favour social justice. Despite repeated promises, the Women's Reservation Bill has been stalled in Parliament. The central legislation for agricultural labour is still to be introduced in Parliament; the Lokpal

Drought Conditions in Orissa

The Central Committee expressed its deep concern at the sufferings of the people in the drought affected areas of Orissa. The severity of the drought has not been properly assessed by the state government and the administration has miserably failed to deal with the situation. The Central Government has also not responded adequately. It is essential that the central government ensure enough funds and the State Government immediately undertake responsibility for drilling of deep tubewells in the drought affected areas. The Central Government and the state government should jointly discuss the long-term measures to be taken to see that the recurring drought conditions are eliminated.

Rectification Campaign

The Central Committee heard a report on the ongoing rectification campaign being conducted inside the Party to remove shortcomings and defects and to streamline the Party's functioning. The discussions on the rectification campaign have been completed in all the state committees and is now being conducted at the district and lower levels.

Updating Party Programme

The Central Committee decided to constitute a commission to update the Party programme as per the decision of the 15th Party Congress. The commission will consist of Harkishan Singh Surjeet, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Jyoti Basu, P. Ramachandran, Sitaram Yechury and Anil Biswas. The commission has been entrusted with the work of preparing a draft of the updated programme to be submitted to the Central Committee.

16th Party Congress

The Central Committee decided to hold the 16th Congress of the Party at Calcutta in February 1998. The Party Congress is being held to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*. The Central Committee worked out a time-table for the holding of Party conferences at all levels prior to the congress.

Report On Political Developments*

**Adopted by The Central Committee of The
CPI(M), in Its Meeting Held in New Delhi
on May 12-14, 1997**

The last CC meeting held between 14 and 16 February, 1997, had reviewed the political developments both in the international and national spheres. It made a sharp critique of the IMF-World Bank dominated policies of liberalization and called upon the Left and democratic forces to organize resistance against these policies. It called upon the Party committees to educate the activists that sole reliance should not be placed on getting concessions and we must take the initiative to mobilize people for struggles and build up the united movements of all sections of the working people against the harmful policies of the United Front Government and various state governments. It asked the Parliamentary group to be alert so that we raise all issues affecting the people and demarcate and oppose all the economic policies which will go against the country's interests. While maintaining unity within the United Front constituents to face all attacks by the BJP, our MPs should be able to assert the independent stand of the Party on all such policy matters and people's issues which are within the framework of the old Congress policies. Our effort must be to see that the government fulfill its commitment made in the CMP with regard to legislations and policy measures such as the reservation for women, central legislation for agricultural labour, a proper Lokpal Bill, electoral reform and so on. Taking into account the entire situation, the Central Committee outlined the following immediate tasks:

*This 'Report on Political Developments' covers the period since the last Central Committee meeting of the CPI(M) held on February 14-16, 1997 (refer Document under Item No. 8 and Document No. 9 of this volume). This was published as a booklet in June 1997 and also covered in a compilation of Central Committee Documents published in October 1998.

- "1. We must be vigilant to counter the US imperialist pressures which seek to subvert India's independent foreign policy and security interests. The Party should conduct constantly anti-imperialist campaigns both in solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles abroad and for heightening the people's consciousness about imperialist manoeuvres against India and in South Asia.
- "2. The United Front Government has yet to fulfill many commitments made in the Common Minimum Programme particularly with regard to progressive legislation and measures like the reservation for women bill, agricultural workers bill, Lokpal Bill, electoral reforms, recognition of trade unions by secret ballot and so on. The Party and the various united platforms of mass organizations should take up the movements and campaigns to make the government act on these.
- "3. The economic policies of the Deve Gowda Government are generating growing popular discontent. We must focus on then to demarcate from the wrong policies, project the Party's independent position and mobilize the working people for struggles. The defence of the public sector, saving jobs, fighting back privatization, strengthening public distribution system, implementation of land reforms are issues which require the Party's initiative and the development of class and mass struggles.
- "4. The communal forces represented by the BJP-RSS and its allies are seeking to utilize the decline of the Congress and the problems of the people to strengthen their position and to renew their bid for power. Constant alertness to foil any attempt to raise communal issues and to bring up divisive slogans must be met politically and ideologically. The opportunism and power mongering within the BJP in states governed by it must be exposed amongst the people.
- "5. The issue of corruption continues to occupy an important place in the country's affairs. The Party and the Left forces should continue to wage a principled fight to expose corruption in high places and to see that none of the guilty

are spared. Campaigns must be conducted to mobilize people to see that all the scandals including Bofors lead to the prosecution of all the guilty persons.

“In order to take up all these major tasks, the Party at all levels must show initiative to build up different types of struggles. We should strive to strengthen Left unity and build up such movements so that wider sections can be mobilized. It is the popular mobilization and Left initiative which can help to counter the communal forces who will seek to diver the discontent of the people and to advance the Left and democratic forces.”

The last three months saw major political developments take place.

Congress Manoeuvre: Withdrawal of Support

Just a few days after the Central Committee meeting, the Congress Party came out with a resolution criticizing the United Front Government. This, however, did not refer to the economic or any other policies of the government. It was mainly confined to complaints that the Congress Party is not being consulted on various issues. It was also a reflection of the inner-party struggle going on inside the Congress. Though a new leadership has emerged with Sitaram Kesri as president, it has not put an end to the inner struggle going on between the various factions inside the Congress. Instead of drawing lessons from their experience and orienting for policy changes, the Congress began asserting to become part of the government. This brought about the crisis between the UF and the Congress.

The Congress was also banking on the differences within the United Front; these were not on policy issues but on personal equations between different personalities and formations. This was so because there are no major differences between them on economic policy. The exposure of various corruption scandals which had earlier involved many Congress leaders and others, now pointed towards the Janata Dal president and Bihar Chief Minister. This had an impact on the United Front itself. A section in the

United Front began echoing the demand for a coalition with the Congress Party in the name of bringing stability in the country ignoring the fact that such a step would be going against the verdict of the people in the last Lok Sabha elections. This resulted in the straining of relations between the United Front and the Congress. Ultimately it led to the sudden withdrawal of support to the United Front by the Congress when the Congress president submitted a letter to this effect to the President Shankar Dayal Sharma on March 30. A day later, this was followed by another letter staking claim to form the government. These letters were written at a time when the Indo-Pakistan secretary level talks were taking place and foreign ministers of non-aligned countries were preparing to meet at Delhi on April 7.

There were some indications that the Congress will follow such a course of action. But our assessment was that the Congress was not in a position to go to the elections and if elections are held they will suffer more losses. We had underestimated the tensions brewing inside the United Front on which the Congress was banking upon.

CPI(M) Stand

The Polit Bureau held consultations about the stand to be taken to meet the situation. In the Steering Committee our Party took a firm position and came out with the suggestion that there should be no question of change of leadership, no coalition with the Congress and that the United Front should remain united. This was supported even by those who had certain reservations. This was followed by discussions with several Congress leaders. It was evident that the dominant section of the Congress was insisting on change of leader of the United Front to disrupt its unity. On April 3 and 4 a special meeting of the PB was called to discuss the situation and it endorsed the stand taken by the Party Centre.

Breakdown of Negotiations with Congress

The President in the meanwhile asked Deve Gowda to seek a confidence vote in the Lok Sabha on April 11. After three to four

days of the Congress president himself came forward with the proposal that he will be content with change of leader of the United Front and that he is prepared to withdraw his letter to the President staking claim to form the government. Hectic discussions took place. There was pressure from within the Janata Dal to concede to the Congress demand. It was the stand of our Party and the Left which came in the way of yielding to their pressure. Discussions between the Congress and the United Front with five representatives from each side were announced. The United Front team consisted of Harkishan Singh Surjeet, Chandrababu Naidu, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Sharad Yadav and Farooq Abdullah while the Congress was represented by Sharad Pawar, J. B. Patnaik, Jitendra Prasad, A. K. Antony and Madhavrao Scindia.

While the Congress president had publicly announced that they wanted a change of leader of the United Front on both days the Congress delegation went on pressing their claim to form the government and seeking the support of the United Front. They argued that since they had extended support to the UF for 10 months, now it was their turn. The UF team pointed out that they had been rejected by the people and it is wrong for them to lay claim to form the government and suggested that they should give some concrete proposals in the interests of the people which the UF will implement. The UF delegation also suggested that a mechanism between the government and the Congress Party be established so that their proposals can be entertained since they are a supporting party. It was also made clear that by raising this question of a government headed by them, the Congress was not serious about the talks but was just wasting time to score points. It is only at the fag end of the two days of talks that they came up with the suggestion to change the UF leader. The UF side stated that it is an untenable position to ask another combination or party to change its leader and such a demand cannot be considered.

The outcome of the talks was reported to the Steering Committee on 10th June and the Left's point of view was accepted and a Press conference was called to reiterate the UF position—no change of leadership, no coalition with the Congress and the unity of the UF to be maintained.

Developments

Before Vote of Confidence

But soon after, rethinking began among the constituents of the United Front about change of leader to avert the crisis. This was a significant development because just a few hours back a decision had been unanimously taken and announced that there would not be a change of leader. Discussions resumed and proposals were mooted in the name of warding off elections. Except for the Left, AGP and Deve Gowda nobody else was prepared to face the elections.

The Steering Committee met on the morning of the 11th and a proposal came from the major constituents that a discussion on the confidence motion should be deferred and we should reopen negotiation with the Congress to find a way out. It was just half an hour before the Prime Minister was to speak. The meeting of the Steering Committee continued after the debate in the Lok Sabha began and ultimately a proposal was mooted that the Prime Minister should not reply to the debate and no voting should take place. While this understanding was being arrived at, our Party leaders took a firm position against it and bluntly stated that we cannot be party to such negotiations. We should not bale out the Congress at this stage. If they insisted on their unreasonable stance let them bring down the government by joining hands with the BJP. Because of this firm stand the Steering Committee reiterated its earlier decision about no change of leadership and no coalition with the Congress. It also decided to take the debate to its logical conclusion. This stand bolstered the Prime Minister's position and as was seen later, the debate against the United Front turned out to be a debate against the Congress Party. The Congress found itself in a miserable position with none of its members coming out in defence of its president's action. The forceful reply given by Deve Gowda had a good impact throughout the country. Up to this point the United Front had the upper hand in terms of initiative and prestige.

In the entire episode beginning with the Congress withdrawal of support to the Deve Gowda Government it was the firm stand taken by the Party and the Left which enabled the United Front to stay together in rebuffing Congress designs to divide the Front and

to make an entry into the government. The vigilance and prompt intervention of the Party leadership in the developing situation played the key role in checking the vacillations and opportunist tendencies of some sections who were prepared to make any compromise with the Congress for the sake of saving the government. Up to the vote of confidence on April 11, it was the Party and the Left's firm position which contributed to the exposure of the Congress's narrow and indefensible action.

Clandestine Bid to Pass Budget

Meanwhile a move was made by the Finance Minister with both the Speaker's consent to somehow or the other get the Union budget passed. Big business interests had become very active to safeguard the bonanza they had received in the budget. It was decided to call a three-day session from 21-23 of April to pass the Finance Bill and the Prime Minister was asked by the President to continue till then. Our Party opposed this move as contrary to parliamentary democratic norms and demanded that instead of the Finance Bill of a government defeated in the House, a vote on account should be passed if such a contingency arises.

Choice of New Leader

However, after the vote of confidence the situation changed. While the Congress Party was in no position to form the government unless it could acquire support from sections of the United Front, this was not possible as no one could leave the United Front at this stage as the people would not tolerate such a defection. The BJP was also not in a position to muster enough strength to get a majority. The whole emphasis of the non-Left United Front partners including a majority of the Janata Dal MPs was to form a government under a new leader with the Congress support. When the Janata Dal leadership itself decided in favour of change of leadership and no partner of the United Front barring the Left and the AGP was prepared to go in for elections, the Left had to yield on the question of change of leadership for the sake of the unity of the United Front.

The convener of the UF Chandrababu Naidu was authorized to consult all the parties to ascertain the opinion of the various

constituents and on that basis decide on the leader who gets the largest support. After two days of consultations various names emerged. Our Party decided that it would be better to have a leader who will be in a position to fight the BJP in its stronghold areas which is the North. It is from this viewpoint that we proposed the name of Mulayam Singh Yadav. Though he was able to muster the largest support among the constituents, a deadlock was created by the stiff-resistance of the Janata Dal president. Finally after all-round consultations the name of I.K. Gujral emerged as the acceptable choice.

Following the UF decision to change the leader the Congress began asserting more. However, on two issues it had to relent following the firm position taken by our Party. It was not prepared to give a letter to the President withdrawing its earlier claim to form the government and extending fresh unconditional support to the United Front. They wanted to give the letter only after the UF had elected its leader. Our Party took a firm stand that we cannot allow the Congress a veto on the question of the UF leader. Since the UF has agreed to elect a new leader, they have no reason not to withdraw their letter and extend support. After two days of deliberations they ultimately had to yield on this and gave in writing to the President extending support to the UF. Following this, the UF elected Gujral. The President then asked Gujral to take oath and prove his majority within a short period of two days.

The next issue was whether the Prime Minister alone would take oath or the whole cabinet. Ultimately due to our intervention it was decided that the old team would remain and after the session is over, reshuffle and expansion can be decided. But on the insistence of the Janata Dal president one of the J.D. Ministers was dropped. The cabinet formation was not to the liking of the Congress Party because it gave the impression of continuity of the same cabinet thereby exposing the hollowness of the Congress efforts.

Gujral had to seek the confidence vote on April 22. This debate was different from the earlier one of April 11. Though both were for the United Front Governments the tenor of the debate was quite different. In this debate both the Congress and the BJP concentrated their fire against the United Front. The Congress speeches justified

their withdrawal of support to the Deve Gowda Government. The BJP unleashed an attack against the United Front targeting the CPI(M) in particular. This was understandable given the fact that the CPI(M) and the Left are consistent fighters against communalism and are exposing the conspiracies and misdeeds of the BJP. But Vajpayee found himself cornered and was unable to answer questions related to Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura raised by some members. The negative part however was that speakers from the United Front did not meet the virulent attack on the United Front both from the Congress and the BJP benches. Even the interpretation of secularism given by Vajpayee was left unchallenged. The Prime Minister in his reply also evaded these issues and made an appeal for unity and cooperation. One can understand his approach to the Congress, given the fact that it is a supporting party, but what about the BJP toward off whose danger the United Front was formed. In fact the Prime Minister went to the extent of announcing that Vajpayee will lead the Indian delegation to the UN. It can be understood that speaking for the first time as Prime Minister he had to make an appeal for cooperation. But if this is pursued it will weaken the basis of the formation of the front itself and ultimately endanger the government itself. Already the Congress has started projecting that it will have a greater say in the functioning of the UF Government.

We have always been of the firm opinion that the unity of the United Front can only be maintained on the basis of the performance of the United Front Government on various policy questions and on the basis of principles which underline its formation. After the vote of confidence, parliament was adjourned till 30th of April. All the parties started working out their strategies for the session.

Bihar Fodder Scandal: Janata Dal Problems

Inside the Janata Dal a serious crisis has developed with the CBI submitting its progress report to the Patna High Court and making known its intention to charge a host of politicians including Laloo Prasad Yadav. The Left parties immediately demanded his resignation. The BJP and Samata Party had already demanded that he resign. This issue was raised in parliament also. But as the charge-sheet was yet to be filed the debate could not be taken

further. Now, however, since the CBI has sent the chargesheet to the Governor for his sanction to prosecute Laloo Yadav, this will remain a burning issue in the coming days with serious implications. Laloo Prasad refused to quit. He charged that vested interests and certain political parties were conspiring against him. Despite his efforts he has not been able to gather mass support which he enjoyed earlier because his involvement in the fodder scandal has tarnished his image. A section from his party including some minister came out against him demanding his resignation. The BJP-Samata Party called for a Bihar Bandh on May 3. The Left parties are separately agitating on this issue and demanding his resignation. Subsequently the CPI(ML) and the Samajwadi Party also joined with the Left on this issue. They are holding demonstrations and mobilizing the people. It is only the Congress Party which is remaining silent. It might be due to the Congress president's sympathy for Laloo Yadav as well as the involvement of Jagannath Mishra in the scandal. Laloo Prasad has taken a stand that even if he is chargesheeted he will not resign and has threatened that if the United Front takes a stand asking him to resign he will revolt and set up his own party. The issue had led to a crisis which threatens the unity of the Janata Dal.

Stand on Finance Bill

After the last CC meeting, the Union budget was presented by the Finance Minister in the parliament. It went a step further than even Manmohan Singh's budgets, giving enormous concessions to the multi-nationals and Indian big business throwing burdens on the common man. The budget got exceptional praise from the IMF and big business and they began openly lobbying for it. A delegation of Left parties met the Prime Minister and presented a memorandum of amendments. Though the Prime Minister's attitude was not negative nothing emerged. The Polit Bureau came out with a sharp criticism of the budget and instructed our MPs to attack it. The Finance Minister refused to accept any of the amendments suggested by the Left parties in its memorandum. After such a stance, the Polit Bureau after assessing the situation should have directed our MPs to walk out in protest against the adoption of the Finance Bill in the Lok Sabha to demarcate our position sharply.

Situation of Other Political Parties

BJP

The situation in the major political parties like the Congress and the BJP is also not good. With the continuation of the United Front in government and the failure of the BJP to topple the Vaghela Government in Gujarat, crisis developed in the Rajasthan BJP also. The BJP resorted to counter manoeuvres by agreeing to a power sharing agreement in Uttar Pradesh sharing ministerial berths equally and agreeing on a rotation system of Chief Ministership and installing Mayawati as the Chief Minister for the first six months. During the elections both the BSP and the BJP fought against each other on the slogan of Hindutva and the former against the Manuwadi forces. It is an unprincipled alliance and full of contradictions. The basic contradiction is that the BJP advocates Hindutva and the BSP sees them as proponents of Manuwad. It may be recalled that the BJP had withdrawn support to the last government that was headed by Mayawati in 1995. These elections were held after the fall of that government. Now again they have come to an understanding which is not durable.

Whereas the BJP has got its solid base mostly among the upper castes, the BSP following is in direct conflict with these very sections. This is seen by the reactions of the people to the installation of this government. It is because of this factor that within six weeks of coming into office of this government cracks have started surfacing. The BJP leader Kalyan Singh who himself comes from a backward community and who is to take over as Chief Minister six months later, as per the arrangement, is being by-passed. Kalyan Singh all through was opposed to this understanding with BSP. He was confident that once he is sworn in he will be able to muster enough numbers to prove majority. On the question of the bifurcation of his home district Aligarh and its renaming, he was not taken into confidence. He has openly come out against this. From Mayawati's actions it seems that she is working in such a way that after the expiry of six months some sort of crisis situation is created whereby she is able to continue.

As we have stated in our earlier reports, inner contradiction is very much there inside the BJP with the basic slogan of Hindutva

and the expansion of its base among the backwards. We should watch how this situation develops. One thing is very clear that the BJP is prepared to compromise any principle to come to power. It seems to have realized that on its own it will not be able to come to power. It has to cover up its appeal of Hindutva and is toying with the idea of the formation of a National Democratic Front in which it hopes it will be able to rope in various regional parties. The BJP which was opposing the Akalis for the last one decade due to its support to the extremists has now joined with it both in Punjab and at the Centre. It helps the penetration of communal feelings among both the communities which serves the purpose of the BJP. Under the cover of the National Democratic Front they intend to rally some other regional parties too and may come out with a platform which does not openly mention Hindutva. Earlier also on many occasions they have changed their slogans to suit the requirements of the situation. But it must not be forgotten that behind the BJP is the RSS and ultimately it is the RSS which determines the fate of the party and they would not like any deviation from the cause of Hindutva which they are advocating.

In the meantime the Delhi High Court squashed the charge-sheet filed against BJP president L.K. Advani in the hawala case. Utilizing this opportunity the BJP announced that Advani would conduct another rathyatra to mobilize support for the BJP. Though the programme is ostensibly to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Indian Independence, the BJP hopes to utilize this rathyatra to propagate its Hindutva politics and the utmost vigilance should be exercised to see that communal tensions are not created by the BJP propaganda during the campaign.

Congress Party

The Congress Party is still the biggest political force in the country. It had secured 28.8 per cent of the votes in the last parliamentary elections. We had noted in the earlier CC meeting that after its rout in the parliamentary elections it faced a serious crisis. This crisis got further aggravated with the exposure of innumerable scandals involving a large number of former ministers including the former Prime Minister. It has not self-critically

thought about its defeat and drawn proper lessons from it. The disruptive role and brinkmanship resorted to in the sudden withdrawal of support to the UF Government has also had an adverse impact amongst the people against the Congress. The Congress therefore is depending mostly on combinations and permutations. The internal quarrels are not confined to the centre along. They have spread over to the states where two or three factions are working against each other openly. The whole concentration is now on the party elections. Many compromises are being worked out. Sitaram Kesri will be able to get elected as the new president. But that will not lead to the consolidation of the Congress Party. In this context the entry of Sonia Gandhi as a member of the party has acquired great importance. Sonia Gandhi enjoys blind support of many leaders. She will not strive for the leadership at present but will be able to influence the composition of the working committee. Certain groups which are now outside may rejoin the Congress.

It is only by the middle of next month that a clear picture will emerge. Unless the Congress changes its policies radically in the realm of economic policies and its compromising attitude towards the communal forces it can't regain the confidence of the minorities and the poorer sections of the population. Whatever manoeuvres it makes it will not be able to gain power. It now has only 142 out of the 545 members in the Lok Sabha and has governments in only four states, apart from some of the smaller north-eastern states.

United Front: New Situation

The United Front which came into being to ward off the danger of the BJP coming to power has not been able to consolidate its position by implementing policies benefiting the people which could have helped it project a viable alternative. With the change in leadership at the Centre this task has become difficult as the Prime Minister has no strong base. The performance of the government has yet to make a mark. The case of Bhabani Sengupta is a pointer. In fact after the second UF Government has come into being the United Front is relatively weakened. This can benefit only the BJP and the Congress. In this context, it is necessary to activize the United

Front. However, if certain groups persist with their line of a coalition with the Congress, it will pose serious danger to the unity of the Front. This tendency will have to be fought firmly.

It must be noted here that the big business and the imperialists do not want this alternative to emerge stronger. They are making conscious efforts to divide the United Front and to isolate the Left. Imperialism does not want the Left's influence on the government's foreign policy whereas the big business is averse to the Left's position on economic policy. Certain sections within the United Front also are targeting the Left. It is not easy for them to succeed. Though the Left is not strong in the country as a whole its political impact cannot be ignored. It provides credibility to the United Front. Therefore the UF cannot completely ignore the views of the Left on various issues.

On a number of issues, the Left has had to intervene so that the UF Government does not adopt erroneous policies. The UF government had introduced a Lokpal Bill which was not in consonance with the requirements to fight corruption and in fact was biased towards those accused of corruption. That bill has now been subject to a number of amendments in the Standing Committee on Home Affairs on our initiative. It is now for the government to bring a redrafted bill. Similarly with regard to the Broadcasting Bill we have come out in opposition to the major provisions in the bill and it is to be re-discussed. Despite opposition from certain sections and the Janata Dal, we are continuing to mount pressure to see that the Women's Reservation bill is taken up in parliament. We are also paying attention to get the revamped PDS system implemented as a priority task.

In all these matters we have to continue to actively intervene in the United Front, particularly on the issues which are agreed upon in the CMP. It is only if we organize mass struggles can they be implemented. As far as economic policies are concerned, we cannot expect any change in the basic policies and therefore we have to mount resistance to the pro-bourgeois-landlord policies. We should be vigilant to see that while we work in the United Front nothing is done to weaken these struggles. Even in relation to other issues other than the economic sphere like defence of national unity and

fighting communalism, the struggle against liberalization policies will help in these tasks.

It is in this background that we have to work to strengthen the United Front. Otherwise the field will be left open to the BJP and the Congress and the people will get demoralized if they see there is no alternative which can defend national unity and provide relief to the people to the extent possible.

We are not dealing here in detail with the performance of the government. It has certain achievements to its credit in the sphere of foreign affairs, Centre-State relations, exposing corruption scandals strengthening the federal structure. At the same time, the dangerous World Bank-IMF dominated policies of liberalization which threatens the economic sovereignty of the country continues to be pursued. During this period, policies harmful to the working class such as the decision to denationalize the coal mining sector, the ordinance to privatize power transmission and further concessions to foreign capital have been given. The Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill is pending in parliament. We have to carry on the struggle against these policies inside the United Front, in parliament and outside.

Role In Parliament

In this respect our parliamentary group has to be very vigilant. At times they forget that while cooperating with the UF we have to firmly defend the interests of the working class and the toiling millions and arouse the masses against the economic policies of liberalization which are aiming at subjugating our economic independence. The experience of Latin American countries and other places in the world go to show that it has disastrous effect on these countries and has led to instability. The Party Centre has been constantly trying to give guidance to the parliamentary group. Even then its work is not commensurate with the requirements of the situation. In this situation the Party has to shoulder a big responsibility in shaping the political direction which the country has to take. This can be done by strengthening the activity of the Left forces. In this respect we reiterate the tasks formulated in the last CC meeting mentioned earlier.

Mass Movements

In the task of developing mass movements and struggles, the Party could not devote sufficient attention in this period because of the preoccupation of the Party leadership with the governmental crisis which developed and its political consequences. However, various mass movements and activities took place. The call of the National Platform of Mass Organizations for a rail/rasta roko protest on March 27 was widely observed. Protest actions to block rail or road traffic took place all over the country in which tens of thousands of volunteers participated. The Orissa State unit conducted a campaign for the development of Orissa and over 3,000 people came to Delhi to submit a memorandum to the Planning Commission. The mass organizations have been conducting various mass mobilizations. The Left led agricultural workers unions organized a joint demonstration to parliament on March 12 demanding the adoption of a Central legislation for agricultural labour. On March 3 there was an all India rally by the beedi workers union affiliated to the CITU before parliament. Agricultural workers struggle for wage have taken place in various places in Andhra Pradesh. In Rajasthan there was a three-day mass dharna by thousands of peasants outside the state assembly for demanding adequate supply of electricity which successfully culminated with their main demand being accepted. The women's organization has been conducting mobilization for the women's reservation bill being adopted. A big women's rally was organized at Calcutta and in Patna there was a demonstration against atrocities on women. In Haryana the prolonged strike of municipal workers concluded with a settlement of their demands while in Bihar the state government employees strike is continuing for over two and a half months.

The conditions of the people particularly the rural and urban poor, have worsened. There is relentless price rise accompanied by the continuing curtailment of the public distribution system, the problem of unemployment is getting acute; the living conditions of the people with regard to supply of water, electricity, health facilities and public transport are worsening. The cuts in government expenditure in infrastructure and the social sector has the worst impact on the common people.

With the continuance of the harmful economic policies, the discontent of the people is growing steadily. The efforts of the BJP and other reactionary forces are directed towards capitalizing on this mass discontent. That is why it is all the more necessary to step up the fight against these policies. The resistance to the liberalizations onslaught must be put up in all forms by mobilizing the people and propagating our alternative policies.

Call for National Campaign

The Central Committee therefore decided to launch a mass campaign to mobilize the people to demand the implementation of the commitments made in the Common Minimum Programme by the UF Government and also to oppose measures which adversely affect the working people and the country's self-reliance.

The Central Committee called for a two-week national campaign from July 15 to 31. The campaign will focus on the following demands:

- 1) Stop the dismantling of the public sector through the disinvestment in the profitable PSUs and those in the core and strategic sectors;
- 2) Take immediate steps to revive sick units in the public and private sector;
- 3) Strengthen overall the Public Distribution System and effectively implement the subsidized prices for people below the poverty line;
- 4) Stop opening up the insurance sector and withdraw the Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill;
- 5) Increase the funds allocated for agriculture and rural development; adopt the agricultural labour legislation for the benefit of agricultural workers;
- 6) Adopt the Women's Reservation Bill, pending before parliament;
- 7) Introduce legislation for recognition of trade unions by secret ballot; and
- 8) Adopt the revised Lokpal Bill for curbing corruption in high places.

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It is on this charter of demands that the entire Party should campaign in all the states during the fortnight. State level rallies and public meetings in important centres should be held to be addressed by national leaders of the Party.

It is imperative that the Party take the lead at the national level to initiate mass movements and struggles on the vital problems affecting the people and on important political questions. The forms of struggle will depend on the correlation of class forces in different areas. They will have to be evolved by the state committees. We should draw in these struggles the mass rallied behind the other political parties because their interests coincide with the interests of their class brethren. A proper approach has to be taken for mass campaign. In this connection the unity of the Left forces acquires added importance. Every effort must be made to further strengthen this unity. It is through the united struggles and the mass mobilization that the Left will get strengthened and we will be able to conduct the struggle effectively in parliament and in the United Front. It is by advancing on this path that the Left will be able to rally all the democratic and secular forces in the country.

CPI(M) Demands Special Parliament Session for Consideration of The Constitutional Amendment Bill for Reservation of One-third Seats for Women in Parliament and Legislatures*

Statement Dated May 17, 1997 Issued To Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly deplores the concerted bid made in the Lok Sabha to prevent consideration of the constitutional amendment bill for reservation of one-third seats for women in parliament and legislature. The Lok Sabha witnessed the strange spectacle of a prominent leader of the Janata Dal opposing the Prime Minister moving the bill for consideration, when the party as a constituent of the United Front is committed to one-third reservation for women in the Common Minimum Programme.

Whenever a progressive legislation is sought to be introduced, it meets with opposition from socially conservative and fundamentalist forces. The commitment to provide reservation for women was made by all the national parties in their election manifestos in the last general elections. The people must know which are the parties which uphold this commitment and who are going back on it. It is essential that the government firmly go ahead with the resolve to adopt the bill by holding a special session of parliament.

CPI(M) Polit Bureau on Government's Delaying Appeal in Hawala Case*

Statement Dated June 5, 1997 Issued to the Press

It is nearly two months since the Delhi High Court Judge pronounced judgement squashing the proceedings against the BJP leader L.K. Advani and the Congress leader V.C. Shukla in the Jain hawala case. There has been widespread concern that the biggest corruption scandal in independent India will escape the judicial process and prosecution of the guilty, due to this judgement. The CPI(M) has demanded that the CBI go in appeal to the Supreme Court against this judgement. Subsequent to this judgement the special court has discharged many of those accused in the case, including the Jain brothers.

The CBI has decided to go in appeal to the Supreme Court on the High Court judgement, but it is six weeks since this matter was referred to the government. It is surprising that the Gujral Government has not given clearance to the CBI to file the special leave petition in the Supreme Court. The delay caused by the government's inaction is inexplicable and serious doubts arise about powerful pressures working to see that the case is given a decent burial. The government owes an explanation to the people. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands that the CBI be immediately allowed to go in appeal to the Supreme Court in the matter.

CPI(M) On Jabalpur Earthquake Demanding Immediate Relief to Effected People*

**Statement Dated May 23, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses deep shock and grief at the death and destruction caused by yesterday's earthquake in Jabalpur. The quake has left nearly 50 killed, several hundred injured and rendered thousands homeless.

The state administration must take immediate steps to rehabilitate people whose houses have been destroyed. This task acquires priority given the scorching summer heat. Measures to prevent the outbreak of any epidemic should be initiated on a war-footing. The state government should provide adequate relief material to the affected. The centre should rush immediate help and assistance to the State Government to tackle the situation.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) conveys its heartfelt condolences to the families of the grieved. It sends its sympathies to those who have been injured.

CPI(M) Condemns Tripura Killings*

**Statement Dated June 12, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) expresses its deep indignation and concern at the killing of 18 people in an attack by the recently outlawed National Liberation Front of Tripura. Members of this organization attacked a GREF party on the Chowmanu-Govindbari road in Dhalai district killing 18 people and injuring ten.

This is not the first such attack. The GREF has undertaken the work of construction of the border from Chowmanu to Govindbari. Without this road this whole area is most inaccessible, sparsely populated by tribals and with a dense forest. The extremist organizations have been thwarting the construction of this road fearing curtailment of their activities. The Tripura Left Front has called for a 24-hour bandh today (June 12) in protest against this heinous attack. Similar call has been given by other political organizations.

The place of the incident falls within the jurisdiction of the disturbed areas. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M), while strongly condemning this incident, calls upon the armed forces to ensure peace and normalcy in the region.

CPI(M) On Appointment of Chancellor of Jamia Milia*

**Statement Dated June 22, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The appointment of a retired army general as the vice-chancellor of Jamia Milia has come as a surprise, and it has disturbing implications for the running of universities. Jamia Milia is a central university which has its own distinctive character. It is incomprehensible why the selection committee could not choose a person of high academic repute to head the university. A general who has rendered meritorious service in the army is, nevertheless, not the person to head an academic institution, particularly a central university which is governed by an Act of parliament.

The issue is a fundamental one regarding how universities should be run. Already in some of the states it has become a common practice to appoint police officers as vice-chancellors. Now this has been taken a step forward by inducting a senior retired army official. This trend has naturally raised apprehensions among all those who are concerned about the preservation of democratic and academic values in higher education. The CPI(M) shares this concern and draws the attention of the government that such steps are inimical for the future development and integrity of higher education.

CPI(M) Demands : Abandon V.D.I. Scheme*

**Statement Dated June 19, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The serious misgivings voiced about the amnesty scheme for economic offenders in the Union budget have now come true. The Voluntary Disclosure of Income (V.D.I.) Scheme announced, makes it clear that a large number of serious cases involving hawala transactions and laundering of black money which are currently being investigated, will be abandoned under the provisions of this scheme. The chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes has quoted the provisions of the scheme to state that only those who have already been served detention orders are ineligible to avail this scheme. All others under investigation can resort to this scheme to get total immunity.

Despite efforts by the finance ministry officials to clarify and correct this impression, the provisions in the scheme are exactly what has been stated by the chairman of the CBDT.

The Voluntary Disclosure Scheme is unjustifiable both on economic and moral grounds. It penalizes the honest tax payers, provides for no penalties for tax offenders, and will provide immunity for all those who have indulged in a range of economic offences which are punishable. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M), therefore, calls upon the Union Government to immediately suspend the implementation of this scheme. In no way should those being investigated for FERA and related offences be able to seek immunity under the scheme. The Finance Minister has to come out clarifying the grave doubts which have been raised about the intentions of this scheme.

Condolence on the Death of Comrade Yamuna Prasad Shastri*

**Statement Dated June 20, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses its deep grief at the sudden passing away of Comrade Yamuna Prasad Shastri, member of the CPI(M) state secretariat of Madhya Pradesh and veteran leader of the Left and democratic movement. Comrade Shastri died on 20th morning at Bhopal after a cardiac-asthma attack. He was 70 years old.

Comrade Yamuna Prasad Shastri was an indefatigable champion of the people's interests and one of the prominent socialist leaders thrown up by the mass movement in Madhya Pradesh. A fiery patriot, he joined the freedom struggle as a young student. He participated in the Goa liberation struggle in 1955 where he was beaten by the Portuguese police which led to his losing sight in one of his eyes. He became subsequently blind in the other eye while in jail during the Emergency. Yamuna Prasad Shastri began his career as a socialist leader who soon established himself as a consistent champion of the working class and the peasantry. In the sixties he was twice elected to the legislative assembly. After the Emergency, Shastri became the leader of the Janata Party and later the Janata Dal. He was elected to the Lok Sabha twice in 1977 and 1989 from Rewa. He joined the CPI(M) in 1993 and became an active leader of the Party.

In his death, the CPI(M) and the Left and democratic movement in Madhya Pradesh have lost a tireless champion of the people who devoted his whole life to public service. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) conveys its heartfelt condolences to his bereaved family members.

CPI(M)) Opposes Draft Civil Aviation Policy*

**Statement Dated June 28, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The draft civil aviation policy proposed by the government is a retrograde step which is harmful for the country's interests. The thrust of the policy is to throw open civil aviation to the market forces. The policy specifies that the share of the public sector and the private sector operators shall be 50 per cent each. The recent dismal experience of private airlines folding up shop does not deter the ministry of civil aviation from suggesting more liberal concessions to the same private sector which launched these ill-conceived ventures.

Further, despite the strong opposition voiced to the entry of foreign airlines into the domestic sector during the Deve Gowda Government, the draft policy advocates 40 per cent foreign equity participation in domestic airlines which will be open to foreign airlines. This is going back on the policy decided by the cabinet under the Deve Gowda Government just a few months ago. The foreign investment proposals for airport construction and maintenance facilities provides for privately owned airports and facilities with foreign equity.

The draft policy unashamedly espouses a purely market approach to the development of civil aviation. The north-eastern and other far-flung routes which are commercially unattractive as they are pegged to lower fares will be de-regulated, so that fares can be hiked up as per the interests of the private operators. This will have serious repercussions for the people of the north-east and other remote areas.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses its strong opposition to these short-sighted and motivated proposals. The draft policy, if

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adopted, would mean a total sell out to the big business lobby. It is imperative that the Gujral Government not proceed with such a harmful policy, and allow a full debate in Parliament and all other relevant forums before coming to a final decision.

CPI(M) On Removal of CBI Director*

**Statement Dated June 30, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The removal of Joginder Singh as the CBI director is a deliberate move to hamper and cover up the investigations into corruption in high places. It comes at a juncture when the CBI is in the midst of investigations and prosecution of current and former top public servants in cases such as the Bofors, hawala, fodder and the ongoing cases against Union ministers of the former government. This hurried action has tarnished the image of the Gujral Government since the United Front has clearly stood for curbing corruption in high places. It will provide a handle for those forces inimical to the United Front such as the BJP. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands that there should be no hindrance or interference in the drive to identify those involved in corruption cases and bringing them to trial.

CPI(M) Condemns Bomb Explosion in Passenger Train Near Bhatinda in Punjab*

**Statement Dated July 9, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses its deep shock and condemnation of the bomb explosion in a local passenger train near Bhatinda in Punjab yesterday (July 8). Thirty four persons have been killed in this ghastly outrage. This is the fourth bomb explosion in Punjab since the new government assumed power, indicating the renewed efforts by extremist groups to strike terror.

These bomb blasts are a serious warning that efforts are once again being made to disturb the situation after peace and normalcy was restored in Punjab. The people of the state are naturally concerned about these sinister activities. The state government has been complacent about the renewed threats. It cannot afford to take it for granted that peace and normalcy will continue unless vigilance is maintained and vigorous efforts are made to track down the culprits responsible for these attacks.

On The Proposed Government Move on The Question of Appointment of Judges*

**Letter Dated July 8, 1997 Written by
Harkishan Singh Surjeet, General Secretary of
The CPI(M) to Shri I.K. Gujral, Prime Minister of India**

I have just returned from a visit abroad to learn that the government is once again proposing to introduce Constitution amendment bill to restore the pre-1993 position on the appointment of judges. The law minister has made such an announcement after the conclusion of the conference of law ministers held in New Delhi on the 1st of July. I am really surprised at this stand taken by the law minister when this question has already been discussed a few months ago and it was decided not to proceed with such a measure.

Let me recall that such a proposal for constitutional amendment was mooted by Mr. Khalap during the Deve Gowda Government and our Party and some other parties had stated that it would not be correct to move for the pre-1993 position. We had advocated, instead, the formation of an independent National Judicial Commission for appointment of judges to the High Courts and the Supreme Court. This is also the view of many distinguished jurists and the bar. At a time when public opinion is exercised about the failure of the executive on many counts, particularly in dealing with cases of corruption, such a move as proposed by the government will be short-sighted, leading to grave apprehensions about curtailing the independence of the judiciary.

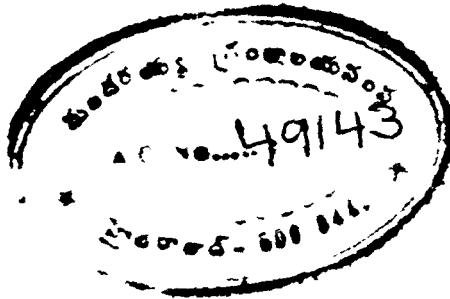
I hope you will immediately intervene to see that this proposal is dropped forthwith and steps initiated for the constitution of a National Judicial Commission.

CPI(M) Condemns Pressure On Judges*

**Statement Dated July 15, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The PB of the CPI(M) expresses its strong condemnation at the attempt of certain interested persons for putting the Chief Justice and other Supreme Court judges under "persistent pressure" to withdraw from the hearing of the hawala case as revealed by the Chief Justice of India. The CPI(M) has been expressing its strong apprehension and deep concern at the tardy progress of the investigations, inordinate delays on the part of the government in taking appropriate decisions such as filing appeals etc. sudden change of the investigating officers in order to scuttle the investigations in cases like hawala, Bofors, Indian Bank etc. The shocking revelations of the Chief Justice of India has confirmed the apprehensions and concerns expressed by the CPI(M).

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) urges upon the government to come forward to show its sincerity in expediting the process of law for booking the culprits in all corruption cases. Any failure on the part of the government will be considered by the public that the government is trying to shield the guilty.



CPI(M) Condemns Firing On Dalits*

**Statement Dated July 11, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the brutal police firing in north-east Mumbai today which has left ten persons dead and 25 injured. Most of those killed are young men. The police resorted to this outrageous action against a crowd of people who were protesting the desecration of a statue of Dr. Ambedkar.

The severity and disproportionate nature of the police action against the Dalit protesters is a blot on the Shiv Sena-BJP Government. The Shiv Sena has been openly hostile to the rights of the Dalit people. All democratic forces must strongly protest against this barbaric action.

The Polit Bureau demands a judicial enquiry into the firing and disciplinary action against the police officials responsible for the firing.

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, July 20, 1997. Refer Document under Item No. 2 of this Volume. 'Dalits' belong to the lowest rung of the 'caste system' of the Hindus in India.

Condolence On Passing Away of Comrade A. Nallasivan*

Statement Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) expresses its profound grief at the passing away of Comrade A Nallasivan, veteran leader of the CPI(M) and front-ranking Communist leader of Tamil Nadu. Nallasivan was incapacitated due to illness in the last two years. He was aged 75 years.

Comrade Nallasivan was a member of the Central Committee of the Party. He was a member of the Polit Bureau till 1995 and served as secretary of the Tamil Nadu state committee of the Party for over a decade.

Comrade Nallasivan joined the Communist Party in 1940. He began his political activities as a trade union worker. He became a prominent leader of the trade union and Party in Thirunelveli district. Nallasivan served as a member of the state council of the undivided CPI from 1959 to 1964. He joined the CPI(M) at the time of the split. After the formation of the CPI(M) he played an important role in the building of the Party in Tamil Nadu. He was a member of the state secretariat from 1968 to 1981. He became the secretary of the state committee after 1981 and continued in that post till 1994. It was during this period that Nallasivan played a key role in the development and expansion of the Party. He made a major contribution in building a leadership team in the Party and fostering collective style of functioning.

Comrade Nallasivan's contributions to the development of the trade union movement in Tamil Nadu is also noteworthy. He was the secretary of the CITU state unit for a decade from 1971 to 1981. His understanding of the workers' problems and his work as

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, July 27, 1997.
Comrade A. Nallasivan died on July 20, 1997.

a trade union organizer helped in making Tamil Nadu one of the strongest centres of the CITU. He was a member of the Tamil Nadu legislative council from 1978 to 1984 and a member of the Rajya Sabha from 1989 to 1995.

Comrade Nallasivan was known for his modesty and simplicity. He had deep concern for the Party cadres and endeared himself to all those who came in contact with him. A dedicated Communist committed to Marxism-Leninism, he led an exemplary life.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) deeply mourns the loss of this valued comrade and pays respectful homage to his memory. It sends its heartfelt condolences to his wife and family members.

CPI(M) On Union Government's Modifications on Recommendations of The Pay Commission*

**Statement Dated July 20, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) considers the modifications made by the Central Government to the Pay Commission recommendations, to be unsatisfactory. The main modifications sought by the Central Government employees have not been responded to. The recommendations relating to massive abolition of posts and massacre of jobs will be given effect to. Threat of wholesale computerization and automation, as recommended by the Pay Commission, remains. The wide disparity between officers and employees remains. Justice is still denied to Class III and Class IV employees. The negative recommendations of the CPC have been accepted, while most of the positive recommendations have been modified to the disadvantage of the employees.

The Polit Bureau hopes that the government will take note of the fact that its decisions have been unanimously rejected not only by the Central and State Government employees organizations but also by all the central trade unions in the country.

The United Front Government must demarcate itself from former governments in this respect by accepting the modifications sought for by the Central Government employees and their organizations.

The Polit Bureau assures its support to millions of Central Government employees in all their united struggles to secure justice.

On Kerala High Court Judgement On Bandhs*

**Statement Dated July 29, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

It is unfortunate that the Kerala High Court has declared the calling of bandhs by political parties illegal and unconstitutional. The CPI(M) cannot subscribe to this viewpoint. From the time of the independence struggle, bandhs and hartals have been an instrument of popular protest. The right to public protest is a democratic right which should not be curbed or restricted.

If a bandh is enforced by coercive methods which infringe the existing laws, the administration has the necessary powers to act against such violations. The argument advanced in the judgement can lead to the dangerous conclusion that the right to strike or any other protest action will infringe on the rights of some section of citizens and, therefore, they are to be illegalized. The strength of the democratic system in our country stems precisely from providing the widest latitude for democratic rights.

The CPI(M) calls upon all sections of democratic opinion to realize the implications of this judgement and to demand that a review be made of the same.

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, August 3, 1997.
'Bandh' is a form of protest movement participated by the people en masse when factories/mills/mines/offices/transport/plantations/ports & docks and shops and markets remain closed.

On CBI Move Against Sharad Yadav*

**Statement Dated August 3, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The CBI special court has decided to frame charges against Shri Sharad Yadav in the hawala case. Among the political leaders and public servants who were chargesheeted in this case, Shri Yadav was the only exception who admitted to receiving Rs. three lakh for his party. But 15 other politicians who were alleged to have received large amounts, have been discharged on the basis of the judgement of the single bench of the Delhi High Court.

The Supreme Court is hearing an appeal in the matter, and the CPI(M) is of the opinion that the judgement of the Delhi High Court was a flawed one and all those involved in the hawala payments should be proceeded against.

In the light of the court decision, it would be better for Shri Sharad Yadav to make an interim arrangement to hand over the charge of the presidency of his party till he is cleared of the charges.

CPI(M) Polit Bureau On Withdrawal of The Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill*

Statement Dated August 6, 1997 Issued to Press

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) welcomes the government's decision to withdraw the Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill in the face of stiff opposition. CPI(M) MPs had moved an amendment to the bill prohibiting the entry of foreign and Indian private capital into the insurance sector.

For over many months now the Left, democratic, patriotic forces and the working class of the country have been opposing the move to privatize the insurance sector as this would be detrimental to India's self reliance.

On Subversion of Law In Bihar*

**Statement Dated August 2, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Bihar state administration is blatantly conniving with the ruling Rashtriya Janata Dal. This became clear the way top official of the administration non-cooperated with the CBI on the question of executing the arrest warrant for the former Chief Minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav. By this act, the chief secretary, the DGP and other senior officials became party to the defiance of the law instead of upholding it.

The way the administration has behaved during the Bihar bandh called by the RJD, confirms this connivance. The responsibility for passively watching the acts of violence unleashed by the RJD men is upon them. The Home Minister's statement in parliament has correctly pointed to the wrong precedent set in seeking the aid of the army for executing the arrest. But the statement is silent about the deliberate connivance and non-cooperation of the senior officials heading the administration. The Rabri Devi ministry is bent upon utilizing the state machinery to protect the interests of the former Chief Minister. Such a state of affairs cannot be ignored by the Central Government and it must take steps to see that this subversion of the law and administration does not continue.

On Personal Ledger Accounts Of West Bengal Government*

Statement Dated August 1, 1997 Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The judgement of the division bench of the Calcutta High Court on the personal ledger account and related matters in West Bengal is a clear vindication of the stand taken by the state government. The court has upheld the main contention of the state government that the constitutional procedure prescribed for the normal audit function of the Comptroller and Auditor General should not be disturbed. After the CAG completes the audit, the report is submitted to the state government which will then be placed in the Assembly and discussed in the Public Accounts committee.

The judgement has also set aside the interim order related to the CAG by a single bench of the court on a writ petition by Mamta Banerjee. The court has stated that the concerned district magistrates should supervise the personal ledger accounts, a normal procedure to which the state government has no objection whatsoever.

The motivated campaign begun by a section of the media and the Congress Party to manufacture a scam to tarnish the image of the Left Front Government of West Bengal has suffered a serious setback. The disinformation about accounting procedures by deliberately confusing local fund accounts with personal ledger accounts has been refuted. The fact that the West Bengal Government itself had decided to call in the CAG in 1980 to audit the funds of the local bodies, instead of the state audit agencies, was also being deliberately obscured.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) is confident that all the lies and distortions being spread in this matter will be nailed down once and for all when the normal process of audit by the CAG is completed and the report placed in the Assembly.

CPI(M) Demands of The UF Government at The Centre: Fulfil Commitment to The People*

**Statement Dated August 13, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) Following Its Meeting
Held on August 11-12, 1997**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expressed its deep dissatisfaction at the failure of the United Front Government to push through major legislations which have been promised in the Common Minimum Programme. The most important is the bill providing for reservations for women in the legislatures. Despite the bill being passed by the Select Committee and introduced in the Lok Sabha, the government has not pushed for its adoption. Some parties have objected to the bill on grounds which are not valid or relevant to the basic question of ensuring adequate representation to women in the parliamentary institutions. It is necessary for the United Front Government to prove its commitment to reservation for women by going ahead with the bill. The people should see who are in support or in opposition to the measure.

The other major bills are the agricultural workers legislation for safeguarding the rights of the most exploited sections of the rural poor and the Lokpal Bill which has been finalized by the Standing Committee. After more than a year of the existence of the United Front Government, the fact that these legislations are not adopted reflects poorly on the government. Even now it is not too late. The government should immediately move for adoption of these bills in the present session of Parliament itself.

Rectify The PDS System

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) heard reports about the defects and malfunctioning of the new PDS scheme introduced by the government. The purpose of providing foodgrains at half the normal

price to people below the poverty line is not being fulfilled by the present scheme. The provision of 10 kilograms of foodgrains for families below the poverty line is totally inadequate. This quantum should be increased to 30 kilograms immediately. Further, the allocation of foodgrains which have been reduced to the states must be increased, so that sufficient stocks are available for the entire public distribution system. This must be taken up on a priority basis by the United Front Government so that immediate relief is rendered to those badly hit by the continuous increase in foodgrains prices in the open market.

AICC Session

The Congress leadership succeeded in holding a full-fledged AICC session at Calcutta without engaging in any introspection about the causes for the debacle of the party in the recent period. Both the political resolution and the economic resolution have managed to avoid any self-critical review of what was wrong with the Congress Government's policies which led to its alienation from the people. The expression of regret on the demolition of the Babri Masjid underplays the responsibility of the Congress Government in the affair and comes too late. The economic resolution harps on continuity of the Nehruvian policies while endorsing the liberalization policies which undermine the path of self-reliance.

Not surprisingly, the Congress leadership has sought to target the CPI(M) and the Left to cover up its own failures. Unable to tarnish the image of the Left Front Government, the slanderous accusations about the so-called Personal Ledger accounts scandal in West Bengal finds a place in the political resolution, even though both the Calcutta High Court and the CAG have made it amply clear that there are no grounds to suspect any defalcation of funds. The CPI(M) is the most consistent fighter against communalism and for the people's interests. This is something which the Congress finds difficult to emulate. The outcome of the AICC session shows that the Congress has failed to reorient itself for a come-back among the people.

Party Congress Preparations

The Polit Bureau discussed an outline for the draft political resolution for the 16th Congress of the Party to be held in February, 1998. This outline will be placed before the forthcoming Central Committee meeting to be held from August 29 to September 1. This is part of the preparatory work for the draft political resolution for the Party Congress.

On Extremist Designs in Tripura*

**Statement Dated August 14, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) condemns the call given by the All Tripura Tribal Force (ATTF) and other extremist groups in Tripura for a 24-hour bandh on August 15. A similar call has been given by the ULFA in Assam. The sinister aim of this call is to disrupt normal life and hamper the observance of the independence day celebrations. The whole country will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of India's independence. In the north-eastern region where the people have various long pending problems to be still redressed, independence day will be an occasion to affirm the common commitment to defend national unity and to work to solve the problems of the people.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) appeals to all sections of the people in Tripura and north-east to be vigilant and foil the designs of extremist groups. The entire administrative machinery must be geared up to see that attacks on innocent people and violent activities are prevented and firmly put down.

CPI(M) Condemns Killing of Adivasis*

**Statement Dated August 26, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the brutal killing of five Santhal adivasis in Jhurkusia village of Bhagalpur district in Bihar. This atrocity on the adivasi agricultural workers was perpetrated on August 23 by the armed goondas of a local landlord Hit Narayan Singh and his son Ram Gulam Singh. The attack on the adivasi settlement was launched as the agricultural workers were resisting efforts to deprive them of their lands. The adivasis were organized under the Bihar Khet Mazdoor Union to protect their rights.

Apart from the murder of the five people including a ten-year-old girl, the armed mob looted all the belongings of the poor adivasis and destroyed the papers connected with the land ownership.

The Polit Bureau demands immediate arrest of all those who participated in the attack and confiscation of the property of the main accused. The affected adivasi people must be suitably compensated for the property lost and immediate steps taken for their rehabilitation. The land alienated from them illegally must be restored to them fully. The Polit Bureau calls upon the Bihar state government to take firm action on these lines.

On Price Hike of Petroleum Products*

Statement Dated September 2, 1997 Issued By
The Polit Bureau Of The CPI(M)

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the hike in the prices of petrol, diesel oil and cooking gas. The steep 26 per cent hike in the price of diesel oil will have a cascading inflationary impact, adversely affecting the livelihood of millions of our countrymen. Transport and all commodities of daily consumption will cost more as a result.

It is unfortunate that the United Front Government has chosen not to implement the various alternatives suggested by the CPI(M) and, instead, has chosen to impose the burden of meeting the oil pool deficit on the shoulders of the working people. For instance, this hike is designed to raise Rs.6,000 crore of revenue this financial year. If the prices of natural gas consumed by the non-priority sector were to be raised to the levels of LPG prices, then this alone would have yielded the government a sum of Rs.6,308 crore. Just this one measure would have met the objective of raising the required resources. In this background, this price hike is patently anti-people.

The fact that the government has decided to issue securities and bonds worth Rs.18,200 crore meets partially the CPI(M)'s position that the past deficit should be borne by the finance ministry rather than imposing burdens on the people. This, however, is in the nature of a loan and the redemption and interest charges of Rs.1,800 crore per annum will have to be borne by the oil pool. Meaning, eventually the burden will fall on the consumer.

However, the other measures suggested such as dismantling the Administrative Price Mechanism (APM) and the opening up of

the Indian oil company will have disastrous consequences. The dismantling of the APM must be preceded by a rationalization of the very high customs and excise duties imposed on petrol products. For instance, this financial year, the government targets to raise nearly 20,000 crore rupees through these duties. Unless the government re-structures this heavy squeezing of the petroleum sector for its revenues, the subsequent years will once again see a mounting deficit. It is clear that if these taxes are not there, then there is virtually no deficit in the oil pool account.

Further, the government should ensure that the finance ministry does not reap undue benefit from these price hikes at the expense of the people. For instance, last year, when the United Front Government hiked prices to raise Rs. 7,000 crore, Rs.4,200 crore of this were taken away by the finance ministry in the form of customs and excise duties.

This hike is the second since the United Front Government assumed office. This, apart from unleashing a cascading inflationary effect, also impose direct burdens on the people.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon all Party units to organize protest actions against this anti-people price hike.

Homage To Comrade N. Vasudevan*

Statement Dated September 4, 1997 Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) mourns the passing away of Comrade N. Vasudevan, secretary of the Andaman & Nicobar state committee. He died on September 4. He was 57 years old. Comrade Vasudevan was suffering from cancer for the past few years and he carried out his party duties courageously till the end.

Comrade Vasudevan was active in the trade union movement of the government employees before becoming a whole timer of the Party in 1983. He also served as the president of the CITU of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. He was elected to the Portblair municipal committee which elected him as a councillor of the Pradesh Council for a term.

Comrade Vasudevan played an important role in the development of the Party and the trade union movement in Andaman & Nicobar Islands. His death is a big loss for the working people of these Islands.

The Polit Bureau pays homage to his memory and convey its heartfelt sympathy to his wife and family members.

Commuque Issued by The Central Committee of The CPI(M) Following Its Meeting Held On August 29-September 1, 1997

The recent attacks by the Congress party against coalition governments and advocating single party rule is only helping the BJP, the CPI(M) General Secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, asserted at New Delhi, September 2. Addressing a crowded Press conference following the four-day Central Committee meeting, Surjeet said, "The Congress party is now saying that coalitions cannot work. It means either they can come to power or the BJP. Since the Congress party has lost its mass support considerably, this can only help the BJP. The Congress is trying to attack the United Front and in the process helping the BJP".

On the CC's assessment of the BJP, Surjeet said its claim of being a principled party had been exposed in state after state where it was in power. In every state, the BJP was wrecked by inner-party quarrels and was striking unprincipled alliances. The BJP is now desperately looking for allies, confirming that it is not in a position to be a single party alternative. The CPI(M) general secretary also ridiculed the BJP's efforts to appropriate the national movement in course of L.K. Advani's recent rathyatra and said the record showed that the Hindutva forces had played no role in the freedom struggle; not a single BJP leader could cite a single instance of participation in any stream of the national movement. On the contrary, the RSS' communal politics only served to disrupt the unity of the Indian people fighting against British rule. In reply to a question, Surjeet also said the BJP was more dangerous than the Congress(I) at present because it was communal as well as a supporter of the anti-people liberalization policies.

Surjeet said the CC had reiterated its commitment to develop a third alternative based on the unity of the Left, democratic and secular forces, but at the same time expressed disappointment at the many failures of the United Front which was coming in the way of developing this alternative. The biggest failure, he said, was in the realm of economic policies where the UF Government had continued the discredited privatization and liberalization measures of the previous Congress(I) regime". If they are serious, they must serve the interests of the common man," Surjeet said, and pointed out the various instances where the UF had not done so. In reply to a question, Surjeet asserted that the UF was definitely deviating from the path it was expected to take, and said, "They are not giving priority to the problems concerning the poorer people". He asserted that the CPI(M), even while supporting the UF Government, had not lost sight of the interests of the common man and had come out in support of the poor and the working class in every strike action, every protest movement in the last one year and a half.

Apart from a discussion on the current political situation, the main agenda before the CC meeting this time was a discussion on the outline of the draft political resolution to be taken up at the 16th Party Congress in February. The dates of the Congress have been finalized; it will be held in Calcutta from February 17 to 22, 1998. Surjeet said the outline draft was discussed at length, and a draft would be prepared on that basis. This draft will be finalized at the next CC meeting scheduled to be held on November 9-12 following which the draft will be circulated in the Party for discussions preceding the 16th Congress.

The Central Committee communique issued on this occasion follows:

Preparation for 16th Party Congress

The Central Committee discussed an outline for the draft political resolution to be taken up at the Party Congress to be held in February 1998. The outline analyzes the international and national situation and sets out the tasks for the Party in the coming days. It calls for stepping up the struggle against globalization and the imperialist offensive.

At the national level, the impact of the policies of liberalization and the challenge posed by the communal forces have been dealt with. On the basis of the discussions in the Central Committee, the Polit Bureau will finalize the draft to be placed before the next Central Committee meeting.

Political Situation

The Central Committee took stock of the national political situation and the developments since its last meeting held in May.

It noted that the Congress party, which is today running state governments in only six out of 25 states, is harping on the non-viability of a coalition government at the Centre. The rejection of the coalition government in the present political situation would imply that there can only be a government of the BJP or the Congress. Given the weak position of the Congress and the erosion of popular support, the advocacy of a single party government by the Congress will only strengthen the BJP's claim. The Congress attack on coalition governments is directed against the United Front.

It will be better for the Congress party to set its own house in order rather than wishing for the unrealizable goal of single party rule by the Congress.

The BJP has reached a stage where it is no longer able to sell itself as the only national alternative to the Congress. It has exhibited in the recent period many of the vices affecting the Congress party, of factionalism and revolts in its leadership. The Madanlal Khurana episode in Delhi, the inability to effectively challenge the Vaghela Government in Gujarat and the precarious nature of its alliance with the BSP in Uttar Pradesh are all difficulties which the party has not found easy to overcome. A confirmation of the abandonment of its earlier slogan that it is the only alternative is its assiduous wooing of regional parties and groups. Even as the Congress party rails against coalition governments, the BJP finds it prudent to build a coalition in its quest for power.

Moreover, the BJP, wherever it is in a state government, has proved itself to be no different from the earlier Congress regimes. The record of the Shiv Sena-BJP Government in Maharashtra, where criminalization flourishes, the privatization spree of the Rajasthan Government and the factional tussles for power in Delhi have all bismirched the image of the BJP.

The Central Committee ridiculed the efforts of the BJP to pose as the inheritors of the freedom struggle through L.K. Advani's *rathyatra*. Everyone knows that the RSS played no role in the anti-imperialist movement. On the contrary, along with the Muslim communalists, they tried to disrupt the unity of the people fighting British rule.

State of the United Front

The Central Committee reiterated its commitment to develop a third alternative based on the unity of the Left, democratic and secular forces. In this connection, however, it noted that many of the components of the United Front do not realize the necessity of consolidating and developing such an alternative. The main reason for this failure is the economic policies being pursued by the United Front Government.

The Central Committee expressed its disapproval and opposition to the policies of rampant privatization and indiscriminate opening up to multinational corporations in sectors where domestic industry is adversely affected. The Central Committee called upon the government to abandon moves to open up the insurance sector and the Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill; the CPI(M) expressed its resolute opposition to the proposed legislation for privatization of the coal mining and power transmission sectors. The Sick Industrial Companies Act Amendment Bill is also a retrograde one as it will facilitate not the revival of sick units but their speedy liquidation.

The United Front is not able to consolidate itself and meet the people's aspirations mainly because of the government's failure to implement the pro-people commitments in the Common Minimum Programme and, instead, pushing those measures which are a continuation of the economic policies of the previous Congress Government.

In this connection, the Central Committee expressed its resentment at the failure of the United Front Government to push through three major legislations to which it is committed, during the monsoon session. They are: the Women's Reservation Bill, Agricultural Workers Bill and the revised Lokpal Bill. There should be no excuse for these legislations not being adopted at least in the next session of Parliament.

Revamp PDS Scheme

The Central Committee expressed its serious concern that the new scheme under the public distribution system has failed to strengthen and improve the PDS. The ten-kg per month provision for families below the poverty line is too meagre. The allocation of the foodgrains to the states has also been reduced which has led to the collapse of the PDS in many places. The CPI(M) gives utmost priority to the strengthening of the public distribution system. For this, the government should immediately increase the allocation for people below the poverty line to 20 kg a month at subsidized prices. Further, there has to be an increase of the allocations to the states, so that people above the poverty line who are by no means affluent but ordinary wage earners, can avail of the PDS.

Protect Dalit Rights

The Central Committee noted the growing attacks on the Dalits in different parts of the country. It strongly condemned the police atrocity in Mumbai which led to the killing of ten young men. The anti-Dalit bias of the Shiv Sena led government was on stark display in this incident. The growing intolerance to the assertion of elementary democratic rights by the scheduled castes and their quest for social dignity is being met with upper caste violence and intimidation. In Tamil Nadu too, clashes have taken place because of this trend.

The Central Committee calls upon all its Party units to firmly stand by the Dalit community in defence of their basic rights. All sections of democratic opinion should be mobilized to prevent caste oppression and discrimination.

Support to Strike Struggles

The Central Committee congratulated the bank employees all over the country who went on a two-day strike on their charter of demands. It is noteworthy that an important demand in the strike was to scrap the scheme for local area private banks being set up. This further step in privatization of banking will lead to private banks in the rural areas mobilizing resources from the rural rich and will lead to the disruption of the co-operative institutions.

The Central Committee extended its full support to the struggle launched by the CITU and other central unions against the new pension scheme.

Pay Commission

The Central Committee criticized the Central Government for failing to arrive at a negotiated settlement with the employees' federations. There are legitimate demands of the employees, particularly those of the 'C' and 'D' categories. The deadlock in the talks have led to the employees organization calling for a strike from September 24. The CPI(M) will extend its full support to this protest action by the employees. It calls upon the Central Government to concede the legitimate demands of the employees so that the strike may be averted.

50th Anniversary Celebrations

The Central Committee decided to conduct a year long observance of the 50th anniversary of independence. This campaign will focus on the role of the militant worker and peasant struggles during the freedom struggle, the sacrifices and contribution made by the Communists and the various other streams of the anti-imperialist movement. The Party will also conduct a campaign to expose the class bias of the bourgeois-landlord policies implemented after independence and project the alternative policies of the Left and democratic forces.

October Revolution Anniversary

The Central Committee decided to observe the 80th anniversary of the October Revolution in Russia which heralded the founding of the first socialist state. On this occasion, the Party will re-dedicate itself to the cause of socialism and Marxism-Leninism. The Central Committee calls upon all its Party units to observe 7th November in a befitting manner.

Party Congress Dates

The Central Committee decided to hold the 16th Party Congress in Calcutta from February 17 to 22, 1998. The next Central Committee meeting will be held from November 9 to 12 to finalize preparations for the Congress.

Report On Political Developments Since The Last Central Committee Meeting of The CPI(M) Held On May 12-14, 1997*

**Adopted by The Central Committee of
The CPI(M) in Its Meeting Held On
August 29-September 1, 1997 .**

Impact of Bihar Developments

After the last Central Committee meeting in May, the problems within the United Front have got aggravated. Even earlier, the trend of having a coalition government with the Congress was seen at the time of Deve Gowda's removal and the confidence motion. We had discussed this matter at the last meeting. However, this problem acquired new dimensions after the developments in Bihar.

The charge-sheeting of Laloo Prasad Yadav by the CBI created a crisis for the Janata Dal and affected the United Front. Our Party, along with the Left, demanded that Laloo Prasad Yadav step down from office when the CBI announced its intention to prosecute him in the fodder scam. From November 1996, when the Left parties held a rally in Patna on this issue, we have been demanding firm action against all those responsible for the fodder scam.

The adamant refusal of Laloo Prasad to quit created a crisis in the Janata Dal. I. K. Gujral and a section of the Janata Dal leaders were not prepared to take a firm position on the resignation of Laloo Prasad Yadav. There were attempts to bail him out. Our Party criticized this vacillating stand. The failure of the Prime Minister and the Janata Dal leadership to intervene in time led to a situation where the elections for the post of Janata Dal president became a contest between Sharad Yadav and Laloo Prasad Yadav. Unable to impose his will, Laloo Prasad and his supporters declared a boycott of the elections and split the party to form the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD).

*Published as a booklet in October 1997. It was also published in a compilation of Central Committee documents released in October 1998. Refer Document under Item No. 26 of this Volume.

After the election of Sharad Yadav and the formation of the RJD, a new situation arose. The RJD was formed with the sole purpose of defending Laloo Prasad in the fodder scam and for justifying his continuance as Chief Minister. At this stage, our Party along with the Left parties wanted the United Front to demand that Laloo Prasad resign, the RJD be not included in the United Front, and the three RJD ministers in the Union cabinet be removed.

On this issue too, there were differences of opinion between the majority of the Janata Dal leadership and the Prime Minister and some others like Bommai and Jalappa. Within the United Front, Karunanidhi and the DMK took a position in defence of Laloo Prasad Yadav and criticized the Janata Dal leadership and CPI(M) for their stand. At the Core Committee meeting of the United Front held on July 17, it was decided that Laloo Prasad should resign and the RJD should not be part of the United Front. Despite this, Karunanidhi on the next day denied that any such decision had been taken. This reflected a tendency within a section of the United Front to bypass the issue of corruption, and keep Laloo within the United Front somehow or the other.

Finally, the issue was clinched after prolonged discussions in the Core Committee meeting held on July 25. In that meeting, it was decided that Laloo Prasad should quit and RJD should not be part of the UF. On the same day, Laloo Prasad resigned from Chief Ministership and his wife Rabri Devi was sworn in.

The Core Committee had decided that the question of the three RJD ministers should be decided by the Prime Minister. So far he has not taken any step to remove these ministers from the cabinet.

The Congress party under Sitaram Kesri adopted a position in support of Laloo Prasad Yadav. When Laloo sought a confidence vote in Bihar Assembly, Congress decided to abstain after it became clear that he would be able to muster a majority after buying up some of the MLAs. Later when Rabri Devi sought a vote of confidence, the Congress voted for her government.

The Laloo Yadav-Bihar issue has further affected the cohesion of the United Front and the Congress sought to utilize this opportunity by openly siding with Laloo Yadav and RJD.

Janata Dal Affairs

The Janata Dal national convention held in July showed up the differences on the RJD issue when Prime Minister Gujral walked out from the inaugural session when some questions were raised about the Bihar developments and the RJD. The disarray in the Janata Dal is seen also in the differences which have developed in the Karnataka unit on the Laloo Prasad issue. Some of the leaders opposed to Deve Gowda have taken a sympathetic attitude to Laloo Prasad and RJD. In Orissa too, the Janata Dal unit is in difficulty with a section openly advocating alliance with the BJP.

Since I.K. Gujral became Prime Minister, the Congress pressure on the United Front Government has increased. There has not been much effort on the part of the Prime Minister to project the United Front among the people. Combined with the failure to fulfill some of the major commitments of the Common Minimum Programme (CMP), the United Front's prestige and cohesion has been eroded.

UF Government's Performance

As for the United Front Government's performance, the last three months have seen the continuance of the economic policies dictated by liberalization and privatization; failure to fulfill the promises made in the CMP which would be of benefit to the people; and an inability to take a firm stand on the question of corruption in high places.

After the Union Budget was passed, the government sought to step up liberalization measures. The move to adopt the Insurance Regulatory Authority (IRA) Bill, the Bill for privatization of the coal mining sector and power transmission were taken up in Parliament. A new bill on SICA has been prepared which, instead of reviving sick units, will ensure liquidation and closure of all such units. The policy of winding up vital PSUs on the plea that they cannot be viable continues.

Economic Situation

The dubious expectations that the Union Budget will stimulate the economy have come unstuck very fast. Industrial production is not reviving. The recessionary conditions have led to official industrial growth rate coming down to 6.7 per cent in 1996-97

from 11.6 per cent in 1995-96 and in the current year the decline in the growth rate continues. The trade deficit has widened. The reduction of import duties has been a major contributory factor to the burgeoning trade deficit. The generous tax concessions to the rich and the overall tax cuts will result in a loss of revenue for the government of over Rs.10,000 crores. This will result in the State relying on expenditure financed by borrowing instead of tax-financed expenditure.

The government has announced its intention to introduce full convertibility of the rupee by introducing capital account convertibility. This will make the country subject to the whims of international speculators and will surrender whatever economic sovereignty which rests with the country.

Parliament Session

On the other hand, the major commitments made by the United Front in the CMP like the women's reservation bill, the agricultural workers legislation, and the Lokpal Bill have failed to materialize. The CPI(M) demanded that these three legislations be taken up on a priority basis and be adopted in the Monsoon Session. In our July mass campaign also we had highlighted these three legislations.

The performance of the United Front Government in the Monsoon Session of Parliament was dismal. It backed out from the women's reservation bill due mainly to resistance from within the United Front, it failed to introduce the agricultural workers bill giving in to pressure of the landlord lobby, and the Lokpal Bill was not even considered after the amendments proposed by the Standing Committee on Home Affairs.

On the contrary, the IRA Bill was moved for adoption at the insistence of the Finance Minister. The firm opposition of the Left parties and the failure to strike a deal with the BJP led to withdrawal of the Bill. This is a major success for the struggle against opening up the financial sector and movement launched by the insurance employees.

Impact of Resistance

The defeat of the IRA Bill is not an isolated event. The past five months saw the Party putting up stiff opposition to the proposal

for hike in prices of petroleum products. There was one round of increase immediately after the UF Government assumed office last year. This time, our Party put out alternative proposals and campaigned for other ways to mobilize resources to meet the oil pool deficit. It is due to this resistance that the government was not able to go ahead with burdening the people with an across the board hike. Even now, when the government announces a hike, our Party has informed the Steering Committee of the UF about its resolve to oppose it and mobilize the people.

The two-day strike by bank employees on August 28 and 29 was a notable struggle. The bank unions have demanded among other things stopping the opening of rural private banks under the "local area private banks" scheme. This further step on privatization will lead to private banks mobilizing resources from the rural rich and will disrupt the cooperative banking sector.

The resistance being put up to the IMF-World Bank dictated policies is having some impact. Despite all efforts, the government has not been able to go ahead with disinvestment of PSU shares as recommended by the Disinvestment Commission. The government finds it difficult to push through legislation for privatization of key infrastructure and core sectors, and such matters as the amendment of the Patents Act. The coal privatization bill has been held in abeyance because of the united opposition of workers. It is necessary therefore to intensify the struggle and widen the resistance to liberalization policies.

PDS Issue

Another important issue on which the Party has had to intervene is the PDS. The purpose of the new scheme under the PDS was to have provided people below the poverty line foodgrains at half the prices prevailing under the PDS. The new scheme of 10 kg. for a family of five per month at subsidized prices and increasing the overall issue price had led to a situation where the beneficiaries below the poverty line do not gain but lose if they draw more than 10 kg. of rice.

The West Bengal Government and other state governments have protested against the defects of the scheme. The allocation for the

states have also been reduced. Our Party has raised this matter both within the United Front and at the governmental level. We are demanding that people below the poverty line be provided at least 20 kg. of rice at subsidized price, and the allocation to the states be increased to meet the overall needs of the PDS in each state. Due to our insistence, a committee was set up by the Steering Committee to go into the problems and to submit a report.

Privatization Drive

Many of the state governments are taking up the policies of the World Bank-IMF and resorting to indiscriminate privatization. These governments whether they are run by the BJP or the constituents of the United Front have accepted uncritically the liberalization policies. The "restructuring" of the Andhra Pradesh State Electricity Board by the TDP Government has been opposed by our Party which has taken a firm position against it. Splitting of the State Electricity Board is a prelude to privatization of some areas. The CITU has been mobilizing electricity employees against this move. The TDP Government has accepted the structural adjustment package of the World Bank in return for getting loans. The BJP Government in Rajasthan and the Bansi Lal Government in Haryana are also taking steps to privatize electricity. Orissa had done it earlier. The UP Government is trying to sell off many state undertakings to the private sector.

All this underlines the necessity for the Party and the mass organizations to continue to assert our independent position and to develop struggles against privatization and in defence of the interests of the different sections of the working people.

Pay Commission

The Central Government is yet to arrive at an agreement with the employees federations on the implementation of the Pay Commission recommendations. There is great unrest among the employees particularly of the 'C' and 'D' categories as many of their legitimate demands have not been met. All the employees organizations are united in the struggle for a better package. The talks have made little progress so far. The CPI(M) wants the government to concede the reasonable demands of the employees

so that a strike is averted. If the negotiations are unsuccessful, the Party will extend its full support to the call for an indefinite strike from September 24.

Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections

Our Party was of the opinion that K.R. Narayanan should be the candidate of the United Front and the Congress. This was done in such a manner that the BJP had no other option but to extend support. The election of Narayanan was near-unanimous with only the Shiv Sena backing T.N. Seshan. For the Vice-President's post, the Left decided that it should be delinked from the Presidential choice. The BJP would have had a chance to intervene if the choice of both candidates was taken up together. In the circumstances Krishna Kant, Governor of Andhra Pradesh emerged as the most suitable person. We did not want the Vice-Presidency to also go to a Congress party person. The BJP and allies supported the Akali leader Surjit Singh Barnala. In both the posts, there are persons who have a clear secular background, which is important in the current political situation.

50th Anniversary of Independence

The country is celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of independence. This occasion should not be utilized to project only the official version of the independence struggle with the focus only on the Congress movement led by Gandhiji. The Party has taken up this question in the official celebrations committee. It is necessary that all the streams which contributed to the anti-imperialist movement are highlighted. The CPI(M) will strive in the year of the anniversary to inform the people about the militant working class and peasant struggles for independence and the role of the Communists. The fifty years of independent India's progress and development have not benefited the common people because of the bourgeois-landlord policies. The alternative policies of the Left and democratic forces for a democratic, socially just and equitable society will be emphasized in the Party's campaign.

Congress AICC Session

The AICC session in Calcutta could not pave the way for unifying and reviving the party. This is mainly due to the failure of the

leadership to have any serious self-critical introspection of why the party has declined so dramatically in the recent years. At the political level the mild regret expressed over the failure to discharge the "legal responsibility" for the preservation of the Babri Masjid was inadequate as an apology for its major responsibility and criminal inactivity. It was also too late. The economic resolution has justified the economic policies adopted since 1991 and claimed it has helped economic growth. There is no self-critical attempt to understand how the IMF-World Bank dictated policies have harmed the country and the people. The only hope put out for the revival of the Congress is Sonia Gandhi. Sitaram Kesri abjectly pleaded for her to take over the party as it is considered the property of the Nehru family.

The elections to the 10 elected positions in the CWC saw 49 candidates contesting. Though Kesri managed to get his candidates elected to the bulk of the positions some of the other leaders polled substantial votes. The alliances forged are shifting. The combination of Kesri and Jitendra Prasad forged during the elections to the presidency has now broken.

The Congress unable to look into its own failures sought to mount an attack on the CPI(M) and the Left. The 20-year-old record of the Left Front Government was maligned and the absurd charge leveled that the Left has failed to take up the fight against communalism seriously. The Congress leadership's attack on coalition governments reveals its inability to come to terms with the changed reality. It can no more hope to form a government at the Centre on its own. By harping on single-party governments, and rejecting the very concept of coalition governments, the Congress is helping the BJP and directing its attack on the United Front.

BJP

The BJP is not able to overcome its internal problems and dissensions. The disarray in the Janata Dal and the state of the Congress party still provides it the hope that it will be able to come to power by the next elections. The *Swarna Jayanti Rathyatra* conducted by Advani in a bid to refurbish his image which was

tarnished in the hawala scandal could not create the enthusiasm which he hoped to repeat from his earlier *yatras*.

Fully aware that it cannot win a majority in the Lok Sabha on its own, the BJP continues to bid for allies. Apart from the existing allies such as the Samata, the Akalis and the Shiv Sena, the BJP is tying up with the Lakshmi Parvathi group in Andhra Pradesh. However, in this quest for allies also, it does not have a smooth road. In Uttar Pradesh the arrangement with the BSP and its continuance continues to create difficulties for the party. Kanshi Ram has made it clear that he is not bound to go into alliance with the BJP after the one-year pact. With the six-month term of Mayawati ending on September 21, the BSP is putting up new demands and pressures which will make the position of Kalyan Singh, if he becomes the Chief Minister, precarious. The demand that the BSP get the Speakership of the assembly will be difficult for the BJP to accede to. The brazen way in which Mayawati has gone about trying to consolidate her mass base by caring little for the sensitivities of the BJP has angered the rank and file. Yet the BJP leadership hopes to cling on to the alliance expecting rich dividends in a general election.

The decision of the BJP leadership not to reinstate Madan Lal Khurana as the Chief Minister after his being discharged in the hawala case saw an open protest by Khurana who is also a vice-president of the party. The factional fight between Khurana and Sahib Singh Verma came out into the open. It is with great difficulty that Khurana has been mollified and made to withdraw his resignation from the office bearership. The BJP was also put on the defensive after the police firing on dalits in Mumbai which led to the killing of 10 persons. The Home Minister in the Shiv Sena-led government is a BJP man.

The situation is complicated as the UF Government's performance does not provide any basis for isolating the BJP in its areas of influence. It will seek to utilize the discontent arising out of the economic situation and other problems of the people for enhancing its credibility and to cover up its communal appeal. The Party has to be vigilant in countering the manoeuvres of the BJP to utilize the existing situation and advance.

Growing Attacks on Dalits

Police Atrocities in Mumbai: The police firing in a dalit colony in Mumbai on June 11 on people protesting against the desecration of Dr. Ambedkar's statue led to a wave of spontaneous protests in Maharashtra and all over the country. Out of the 10 youth killed, one was a member of the DYFI. The CPI(M) in Maharashtra joined the call for a Mumbai bandh in protest against the firing. The Party organized protests outside Maharashtra also such as in Delhi and Kanpur. The Shiv Sena has a history of animosity towards the dalits and this reactionary outlook is leading to a strong backlash amongst the scheduled castes. The RPI* leadership which is badly divided into a number of groups failed to provide timely leadership and it was the young militant activists who came to the fore in the protest movement.

Caste Clashes in Tamil Nadu: The growing assertiveness of the dalits is sought to be suppressed by vested caste interests and the dominant landed sections everywhere. In Tamil Nadu there have been prolonged caste clashes and riots between the scheduled castes and Thevars (a backward caste) in the southern districts. Scores of people have lost their lives in the violence. The police administration is generally prejudiced against the dalits. Untouchability and caste discrimination is still practised in these areas. Some of the dalit organizations also take sectarian positions to mobilize support and pit the SCs against other sections.

Our Party in Tamil Nadu viewing the serious situation decided to campaign for an end to the violence and for amity between the different communities while upholding the basic democratic rights of the dalits. The campaign also took up the struggle against untouchability. Anti-caste conventions have been organized in different centres. A delegation of our state Party leadership met the Chief Minister and submitted a memorandum of demands which included the institution of a high level enquiry and a joint campaign against casteism and untouchability. The Chief Minister promptly set up an enquiry committee headed by a retired justice and a joint campaign is also to be conducted.

The casteist politics of the bourgeois parties and the narrow sectarian response of some of the dalit organizations are creating

*RPI means Republican Party of India.

caste polarization and disruption of the unity of the working people. It is essential that our Party stands firmly in defence of the rights of the most downtrodden sections, the dalits who are also the bulk of the agricultural labour. We should take up the fight against untouchability and caste discriminatory practices along with the demand for wages and land. At the same time we must work for forging unity between the scheduled castes and other poorer sections by raising common demands.

North East

The situation in the North East has deteriorated in the last few months. The ULFA in Assam stepped up its attacks on army personnel and civilians. The Bodo extremist groups resorted to bomb blasts to disrupt railway services. More heinously innocent non-Bodo people, mainly Bengalis, were massacred. This has led to retaliatory attacks on Bodo families. On 15th August the extremist groups issued bandh calls in Assam, Tripura and other areas to disrupt the independence day celebrations.

In Manipur, the inter-tribal clashes continue in the border areas. There has been mass discontent over rumours of Naga extremist claims on some districts of Manipur. Fears of division of Manipur has led to big protests.

In Tripura, the NLFT and ATTF continue their violent activities despite the deployment of security forces in the disturbed areas. A number of CPI(M) tribal cadre have been killed by the armed gangs. The LF Government has requested for more armed forces to be deployed to effectively patrol and check the extremist affected areas. The Centre should make the arrangements for more security forces to be sent to the state.

The Party has condemned the violent attacks by the Bodo extremists and ULFA in Assam. It has called upon these groups to desist from violence and hold talks with the Centre and the state governments.

In order to carry forward the current line of the Party, we should make all efforts to keep the secular allies in the United Front together by struggling for the implementation of the positive measures in the CMP. At the same time the Party's independent projection of the Left and democratic alternate policies must be stepped up.

The fortnight long campaign conducted by the Party between 15 and 31 July has been successful in informing the people about our Party's independent stand about implementing the pledges in the CMP and our opposition to the harmful economic policies.

In the coming period, the Party should undertake the following tasks:

1. Oppose all policies which affect domestic industry and self-reliance and indigenous development of science and technology.
2. The Party should lead and lend full support to the united struggles and protest actions by the working class and trade unions against privatization, closures and the steps to dismantle the public sector.
3. Counter the pernicious propaganda of the BJP-RSS and defend the legitimate rights of the minorities and the dalits.
4. Take the initiative to mobilize people for demanding the adoption of the agricultural labour legislation. The Party should call for stepping up struggles for takeover of ceiling surplus land and its distribution; distribution of homestead, degraded forest land and gram sabha lands/plots to the landless.
5. Resist all steps to curtail the public distribution system and ensure that all deserving beneficiaries get the subsidized PDS entitlement.
6. Campaign for fulfilment of reservation of women and for equal wages and rights of working women.
7. Demand increased allocations for education and public health and employment generation.
8. Utilize the 50th anniversary observance to rouse anti-imperialist patriotic feelings, highlight Communist contribution to the freedom struggle and project alternative policies to the 50 years of bourgeois-landlord policies.

On Central Government Employees' Demands*

Statement Dated September 6, 1997 Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) urges the United Front Government to immediately accept the genuine demands of the central government employees regarding the Pay Commission recommendations. There are serious drawbacks in the recommendations which increase the disparity between the officers and the group 'C' and 'D' employees. These need to be ironed out, apart from the demands of the lower staff regarding the minimum pay, bonus, etc. etc.

The CPI(M) calls upon the government to immediately start negotiations with the leaders of the central government employees' organizations on the basis of the reasonable proposals made by them for a settlement. This is necessary in order to prevent the precipitation of the matter that could lead to disruption of government functioning and inconvenience to the public at large.

Condolence On Mother Teresa's Death*

**Statement Dated September 6, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) is deeply grieved at the demise of Mother Teresa, the great humanitarian. The Left Front Government in Bengal, since assuming office in 1977, had given her all help in her work for the suffering humanity. The Polit Bureau conveys its deep condolences to all those at the Missionaries of Charity.

CPI(M) On Mid-Year Financial Measures*

**Statement Dated September 17, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The United Front Government has announced a mid-year package of measures to garner an additional revenue of Rs.6,880 crore. At the time of the last budget, the CPI(M) had criticized the move to slash import duties. Apart from reducing revenue, this would lead to a domestic recession as well as widen the trade deficit. The government has now applied a corrective by hiking import duties across the board by three per cent. This, however, is a marginal increase that may not offset the tendency towards domestic recession and check the widening trade deficit.

However, the import duty hike and related measures contribute only Rs.1,300 crore of the envisaged Rs.6,880 crore. The bulk of this resource mobilization comes from cuts in expenditure and a heavy dose of fresh disinvestment of the public sector. The cuts in the plan and non-plan expenditure are to raise Rs.3,200 crore. Needless to add, this will adversely affect the meagre expenditure on the social welfare schemes. It will be the livelihood of the vast mass of Indian people that would be hurt most. The fresh disinvestment of the public sector is to fetch Rs.2,200 crore. This will mean that in this fiscal year alone, the overall disinvestment is expected to generate about Rs.8,000 crore. Thus, a massive attack on self-reliance of our economy is being undertaken. What is worse is that this disinvestment is being done to meet the government's current expenditure. This is contrary to the stated objective in the Common Minimum Programme.

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, September 21, 1997.
This United Front Government is the United Front Government at the Centre
i.e. the Union Government of India.

It is clear that the government is resorting to these measures to bolster its revenue collections in the face of sluggish returns. The Reserve Bank of India has shown that the indirect tax collections, which account for nearly 70 per cent of the total budgeted tax revenue, are far short of the target. Instead of admitting that the faulty policies pursued in the last budget of granting massive concessions to the rich is resulting in a sharp drop of potential revenue collections, the finance ministry is using the specious plea that these measures are due to the implementation of the Pay Commission's recommendations.

In a separate move, the government has decided to deregulate the price of natural gas. The suggested increase, however, falls far short of the potential. The CPI(M) had suggested that 20 per cent of natural gas which used by the non-priority sector should be priced equivalent to the price of LPG. This would have yielded the government anything over Rs. 6,000 crore annually. The increase suggested now is a meagre 300 rupees generating at best Rs.80 to 100 crore.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon the government once again to review its decision regarding the gas prices.

CPI(M)'s Greetings to 15th Congress of Communist Party of China*

[On behalf of the Party and its Central Committee, the CPI(M) General Secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, sent the following message of greetings to the 15th Congress of the Communist Party of China, on September 11, 1997]

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) conveys its warm fraternal greetings to the Communist Party of China on the occasion of its 15th National Congress.

This congress is being held in a complex international situation. Forces of world imperialism continue to seek to impose their hegemony—both political and economic. Their efforts, however, are being met with resistance. The complexity of the world situation is such that while imperialism seeks to impose its vision of a unipolar world, developments counter this with the possibilities of an emerging multi-polarity. In these complex circumstances, the firm adherence by the Communist Party of China to the socialist path and advance to the 21st century is a source of inspiration for the peoples struggling for an exploitation-free society.

The CPI(M) notes the impressive economic advances made by the People's Republic of China that is carrying forward the reform process and socialist modernization while adhering to the four cardinal principles enunciated by Comrade Deng Xiaoping. These rapid economic strides are attracting world-wide attention.

The CPI(M) wishes the CPC all success in carrying forward the tasks of socialist modernization with the explicit purpose of strengthening socialism in China.

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The deliberations of the 15th Congress, upholding the banner of building socialism with Chinese characteristics, reviewing the history of the Chinese people's struggles in the past 100 years and chalking out plans to carry China into the next century seizing favourable opportunities, we are sure, will contribute to the process of consolidating and strengthening socialism in China.

The CPI(M) is happy that the relations between India and China are improving. This has an important bearing on peace and stability in the region. We are confident that the deliberations of this congress will further strengthen this process.

The CPI(M) once again wishes the 15th Congress of the CPC all success and conveys its fraternal Communist greetings to all delegates.

CPI(M) Welcomes Union Government's Agreement with Employees On Implementation of The Recommendations of The Fifth Pay Commission*

Statement Dated September 12, 1997 Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) welcomes the agreement reached between the Union Government and the employees unions on the implementation of the Fifth Pay Commission's recommendations. The agreement which has been concluded after negotiations between the group of Union ministers and the employees representatives of the Joint Consultative Machinery is a victory for the employees.

The agreement has met some of the major demands of the employees such as 40 per cent increase in basic pay in the fixation of revised pay scales, bonus for all non-gazetted employees, review of the decision to abolish 3.5 lakh vacant posts and rejection of the Pay Commission recommendation to reduce staff strength by 30 per cent in ten years. These benefits have been achieved due to the unity displayed by the employees organizations and their firm united stand.

The Polit Bureau appreciated the positive approach adopted by the United Front Government at the Centre in settling the package of proposals through negotiations and conceding some of the legitimate demands of the employees.

CPI(M)'s Greetings to 21st Congress of The Japanese Communist Party*

**Sent by Harkishan Singh Surjeet, General Secretary
of The Communist Party of India (Marxist)**

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) conveys its warm fraternal Communist greetings to the 21st Congress of the Japanese Communist Party.

The CPI(M) has been following with great attention the historic success achieved by the JCP since its 20th Congress. The over seven million votes representing 13.08 per cent of the total vote won by the JCP in 1996 elections, its achievements in the local assembly elections and the Tokyo Metropolitan elections constitute a resounding vindication of the validity of scientific socialism and the independent role pursued by the JCP for over seven decades. We are confident that the deliberations of this Congress will further strengthen the ties between the JCP and the working people of Japan.

Comrades,

Your Congress is taking place in the midst of a complex international situation. Forces of world imperialism led by the USA continue to seek to impose their hegemony—both political and economic. Their efforts, however, are being met with resistance. The complexity of the world situation is such that while the USA seeks to impose its vision of unipolarity, world developments counter this with the possibilities of emerging multipolarity. Under these circumstances, the advances made by the JCP indeed constitute a source of inspiration for the forces the world over struggling for an exploitation-free society.

Comrades,

We, in India, are in the midst of a complex situation that is providing opportunities for our advance. The efforts to keep the

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right wing fundamentalist forces away from state power and to prevent the dominant part of the ruling classes, the Congress, from acquiring state power, have temporarily succeeded. However, the struggle continues to remain intense.

Comrades,

The CPI(M), once again, wishes the 21st Congress of the JCP all success.

With fraternal Communist greetings!

CPI(M) Demands Firm Stand by The Government of India on Dumping Toxic Wastes*

**Statement Dated September 26, 1997 Issued
by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

India has been facing the problem of hazardous industrial wastes being dumped in India from the western and developed countries. Under the guise of reuse and recycling, such toxic wastes are being imported which are a serious threat to the health of the people and the environment. The Basel convention on trans-boundary movement of hazardous waste in 1995 took a decision to ban the export of hazardous waste from the advanced countries (OECD nations) to non-OECD countries. This decision known as the Basel ban will be coming up for consideration at the international convention to be held in Malaysia in October.

In India, there has been growing awareness of the toxic contamination of the soil and waters due to the import of hazardous wastes. The Supreme Court had also passed a judgement banning the import of such wastes into the country. The Indian Government should ratify the Basel ban and take steps to see that it is enforced.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) requests the Government of India to take a firm and clear decision in the matter so that the Indian delegation to the conference can ratify the ban. In this connection the CPI(M) General Secretary has also written to the Union minister for environment.

CPI(M) On Bomb Blasts: Demands Government of India Must Probe External Links*

**Statement Dated October 2, 1997 Issued
by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the bomb blasts in the Frontier Mail at Ghaziabad and the explosions in Delhi city. Two people have been killed in the attack on the train and many more have been seriously injured. These attacks are part of a pattern of terrorist violence which has been concentrated on the railways in the north-western region of the country. The Central Government should investigate the pattern of incidents and look for the external connections of these groups operating to destabilize normal life in the country.

In this context the Polit Bureau also expressed its serious concern at the wanton shelling of Kargil town which led to the death of 16 civilians and the continuing firing from across the border. Coming soon after the meeting of two Prime Ministers in New York, this unwarranted firing will vitiate the atmosphere. The Pakistani Government should be firmly told that the continuation of such hostile activity will be detrimental to the efforts being made to improve relations through the secretary-level talks.

CPI(M) Demands: Phone Tapping Must Be Probed*

Statement Dated October 7, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

Transcripts of some telephone conversations which were tapped and published in a newspaper evoke serious concern for two reasons. Firstly, it is clear that the above tapping has been done illegally. This must be investigated and the agencies of persons responsible booked under the law. The government must be aware that there are a number of private agencies which are available for hire for this illegal business.

Secondly, the telephone transcripts provide a glimpse of how big business operates in the country. It shows disturbingly the efforts made to lobby and influence Central Government officials and intelligence agencies to forestall the serious investigations and prosecution being conducted by the Assam State Government.

The Tata Tea company owes an explanation as to why it continued to shield one of its executives after his connivance and complicity with the ULFA was fairly well established by the State Government. While recognizing the serious difficulties of working in Assam in the past few years due to the extremist menace, still it is incumbent on all companies to draw the line between acting under coercion and active cooperation which goes far beyond a response to extortionate threats.

The Central Government should ensure effective cooperation with the Assam State Government to tackle the continuing threats from the extremist groups and to put an end to all such activities which provide them with sustenance and support.

CPI(M) Opposes Pre-Shipment Assessment by The Government of India*

Statement Dated October 8, 1997 Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

It is reported that the Government of India is considering a major change in policy with regard to the customs appraisal of imports of goods into the country. So far imports into the country are appraised for their value by the Indian customs, and duties levied accordingly. This is now sought to be changed and there is to be a pre-shipment inspection to be assigned to foreign companies. This would mean that imports to India from Europe and the USA will be assessed for their value before shipment at the place of export and this will be communicated to the customs at India which will be obliged to follow their advice. Thereby, the sovereign function of evaluating and collecting customs duties is to be handed over to foreign companies.

The CPI(M) is totally opposed to this proposed change. It will be a dangerous step which will open the floodgates for massive corruption at high levels. The experience of certain developing countries in Africa and Asia, which introduced this system of pre-shipment assessment, shows that this will provide ample opportunities for fraudulent pre-shipment assessment and a manifold increase in kickbacks.

The finance ministry is reportedly negotiating with a pre-shipment inspection company, the *Societe Generale De Surveillance (SGS)* of Geneva, to entrust them with this job. This itself is a shocking step as this very company has been named by the Pakistan Government for giving kickbacks after being appointed for pre-shipment assessment. After an official enquiry, the Pakistan Government has recently announced that there is ample evidence

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that the SGS of Geneva and its subsidiary, Cotecna Inspection, had paid six per cent kickbacks to persons and front companies close to the then Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, and her husband.

The revenue collected by the customs shows that the present system is working. There is no reason for departing from the system of appraisal and realization of duties on imports by the Indian customs. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) wants the government to come out on what the position is with regard to appointing foreign companies for pre-shipment assessment. It calls upon the government not to proceed with the proposal.

CPI(M)'s Homage to Comrade Chitta Basu*

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) expresses profound shock and grief at the death of Comrade Chitta Basu.

Comrade Chitta Basu had joined the Forward Bloc when he was 20 years old in 1945. Through active, dedicated and ceaseless work in the cause of the working class and the toiling peasantry, Comrade Chitta Basu rose to become its General Secretary in 1977. He was elected to the West Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1957. Between 1966 and 1991 he was elected to the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha several times. He was an outstanding parliamentarian who used to raise issues of national interest particularly those pertaining to workers struggles in Parliament. Comrade Chitta Basu had also to undergo imprisonment several times totalling a period of eight years.

Through his dedicated work and devotion he had earned the love and respect of the people. He was held in respect by those who were opposed to him politically also. His simple life-style and easy accessibility struck all those who had the occasion to meet him.

Comrade Chitta Basu's death is a big loss not only to the Forward Bloc but also for the Left and democratic movement in the country. In his death the working class movement in the country has lost one of its valiant soldiers who had championed and defended the interests of the working class and the peasantry.

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) pays respectful homage to this departed leader of the Left movement. It conveys its heartfelt condolences to the Forward Bloc and all members of his family.

On Enhancing Railway Freight Charges*

**Statement Dated October 7, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)
Demanding Its Withdrawal**

The increase in freight charges announced by the railways is unwarranted and will inflict a further burden on the people by hiking up the cost of living. The withdrawal of freight subsidy on essential commodities such as foodgrains, pulses, sugar and kerosene will directly hit the people. Alongwith the four per cent increase on coal this will have a cascading effect resulting in all-round price rise.

Out of the 15 essential commodities which were getting freight subsidies, subsidies have been withdrawn in thirteen cases. This indirect taxation on the people is a result of the decision of the United Front Government to increase the prices of petroleum products, particularly diesel. Since then there has been a steep increase in transportation costs, leading to increase in bus fares and now the railway freight charges. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly protests this unjustified imposition on the people. It calls upon the government to withdraw this decision. It calls upon all its Party units to mobilize the people to oppose this hike.

CPI(M)'s Greetings to 9th Congress of The Communist Party of Brazil*

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) conveys its warm fraternal greetings to the 9th congress of the Communist Party of Brazil. We are confident that this important congress will further sharpen the struggle of the Brazilian people against the current neoliberal offensive.

Comrades,

Your congress is taking place in the midst of a complex international situation. Forces of world imperialism led by the USA continue to seek to impose their hegemony — both political and economic. Their efforts, however, are being met with resistance. The complexity of the world situation is such that while the USA seeks to impose its vision of unipolarity world developments counter this with the possibilities of emerging multipolarity. Such possibilities, however, can be utilized only if Communists are able to further strengthen their links with the working people and sharpen the class struggle against the multifarious attacks mounted by imperialism. Under these circumstances, the resolve of the Communist Party of Brazil to forge a large democratic and popular front opposing this offensive and generating a political action to force the ruling classes to reverse these policies will constitute an important part of the worldwide struggle of the working people against the current imperialist efforts.

Comrades,

The CPI(M) has always held in high esteem the glorious legacy of the Brazilian Communists in the struggle to restore democracy in the country and also the current struggle for advancing the

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people's movement for an exploitation-free society. We are confident that the deliberations of your congress will strengthen further the Communist Party of Brazil and its links with the working people.

We once again wish the congress all success.

With fraternal greetings.

CPI(M)'s Greetings to 34th Congress of The Communist Party of Belorussia*

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) conveys its warm fraternal greetings to the 34th congress of the Communist Party of Belorussia.

Following the dismantling of socialism in the USSR, and the disintegration of the USSR the CPI(M) has been following developments in the former Soviet socialist republics with great concern. We are pleased to note that the Communist Party of Belorussia has, during the last year, following its 33rd congress, re-established provincial, regional and city party organizations all across the country. The new party programme and constitution of the party to be adopted in this 34th congress, we are confident, will pave the way for strengthening further the links between the Communist Party and the working people of Belorussia.

Comrades,

Your congress is being held in the background of a complex international situation. Forces of world imperialism led by the USA continue to seek to impose their hegemony — both political and economic. Their efforts, however, are being met with resistance. The complexity of the world situation is such that while the USA seeks to impose its vision of unipolarity, world developments counter this with the possibilities of emerging multipolarity. Under these circumstances the re-establishment of the Communist Party of Belorussia and its efforts to regain its leading position constitute a significant development.

Comrades, the CPI(M) once again wishes the 34th congress of the Communist Party of Belorussia all success.

CPI(M)'s Greetings to 30th Congress of The Communist Party of Austria*

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) sends fraternal greetings to the 30th congress of the Communist Party of Austria. Your congress is being held in the background of a complex international situation. Forces of world imperialism led by the USA continue to seek to impose their hegemony—both political and economic. Their efforts, however, are being met with resistance. The complexity of the world situation is such that while the USA seeks to impose its vision of unipolarity, world developments counter this with the possibilities of emerging multipolarity. Under these circumstances, the offensive in Europe is bound to have a significant impact on world developments. We are pleased to note that the agenda of your congress seeks to discuss the possibilities of united action with other Left wing and progressive forces in Europe in the struggle against Maastricht Treaty; the planned introduction of a common currency; the eastward expansion of NATO and in defence of the working people's rights and Austria's neutrality.

The CPI(M) is confident that the deliberations of your congress will further strengthen the links between the working people and the Communist Party of Austria.

We, once again, wish the deliberations of your congress a grand success.

With revolutionary greetings,

CPI(M) Condemns Haryana Firing*

**Statement Dated October 12, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the brutal killing of six innocent peasants in police firing at Mandiali village in Mahendragarh district of Haryana. Many persons have also been seriously injured. The peasants who were protesting against the disconnection of power lines and for repair and replacement of burnt transformers were squatting on railway tracks at Mandiali village.

The Polit Bureau demands adequate compensation to the relatives of those killed and injured. It also demands resumption of power supply to the peasants immediately.

CPI(M) Demands Dismissal of Kalyan Singh Government In Uttar Pradesh*

**Statement Dated October 19, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands the immediate dismissal of the Kalyan Singh Government in Uttar Pradesh consequent to the withdrawal of support by the BSP. The BJP-BSP alliance was the basis on which the government was able to muster a majority and form a government seven months ago. Now, that the BSP has withdrawn support, the BJP-led government has no basis whatsoever to continue.

The CPI(M) asks the governor to act forthwith so that no horse-trading or any unscrupulous use of money is resorted to by the BJP.

CPI(M) On BJP's Nefarious Game to Remain in Government in Uttar Pradesh*

Statement Dated October 25, 1997 Issued by Harkishan Singh Surjeet, General Secretary of The CPI(M)

The BJP, in its bid to muster a majority in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly and win the vote of confidence, not only indulged in horse-trading but also supported and permitted the violation of the provisions of the anti-defection Act. Twelve BSP members who had left the BSP and who do not constitute one-third of the strength of the BSP legislature party were allowed to vote in the vote of confidence, defying the whip issued by the BSP. The Speaker of the UP Assembly, who is a BJP nominee, should have disqualified them after they had made known that they had left the BSP. This cannot be recognized as a split as per the provisions of the anti-defection Act.

Moreover, Press reports also indicate that non-members were allowed inside the house. The Press has published photographs and also given names of those individuals.

The high moral pedestal on which the BJP has always sought to place itself has been torn to shreds. In its quest for power, it is willing not only to enter into unprincipled alliances but is also indulging in horse-trading and unscrupulous means and manoeuvres.

The clear and flagrant violation of democratic norms and unscrupulous manoeuvres indulged in by the BJP to cling on to power in Uttar Pradesh calls for unequivocal condemnation by all democratic forces in the country. The moral and ethical facade that the BJP has tried to present should be exposed. The provisions of the anti-defection Act should be applied and the 12 BSP legislators who had violated their party's whip should be disqualified. Failure to do so will set a bad precedent and political parties will try to twist situations for political expediency.

CPI(M) On US Government's Attempt to Dictate Indian Government to Reintroduce The Insurance Regulatory Bill in Indian Parliament*

**Statement Dated October 31, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses its strong objection to the statement made by the US commerce secretary, William Delay, asking the Indian Government to take steps to reintroduce the Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill in the forthcoming winter session of parliament. This is a blatant interference in the internal affairs of the country and an attempt to dictate the agenda for parliament.

The Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill was withdrawn in the last session of parliament after widespread opposition to the opening up of India's insurance sector to foreign companies. This has led to tremendous pressure being mounted by the US and other western countries on the Indian government to revive the bill so that foreign companies can have entry into the insurance sector.

The CPI(M) is totally opposed to this arm-twisting tactic. The CPI(M) calls upon the UF Government not to proceed with this bill as it has serious implications for the country's economy and self-reliant development. The Polit Bureau appeals to all political parties to come out against the US Government's attempts to dictate terms.

On US Interference in China's Internal Affairs*

**Statement Dated November 3, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The decision of the US administration to appoint a special co-ordinator for Tibet affairs is a gross interference in the internal affairs of China. The Clinton administration has taken upon itself to act as the arbiter on human rights in China and to act out its self appointed role to promote dialogue between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama. The CPI(M) condemns this arrogant and motivated stance.

The Government of India should immediately convey its disapproval of such a step. The US policy on Tibet is similar to its stand on Kashmir where it wants to mediate between India and Pakistan. India cannot be a party to any outside interference in the affairs of Tibet which is part of the People's Republic of China.

CPI(M) Condemns US Threat to Iraq*

**Statement Dated November 3, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the threat of military action against Iraq by the United States which is bent upon pursuing sanctions and an economic embargo against the country. The current dispute concerning the presence of American members in the United Nations inspection team is being sought to be utilized to get the United Nations' Security Council to sanction yet another military attack against Iraq.

Iraq has been subjected to economic sanctions for the past six years which has led to a large number of deaths of children due to malnutrition and lack of sufficient medicines. The United States, in pursuit of its hegemonic designs in the region, is not allowing the United Nations to withdraw sanctions. The intimidatory tactics adopted by the United States must be condemned by all peaceloving forces in the world. The Polit Bureau calls upon the Indian Government to oppose any military action against Iraq to resolve the current dispute.

Communiqué Issued by The Central Committee of The CPI(M) Following Its Meeting Held In New Delhi On November 9 - 12, 1997*

The CPI(M) General Secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, today November 12, 1997, demanded that the Jain Commission report be tabled in Parliament on the first day of the winter session in order to avoid "needless controversy" and refused to comment on its purported contents till the report was made public. He was addressing a crowded Press conference this evening (November 12, 1997) following the 3-day meeting of the CPI(M) Central Committee. The main agenda of the Central Committee was finalization of the draft political resolution to be placed before the Sixteenth Party Congress in February 1998. The draft will be formally released on November 20.

The Press conference witnessed a volley of questions on the current controversy regarding the alleged anti-DMK comments in the Jain Commission report, the angry reaction of some Congress(I) leaders and the media speculation that the Congress would withdraw support if the DMK remained in the United Front.

Despite repeated attempts by journalists, Surjeet refused to be drawn into the controversy and maintained that no comment was possible till the actual report was tabled in the house. On the reaction of Congress(I) leaders, he said, "There are many senior leaders in the Congress party. They should restrain themselves from rushing to the Press and making comments before the report is tabled".

Regarding the Union home minister's comment that the report lacked evidence, Surjeet said, "I do not want to get into the intricacies. Let us first see the report".

Similarly, on the issue of DMK's future, Surjeet said: "So far there is no question of anybody going out of the United Front. The DMK is part of the Front."

Congress Threat

On the Congress threat of withdrawing support to the UF Government, Surjeet refused to take Press speculation seriously. He said, "Different statements are being made by different leaders at different times. I am not going to comment on them". Elaborating, he said, "I go by the Congress Working Committee (CWC) resolution. The CWC met on November 9 and the CWC statement did not say anything about withdrawal of support. The CWC, in fact, expressed happiness that the UF Government had agreed to table the Jain Commission report on the first day of the coming session of Parliament".

Regarding the Congress demand for a coordination committee, Surjeet said, "Since the Congress is supporting the government from outside, we have always been in favour of a coordination committee at the government level, not at the United Front level".

State of Congress

Earlier, while elaborating on the CC communique, Surjeet said the Congress(I) should seriously ponder on how it was being completely corroded and eroded as a party. "What is happening to the Congress? They talk of secularism, of patriotism, but Congressmen are ready to walk over to the BJP. This must be rectified. They must introspect on why this is happening, why they have steadily lost their mass base", Surjeet said. He pointed out that the Congress(I) cannot survive by compromising with communalism, it cannot survive by pursuing the so-called new economic policies. If it wants to revive itself, Congressmen must think about these deeper questions instead of resorting to the politics of manoeuvre.

Ignoring Left Agenda

Surjeet also came down heavily against the United Front for continuing with the earlier economic policies and ignoring the Left's demands completely. In this context, he sharply criticized the finance minister's promise that India would go in for capital account convertibility by the year 2000 and demanded that the

government come out with a policy statement rejecting such a dangerous proposal.

On the Common Minimum Programme (CMP), he said, "We have told them that you are going ahead with your agenda, what about our agenda?" The promise in the CMP of a revamped public distribution system with 20 kg. of foodgrains at half price to those below the poverty line was being completely ignored. Despite the Left's pressure, the government made one excuse after another to subvert this promise. Other promises in the CMP which the Left backed such as the Comprehensive Legislation for Agricultural Workers, the women's reservation bill, and secret ballot to verify TU membership were also being sidelined session after session in Parliament. Regarding the escalating violence in Tripura, Surjeet said the Congress unit in the state was actively supporting the extremist elements in order to create terror and subvert the democratic process and demanded that the Centre send additional armed forces to deal with the extremist violence in this sensitive border state.

Protest US Threat to Iraq

Strongly condemning the bullying tactics of the US which was now threatening war against Iraq only to topple Saddam Hussein, Surjeet said, "We want the Government of India to take a firm position and intervene in the UN to prevent any sanction to military action". The Central Committee had also called upon all Party units to organize meetings all over the country to protest against the US threat and express solidarity with the Iraqi people, he said.

The communique issued after the Central Committee meeting follows:

Draft Political Resolution for Party Congress

The Central Committee meeting had on its main agenda the adoption of the Draft Political Resolution for the 16th Party Congress to be held in February 1998. After thorough discussions, the Central Committee finalized the draft resolution. This draft resolution after editing will be released on November 20, 1997.

Threat to Iraq

The Central Committee expressed its strong opposition to the US moves for military action against Iraq. The Clinton administration

is pressurizing the UN Security Council to sanction such an aggressive measure. For seven years Iraq has been subjected to sanctions by the United Nations and the USA has been refusing to have the sanctions withdrawn. Despite inspection by the UN Special Commission teams in Iraq for the past six years and the destruction of many of the weapons production facilities, the United States is unrelenting. All this is a pretext for making efforts to topple the Saddam Hussein regime.

The Central Committee calls for an end to the U-2 flights over Iraq and withdrawal of the sanctions. The Indian Government should effectively intervene in the United Nations to prevent any sanction to military action.

The Central Committee calls upon all its Party units to organize protest actions against the US threats and express solidarity with the Iraqi people.

Saharwi Arab Democratic Republic

The Central Committee called upon the Indian Government to resist any pressure to withdraw recognition to the Saharwi Arab Democratic Republic. India should remain firm in its commitment to the self-determination of the Saharwi people.

BJP Exposed

The manner in which the BJP has installed the Kalyan Singh ministry in Uttar Pradesh has thoroughly exposed the party's unprincipled opportunism and resort to corrupt practices. The formation of a 93-member ministry with a large number of persons with criminal backgrounds, and the attempts to lure further defectors has damaged the party's credibility and its so-called adherence to principles. The BJP top leadership is now openly advocating similar tactics at the national level which shows how deep the rot has set into the party. The Central Committee condemns the partisan role of the Speaker of the UP Assembly who is taking no steps to disqualify the defectors from the BSP who violated the provisions of the Anti-Defection Law.

The Central Committee condemned the brutal lathicharge upon the Samajwadi Party demonstrators at Lucknow on November 10 in which several persons were badly beaten and injured. It warned the BJP Government that such tactics to suppress the opposition cannot be tolerated.

Congress Stance

The Central Committee noted that for the first time a majority of MLAs belonging to the Congress(I) in a state assembly have crossed over to the BJP, as happened in Uttar Pradesh. This shows the extent of corrosion in the political-ideological level of the Congress party which claims to represent secular traditions in the country. The compromising approach to communalism, which became the hallmark of the Congress in recent years is now coming home to roost. It is for the Congress leadership to forthrightly give up this wrong approach taken in the past and take firm secular positions.

The Congress party is not prepared to self-critically look at its economic policies, attitude to communalism and corruption. Instead of doing this, any unrealistic pressure to join the government at the Centre will not help the party to check its decline.

Anti-Defection Law

In the light of the happenings in Uttar Pradesh and the growing tendencies to encourage defections and indulge in horse-trading and unscrupulous methods in politics, the Central Committee wants more stringent provisions in the Anti-Defection Law. It must be provided that anyone or a group of elected representatives who leave their party have to vacate their seats. Such cases will have to be referred to the Election Commission for their recommendation for action to the President of India.

Economic Policies

In the light of the currency crisis and the economic difficulties which have engulfed the South East Asian countries, there is serious rethinking about allowing free and unfettered flow of international capital and capital convertibility. This was reflected in the G-15 Summit held at Malaysia recently. The lessons of this crisis should be realized by the policy-makers and the Government of India. The finance minister had committed the country to capital account convertibility by the year 2000 in his budget speech. The CPI(M) has already expressed its strong opposition to such a move. The Central Committee wants the Government of India to come out with a policy statement that it will not go ahead with full convertibility.

The Central Committee expressed its deep dissatisfaction at the failure of the UF Government to take steps to improve and revamp

the public distribution system. It notes that the government has so far not agreed to increase the quantum of foodgrains supplied to 20 kg. for beneficiaries below the poverty line under the Targetted PDS. Further, it strongly criticized the moves to supply foodgrains to the states at "economic cost" prices which is more or less the market price. This will damage the effective public distribution system in states like Kerala. It is essential that people below the poverty line be given 20 kg. per month and the allocations to the states be restored to the pre-TPDS level at the central issue price.

The Central Committee criticized the proposals of the Disinvestment Commission which is recommending the sale of shares of many profitable PSUs. The proposed sale of the Bongaigaon Refinery and Petrochemicals in Assam is one such instance. This profitable enterprise in the north-east region should not be privatized. Further, the government continues to use the proceeds of such sales to bridge its budgetary deficit and is not ploughing back these funds to upgrade and modernize the public sector.

Pass Delayed Legislations

The Central Committee was strongly critical of the UF Government's failure to pass long delayed legislations such as the agricultural labour bill, women's reservation bill, the Lokpal Bill and the trade union recognition by secret ballot measure. The Central Committee demanded that these bills be taken up immediately in the forthcoming winter session of Parliament.

The Central Committee called upon the UF Government not to proceed with the Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill in the coming session. The bill was withdrawn in the last session due to widespread opposition.

Tripura

The Central Committee denounced the systematic efforts being made by the extremist groups to destabilize normal life by killings, extortions and kidnappings. The Congress party is encouraging and conniving at these activities with the narrow aim of targeting the Left Front Government. The Central Committee strongly condemned these tactics. The Central Committee called upon the Centre to dispatch immediately additional armed forces to the state so that the cross-border extremist violence can be curbed and peace maintained.

On Supreme Court Ruling on Bandhs*

**Statement Dated November 13, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

It is unfortunate that the Supreme Court has upheld the verdict of the Kerala High Court that bandhs are illegal. The right to protest is a fundamental right in a democracy. The call for a bandh is a voluntary collective protest action. Any act of intimidation or violence can be dealt with by the existing laws under the Criminal Procedure Code.

To extend the logic of the High Court judgement, protest actions such as a strike or hartal can also be seen as infringing the right of some other citizens or sections. Therefore, to differentiate between the bandh and a general strike or hartal is not valid. To term a bandh as illegal and to hold a general strike or hartal as legitimate is both impractical and unsound. It would have been better, if the judiciary had not decreed, what are the acceptable forms of public or political protest actions.

On The Demise of Comrade Georges Marchais*

**Condolence Message Sent by Harkishan Singh
Surjeet, General Secretary of The CPI(M), on
November 19, 1997 to The Central Committee
of The Communist Party of France**

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) expresses its deep sorrow and grief at the death of the veteran Communist leader, Comrade Georges Marchais. Comrade Marchais, one of the foremost Communist leaders of Europe and former General Secretary of the Communist Party of France, leading the Party for 22 years, played an important role in post-second world war European political history.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) conveys its deep condolences to the French working class, the Communist Party and Comrade Georges Marchais's family.

CPI(M) on The Stand of Indian National Congress on The Interim Report of The Jain Commission*

Statement Dated November 21, 1997 Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The Interim Report of the Jain Commission does not show any involvement of the DMK in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. Therefore, the reaction of the Congress demanding the removal of the DMK ministers from the Union cabinet is totally unwarranted and politically motivated.

The CPI(M) opposes the desperate Congress attempt to cash in on the Commission's report for its narrow purposes. In trying to destabilize the UF Government, the Congress is only helping the BJP. The United Front will resolutely reject such Congress tactics and the people of the country will see through the Congress game.

On Withdrawal of Support to The United Front Government at The Centre by The Indian National Congress Leading to Fall of This Government*

Statement Dated November 29, 1997 Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The Congress party has withdrawn support to the United Front Government. It has used the pretext of the Jain Commission's interim report which has made out no case whatsoever about the DMK's involvement in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. The people will disapprove this action of the Congress party; it only indicates the desperate straits the Congress finds itself in, unable to project a viable political platform to revive the party.

By staking its claim to form the government, the Congress has only exposed itself to ridicule. The BJP having failed once to establish a majority, will once again try to organize defections resorting to corrupt practices.

The resignation by the Prime Minister and the stand taken by all the United Front constituents that they will not support any BJP or Congress-led government shows that the united stand of the Front will foil any unscrupulous manoeuvres.

The CPI(M) wishes to make it clear that after the Congress's irresponsible act of bringing down the Gujral Government, there is no other option but to go in for elections. This will be the only democratic way to resolve the present crisis. Any concession to unscrupulous manoeuvres will be harmful for democracy in the country.

On Massacre of 60 Agricultural Workers and Poor Peasants Belonging to Scheduled Castes by The Banned Ranavir Sena in Bihar*

**Statement Dated December 2, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses its strong condemnation at the massacre of 60 agricultural workers and poor peasants belonging to the scheduled castes and backward communities in Lakshmanpur-Bathe village of Jehanabad, Bihar by the banned Ranavir Sena, an armed outfit of the landlords. Brutal attacks on agricultural workers and poor peasants are continuing and increasing in Bihar. A section of the Bihar Government is aiding and supporting the criminal gang.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands the immediate arrest of the perpetrators of this ghastly crime. It also demands adequate compensation to the relatives of the deceased.

CPI(M) Condemns Blasts in Trains*

**Statement Dated December 6, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses its strong condemnation and outrage at the series of bomb blasts in trains in southern India which have killed ten persons and injured many passengers. The blasts in the Pandian and Cheran Expresses in Tamil Nadu and the explosion at Thrissur in Kerala on the Alleppey Express coming from Chennai are a dastardly attack on innocent railway passengers.

The terroristic violence has been perpetrated by fundamentalist extremist groups and comes in the wake of serious communal violence in Coimbatore city. It is a matter of serious concern that religious extremist groups are increasingly targetting places in Tamil Nadu where there has been traditional communal amity. No efforts should be spared to track down and put down such elements. The Central Government should immediately take steps to coordinate with the state governments, the investigations into these terroristic activities which have serious repercussions for the country's security and integrity.

The Polit Bureau conveys its deep sympathy to all those who have lost their family members or have been affected by the tragedy.

CPI(M) Protests WTO Accord*

**Statement Dated December 16, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) registers its strong protest against the government's decision to sign the WTO accord on liberalizing financial services by March 1999. As is well-known, the opening up of the financial sector, especially the insurance sector, has been firmly opposed by the CPI(M) and other Left and patriotic forces. This has forced the United Front Government to withdraw its proposed bill on the Insurance Regulatory Authority. Now on signing this accord, the government, succumbing to imperialist pressures, has, in effect, agreed to open up the financial sector, including the insurance sector by March 1999.

Further, the United Front Government is now forced to grant permission to foreign banks to open 12 branches a year at any place they choose in the country.

By doing this, the United Front Government has exposed India to the mercy of international financial markets. It is indeed strange that the present government should take such important decisions at a time when the country is going in for a mid-term election.

On Dastardly Attack On CPI(M) Leader in Uttar Pradesh*

**Statement Dated December 17, 1997 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) strongly condemns the attack on Comrade Gulab Singh, member of the Uttar Pradesh State Secretariat of the CPI(M). Gulab Singh was shot at in front of the venue of the Uttar Pradesh state conference of the CPI(M) being held in Saharanpur. He has been seriously injured and is admitted to the PGI Hospital, Chandigarh.

The attack was made possible due to the laxity of the state administration in providing security at the conference venue.

The Polit Bureau demands an immediate enquiry into the whole incident to find out the motive and the conspiracy involved behind this attack on Comrade Gulab Singh. The Polit Bureau also demands that immediate action be taken against those responsible for the attack.

Communiqué of The Central Committee of The CPI(M) Issued Following Its Meeting Held in Calcutta On December 21-22, 1997*

[The Central Committee of the CPI(M) met in Calcutta on December 21-22, 1997. The Central Committee met to take stock of the political situation after dissolution of the Lok Sabha and chalk out the tactics of the Party for the coming elections. Following on its deliberations the CC issued the following statement:]

The country has been forced into a mid-term election due to the disruptive stance of the Congress in insisting on the baseless demand of the ouster of the DMK from the Union Government on the basis of the Jain Commission Report.

The United Front has firmly met this Congress blackmail and unitedly rebuffed all attempts to divide the Front. The Congress party which learnt no lesson from its past record will have to pay a heavy price for this folly.

The Central Committee denounced the shameless efforts of the BJP to induce defections using money and blandishments of office to try and form the government at the Centre. The BJP which became infamous for its forming the defector-criminal jumbo ministry in Lucknow, has now openly come out in support of corrupt practices. The BJP has become synonymous with unethical opportunism and unprincipled power-mongering.

The BJP is desperately seeking allies in its pursuit of power at all costs. The combination of Hindutva and corrupt opportunism is the most reactionary alternative before the people. It represents the big business, feudal elements and landlords who wish to see an authoritarian set-up which keeps the people divided on religious sectarian lines.

The Congress presents a picture of political bankruptcy and decay. Whether it be compromise with communalism, economic reforms at the behest of the IMF-World Bank, or its record of corruption, the people are bound to reject such a party.

Neither the BJP and its allies nor the Congress and its new found friends can provide stability. Stability requires commitments to secularism, national unity, federalism and pro-people economic growth. Only the United Front can provide such a stable government.

The third alternative was formed to fight the communal forces. It took concrete shape in the form of the United Front which was in power for 18 months. It has established the relevance and need for a government committed to secularism, federalism and democratic values and economic policies which benefit the people.

The Central Committee decided to work for the strengthening of the United Front. The UF should formulate a policy declaration which will provide the people with a choice which contains the policies which will advance secularism, democracy, federalism and pro-people economic growth. The Central Committee decided also to issue a joint manifesto with the Left parties to project the Left and democratic programme.

The Central Committee called upon the people:

* To elect the United Front with a majority to form the Central Government.

** To defeat the BJP and the Congress whose policies and programme offer no future for the people and country.

*** To strengthen the representation of the CPI(M) and Left parties so that the firmest defenders of secularism, democracy and people's interest are adequately represented in Parliament.

Party Congress

The Central Committee approved the postponement of the 16th Party Congress in view of the Lok Sabha elections in February 1998. The Congress will now be held at Calcutta in the month of September 1998. The exact dates will be declared after the General Elections.

Note On Present Political Developments and Election Tactics*

Adopted by The Central Committee of The CPI(M) in Its Meeting Held in Calcutta on December 21-22, 1997

In the last CC meeting held between November 9 and 11, 1997, the main agenda was the adoption of the Draft Political Resolution to be circulated for inner-Party discussion to fulfil the constitutional obligation and to draw the rank and file at all levels in formulating Party policy. After a thorough discussion of the Draft, it was unanimously adopted by the Central Committee.

Congress & Jain Commission Report

Apart from the draft political resolution, a report was made on the political developments taking place in the country. The report highlighted various aspects of the crisis developing between the United Front and the supporting party, the Congress, on the issue of the Jain Commission's interim report. The Jain Commission submitted its interim report to the government about two months back. It was natural that a demand arose for a discussion on the report. But a section of Congress was feeling that this report can help them to rehabilitate the party among the people and they would be able to derive mileage in elections. A portion of the report was leaked to the *India Today*. This raised a discussion in the Press and among the political parties.

The Congress party demanded that the report be tabled in Parliament on the first day of the winter session. Our Party also raised the same demand. The Congress Working Committee which met on 9th of November, welcomed the decision of the government to table the report. But certain Congressmen began raising the question of removal of DMK ministers from the Union Cabinet.

*Published in the compilation of Central Committee documents released in October 1998.

According to them the Jain Commission had indicted the DMK in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. They were demanding action against the DMK without waiting for the tabling of the report and a discussion on it. They forced the Congress president to convene the meeting of the parliamentary party which adopted a similar resolution demanding the removal of the DMK ministers. It further indicated that this* demand will be followed by the demand for action against other personalities mentioned in the report.

Our opinion was that priority be given to a discussion on the misdeeds of the BJP in Uttar Pradesh where the BJP clung to power by indulging in large-scale horse-trading by luring defectors with ministerial berths and money. In the 93-member jumbo sized cabinet, the BJP has inducted all the defectors, many of them who have criminal backgrounds. This action of the BJP was condemned by the national Press and had put the BJP on the defensive. A discussion on this would have exposed the BJP. It was suggested that after a discussion on UP developments, the Jain Commission report could be taken up. But the Congress leaders persisted in their demand for the removal of the DMK ministers and began stalling both houses of Parliament, finally leading to the adjournment of the Lok Sabha *sine die*.

To break the deadlock the Congress president and the Prime Minister wrote to each other. The Prime Minister did his best to accommodate the Congress party without yielding to the central issue of the removal of the DMK ministers which on the basis of the report could not be held responsible for the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. But the Congress was bent upon creating a crisis and was not amenable to any reasonable solution. Inside the Congress also many pulls and pushes were going on. It adopted an adamant attitude which was most unreasonable. Accepting this demand could have led to only disruption of the United Front. The Congress did not relish the coming into existence of the United Front. They thought that it will be able to rally the masses behind the Congress more and more. That is why they have been stating that coalition politics cannot work in the country, completely forgetting the situation which has been emerging since 1989. The Congress also thought that they would be able to pressurize the

United Front to concede their demand by which they would be able to boost their position. Moreover, a section, as already mentioned, thought that if they go to the polls on this issue they will be able to utilize the Jain Commission report to revive the Congress party, expecting a big upsurge in their favour.

The total result of their manoeuvres was that the BJP to ward off whose danger we had formed the United Front, was left untouched. It enjoyed the fight between the Congress and the United Front and was waiting to make use of the situation to capture power or to disrupt the Congress party.

Party's Stand

Our Party had taken a principled stand in this crisis. We rightly did not come out till the report of the Commission was tabled. After studying the report, we found the complete fallacy in the arguments of the Congress and took a firm position to defend the unity of the United Front. Though there were certain pressures on the United Front to seek a compromise with the Congress, the Left took a firm position which did not allow submitting to the dictates of the Congress or its blackmail. We also told the United Front constituents that since the Congress had raised the issue to a high pitch and did not allow the functioning of Parliament, they would not be able to go back on this issue and hence, the UF have to be prepared for the challenge. Our Party, therefore, suggested that the Prime Minister should submit his resignation and seek the dissolution of the Lok Sabha because the people's verdict is the only solution.

Our Party and the other Left parties had made the same suggestion when the Deve Gowda Government was defeated after the Congress party withdrew support. But at that time the other constituents of the United Front did not agree as they did not want to go in for elections within such a short time. This time also some constituents of the UF were hoping that like last time a compromise could be arrived at. Therefore, it took some time. The Congress party, however, wrote to the President withdrawing support and laying claim to form government. The Congress party took the plea that since they had supported the UF Government from outside,

he UF should also do the same now. They, however, forgot their own resolution which decided to support the United Front so as to avert the communal forces from coming to power and bowing to the verdict of the people.

After the withdrawal of support, the United Front Core Committee met and considered submitting resignation of the ministry. This was immediately followed by a letter from all constituent parties to the President stating that they will not support any government headed or supported by the BJP or any Congress led government. After the Prime Minister submitted his resignation a delegation consisting of all parties of the UF met the President and these letters were hundred over to him barring the way for the formation of a Congress or BJP led government. The BJP began luring individual MPs from some constituents of the UF apart from a huge chunk from the Congress party. Certain monopoly houses entered the fray. The machinery which was used to carry out the operation in Lucknow was brought into action here also. Things went to such a pass that a party which talked of high "principles" was openly indulging in horse-trading. Vajpayee came out openly inviting MPs from other parties to cross over and enjoy the benefits. He even stated that what will happen in New Delhi will not be Lucknow type but New Delhi style.

The Congress also met some constituent parties of the United Front to woo them. They were trying to use the slogan of the danger of the BJP coming to power and started projecting that it is only the Congress which can fight against the BJP taking the country as a whole. They wanted us to forget that it is the compromising attitude of the Congress with the communal forces that led to the present state of affairs. Some Congressmen also felt that if Sonia Gandhi were to lead the Congress campaign the Congress would be able to make a comeback. Things came to such a pass that the Congress president himself made an appeal to Sonia Gandhi to take over.

UF Unity Maintained

The United Front, however, was able to foil the game and remained united. The Congress party also while laying claim made

use of the situation perhaps to get over vacillations inside the Congress in the hope that perhaps they might get a chance. The UF defeated the game of both the Congress and the BJP. It was only Laloo Prasad Yadav's Rashtriya Janata Dal which already had come to an understanding with the Congress party, which supported the Congress party since after their removal from the United Front its government in Bihar was dependent on Congress support. As far as the BJP is concerned its plans also failed and Advani himself had to admit that they were able to organize defections from the Congress but they were seven short of the required 47 to make it one-third of the strength of the Congress to formalize a split. Therefore, they also asked the President to dissolve the house. The Congress president also had to make the same demand. It was after all this exercise that the President after thorough discussions with various political parties, legal experts etc. took a decision to dissolve the Lok Sabha and asked the Gujral Government to continue till a new government is sworn in.

At the time of the last CC meeting, we knew about the crisis that was developing and we also knew that this government would not be able to last long. But we expected that it might carry on till the next budget. It was thought that after what happened in Uttar Pradesh the BJP would not be able to again gamble for a new manoeuvre at the Centre and we had also thought the Congress would not be able to overcome the shocks of Uttar Pradesh quickly and would take some time to reach a crisis point. But things went out of the hands of the Congress president and the crisis got precipitated. But it was not possible for us to fully appreciate the situation. Had it been so in the CC meeting itself we could have taken a position about postponement of the Party Congress and concentrated on the election strategy and the campaign.

The reality of the situation is that the Congress party which remained in power for more than four and a half decades at the Centre is now reduced to a situation where it has become the third force, thanks to our initiative in forming the United Front. They are now ruling only in five of the 25 states. It is very anxious to come to power. Most of the Congressmen who had joined the party during the last two decades lack any ideological commitment apart

from the dilution in secular values in general. This was shown in the defection of 22 out of 39 Congress MLAs in Uttar Pradesh to the BJP. At the Centre too a chunk of Congress MPs were bargaining with the BJP. The Congress has no leader who has appeal among the masses. That is why they are trying to mobilize Sonia Gandhi. This is the plight of the Congress party which is ridden with dissensions at the state level with many groups operating.

BJP Threat Growing

The BJP has a well-oiled apparatus with the RSS at its core. It has many fronts which compliment and supplement each other like the VHP, Bajrang Dal etc. and its allies like the Shiv Sena which has the same ideological approach. Its standard slogan remains that of temples with the slogan of Hindutva which at times it tries to cover up with various other slogans including that of Swadeshi, self-reliance etc. Simultaneously, they are supporting the IMF-World Bank dictated policies. With the disintegration of the Congress, sections of the big business which do not want the Left to play a significant role have started supporting the BJP. They do not have any dearth of money and they have the support from certain imperialist countries particularly America. It is not accidental that when Vajpayee was invited to form the government Clinton congratulated him. The Americans have an eye on India not only in the economic sphere but no influence politically also. However, the image of the BJP has eroded very much because of its unprincipled positions especially among sections of the intelligentsia.

The BJP is also having problems. What happened in Gujarat is known to all, infighting is there also in Delhi. In Madhya Pradesh and all other states also it is faction-ridden. As stated above, the RSS control keeps them together. Their appeal to the minorities cannot make any breakthrough. In fact their activities are helping the growth of Muslim fundamentalism. Even now Vajpayee has stated that as far as the Ayodhya temple is concerned it is already there. Only a beautiful structure has to be constructed. This is in spite of the fact that cases are pending before the courts. Advani

openly claims that it cannot be out of the BJP's agenda. Only they are offering the minorities a compromise that too a mischievous one, that if they agree to the Ayodhya temple they will not go ahead with their demand with regard to Kashi and Mathura. It is the same position which they had taken in relation to Ayodhya earlier. But when the issue became hot they jumped into it. Their attitude towards the minorities in reality is that of hatred whatever slogans they may give. They pose a serious threat to national unity which can have very serious repercussions for the democratic fabric of the country. Some of the retired military generals and top bureaucrats have started joining the BJP.

The disarray in the Congress after its gamble failed and the Lok Sabha was dissolved is sought to be cashed in by the BJP. It has outsmarted the Congress in Tamil Nadu by aligning with Jayalalitha. Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal is also indicating her preparedness to join hands with the BJP. The danger of sections of the Congress crossing over to the BJP is a real one. A big section of the big bourgeoisie is seeing the BJP as a viable option.

Position of UF

As far as the United Front is concerned it must be clear to all that since the last two Party Congresses we have been raising the slogan of unity of the Left, democratic and secular forces as an electoral alternative to meet the immediate challenge. In fact the CC has repeatedly made it clear that our ultimate objective is the formation of the people's democratic front which alone can enable the people's democratic revolution to pass on to the socialist revolution. But the achievement of the objective is far away. In the meantime, we have to develop the Left and democratic front which alone can provide a real alternative to the bourgeois-landlord policies.

In the last two Party Congresses we have presented the programme of this Left and democratic front for which we have to constantly work. Otherwise, we will lose direction. However, the situation is developing fast. And the Party is not a small group today. Its political influence is wider than its organizational strength. It has to intervene in the immediate situation even for the purpose

of building Left and democratic front. With that purpose we have coined the slogan of unity of Left, democratic and secular forces as an electoral alternative.

The present United Front is the first effort which we undertook to meet the concrete situation. It comprises not only those parties which had gone to the elections together along with the Left but also certain other regional parties which had fought on their own programme or with different allies. They were brought together to ward off the danger of the BJP coming to power. Our Party played an important role in bringing these forces together in order to place a third alternative before the people. We knew the limitations of this front and we were aware of the fact that in the working of this front, unity and struggle will have to be carried all through without compromising the class interests of those sections that we represent as far as economic policies are concerned.

We compromised in respect to certain policies in the Common Minimum Programme but we were able to include some aspects which strengthened the position in the realm of foreign policy, Centre-state relations, electoral reforms, fight against corruption and providing relief to the people like the strengthening of the PDS by providing foodgrains at half the prices to the people living below the poverty line, reservation for women, agricultural workers legislation, trade union legislation etc. On economic policies we kept our right to oppose them through public statements and by mobilizing the people so that our demarcation remains very clear.

In this connection it must be stated that we had kept good relations with various constituents of the front and we also paid attention to strengthening Left unity so that Left takes a common stand. The disturbing feature in the situation is that after the change in the leadership from Deve Gowda to Gujral, attitude of yielding to pressure of the Congress increased. This created some fissures inside the United Front too. In the developments in Bihar, the Prime Minister had a different view as compared to the other constituents of the Front. The Left parties took a principled stand and came out for the removal of Laloo Prasad Yadav while the Prime Minister till the end supported him. He continues this support even now. Similarly, in Punjab where the Akalis had joined with the BJP and voted against the United Front Government on all occasions and

did their best to bring a BJP-led Government during the last crisis, the Prime Minister's attitude is soft towards them and he is prepared to contest the elections with their support. This also weakens the forces of the United Front in that area.

After the recent crisis, it is very important to keep the United Front together. Otherwise all the parties will go their own way and at the national level the people will have to choose between the Congress and the BJP. It poses a serious danger with the BJP getting the upper hand in the fight. We played an important role in keeping the United Front together. Some problems arose particularly in relation to crisis in the Janata Dal and the crisis between the TMC and the DMK, important constituents of the Front. Some problem was there in relation to SP also. Since the urge for unity is there and every party is looking to various contradictions and the prospects in the coming elections it was not difficult to solve the problem in Tamil Nadu and the TMC-DMK alliance have come out with a statement that they are going together in the coming elections. The SP has also taken a clear cut position on various issues.

Janata Dal's inner problem is there in Karnataka and Orissa. In Karnataka it is expected that this problem will be overcome. In Orissa a split has taken place in the Janata Dal with the majority of MLAs forming a new party called the Biju Janata Dal. They are going to join hands with the BJP in the coming elections. This is a big setback to the Janata Dal. A serious problem arose about Laloo Prasad Yadav's party. A section in the Janata Dal including the Prime Minister is advocating alliance with them but the Left and SP which count in Bihar apart from the Janata Dal is of the firm opinion that they cannot take an unprincipled position after the exposure of the fodder scam. The last core committee meeting which was held on 9th December showed urge for unity and belied the hopes of division in the front and in the 16th December 1997 meeting it was decided that we will have to fight against the RJD combination in Bihar and demanded the removal of RJD ministers from the government.

Tactics in the Forthcoming Elections

The tactical line to be adopted in the elections depends on the concrete situation prevailing today. The Congress party which had

the monopoly of power for long is weakened very much. Whether they will be able to maintain the present position is doubtful. But one should not underestimate its strength because of the old mass base which exists in the country. Even during the last elections the Congress polled 28.8% and the impact in the minds of the masses about the traditional organization is still there. It also depends on the new alliances which they will be able to build. It seems that in some of the states where the Congress can benefit BSP will go along with them such as in Bihar, MP and Punjab. In Bihar may be the BSP does not count which except in the areas adjoining Uttar Pradesh is not a force. In Madhya Pradesh it can become a determining factor in favour of the Congress. Similarly, it can help the Congress in Punjab too to an extent. In the North-East and the South, BSP does not count.

The BJP is trying to do everything to emerge as a major force if not getting majority and is developing alliances with regional parties. It has come to an understanding with Laxmi Parvathi in Andhra Pradesh and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu. But in Uttar Pradesh as it seems the BSP will not go with the BJP. We are not a force there. Nor are the other Left parties. We have to watch how the SP will be able to supplement its strength to fight the BJP which is the main contender in UP elections where 85 seats are at stake.

Bihar position is not certain because of the attitude of the Central Government towards Laloo Prasad Yadav. But the mass response to our combination has been there. Laloo Prasad Yadav banks upon the support of the Yadavs, SCs and minorities. While the bulk of the Yadavs are with Laloo Prasad, it is not the same position with the scheduled castes and minorities who can shift to the UF combination. If the United Front constituents like the Janata Dal, SP and Left parties go together, then it has to be seen whether the minorities shift and come this side and this becomes quite a strong force. There is a split in the Congress party with Jagannath Mishra forming his own party. Its impact has to be seen.

The situation in other states is complex as in Maharashtra. The earlier alliance which had got 20 per cent of votes, has broken with the RPI coming to an understanding with the Congress and they

want to rope in the SP also. The PWP is also inclined towards that. Because of the aggressive attitude of the Shiv Sena and the BJP, the minorities are very much frightened there. In view of that it is likely that SP also comes to understanding with the Congress on seat adjustments. Janata Dal and the Left are very weak forces and the combined strength of Janata Dal, Communist parties and the PWP and RPI is quite significant, which was seen during the last elections. But is the division of votes led the Shiv Sena to come to power? There has been a shift in the Congress base towards BJP-Shiv Sena. It has to be assessed.

The present situation is complicated and we have to work out the tactical line to meet the present challenges. There is no difference of opinion in the Party now on the formation of the United Front. The Central Committee has also endorsed in the draft political resolution for the 16th Congress, the line followed in this respect. In consonance with our position we have taken a consistent stand that the Party will have to fight against both the BJP and the Congress but in consonance with our line we have to see that where the Left is not a force and the United Front is not effective viz Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Himachal and Delhi fire should be concentrated against the BJP. Such cases can be concretely discussed in the state committees. The Left and the UF constituents should contest in those seats where they can put up an effective fight. But the line must be worked out from the Centre and the state units should not be allowed to go their own way without the approval of the Centre. We have earlier also taken such a position in the elections even when the Congress was more powerful. Now the Congress is a declining force while its place is being taken by the BJP. This poses a big danger to the democratic movement.

Other important question which is being posed is about the alternative government. One fact which forced us last time to say that we will consider the question about the participation after the elections arose because of the concrete situation to enthuse the people in the elections. After the United Front had come to power some hopes are raised in the minds of the people for this alternative as against that of the BJP and the Congress. This is of great

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significance. It is not a mean achievement that it has stood together. We have to present the question in a way where we do not declare non-participation in government and the concrete decision will be taken after the elections.

Regarding the manifesto, we should go in for a joint manifesto of the Left parties in which we can put forward the main points based on the Left and democratic programme so that the Left's independent position on all issues goes before the people. At the same time we should come out with a common declaration on policy issues on behalf of the United Front in which apart from the political issues like defence of secularism, strengthening of federalism, national unity and democratic steps like electoral reforms and anti-corruption measures, we should also highlight some pro-people economic measures that can be taken.

For the election campaign, we should go with the following slogans: Elect the United Front with a majority to form the Central Government; defeat the BJP and the Congress, strengthen the representation of the CPI(M) and the Left parties.

Condolence On Comrade Tridib Chowdhury*

[On December 21, the Central Committee of the CPI(M), then in session at Calcutta, sent the following message to the RSP on the death of Comrade Tridib Chowdhury.]

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) deeply mourns the passing away of Comrade Tridib Chowdhury, General Secretary of the Revolutionary Socialist Party and veteran Left leader. Comrade Chowdhury was an active freedom fighter who joined the Congress movement and later the Anushilan revolutionary group. He was one of the founders of the RSP. He was imprisoned in the British jail for 14 years during the freedom struggle, and in the struggle for the liberation of Goa by the Portuguese authorities in 1955-58, for 19 months.

Comrade Tridib Chowdhury made an important contribution in forging Left unity and projecting the Left standpoint in Parliament where he served for six terms in the Lok Sabha. Comrade Tridib Chowdhury was noted for his principled and simple life. He was respected in all circles for his adherence to high moral values. Comrade Chowdhury was known to close people as Dhakubabu, and was a member of the Rajya Sabha till death.

The Central Committee extends its heartfelt condolences to his party colleagues and close friends.

Jyoti Basu Condolces Death

On the same day, CPI(M) Polit Bureau member and West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, sent the following condolence message.

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I am deeply grieved at the death of Comrade Tridib Chowdhury, a patriot and front-ranking leader of the Left movement. He had been an influential figure in Indian politics for several decades. He fought bravely against British imperialism and played a very courageous role in the liberation movement of Goa. One of the founder-members of the RSP and its long-time General Secretary, Tridib Babu distinguished himself as a parliamentarian. He stood for democratic rights and social justice. In his death, the Left and democratic movement in the country has suffered.

My condolences to his relatives and followers.

CPI(M)'s Greetings to Party Congress of Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist)*

On behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), we have great pleasure in sending warm greetings to you on the occasion of the Congress of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML).

Our two parties have, in the face of the adverse international situation prevailing in the recent period, reaffirmed our commitment to Marxism and the struggle for socialism. This marks an important bond in the ongoing struggle to defend socialism and its creative application in the concrete conditions of our societies. Both our parties and other revolutionary contingents have to stand together to face the international offensive of imperialism which is seeking to subjugate and impose its global hegemony in the situation consequent to the dismantling of the Soviet Union. India is bearing the brunt of this offensive of the IMF/World Bank structural adjustment policies. The resistance to these policies in India is registering progress. The Left forces are unitedly mobilizing the working people against the dismantling of the public sector and privatization.

As you are aware, we are in the midst of a very important electoral battle in India. The United Front Government was brought down by an irresponsible decision of the Congress which was supporting this government from the outside. The communal forces which pose a serious threat to the very unity and integrity of India are making an offensive bid to capture power. The CPI(M) along with the Left, democratic and secular forces is redoubling its efforts

*This greeting was sent on January 24, 1998 and published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, February 1, 1998.

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to ensure the defeat of these forces which can only foment greater social strife and hence instability.

The CPN(UML) is playing a significant role in the process of strengthening democracy in Nepal and improving the people's welfare. In the complex situation in Nepal, the CPI(M) wishes the CPN(UML) all success in its efforts to lead the Nepalese people.

We are confident that the deliberations of this Congress will further strengthen the links between the CPN(UML) and the people of Nepal.

The CPI(M) conveys its revolutionary greetings to the Nepali Communists on this occasion.

CPI(M) Condemns Horrific Massacre of 23 People, Including Women and Children in Kashmir*

**Statement Dated January 27, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses its shock and strong condemnation of the horrific massacre of 23 people, including women and children, at Wandhama village near Srinagar. These cold-blooded killings of members of the minority community in the valley has been perpetrated by the extremists who are controlled and directed by foreign agencies.

The obvious and diabolical game is to try and destabilize the situation in Jammu and Kashmir on the eve of the elections and to rouse communal feelings. The entire country will firmly rally to foil these designs. The state government should take all necessary measures to track down the culprits and deal with a firm hand with those who do not hesitate to perpetrate such atrocities. The Central Government should immediately coordinate efforts with the state administration to ensure proper security and to foil such conspiracies in the coming days.

CPI(M) Protests Stipulations of Election Commission of India*

**Statement Dated February 1, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has taken up with the Election Commission two problems connected with the poll broadcast/telecasts by national political parties. Firstly, in the earlier system, all recognized national political parties were given 15 minutes on Doordarshan and 30 minutes on All India Radio for regional broadcasts in each state. This was apart from the time given in the national hookup of Doordarshan/All India Radio. On this basis in the 16 major Doordarshan regional centres every party got a total of 340 minutes. Now, by the new scheme, the CPI(M) gets 105 minutes and all national political parties are getting much less than last time.

In the All India Radio, all parties got 750 minutes each at the state level through the regional All India Radio centres. Now all the parties are getting one-fifth or one-sixth of this time.

Secondly, the new decision that parties should record their own programmes privately and not at the Doordarshan and All India Radio stations is imposing a big financial burden on the parties. So, instead of poll broadcasts being a form of state funding it becomes contrary to it. The CPI(M) has requested that the old system where recording was done on the Doordarshan and AIR centres be restored.

CPI(M) On BJP's Election Manifesto*

**Statement Dated February 5, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The BJP manifesto adheres to the RSS ideology of Hindutva. It talks of 'one nation, one culture, one people' denying the diversity of India's cultures and traditions. It is with this communal sectarian outlook that the manifesto calls for building the Ram Temple at Ayodhya at the place where the Babri Masjid was demolished; scrapping of Article 370 and interfering with the rights of the minorities. All this is a repetition of the 1996 manifesto of the Party.

The manifesto is an onslaught on the Indian Constitution. By calling for a review of the Constitution, the BJP wants to change the parliamentary system and introduce a presidential form of government.

The BJP's call for producing nuclear weapons will fuel nuclear arms race in the subcontinent and play into the hands of US imperialism. Though the BJP calls for the development of missile technology it does not want the scrapping of the Indo-US military cooperation agreement which is inimical to the interests of India's security. It is the United States which is opposed to India developing the Agni missile.

The economic policies of the BJP are basically no different from what has been put forward in the Congress manifesto. It advocates more liberalization and privatization, which will lead to dismantling of the public sector. Unable to reconcile its *swadeshi* platform with its advocacy of big business and foreign capital, the BJP has chosen to indulge in semantic jugglery to camouflage its right-wing economic policies.

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The BJP manifesto combines its communal platform with crass opportunism. It generously doles out promises to each and every section of the people. The BJP's talk of probity is blatantly hypocritical given its recent record of embracing defectors and inducting criminals into the government in Lucknow.

The BJP manifesto is a mix of medieval ideology and crass opportunism. It reflects the party's desperation to somehow come to power at the Centre.

CPI(M) Demands Fresh Poll in Nagaland*

**Statement Dated February 10, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The election of 43 Congress(I) candidates to the Nagaland assembly "unopposed" has made the election in the state into a farce. Due to the threats held out by a section of the underground militants, opposition parties and groups could not file their nominations. It is evident that a section of the underground militants has worked in tandem with the Congress by calling for a poll boycott and enforcing it. This has happened despite the warning issued by the Central Government to the NSCN (Issac-Muviah) group not to misuse the ceasefire which is in force in the state.

In such a situation, the Election Commission should consider the holding of fresh polls in an atmosphere where all parties and candidates will be allowed to contest elections and have a fair chance.

CPI(M) Condemns Coimbatore Blasts*

**Statement Dated February 14, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the bomb blasts at a meeting which was to be addressed by BJP leader, L.K. Advani at Coimbatore, and in other places, today (February 14) in which 15 persons are reported to be killed. This is a calculated attempt by the extremist forces which have been active in Coimbatore in the recent period. The CPI(M) conveys its deep condemnation about reports of violence after the incident. It appeals to the people of Coimbatore to remain calm and not fall into the trap of provocateurs.

The Polit Bureau requests the state government to take strict measures to apprehend the culprits and unearth the organizational network of the fundamentalist forces. The Polit Bureau conveys its heartfelt sympathies to the families of all those who have lost their lives.

Stop US Aggression On Iraq*

**Statement Dated February 19, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

Ignoring strong worldwide public opinion, the United States administration is going ahead with preparations for a military attack on Iraq. The United Nations' Secretary General is visiting Baghdad on February 20 to make a last effort for a negotiated settlement on the inspection issue. This is in keeping with the wishes of the majority of the Security Council members and international opinion.

However, the United States has made its intention clear that it would bypass the United Nations' Security Council and go ahead with a massive aerial bombardment. The United States and Britain are continuing to build up troops and warships in the region. President Clinton has made a bellicose speech at the Pentagon on February 18 where he has declared that the USA will resort to military action.

The entire Indian people are outraged by this brazen and bullying stance of the United States against Iraq. India will stand with the Iraqi people against any aggression and attack on their sovereignty. The CPI(M) wishes to warn the United States administration that it will forfeit any goodwill in India if it proceeds with military aggression. It will lead to an adverse impact on Indo-US relations. The CPI(M) calls upon the India Government to step up its diplomatic efforts, both in the United Nations and outside, in concert with countries like France, Russia and China, to check the United States' action.

The Polit Bureau calls upon all sections of the people to vigorously protest against the United States' attitude and express their solidarity with Iraq.

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, March 1, 1998.

CPI(M) Demands Publication of Srikrishna Commission Report*

**Statement Dated February 21, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands the immediate publication of the findings of the Srikrishna Commission which investigateded the post-Babri Masjid demolition communal riots and the serial bomb blasts in Mumbai in 1992-93. The public at large have the right to know the real culprits who masterminded the worst communal riots that rocked Mumbai. It is also necessary for identifying the loopholes in the administration, the role of the police, and above all for securing justice. The CPI(M) agrees with Justice B N Srikrishna who has now said that the time has come for "retribution" and for the guilty to be exposed.

The BJP-Shiv Sena Government in Maharashtra has all along created obstacles before the Commission in its work. Initially, it had extended the Commission's terms of reference to include the serial bomb blasts in March 1993—a move aimed to dilute and delay the investigations into the savage communal riots in the wake of the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The BJP-Shiv Sena State Government had decided to summarily scrap the Commission in January 1996. It was only under public pressure that the Commission was reinstated. And now, the state government is stonewalling the publication of the long awaited report.

It is clear that the BJP and the Shiv Sena have a lot to conceal about their role in the communal riots. The fact that they are delaying the publication confirms their active involvement in one of the worst communal riots in recent years.

The CPI(M) demands the immediate publication of the report, and stringent action against all those found guilty.

Commuque Issued by The Central Committee of The CPI(M) Following Its Meeting Held in New Delhi On March 6-7, 1998*

Addressing a Press conference following the two-day meeting of the Central Committee on March 6 and 7, 1998 CPI(M) General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet said no single party or pre-poll alliance had received a clear mandate to form the government. But the BJP was "leaving no stone unturned" to secure a majority. The BJP alliance had already elected Vajpayee as their parliamentary party leader. In the eventuality of Vajpayee being sworn in, the CPI(M) would do its best to ensure the defeat of the BJP Government.

In reply to a spate of questions on whether the Left and secular forces would strive to form a Congress(I)-UF Government, Surjeet said as of now, the BJP was the only party to elect a leader. Besides, the BJP was a past master at engineering defections and resorting to horse-trading—methods which the secular forces could not apply. The effort, therefore, would be to first defeat the BJP.

Asked if the idea of backing a Congress(I) Government had been given up, Surjeet said, "But where is this government? There is no attempt being made to form a government now." He said after the CWC decision to explore the possibilities of forming a secular government, the Congress(I) leaders had not pursued the efforts. "We have not received any communication from them", he added.

Several questions were asked about the Telugu Desam leader, Chandrababu Naidu's stand regarding the BJP. Surjeet said at the last UF core committee meeting, detailed discussions had taken

*This commuque was released in a Press Conference in New Delhi held on March 8, 1998 and published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, March 15, 1998.

place on the issue. He said the UF leaders would meet again on Tuesday, March 10, 1998 when their stand would be finalized. He refused to comment on Press speculation that Naidu would support the BJP Government or abstain during the vote of confidence. Surjeet said he would go only by what Naidu had said during the UF meeting and what he would say in March 10, 1998 meeting. He said it was easy to understand Naidu's compulsions since his party was pitched against the Congress(I) in Andhra Pradesh. Naidu had earlier said that the Congress(I) was his Enemy No. one in the state while the BJP was the enemy No. one at the national level. March 10 discussions would finalize the UF stand, he said while repeatedly emphasizing that "our effort is to keep the UF together".

On his earlier statement on television regarding Left support to a Congress(I)-led government in order to keep out the BJP, Surjeet said that had been part of a question-answer session on what kind of a government he would like to see. At that time, all the results had not yet come in. But at the moment, there was no Congress(I) Government to support and all efforts were being directed to try and defeat any eventual BJP Government, and keep the UF united, and Left and secular forces together. On whether the effort to defeat the BJP on the floor of the House will succeed, Surjeet said the CPI(M) and Left would make all efforts. "We do not have enough strength of our own to defeat the BJP but we will do our best."

Earlier, Surjeet congratulated the people of Tripura, West Bengal and Kerala for reaffirming their faith in the CPI(M)-led Left Front. Though the UF had lost as many as 80 seats, the Left has, by and large, retained its base. Moreover, despite the so-called "anti-incumbency factor", the Left Front had secured as much as a two-thirds majority in the Tripura assembly. He said if the Left had done badly in Tripura, the media would have run banner headlines but the Left Front's victory had been almost entirely ignored. Apart from the assembly victory, the CPI(M) had won both the parliamentary seats in Tripura and had actually increased its tally by one each in Kerala and West Bengal, which compensated for the loss of a seat each in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

The CC communique as well as Surjeet in his Press conference said the so-called "incumbency factor" was not a political

explanation. In states where the Left was in power, the anti-incumbency factor did not seem to work. This only proved that it was the policies that mattered—wherever the government pursued pro-people policies, the people once again reposed faith in them. The BJP, therefore, could not hide behind the “incumbency factor” to explain its reverses in Rajasthan and Maharashtra. The vote against them was a vote against their policies.

He also reiterated the Central Committee’s assessment that far from receiving “mandate to rule” the BJP had not fared well in the elections. It has increased its individual tally by a mere 17 seats and this too was thanks to “riding piggyback” on its new found allies. Even with its allies, the BJP and its partners had received a vote share of 36 per cent. In other words, two thirds of the Indian people had rejected the communal combine.

The CPI(M) General Secretary made it clear that apart from the efforts to defeat the BJP Government during the vote of confidence, the battle against the BJP and its communal ideology would be pursued relentlessly by the Party in the coming days.

The Central Committee communiqué issued on this occasion follows:

The mid-term 1998 general elections to the 12th Lok Sabha have once again thrown up a hung Parliament. The BJP riding piggyback on its new found allies has managed to increase its individual tally by a mere 17 seats to reach 178. Along with its allies it has secured 251 seats, but short of an absolute majority.

The BJP in these elections had left no stone unturned to capture a majority. It had struck the most opportunistic of alliances, thrown to winds all pretensions of political morality by giving tickets to known history-sheets and those charge-sheeted by the CBI in corruption cases, conducted a campaign full of hype through an often pliable media—and yet according to preliminary statistics, managed to receive around just one-fourth of the voters support. Its combination, however, thanks mainly to its allies, is placed around 36 per cent. In other words, close to two-thirds of the Indian electorate have voted against the communal combination.

The United Front has suffered a setback in these elections. It has lost more than 80 seats. The UF will have to seriously review

its performance. The insufficient attention paid to the needs of the common man, expression of disunity in some states and the failure to project an effective alternative are some of the factors that prevented the UF from translating its goodwill amongst the people into votes. The Left however, by and large, retained its base.

In spite of all efforts to revive its base, the Congress performance remained where it was. It won the same number 140, as it did in 1996. It is clear that the people did not appreciate the Congress role of withdrawing support to the secular UF Government and forcing these mid-term general elections.

CPI(M) Victories

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) congratulates the people of Tripura for once again reposing their faith in the CPI(M)-led Left Front and giving it a clear two-thirds majority in the assembly as well as returning both its candidates to the Lok Sabha.

Likewise, the Central Committee congratulates the people of West Bengal and Kerala for reaffirming their faith in the CPI(M)-led Left Front. In both these states the CPI(M) has increased its individual tally by one seat each, winning 24 in West Bengal and six in Kerala.

This clearly shows that the so-called “incumbency factor” is not a political explanation. In those states where the ruling parties have pursued pro-people policies and safeguarded their rights and interests the people have once again reposed faith in them.

In contrast to the Left's performance, stands that of the BJP alliances in Maharashtra and Rajasthan. Pursuing economic policies of liberalization, that impose greater burdens on the people, the BJP had to face the wrath of popular discontent. In fact whichever party adopted such policies faced a negative result in those respective states.

Post-Election Situation

Given these results it is clear that no pre-poll alliance has received any mandate to form the government. New post-poll alliances and combinations are being worked out to install a new government.

The BJP being a past master at engineering an orchestrated majority, is leaving no stone unturned. Outright compromises, monetary allurement and enticement of office are all being resorted to, to shore-up a majority.

In the eventuality of the BJP being asked to form a government, the CPI(M) along with other Left and secular forces will oppose this government during the confidence vote on the floor of the Lok Sabha.

Under these circumstances, the Central Committee of the CPI(M) has underlined the need to maintain and strengthen the unity of the Left, democratic and secular forces as being essential to meet the challenge posed by the communal forces.

The CPI(M) will make all efforts to keep the United Front united and rally around secular forces to defeat a BJP Government on the floor of the Lok Sabha when it seeks a vote of confidence, the CPI(M) General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet asserted this in New Delhi on March 8, 1998.

BJP's 'National Agenda'— A Hoax On The People*

Statement Dated March 18, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The so-called "National Agenda for Governance" put out by the BJP and its allies is neither an agenda nor a document to guide governance. It is a string of homilies and platitudes which has been put together by the BJP and its junior partners who could not agree on a common programme before the elections. The BJP has deliberately resorted to this vague statement in the hope that it can smuggle in its own agenda later if it consolidates its rule.

After bringing out a 55-page printed manifesto, the BJP has now confined itself to eight pages of generalities without specifying anything concrete for implementation. But knowing the political ideology of the BJP, it is evident that first of all, the Vajpayee Government will seek to assault the Indian Constitution. One of the few manifesto promises of the BJP included in the agenda is the setting up of a commission to review the Constitution. The BJP does not accept secularism as a basic feature of the Constitution. It advocates a presidential form of government, scrapping of Article 370 and Article 30, and wants to use the pretext of a review to subvert the republican secular Constitution. This ominous step should be totally opposed by all citizens. The BJP has no mandate whatsoever to tamper with the Constitution. It is a party with a minority of votes and on such a fundamental issue only Parliament can decide.

In economic policy, the document recommends a right-wing course and the Vajpayee Government will advance privatization and liberalization. The public sector will be a prime target for dismantling.

As for the rest of the programme, the BJP and its allies have promised everything under the sun to all sections of the people—jobs, food, health, housing and education. The foreign policy section makes no pretence even of adhering to the non-aligned basis of India's external policy. The promise to exercise the nuclear option is a wrong and dangerous step.

The real agenda of the BJP and the opportunist demands of its allies like Jayalalitha cannot naturally be spelt out in such a document. The national agenda put out by the BJP-RSS combine is self-condemnatory. It is an open declaration of the bankruptcy of the opportunist alliance. It is a hoax on the people.

**Hanage to Comrade E.M.S.
Nambodiripad***

*Statement dated March 19, 1998 Released by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)*

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) announces with profound grief the passing away of Comrade E.M.S. Nambodiripad, foremost leader of the Communist movement in India and one of the founding leaders of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). He died of viral pneumonia in a hospital in Thiruvananthapuram on March 19, 1998. He was aged 89.

In his nearly seven decades of public life and revolutionary activities, E.M.S. Nambodiripad left an indelible imprint on the progressive and working class movement of the country. As a young man, he became active in the social reform movement against caste. He left college in 1931 to join the freedom struggle and was jailed in the Satyagraha movement. From then onwards, he played an important role in the Congress movement and was one of the founders of the Congress Socialist Party in Kerala. He became, in 1944, the all India Joint Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party. It is in this period that E.M.S., while leading the Congress Party as General Secretary of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Party, became acquainted with Marxism. He was one of the five members who formed the founding group of the Communist Party in Kerala in 1949.

E.M.S. Nambodiripad represented the coming together of the two streams of the anti-imperialist and the anti-feudal struggles, which laid the foundations for the development of a powerful Communist movement in Kerala. He was one of the key proponents of a free Kerala which led to the formation of Kerala as a unified progressive state.

E.M.S. Namboodiripad was first elected to the Madras Provincial Legislative Assembly in 1939. As an important leader of the fledgling Communist Party, he donated the proceeds of his landed property for the Party. He went underground building the Party in crucial periods between 1939-42 and 1948-50. He was elected to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India in 1941. He became a member of the Polit Bureau of the CPI in December 1950 and later in the Secretariat of the CPI. He became General Secretary of the united CPI in 1962.

In 1957, after the state of Kerala was formed in the first elections in 1957, the Communist Party won a majority and E.M.S. Namboodiripad became Chief Minister of the first elected Communist Ministry in India. It was the E.M.S. Ministry which initiated the path-breaking land reform legislation and other democratic measures, till the ministry was dismissed undemocratically in 1959. E.M.S. Namboodiripad became Chief Minister of Kerala again in 1967 heading a United Front Ministry till 1969.

E.M.S. joined the leading group from the united Party which formed the CPI(M) and was elected to the Central Committee and the Polit Bureau of the Party at the Seventh Congress of the Party in 1964, and he continued to serve in these positions till his death.

E.M.S. Namboodiripad was elected the General Secretary of Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in 1977 and he led the Party in this capacity till the 14th Congress in 1992 when he stepped down due to ill-health. His leadership in rallying all the Left, democratic and secular forces was invaluable.

E.M.S. was a brilliant Marxist theoretician. He made outstanding contributions to the application of Marxism-Leninism to Indian society and in working out the strategy and tactics of the Indian revolution. His vast body of writings bear the mark of an original and creative mind which mastered the dialectics of Marxist theory. His writings on land relations, Kerala, society and politics and his writings on Marxist philosophy, literature and history—mark him out to be one of the most influential Communist thinkers of the country and the world.

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E.M.S. Namboodiripad was a rare example of a Communist leader who, hailing from a traditional landlord family, graduated to become the foremost leader of the proletarian revolutionary movement. He spent three years in jail and six years underground. His was a life of sacrifice and simplicity. He set an example which has inspired tens of thousands of Communists all over the country. In Kerala, he was a legend in his lifetime who was adored and respected by all sections of the people. Till the last day of his life, despite failing health, EMS kept to his daily routine of writing articles and providing guidance to the Party.

The CPI(M), the Left movement and the democratic forces have suffered a grievous loss. His absence will be deeply felt by all those who cherish integrity and high standards in public life. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) pays its respectful homage to this great revolutionary. It pledges to carry on the revolutionary work he had undertaken all through his life. It conveys its heartfelt condolences to his wife, sons, daughters and other family members.

Condolence Messages Received on The Demise of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad*

A.B. Bardhan

CPI General Secretary

A colossus of the Communist movement has passed away. Comrade E.M.S. is no more.

I had rushed to Trivandrum to have a last glimpse, and pay homage on behalf of the party to this great son of India, as he lay in state at the Durbar Hall of the Secretariat. It was here that he had been sworn in as the first Chief Minister of the new Kerala State heading the first elected Communist Ministry. It was from here that he was to leave on his last journey. I saw the spectacle of an entire city — nay, an entire state, which had come to a halt and was plunged in grief at the loss of this giant among men, and yet a simple and humane being who had become so close to them through more than six decades of history. And not just Kerala, the country mourns his loss. For E.M.S. belonged not just to Kerala, and not just to the Communist movement.

He had become a living legend, no matter how many agreed with him or how many differed from him.

The media has related glimpses from the story of his life, which he lived up to the ripe old age of 89. One does not have to go all over this again in short tribute to his memory, except to exclaim: what a life! A life, which despite all physical handicaps and ailments, was an active and full life till the last breath. It was a remarkable victory of will over the body — a will, which could derive and draw sustenance from a total commitment to a powerful,

scientific and revolutionary ideology,—the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, and to the noble cause of socialism,—a glorious society free from all forms of exploitation and oppression.

E.M.S. had started his odyssey, his mission in life through active participation in the social reform movement against orthodoxy, exclusiveness, superstition and all manner of evil customs, at a very young age while still in school, and then gone ahead some years later to the social revolutionary movement to which he remained committed all through his life till the last breath.

The national movement drew him and he joined the Civil Disobedience Movement for which he had to suffer imprisonment. In jail, study and deep concern for the toiling masses made him a socialist. Close association with the people had moulded him into an organizer and a tribune of the people.

Thus it was, that the Congress became a mass movement in Kerala due to his untiring efforts, and he became the General Secretary of KPCC.

Thereafter, when he became a socialist it was once again he who was the State General Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party and the Joint Secretary of the All India CSP.

In course of time, under the impact of the October Revolution, and Marxist ideology, E.M.S. along with P. Krishna Pillai led the entire CSP in Kerala into the Communist Party of India in 1940. Through all the subsequent four years he was always at the top, whether in the undivided CPI or thereafter in the CPI(M).

E.M.S. has been a pioneer and builder of the Communist Movement. As a Marxist theoretician, he wrote prolifically. Books, pamphlets, articles, newspaper columns flowed from his pen, and the flow never ceased till the last moment, i.e., the afternoon of March 19, 1998. Two hours later, he was no more.

E.M.S. had deep knowledge of the Vedas, India's philosophical and cultural heritage, its social plurality and its specific character. For him this was not just erudition and scholasticism, but a foundation for grasping the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, and applying it to the concrete conditions of our time and our country. One may not agree with everything that he wrote or spoke (for he was no less a prolific speaker). Indeed, there were bound to be

differences. But the gigantic effort and thought that had gone into his works, has left behind a storehouse from which one can find direction, guidance and inspiration for the present and the future in shaping a new life and a new destiny for our people, in furthering the cause of social emancipation and socialism in our country.

Though he wrote almost daily for the Press, it was not as a journalist, but as an educator of the masses. In a class-divided society, and in the clash of political ideologies and tactics, how could this be free from all controversies! He, at any rate, was never the one to shy away from controversies. E.M.S. led a spartan life. That life style symbolized both, his identity with the people and his devotion to their cause, and the intense activity required to march towards that goal.

Lal Salaam Comrade E.M.S.

From CP China

We are shocked to learn of the passing away of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad. The loss of a sincere friend fills us with deep sorrow.

Comrade Namboodiripad was a veteran fighter of the Communist movement in India. He dedicated all his life to the Indian people's struggle for the cause of national independence and social progress. He made significant contributions to the friendship between the two parties, two countries and two peoples of China and India.

We would like to convey to you and Comrade Namboodiripad's family the heartfelt condolences and sincere solicitude from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

International Department
Central Committee, CPC

From CP Vietnam

On hearing that Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, former General Secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), has passed away, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam would like to extend to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and to the family of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad our profound condolences.

Central Committee
CPVN

From CP Cuba

On behalf of Comrade Balaguer and the Central Committee, please transmit to the CPI(M) our heartfelt condolences on the demise of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, and extend them to his relatives.

Jose Luis Robaina Garcia
Department of Foreign Affairs
CP Cuba

From JCP

I wish to extend my deepest condolences at the sad news of the death of Comrade E.M.S Namboodiripad.

Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad was a leader of India's progressive movement, well known here in Japan from early on as a Chief Minister of the first Left-wing State Government in India in the late 1950s. I had fruitful talks with him on our struggle for the cause of social progress both in Japan and India, and we strengthened our solidarity as the communist parties working in Asia. The warmest hospitality he gave me during the visit, still remains vivid in my mind.

Please convey our deepest sorrow on the death of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad to his family and all comrades of your party.

Tetsuzo Fuwa
Presidium Chairman
JCP

From CP Sri Lanka

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka has learnt of the passing away of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad with great sorrow. Comrade Namboodiripad was not only a leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). He was a respected leader of the international communist movement. Credited with leading the Kerala communists to a historic electoral victory in 1957, his contribution to the advance of the communist movement in South Asia will always be remembered. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka dips its red banner in salute

to the memory of Comrade Namboodiripad. It expresses its profound grief and conveys its deep condolences to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the relatives of Comrade Namboodiripad.

Raja Collure
General Secretary

From CPN (UML)

I feel very sad to learn the death of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, one of my colleagues and comrade-in-arms, at the age of 89. Comrade Namboodiripad's absence will be felt deeply by the Nepali Communists and the democratic forces. He was a veteran leader of the Indian communist movement and had devoted his whole life to the oppressed people of India. As a freedom fighter in the Indian independence movement, Comrade Namboodiripad made historic contributions to the Left, democratic movement in this region.

I again express my deep condolences to you, your party and the bereaved family of Comrade Namboodiripad.

Manmohan Adhikari
Chairman
CPN(UML)

From WP Bangladesh

We have learnt with grief about the sad demise of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, a great leader of the exploited masses of India. He upheld the cause of socialism and communism till his last breath. He will be remembered by the people of the sub-continent for his contribution to advancing the cause of independence and socialism.

We pay our deep respects to him and are with you in your grief.

Rashid Khan Menon
General Secretary
Workers Party of Bangladesh

From CP Bangladesh

On behalf of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, we convey to you our heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of CPI(M) leader Comrade Namboodiripad. The veteran leader of the communist movement of the subcontinent will be remembered for his legendary contributions to building up the communist movement in the complex situation of India.

Please convey our sympathies to the bereaved family.

Mujahidul Islam Khan
General Secretary

From CPN(ML)

It is with immense grief that I learnt about the sad demise of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, former General Secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). In his death, we have lost a great internationalist communist fighter, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has lost a great ideologue and a dedicated leader of the Indian communist movement. Comrade Namboodiripad was an inspiring force not only for the Indian communist movement for more than half a century, his contribution to the Marxist literature has also served to enrich the treasure house of Marxism. On this sad occasion, I, on behalf of the Central Committee of the CPN(ML) and its entire membership, would like to express my deep condolences to you, and through you to the bereaved family of late Comrade Namboodiripad. Please allow me to assure that the entire party rank and file of the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist) will share this moment of grief.

Sahana Pradhan
Chairperson
CPN(ML)

I was shocked to hear of the sudden demise of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, former General Secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). In his death, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has lost a great ideologue and a dedicated leader of the Indian communist movement. Comrade Namboodiripad remained a moving

force of the Indian communist movement for more than half a century. His sad demise has left a deep void in the Communist movement of India, which may not be filled for many decades to come.

On this sad occasion, I would like to express my deepest condolences to you, and through you to the bereaved family of late Comrade Namboodiripad, and pledge solidarity with you to change this moment of grief into strength.

Bam Dev Gautam
General Secretary
CPN(ML)

From Party of Democratic Socialism, Germany

In the name of the leadership of the Party of Democratic Socialism, I express my deep condolence at the sad news of passing away of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, an outstanding leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

We know Comrade Namboodiripad was associated with the Marxist movement for many decades. Early in his life, he started to contribute to the national movement and participate in the freedom struggle. With his sharp intellect and his keen observation of the happenings around him, he became an active and forceful leader in spreading the ideals of social justice and people's welfare. With this vision he was associated with the development of the Congress Socialist Party and later on of the Communist Party of India. He was later to become the CPI(M)'s General Secretary in which capacity he visited GDR several times. The people he met still remember this judicious and humanitarian, militant and modest figure.

In the death of Comrade Namboodiripad, the CPI(M) and the Left-oriented people have lost a prominent comrade, and not only in India.

Please convey our heartfelt condolences to the members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) as well as to the family of Comrade Namboodiripad.

Lothar Bisky
Chairman
PDS, Germany

From Communist Party of Portugal

Getting the knowledge of the passing away of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, one of the foremost founding leaders of your Party, distinguished fighter of the national and social emancipation movement of the working class of Kerala and of the whole of India, we express our heartfelt condolences and the fraternal solidarity feelings of the Portuguese communists.

Secretariat of
the Central Committee,
Portuguese Communist Party

From AKEL, Cyprus

On behalf of the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL), and on my own behalf, I extend to you sincere condolences on the loss of Comrade Namboodiripad.

The late Comrade Namboodiripad, as one of the founding members and leading figures of the communist movement in India, played a significant role in the spread of Marxism. He also participated in the struggle to free India from colonialism, thus becoming a bright example for his comrades.

We are confident that his comrades and his Party will continue his struggle to bring social and economic development to the people of India.

Once again accept, dear comrades, our sincere condolences.

Demetris Christofias
General Secretary
Central Committee, AKEL

(A condolence message in Spanish was received from Comrade Patricio Echegaray, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Argentina, and Comrade Athos Fava, Secretary of the International Department of the Party.)

From WFTU

The World Federation of Trade Unions shares the deep grief of the people of India on the sudden demise of their leader, E.M.S. Namboodiripad.

Kindly accept our sincere condolences on behalf of the Secretariat and staff of the WFTU and convey the same to his family and comrades.

Alexander Zharikov
General Secretary, WFTU

From Russian Academy of Studies

We are very sorry to hear of the passing away of E.M.S. Namboodiripad, a well-known freedom fighter, prominent political leader, distinguished theoretician. His books and articles on the national liberation movement, caste conflicts and social problems have been thoroughly studied here. We have always appreciated his interpretations of Indian history and politics.

Please convey our deep condolences to his family.

Prof. A.A. Kutsenkov
Prof. Felix N Yurlov
Centre for Indian Studies,
Russian Academy of Studies, Moscow

From World Malayali Council

The World Malayali Council Inc, America Region, convened an emergency meeting of the Cabinet to mourn the sudden demise of the world renowned E.M. Shankaran Namboodiripad, known for his intellectual calibre, humane nature, leadership, and as the spokesman for a classless, casteless society in India. He had been one of the best leaders in Indian political arena. He was a good teacher, a great philosopher, prolific writer, and became the head of the world's first democratically elected communist government in 1957.

It is a great loss to the human race as a whole, to India, and to Kerala in particular.

Charly Angadicheril
Secretary

From Janata Dal

The Central Secretariat of the Janata Dal, meeting this morning under the Chairmanship of Shri Sharad Yadav, expressed its deep sense of sorrow and grief at the sudden passing away of Shri E.M.S. Namboodiripad.

Starting as a Congress worker at a very young age, rising to the position of President, Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee within a very short period, then becoming a founder member of the Socialist Party along with Shri Jayaprakash Narayan and other veterans, and ending up as a committed communist, Shri Namboodiripad has, all his life, been a highly devoted, selfless political leader active to his last days. His services to the people, particularly of Kerala, his sacrifices as a fighter for the cause of the weak and downtrodden, and the communist movement in the country, shall be recorded in golden letters in the history of the country and in the minds of the generations to come. The Janata Dal conveys its heartfelt condolences to his family, kith and kin, the CPI(M) leaders and its cadres, and the vast number of his supporters and admirers.

Dr. Bapu Kaldate
Secretary General
Janata Dal

From Samata Party

E.M.S. Namboodiripad was one of the tallest political leaders produced by India during this century. A freedom fighter and a patriot, he was an outstanding intellectual of the Marxist movement in India.

As the head of the first democratically elected Communist Government, he set Kerala on the course to a social and economic revolution that went on to transform the face of the state.

I pay my tributes to the memory of this revolutionary leader of the Indian people.

George Fernandes
President
Samata Party

From SUCI

We are deeply shocked at the sudden passing away of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, a veteran freedom fighter of our country and former General Secretary of the CPI(M).

I, personally and on behalf of the Central Committee of our Party, convey heartfelt condolences to the CPI(M) members and to his bereaved family.

Nihar Mukherjee
General Secretary
Socialist Unity Centre of India

From AIKS

The sudden demise of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, veteran Marxist leader and intellectual, a founder member of the All India Kisan Sabha, Polit Bureau member of the CPI(M), and twice the Chief Minister of Kerala, has been received by the office-bearers of the All India Kisan Sabha as a great shock and a matter of immense grief. At a time when the country is passing through a period of great turmoil and uncertainty, his departure from the political scene is a great loss to the progressive and democratic masses who always found his voice of wisdom a very useful word that always showed them the way out. A towering personality and a father figure of the progressive and Left movement in the country, E.M.S. is irreplaceable.

The office-bearers of the AIKS, expressing deep condolence, send their heartfelt sympathies to his wife, his two sons, daughter and other members of his family and, above all, to the aggrieved people of Kerala. We dip our red banner in his sacred memory as a mark of our respect for our most beloved departed leader.

From AIAWU

The All India Agricultural Workers Union condoles the death of CPI(M) Polit Bureau member, Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad.

Comrade E.M.S., who headed the world's first democratically elected Communist Government in Kerala in 1957, was a relentless fighter who stood for the betterment of the underprivileged and downtrodden sections of the people.

Namboodiripad, who belonged to an upper caste Brahmin family, fought against social injustice and untouchability, to improve the status of the backward classes in the society.

A founder-member of the communist movement in the country, Comrade E.M.S. was the main architect behind the Kerala Land Tribunal Act which secured the land ownership to the tiller.

The AIAWU dips its banner in sorrow and pays its homage to the departed Marxist ideologue. The Union also sends its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.

From SFI

The Central Executive Committee of the Students' Federation of India expresses profound grief over the passing away of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, a veteran communist leader.

Comrade E.M.S. was a rare specimen of the Indian Left movement. He was a prolific writer and his writings are a permanent contribution to the political progress of India.

In his demise, the Indian students movement, particularly the Left students movement, has lost a good political guide.

The SFI pays its respectful homage to this great revolutionary.

From AISGEF

The All India State Government Employees Federation is deeply shocked at the demise of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, one of the tallest figures of the communist, Left and progressive movements of the country. He was a leader of the international stature, one of the most eminent progressive thinkers, well-versed in philosophy, history, art and literature, and one of the tallest figures in the freedom movement of the country. He came to the communist movement through the course of the freedom struggle.

He was a great friend of the trade unions, the working class and the downtrodden people of the country. We pay our heartfelt tribute to his hallowed memory and convey deep condolences to his bereaved family.

Sukomal Sen
General Secretary
AISGEF

(Apart from various state, district and local level committees of the CPI(M), a large number of fraternal parties abroad as well as political parties in the country, organizations of various sections of the people and several individuals have also condoled the death of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, and expressed determination to carry forward the struggle which the late communist leader waged till the last moment of his life. The West Bengal Legislative Assembly, the Bihar Legislative Council and several other bodies also passed resolutions condoling the CPI(M) leader's death.)

CPI(M) On Tripura Minister Killed by Extremists*

**Statement Dated March 31, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses its deep shock at the killing of Comrade Bimal Sinha, Health Minister of Tripura and member of the State Committee of the CPI(M). Bimal Sinha and his younger brother were killed by an extremist ambush in Kamalpur sub-division. Bimal Sinha was a prominent leader of the CPI(M) and the Centre of Indian Trade Unions. He courageously fought against the extremist violence which had been affecting the state for the past few years. He also bravely withstood the terror unleashed by the Congress-TUJS Government between 1988 and 1993. Hailing from a small community of Bishnupriya Manipuris, Bimal Sinha was a valiant fighter for the unity of all sections of the people. He ceaselessly worked to advance the cause of the working people.

The Left movement and the CPI(M) in Tripura have suffered a big loss. The Polit Bureau conveys its heartfelt condolences to the wife and children of Bimal Sinha.

It is essential that the Central Government immediately take steps to send more Central Paramilitary Forces to the state. Despite repeated requests, some of the forces, withdrawn for election work in the rest of the country, have not yet been sent back to the state. Tripura, with 800 kilometres long international boundary, requires concerted help from the Centre to curb the extremist menace which utilizes the long and difficult terrain in the border areas.

CPI(M) On Tornado Disaster In West Bengal and Orissa*

Statement Dated March 26, 1998 Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses deep distress over the death and devastation caused by the tornado that lashed parts of West Bengal and Orissa on March 24, 1998. It extends heartfelt sympathies to the families of those killed and those who have had to suffer losses.

The tornado has left behind a trail of death and destruction. More than 200 people are feared killed and hundreds wounded, while hundreds of others are yet to be traced. The Midnapore district of West Bengal had to bear the major brunt of the fury of the tornado.

The state governments of West Bengal and Orissa are undertaking relief and rescue operations in the affected areas. However, given the limited resources at the disposal of the state governments, these are inadequate to meet the requirements of the situation. The assistance announced by the Prime Minister is insufficient. All possible relief and assistance have to be provided to both these states on an urgent basis.

It is indeed strange that the BJP-led Government has chosen to politicize this human tragedy by deputing a partisan team of MPs to assess the damage to human life and property in the affected areas. The CPI(M) calls upon the Central Government to immediately make amends and refrain from playing petty politics at the expense of human tragedy.

CPI(M) On Home Ministry's New Identity Card Scheme*

**Statement Dated April 4, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Union Home Minister, L. K. Advani, has announced a new scheme to issue photo identity cards to all citizens of the country. One fails to understand why such a decision has been taken when, after thorough discussions, the Election Commission has already undertaken a scheme of issuing identity cards to all voters. After discussions with all political parties, it was understood that these cards would serve as multi-purpose identity cards for citizens. The work of issuing such identity cards has gone on all over the country and hundreds of crores of rupees have been spent on the scheme. It makes no sense whatsoever to abandon this process mid-way when so much resources and time have been spent on the scheme.

The statement made by the Home Minister at Gandhinagar indicates that the main purpose of the new scheme of the Home Ministry is to identify illegal immigrants and to meet what Mr. Advani terms as increasing threats to national security. The method of identifying citizens of the country has already raised a lot of controversy in Assam where certain agreements and legal decisions are now being sought to be implemented. It will be harmful for the country to rake up questions of identity of citizens in this manner, which will create apprehensions among sections of the people. If the Central Government is serious about the issuance of identity cards, it should ensure that the Election Commission's initiative to issue such multi-purpose cards is followed up and implemented.

CPI(M) On Irresponsible Stand of Congress On The Interim Report of The Jain Commission*

**Statement Dated April 4, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The reports appearing in a section of the Press regarding the Jain Commission's final report enquiring into the circumstances leading to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, clearly indicate that there is no conclusive evidence to establish the DMK's involvement in the conspiracy behind the assassination.

The Interim Report of the Jain Commission and its remarks against the DMK were utilized by the Congress as the pretext for withdrawing support from the United Front Government and imposing the mid-term polls. The Congress Party, on that occasion, refused to accept the voice of reason urging it to wait till the final report is submitted. It is now clear that the irresponsible and indiscreet stand of the Congress is what led to the mid-term elections facilitating the installation of the BJP-led Government at the Centre.

CPI(M) On The New Exim Policy*

Statement Dated April 14, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The Exim policy for 1997-2002 announced by the Commerce Minister Ramakrishna Hegde on behalf of the BJP-led Government confirms the fact that the BJP's "swadeshi" slogan is meant only to dupe the people. Its real concern is with appeasing the WTO, the IMF and the US Government, even if this involves serious damage to the Indian economy, which the next Exim policy does.

This policy comes against a backdrop of sharply increasing trade deficit and an industrial stagnation induced by liberal imports. The growth rate of exports in dollar terms has been (for April-February) 5.61 per cent in 1996-97 and only 2.63 per cent in 1997-98. By contrast non-oil imports have increased by 13.65 per cent this year. Notwithstanding a lower oil import bill owing to reduced world prices, the trade balance has deteriorated from 4.3 billion dollars during (April-February) 1995-96 to 5.3 billion dollars in 1996-97, to 6.4 billion dollars during 1997-98, and is expected to be 7.7 billion dollars for the full year.

The export stagnation has occurred despite depreciation in the rupee-dollar rate (over four per cent this year). The import splurge has occurred in a period of industrial stagnation, not caused by growth but contributing on the contrary to this stagnation, as in a whole range of goods including steel, heavy chemicals, plant and machinery and intermediate petroleum products, foreign products have been dumped to outcompete domestic producers.

The export outlook continues to be bleak with Asian currency depreciations having an adverse effect. Even the IMF, in its just released "World Economic Outlook", expects sluggish export

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, April 19, 1998.
'EXIM POLICY' means Export and Import policy of the Government of India.

growth for India in the coming year. With the rupee under speculative pressure owing to the domino effect from South-East Asia, it is imperative to keep the trade deficit in check.

But the government has chosen this very moment to go in for large-scale import liberalization by shifting as many as 340 items to the OGL. These items which range from video cameras and camcorders to safety razor blades, toilet soaps, shrimp, crabs, oysters, clams, complete wigs, and kitchen waste disposers are neither essential commodities for the people of the country nor necessary inputs for export promotion. It also includes agricultural commodities like green pepper, onions, vegetables preserved in brine, mushrooms, cassava, apricots, cherries, peaches, strawberries, grapes, apples, guava, other fruits and juices like apple juice and mango juice, and cotton etc. This will adversely affect the interests of the peasants in the country. There is simply no justification for liberalization of their imports.

On the contrary, since the so-called 20 per cent export growth target set in the policy is no more than just tall talk liberal imports would inevitably worsen the trade deficit and aggravate industrial stagnation, as the affluent indulge their "craze for foreign goods". This would only increase the economy's vulnerability to speculative pressures.

There can be little doubt that this lack of concern for the nation's interest has been promoted by a desire to please the WTO which is to meet soon and which in its trade policy review has explicitly demanded greater import liberalization from India. It is to be noted that the new Exim policy was announced on 13th April, just two days prior to the Geneva meeting where the US is taking up the issue of phasing out quantitative restrictions. When questions are being raised about the wisdom of neo-liberal policies all over the world in the wake of the Asian crisis, the BJP-led Government's rush to import liberalization only reveals its true character.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon all its units throughout the country to protest against this Exim policy.

CPI(M) On A Condemnable Manoeuvre of The BJP Government at The Centre*

**Statement Dated April 15, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) views with grave concern the act of the BJP Government at the Centre in sending a team of senior officials from the Centre headed by Special Secretary of the Home Ministry, to Chennai, for an “on-the-spot assessment of the law and order situation in Tamil Nadu”. After the Coimbatore blasts, extensive searches, seizure of arms, arrest of the Muslim fundamentalists, from even beyond Tamil Nadu borders have been effected by the Tamil Nadu State Government.

Press reports appeared that the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu himself, has, in person briefed the Prime Minister and Home Minister, on the normal state of law and order in Tamil Nadu, and on the steps taken to check the activities of the fundamentalists.

Then what is the new development that has taken place in Tamil Nadu, which warranted sending such a team to Chennai? Or is it inspired by any of the BJP allies in the government, with any political motive? Does the BJP Government at the Centre intend to create situation and encourage the forces of destabilization in the state, to disturb the peace?

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly protests against this move of the BJP Government and demands that it desist from such destabilizing moves. It demands that the Central Government extend all co-operation to the state government to protect the existing normal law and order situation in Tamil Nadu.

On BJP's Slogan Of *Swadeshi**

**Statement Dated April 16, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Finance Minister has chosen to visit Washington on his first international mission. In his speech to the American and NRI investors he stated, "We are committed to broadening, deepening and accelerating the reforms", and claimed that the BJP was the "earliest proponent of liberalization even during the halcyon days of socialism".

It is clear that the slogan of *Swadeshi* was meant primarily to mislead the people and garner their support. In line with its commitment to liberalization, the government is seriously considering the decontrol of the sugar industry and to stop the sale of sugar from public distribution system outlets. This will impose an unbearable burden on millions of working Indians who would now be left at the mercy of the market prices to consume an essential commodity.

Further, in tune with its commitment to the World Trade Organization, the Industry Minister has declared that India will sign the joint Paris Convention regarding the patent systems. This is a retrograde move that will adversely affect India. Ironically, BJP leaders themselves were crying hoarse, when they were in opposition, against this attempt to amend the Indian Patents Act and had, in fact, blocked it in the Rajya Sabha in the process. Their *volte face* today confirms their double-speak and brings out their real character as a party committed to advancing imperialist interests in the country to the detriment of our economic sovereignty and self-reliance.

The CPI(M) is committed to firmly oppose these moves and shall launch a public agitation against these retrograde decisions.

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, April 26, 1998.

On Irresponsible Statement of the Defence Minister*

**Statement Dated April 16, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) is aghast at the irresponsible manner in which the Defence Minister has taken upon himself to reverse the process of improving India-China relations. For over a decade, the political leadership of both the countries, echoing the sentiments of the peoples, had initiated the process of improving good-neighbourly relations. There has been complete consensus in the wide spectrum of India's political opinion towards this end.

The open allegations being made by the Defence Minister have evoked strong response from China which has completely denied any role in Pakistan's newly launched missile. Chinese official sources have stated that China is a "responsible country and it is very silly to make all these remarks". It said that it is strictly abiding by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that it had signed.

Further, the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister are speaking in contradictory voices regarding the construction of a helipad by the Chinese in Indian territory.

A working group had been set up by both the countries to resolve the territorial and other disputes. This group has been meeting regularly. Instead of levelling public allegations, maturity and responsibility demands of the Defence Minister to raise these issues in these groups and articulate India's concerns.

While protection of India's interests and security is of the highest priority, this, however, cannot be used as an excuse to set the clock back in improving our relations with China, so necessary for peace in the region and development.

On the Forcible Removal of Governors*

**Statement Dated April 16, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The BJP-led Government is continuously exposing itself as being completely insincere to the publicly declared National Agenda. It is, in fact, pursuing an agenda that it had not publicly declared.

In a decision of far-reaching consequences the BJP-led Government has completely violated the spirit of the Constitution and insulted the high office of the Governor and, by inference, the President and the Constitution by the forcible removal of three Governors and two Lt. Governors well before their tenure ended. This runs completely contrary to the public declaration in the National Agenda that the Governor's appointment and tenure will be done in consultation with the state governments, and the assurance in the President's address to the joint session of Parliament that the institution of Governor will not be politicized. It is clear that the BJP is seeking to use the office of the Governor to serve its political ends rather than maintain the sanctified principles and spirit of the Constitution.

Such subversion of the Constitution cannot be allowed.

Commuque Issued by The Central Committee of The CPI(M) Following Its Meeting Held in New Delhi on April 17-19, 1998*

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) has decided to launch a three-month long programme of mass contact and agitation to expose the BJP's double-speak on various issues as well as its pursuance of the ruinous economic policies. The programme will include protest actions throughout the country which will culminate in August. The decision was taken following the three-day meeting of the Central Committee from April 17 to 19 to analyze the Lok Sabha elections and its aftermath.

Addressing a Press conference in April 20, 1998, on the decisions taken by the Central Committee, CPI(M) General Secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, said the manner in which the BJP had come to power, and its first few weeks in office, had thoroughly exposed the party's utter lack of principles. He highlighted, in particular, the protection given by the BJP to corruption. When in the opposition, Atal Behari Vajpayee used to wax eloquent on the evils of corruption and now his government was sheltering the corrupt, Surjeet said while referring to the latest attack launched by Jayalalitha against chargesheeted ministers. Soon after the Press conference ended, the news that the Union Communications Minister, Buta Singh, had been dropped from the cabinet at the behest of the AIADMK chief, reached here. Commenting on the latest development, Surjeet told that it exposed the growing fissures in the BJP-led alliance. He also reiterated that all chargesheeted ministers should resign and that this should not be done selectively.

Regarding the election results, the Central Committee said the severe setback faced by the United Front was a result of its failure to implement the pro-people policies contained in the Common Minimum Programme, and at the same time, continuance of the pro-rich economic policies of the previous regime. The United Front's failure to project a common approach and its inability to work out seat adjustments in large parts of the country also contributed to its dismal performance, Surjeet said. While the Central Committee underlined the need to strengthen the unity of the Left, democratic and secular forces to build an alternative to the communal forces and the Congress, it stressed the importance of stepping up "independent activity of the Party through mass mobilization and protest actions against the continued anti-people policies being pursued by the present government".

On the BJP-led Government's performance, Surjeet said there were enough indications that it was following its own hidden agenda while talking of a "National Agenda". Despite all the tall talk of Swadeshi, it was clearly following the discredited path of liberalization and privatization; it was protecting and promoting corruption by inducting a large number of chargesheeted ministers and patronizing other corrupt elements; and it was displaying its characteristic authoritarian streak by appointing Governors who were close to the BJP, and without consulting the concerned state governments. The manner in which a Central team was sent to Tamil Nadu to assess the law and order situation constituted a "serious assault on the rights of the states," the Central Committee said. Surjeet condemned the talk of sending a similar Central team to Kerala.

Surjeet also sharply criticized the Union Defence Minister's openly anti-China position on the issue of Pakistani missiles and the helipad issue in Arunachal Pradesh, and pointed out that never before had the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister of the country contradicted each other in such a manner. He said in recent years, both China and India had taken a number of steps to improve bilateral relations which was important for the security and welfare of both the nations. This process was being threatened by the irresponsible statements being made by a senior minister and the jingoistic stance of the BJP Government.

The BJP's hidden agenda, Surjeet said, was being assiduously pursued by the RSS and other members of the saffron combine. The Central Committee highlighted this danger and stated: "The efforts for the construction of the temple at Ayodhya or the campaigns for Kashi and Mathura, and the raising of a private army by the Bajrang Dal are all indicative of the fact that communal tensions will escalate in future. The so-called secular allies of the BJP have to answer to the people for their complicity in the unfolding of this 'hidden agenda'."

Relations with the Congress

In reply to a question whether the CPI(M) would still be willing to support a Congress(I)-led Government in order to combat the communal forces, Surjeet said: "There is no change in our position on that." However, in reply to other queries on a possible alternative government at the Centre led by the Congress(I), Surjeet said, "Let this government fall first. It will not be difficult to form an alternative government once this falls". In a sarcastic vein, he added, "We are not bringing them down. They are facing a lot of difficulties as it is, and we do not want to add to their tension by threatening to pull them down". He indicated that the Vajpayee Government's troubles came from within and would aggravate further in the future.

Asked if the CPI(M) would be willing to induct new partners in the United Front, Surjeet said, "We are against communalism. If any party is willing to join the fight against communal forces, we are ready to join hands in this battle. We do not consider any individual or party an enemy". To a specific question on Laloo Prasad Yadav, Surjeet pointed out that the CPI(M) had nothing against him as an individual but opposed him on the principle that no chargesheeted minister should continue in office till his case is finally disposed off. He said the Left's differences with Laloo Prasad Yadav had been on the issue of corruption and not on the question of fighting the BJP.

In reply to a question whether the CPI(M) would join hands with other Left forces including the various ML groups, Surjeet said, "We have not received any proposal from them. Nobody

has approached us". Regarding cooperation with the CPI(ML), he said, "Once we tried, but it did not succeed". He pointed out that in their political resolutions, the CPI(ML) had said its main objective is to weaken the CPI(M). Unless there was a change in this position, it was not possible to cooperate.

The Central Committee's communique issued on this occasion follows:

Election Review

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) noted the fact that in the 1998 mid-term elections, the BJP increased its percentage of votes from 20.29 to 25.47. The BJP, during this election, had left no stone unturned and used all methods in its arsenal to capture power. It stooped to the lowest levels of political immorality by seeking the support of the most corrupt and criminal elements. Yet, it could increase its tally by a mere 17 seats. Along with its allies, it came close to a majority, but did not get the majority. It was only the position taken by the Telugu Desam Party, which betrayed its own commitment to secularism and the United Front, that helped the BJP-led Government to assume office.

The Congress party continued its declining trend. Its voting percentage declined from 28.8 to 25.88. Despite the intensive campaign by Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the party managed to just about retain its tally of the 11th Lok Sabha.

The United Front received a severe setback in this election. While the CPI(M) retained its 32 members, the major constituent of the United Front, the Janata Dal, was trounced. All the constituents of the United Front need to make a proper review of their performance.

The CPI(M) all along had been warning the United Front Government that unless it implemented sincerely the pro-people policies contained in the Common Minimum Programme, it would not succeed in garnering people's support. Though important advances were made in the spheres of foreign policy, Centre-state relations and strengthening secularism, unfortunately many of the promises in the economic sphere were not implemented. The decision to provide foodgrains at half the price to the people

below the poverty line, though taken in principle, never saw the light of the day in many parts of the country. The growing discontent amongst the people due to the economic policies was a factor determining the electoral fortunes of the United Front constituents. It is only the Left and the Samajwadi Party that have been able to receive some degree of wide support from the people.

Even during the election campaign, the United Front failed to effectively project itself as an alternative with a distinct policy and programme. The lack of proper seat-sharing amongst its constituents, particularly in the Hindi-speaking states, led to a division of votes which directly benefited the communal alliance.

Factors such as these determined the poll outcome in which the United Front's tally was reduced by nearly a half to 99.

The Central Committee decided that, under these circumstances, the unity of the Left, democratic and secular forces should be strengthened. The CPI(M), along with its allies in the United Front, shall make all efforts to build up this alternative to the communal forces and the Congress.

The Central Committee decided to strengthen the independent activity of the Party through mass mobilization and protest actions against the anti-people policies being pursued by the present government.

BJP Government's Performance

Having won the confidence vote by a wafer-thin majority by enlisting the Telugu Desam Party's support and by electing a TDP nominee as the Speaker, the BJP led Government, during the first few weeks, has clearly shown its true colours. The BJP is pursuing a 'hidden agenda' while trying to mislead the country and the people through its 'National Agenda'.

Economic Policies: On the economic policy front, the BJP Government has taken important decisions which clearly revealed that the *Swadeshi* slogan was only meant to dupe the people and garner their support in the elections. The new Exim policy will

prove very harmful for domestic industry'. The Finance Minister, choosing to visit the USA on his first international mission, has stated in unambiguous terms that the BJP will further accelerate the process of liberalization. The government is also proposing to amend the Patents Act in line with the WTO requirements. Ironically, it was the BJP that supported the Left in the Rajya Sabha earlier installing similar amendments brought by the Congress Government. A proposal to further step up privatization of the public sector units and open up the insurance sector constitute a grave assault on our self-reliance.

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) has called upon all its units to actively oppose these and many such measures through public mobilizations.

Protecting Corruption: The deceitful compromises that the BJP has made to assume power is now being exposed by its own allies. Having shed all norms of political morality, the BJP has inducted individuals chargesheeted in corruption cases in its cabinet. The consequent friction between the AIADMK and the BJP speaks volumes of the 'cohesive' nature of such an alliance.

The daily quarrels, bickerings and open charges being levelled by various partners of the ruling alliance have completely eroded the credibility of the Vajpayee Government and reduced it to a laughing stock. The way the most venal and corrupt elements are being protected and patronized reduces the BJP's declarations of fighting corruption in its election manifesto and the National Agenda, into a total farce.

Authoritarian Streak: The manner in which the resignation of some Governors and some Lt. Governors have been obtained before the completion of their tenure reveals the authoritarian streak of the BJP. Having assured the country through the National Agenda, and reiterated it in the President's Address to the joint session of Parliament, that the state governments would be consulted on the question of Governors and that the institution of Governors will not be politicized, the BJP lost no time in negating these. The manner in which a Central team was sent to Tamil Nadu to assess the law and order situation constitutes a serious assault on the rights of the states and the federal spirit

of the Constitution. Clearly, the gains made during the United Front Government in strengthening the Centre-state relations are bound to be reversed.

Stoking Jingoism: The open manner in which the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister are contradicting themselves on the issue of a helipad is, indeed, amazing. Never before has the country seen the Prime Minister contradict his Defence Minister's statement made at an official ministry Press briefing. The BJP, however, is resorting to jingoism which can only be detrimental to the process of improving good-neighbourly relations with China which was started by the political leadership of both the countries in the eighties. Such jingoism can only have grave consequences for peace and development in South Asia apart from having a negative consequence for India's own interests.

Communal Agenda: Through such measures, the BJP-led Government is clearly revealing itself as one that is pursuing a 'hidden agenda' which can only pose serious problems for the unity and integrity of our country. The RSS and the saffron combine are acting in tandem by pursuing the communal agenda which the BJP, for the sake of assuming office, has not included in the National Agenda. The efforts for the construction of the temple at Ayodhya or the campaigns for Kashi and Mathura and the raising of a private army by the Bajrang Dal are all indicative of the fact that communal tensions will escalate in future. The so-called secular allies of the BJP have to answer to the people their complicity in the unfolding of this 'hidden agenda'.

Nationwide Protest

Under these circumstances, the Central Committee of the CPI(M) has decided to launch a three-month long programme of mass contact and agitation exposing the BJP's double speak. Protest actions will be organized throughout the country as the culmination of this programme in August against the ruinous economic policies.

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) calls upon all its units and appeals to the Indian people who cherish the values of

secular democracy and self-reliance to join this campaign and safeguard our country's unity, integrity and prosperity.

16th Party Congress

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) has decided that the 16th Party Congress, which had to be postponed due to the elections, would now be convened from October 5 to 11 at Calcutta. The Central Committee will meet again in July to finalize the draft political resolution and other materials for the Congress. As per the CPI(M) constitution, the draft political resolution is to be circulated to its members two months prior to the Congress for an active inner-Party discussion.

Election Review and Consequent Political Developments*

Adopted by The Central Committee of The CPI(M) in Its Meeting Held in New Delhi on April 17-19, 1998

The Central Committee meeting held on December 21 to 22, 1997 at Calcutta adopted the tactics for the 12th Lok Sabha elections and state assemblies. About the BJP and the Congress, CC made the following assessments:

“The BJP is trying to do everything to emerge as a major force, if not getting majority and is developing alliances with regional parties”.

“The Congress Party which had the monopoly of power for long is weakened very much. Whether they will be able to maintain the present position is doubtful. But one should not underestimate its strength because of its mass base which exists in the country. Even during the last elections, the Congress polled 28.8 per cent and the impact in the minds of the masses about the traditional organization is still there. It also depends on the new alliances which they will be able to build.”

It assessed the concrete situation prevailing and came to the following conclusions:

“The present situation is complicated and we have to work out the tactical line to meet the present challenge. There is no difference of opinion in the Party now on the formation of the United Front. The Central Committee has also endorsed in the draft political resolution for the 16th Congress, the line followed in this respect. In consonance with our position, we have taken a consistent stand that the Party will have to fight against both the BJP and the Congress. But in consonance with our line, we have to see that where the Left is not a force and the United Front is not effective, namely, Maharashtra, fire should be concentrated

against the BJP.Now the Congress is a declining force while its place is being taken by the BJP. This poses a big danger to the democratic movement."

The election results have led to a new situation. The main features of which are: The BJP has emerged as the biggest party; the Congress has just maintained its position; and the UF has suffered major setbacks.

It is in this background that we have to analyze the election results.

ANALYSIS OF THE ELECTION RESULTS

BJP

The BJP has been able to improve its position, both in percentage of votes and number of seats won. Its voting percentage has been increased from 20.29 in 1996 to 25.47 in 1998 and the number of seats from 161 to 180. It is interesting to note that the increase in percentage of votes Gained by BJP is 5.18 per cent.

The review report on 1996 general elections adopted by the Central Committee had taken note of the steady advance made by the BJP since the 1989 elections. The trend has been continued in this election.

Year	All India No. of seats won and Contested	Percentage of Votes
1952	3 (94)	3 1
1957	4 (130)	5.9
1962	14 (196)	6.4
1967	35 (251)	9 4
1971	22 (160)	7 4
1977		
1984	2 (229)	7 4
1989	86 (226)	11.5
1991	120 (468)	20.1
1996	161 (471)	20 29
1998	180 (385)	25 47

(Note: Before 1984 it was known as the Jan Sangh)
(In 1977 they were part of the Janata Party)

The BJP's close ally Shiv Sena also slightly improved its percentage of votes from 1.43 in 1996 to 1.78 in 1998, although its seats have been reduced from 15 to 6. Except in states like Gujarat, Haryana, Meghalaya, Rajasthan and Delhi, the BJR has been able to improve its voting percentage in other states. In spite of the 1 per cent decline in Gujarat due to the split in BJP, it has been able to maintain more or less its base. It now polled 48.27 per cent votes in Gujarat. In states where the BJP or with its allies are in power, the percentage of votes declined. The BJP's vote declined in Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Delhi. The only exceptions are Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. The BJP came to power in UP only very recently.

. The BJP has not only been able to consolidate its traditional base such as in Madhya Pradesh, UP, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Delhi etc, but also made considerable gains in South India and NOrth-East. It has been able to make gains in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, West Bengal, Orissa and Bihar.

The Central Committee earlier noted the vast organizational work which is being undertaken by the various outfits of the RSS that contributed to the consistent expansion of the BJP in recent years "The Saraswaty Sishu Vidyalayas (kindergartens) and other educational institutions run by the RSS are expanding network in many states. Behind its success in south Bihar, which has a big adivasi population there is the work of an organization like the Vanavasi Kalyan Parishad, an RSS outfit, which has been working primarily to counter the influence of the Christian missionaries. It is through this organization that the RSS has made inroads among the adivasis in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and now in Orissa. It is significant that the BJP is penetrating most in Orissa in the backward tribal areas using both the feudal-royal politicians and the work of the RSS. The RSS is also assisting the BJP to organize people on caste and sub-caste lines. Holding of caste conferences, organizations of different sub-castes, taking their specific problems, ensuring that tickets are distributed to the prominent people in these communities, are all planned by the RSS in order to widen the social base of the BJP" (*Review Report on 1996 General Elections*).

The Coimbatore bomb explosion was effectively used by BJP and its allies for effecting a communal polarization to make gains in the elections in Tamil Nadu. The election results also show the dangerous trend of its ability to attract more votes, particularly, from middle class employees, workers and the youth.

The BJP has been able to achieve these gains due to a variety of factors:

(a) By continuing to base itself on the Hindutva ideology, they were able to retain their appeal to their conservative communal constituency. The hardcore of the BJP—the RSS—had made determined efforts to ensure the success of the BJP.

(b) However, recognizing that on their own, BJP would not be able to come to power, it adopted successfully the tactics of forging electoral alliances with various regional parties and groupings like the AIADMK and its allies in Tamil Nadu, the Trinamul Congress in West Bengal, the Samata Party, the Biju Janata Dal in Orissa, the JMM etc. Though the opportunist character of these alliances and electoral understanding was evident, the end result shows that these tactics have helped the BJP to some extent atleast for the present.

(c) The BJP capitalized on the discontent among the people arising out of the impact of the economic policies initiated by the Congress in the earlier period and pursued by the United Front Government.

(d) The BJP had played upon the widespread frustration among the people on the prevalence of corruption in a big way.

(e) Some state reports have indicated that the BJP, with the help of the RSS, has been systematically building links with various strata of people like the dalits, fishermen, contract workers etc. at various levels by championing their immediate demands. The RSS and the BJP were also in a planned manner extending their work to the various regions where they were weak like the North-East, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu etc.

(f) The build up of the BJP in the media as the ‘winning’ party created an atmosphere favourable to them and this image influenced sections of the middle class, the traders, landlords etc. Even many sections of the organized working class voted the BJP. This was further strengthened by their alliances.

(g) Powerful sections of the big bourgeoisie and the MNCs threw their weight behind the BJP in a big way.

(h) The major slogan of 'stability' played a big role favourable to the BJP. The decline of the Congress and the picture of disarray and confusion in the United Front contributed to the impression that only the BJP could provide stability.

The long term aspect of the continuous decline of the major bourgeois-landlord party—the Congress—and the failure of the Left, democratic and secular forces to present themselves as the alternative have enabled the BJP to project itself as the only force capable of taking the country out of the deep crisis. This aspect has to be seriously noted and the Party has to draw proper lessons.

Congress Party

The election results reveal that the decline in the Congress mass base which began from the 1989 Lok Sabha elections has been continuing. The percentage of votes polled by the Congress declined from 28.8 per cent in 1996 to 25.88 in 1988. It secured 141 seats this time as compared to 140 in 1996.

The following table will give an idea of the performance of the Congress Party from the 1st General Election onwards.

Year	All India No. of seats won and Contested	Percentage of Votes
1952	364 (479)	45
1957	371 (490)	47.8
1962	361 (488)	44.7
1967	283 (516)	40.8
1971	352 (441)	43.7
1977	154 (492)	34.5
1980	353 (492)	42.7
1984	415 (517)	48.1
1989	197 (510)	39.5
1991	232 (492)	36.5
1996	140 (529)	28.8
1998	141 (477)	25.88

The decline of votes polled by the Congress in 1998 is mainly due to decline of votes in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Orissa. The Congress has gained in Assam, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Kerala, Tripura, Nagaland, Chandigarh and Delhi.

The ULFA's call for boycott of elections and the terror created by them restrained Assamese voters coming to the polling booths in Assam. Compared to the 78.5 per cent of the votes polled in 1996 parliamentary elections, the polling percentage came down to 61 per cent in 1998. The Congress's alliance with the United Minority Front also helped it to gain minority votes.

In Maharashtra, the Congress has improved its number of seats from 15 to 33 and percentage of votes from 34.8 to 43.64. It is interesting to note that the combined percentage of votes polled by BJP-Shiv Sena combine has increased from 38.6 in 1996 to 42.15 in 1998. The success of the Congress was made possible because of its alliance with RPI and understanding with Samajwadi Party which polled 4.14 per cent and 2.62 per cent of votes respectively, helping the broad alliance polling more than 50 per cent of votes.

In Rajasthan, Congress improved its numbers from 12 to 18 and percentage of votes from 40.5 to 44.45. The anti-people policies of the BJP Government in Rajasthan and the shift in votes among the jats in favour of the Congress helped the Congress.

The Congress has been able to gain 7 per cent votes more in Madhya Pradesh due to the unity efforts inside the Congress and with the support of dalits, minorities, tribals who did not find any other force to check the communal politics of BJP.

The Congress Party which was rejected by the electorate in the 1996 General Elections, though forced to support the United Front government, continued to exercise pressure on it. It created a crisis situation with the demand of the removal of Deve Gowda from Prime Ministership and wanted to be included in the ministry. Though the Left parties had taken a stand to go to the electorate, other constituents were not prepared for that. Again after some time, with its power hungry politics, it precipitated a

crisis making use of the Jain Commission's interim report, leading to the general elections when the United Front failed to yield to their blackmail. It created a serious crisis inside the Congress itself. However, in West Bengal, the opposite happened with the major split in the Congress and the emergence of the Trinamul Congress.

The announcement of the elections saw many Congress leaders joining the BJP. It was the entry of Sonia Gandhi that stopped this exodus from the party. Subsequently, Sonia Gandhi was made the President of the Congress. She has succeeded in instilling some confidence in the Congress ranks and mobilized its activists during the elections. In the recent AICC session an impression was sought to be conveyed as though she has succeeded in uniting all Congressmen. However, there seems to be no serious introspection on the issues that led to the decline of the party. It is still under the impression that it will be able to gain the status of the single largest party and rule the country as in the past, though it is looking for alliances now. Sycophancy was in evidence during the AICC session where while one leader was criticizing the other all were praise for Sonia Gandhi. Though during the elections it projected itself as the only alternative to the BJP it could not go to the elections without allies. It struck alliances with the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the BSP and other smaller parties. Similarly, the BJP which is trying to project itself as the alternative to the Congress also had to recognize this reality and entered into alliances with various regional parties to come to power.

United Front

In these elections the United Front which had come into existence to meet the threat of the BJP assuming power at the Centre, received a big setback.

The United Front, which had won 170 seats in 1996, secured only 99 seats in 1998. The setbacks suffered by Janata Dal, DMK, TMC and AGP contributed to the decline in number of seats of the United Front. The Janata Dal, which had won 46 seats and had polled 8.1 per cent of votes in 1996 won only 6 seats and polled

only 3.25 per cent of votes in 1998. The major setbacks for Janata Dal were in Bihar, Orissa and Karnataka.

The split in the JD and the political polarization between Laloo Prasad Yadav and his allies on the one hand and the BJP and its allies on the other caused the marginalization of the JD in Bihar.

The split in the JD and the formation of the Biju Janata Dal and its alliance with BJP facilitated a polarization between Congress on the one hand and BJP and its allies on the other hand resulting in the marginalization of the Janata Dal in Orissa.

In Karnataka, Janata Dal votes declined from 34.91 per cent in 1996 to 21.69 per cent in 1998. Lok Shakti has been able to gain 11.5 per cent of votes. The splits in the JD and the factional fights caused its decline in Karnataka.

The Coimbatore incident and the communal polarization that took place, the discontent among the people against the wrong policies of the DMK Government and the failure of the DMK-TMC leadership in building a wider United Front opposing AIADMK-BJP front etc., mainly contributed to the poll debacle of DMK-TMC alliance in Tamil Nadu.

The non-performance of the AGP-led Government, the decrease in the polling percentage among the Assamese population, and the shifting away of minorities in support of the Congress contributed to the defeat of AGP in Assam.

It is only the Samajwadi Party that has been able to increase its strength from 17 to 20 and also its percentage of votes.

The Party has to undertake a deep and thorough-going analysis of the reasons for the serious defeats suffered by the third force as represented by the UF. Some of the reasons for the major setbacks to the UF have to be gone into to draw proper lessons for the immediate as well as long term tactics.

(a) It is very clear that the UF, which was formed to meet the specific situation that arose in May 1996, was unable to project itself as the effective alternative to the BJP or the Congress. Even in this election, the United Front had decided to fight against the BJP and the Congress. But this objective could not be realized due to various factors.

- (b) The continuous disunity, mutual conflicts and the absence of any purposeful efforts to strengthen its unity had vitally affected the image of the UF. The disunity manifested itself from the early months of the formation and got aggravated at first during the last days of the Deve Gowda Government and much more in the few months when Gujral was the Prime Minister. However, when the Gujral Government assumed office even the projection of the UF was lacking. Constituents of the Front were interested in small matters relating to their own states forgetting that without unity emerging, the projection of the UF would suffer. When the crisis developed on the question of the Jain Commission's interim report, and the Congress forced an election the UF's image and credibility was lost to a great extent.
- (c) Though a Common Minimum Programme had been worked out to endow the UF with some communalities of purpose, some of the bourgeois parties were not much bothered even about these guidelines.
- (d) The personal conflicts and the animosities within the Janata Dal—the split in the Bihar Janata Dal, the dissension in Karnataka and later break-up of the Janata Dal in Orissa, and the formal split in the JD at all India level—all these had caused serious damage to the Janata Dal. This break-up of the JD which was the major component of the UF, contributed in a big way to the defeat of the UF.
- (e) The dissension and conflicts in the UF manifested themselves in a most acute manner in the course of the run up to the elections. In most states leave alone agreed common lists of UF candidates; there were not even electoral adjustments among the constituent parties. Except for the Left parties, all the parties were interested only in their narrow interests and the resultant mutual conflicts vitally affected the very image and standing of the UF. (Only in West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura and Andhra Pradesh there was genuine understanding among the

parties.) Internal squabbles were taking place and when we were facing elections it became almost non-existent. Most of the constituents fought against each other. Except for the CPI(M) all other constituents tried to monopolize in their respective states. In UP where the SP is the strongest force amongst the UF, it was not able to accommodate other constituents even to a small extent. No doubt their claims were exaggerated. But this lack of unity robbed the UF of a united appeal before the electorate, which could have resulted in more success against the BJP. In Bihar both the CPI and the Janata Dal put up candidates in many places and results go to show that where the challenge was both from the RJD-Congress combination and the BJP-Samata alliance the JD could win only seat and the CPI lost all the four seats it held earlier. The CPI(M) also did not gain any seat here. It is unfortunate that in the Darbhanga constituency in spite of an agreement with the CPI it opposed the CPI(M) candidate. In Punjab violating the decision of their National Council the local unit of the CPI came to an understanding with the Congress Party and campaigned against our Party in the seats, which we were contending. In Maharashtra in three seats it was due to the JD that the SP lost three seats.

- (f) The same tendency was manifested in Tamil Nadu where the DMK-TMC combine stubbornly refused to accommodate the CPI(M) and JD due to highly exaggerated calculations of their strength.
- (g) Most state reports indicate that the JD was adopting a high and mighty attitude to the Left parties with regard to seat adjustments refusing to even concede one or two seats.
- (h) As a result of all these, practically there was no common campaign by the United Front in the country as a whole. Only in Hyderabad and Calcutta, mass UF rallies were held.
- (i) Absence of a common campaign is highlighted by the fact that Common Manifesto and Policy Declaration was adopted belatedly just three or four weeks before the

elections. This Policy Declaration was hardly referred to by most of these parties.

(j) A very important reason for the setback is the most unsatisfactory performance of the United Front Government in very many respects. It is a fact that the government had a duration of only 18 months and that too under two Prime Ministers—Deve Gowda and Gujral, thanks to the disruptive game of the Congress. This was a severe limitation that has to be noted while assessing the UF Government's performance. When it started succumbing to the pressures of the Congress Party it started losing its appeal. In spite of the various achievements, which it made in the realm of Centre-state relations, non-discriminatory attitude against all states, non-interference, democratic approach to strikes, improvement in relations with China and Russia and neighbours, holding of successful elections in Jammu and Kashmir, exposure of corruption scandals etc., it failed to tackle the urgent problems facing the people. It had planned to provide foodgrains at half the prices to people living below the poverty line. But due to various factors including lack of mechanism in various parts of the country, this scheme could not come into operation except in some states. There were many other declarations such as reservation for women, agricultural labour legislation, recognition of trade unions through secret ballot, Lokpal Bill etc., which could not be implemented because of certain vacillations among the UF partners. On the other hand, the policies of liberalization and globalization vehemently pursued by the UF Government were having adverse effect on the working class, agricultural labour, poorer sections of the peasantry and various sections of the middle classes and other downtrodden sections.

It should also not be forgotten that one important factor is the record of the State Governments run by the UF constituents whether it be the TDP in Andhra Pradesh, the DMK in Tamil Nadu

or the AGP in Assam—all of them were vehemently pursuing the economic policies dictated by the World Bank and the IMF. It is because of this that in spite of the fight against communalism these parties heading the governments got a big setback in the elections.

The CC had repeatedly warned that the BJP would benefit by this growing discontent. The election results have confirmed the correctness of our warning.

The experience of UF functioning needs to be assessed properly. We have experience of working with various parties ever since 1977. These experiences require a deep-going analysis including a study of the character and role of the bourgeois parties, including the regional parties and our tactics at various periods in the last 20 years. Many State Committees have demanded such a review.

The Left

The Left parties which got 52 seats in 1996 have now only 48 seats in the Lok Sabha. The CPI's strength has been reduced from 12 to 9 and Forward Bloc's from 3 to 2. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the RSP have been able to retain their seats. The percentage of votes polled by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) declined from 6.1 per cent in 1996 to 5.18 in 1998. The percentage of votes polled by CPI(M) declined in many states except in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. We lost our sitting seats Barpeta in Assam and Khammam in Andhra Pradesh. The TDP and the CPI did not work for us in many places in Khammam.

In the context of the defeat suffered by the state level ruling parties as in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh etc., the good performance in the Left-ruled states—West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura—once again has demonstrated the basically correct policies and practices of the Left-led State Governments. The so-called anti-incumbency theory stands belied in these states.

The adoption of the Manifesto of the Left parties for the first time is an important development as it projects the real alternative in the present political situation. However, it cannot be said that

we were able to popularize the Left Manifesto to the extent necessary and possible within the short time available.

Our Party's Performance

The CPI(M) contested in 71 seats and won in 32. They are: from West Bengal-24; Kerala-6; and Tripura-2. The CPI(M) lost one seat each in Assam and Andhra Pradesh which it had won in 1996. It had gained one more seat in West Bengal and one seat in Kerala when an independent supported by the Party who had won in 1996 lost this time.

West Bengal

The Left Front has won 33 Lok Sabha seats retaining the same position as in the last elections. The Left Front has wrested two seats from the Congress when it has lost two seats which were won last time. The defeats in the Dum Dum and Barasat seats were unexpected. The left Front has secured 46.83 per cent of total votes which is less than 2.25 per cent of votes polled by the Left Front last time. Election results show that the Trinamul Congress-BJP combine has emerged as the major anti-Left Front force in the state. They have secured 34.62 per cent of the total votes when the Congress share plummeted from 40.09 per cent to 15.04 per cent. Apart from the major portion of the anti-Left votes, the Trinamul-BJP combine has been able to attract a small section of those who had voted for the Left Front in the past. Out of the 294 assembly segments in 42 parliamentary constituencies, the Left Front has won 203 assembly segments—a similar number it had won in 1996. While the Left Front regained 32 assembly segments, which it had lost in the last elections, it has lost an identical number of assembly segments. In 81 assembly segments, the percentage of Left Front's votes increased. Left Front has secured more than 50 per cent of votes in 113 assembly segments.

The results, particularly in the urban areas, have not been up to the expectations. Out of the 80 assembly segments in urban areas, the Left Front has been able to retain only 27 and has been defeated in 20 assembly segments which it had won last time.

The Left Front has regained only 7 such segments where it had lost last time.

It is to be noted that the popular support to the Left Front has been reduced a little. The reduction is, of course, a matter of concern in some constituencies, particularly those in urban areas within Calcutta and also in the adjacent areas. Many people expected that the split in the Congress leading to the formation of Trinamul Congress would lead to a significant division in anti-Left votes. It did not take place. The successes achieved by the United Front Government had not been able to leave a mark on the public mind and they were also not sufficiently highlighted in the campaigns.

A section of the younger generation voted for the BJP-Trinamul Congress combine and it is a serious matter and requires immediate attention. Unemployment, uncertainty about future, the massive anti-Left campaign and the organizational weaknesses may have facilitated the alienation of these sections. Inclination towards Trinamul Congress-BJP combine among women, particularly women in urban areas noted in the election work should be properly addressed.

There are organizational lapses such as complacency at many levels in conducting the electoral battle, lack of close relation of Party workers with local people, failure to understand the mind of the people, absence of day-to-day contact, weaknesses in door to door campaigns, individual misbehaviour, indulgence in unlawful and unprincipled activities in the case of some members and sympathizers, indifference to complaints coming from the people, factional fights etc. are some of the weaknesses that came in the way of election work.

Kerala

Out of the total 20 seats in Kerala, LDF got 9 seats and UDF got 11. Out of the 9 seats won by the LDF, CPI(M) got 6, CPI-2 and RSP-1. The LDF lost 3 seats—Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam and Kozhikode—which it had won in 1996. It captured 2 seats—Adoor and Kottayam. The LDF lost 4 seats by a

margin of less than 10,000 votes. The LDF voting percentage made a slight increase from 44.22 per cent in 1996 to 44.29 per cent in 1998 while UDF gained from 44.97 per cent to 45.74 per cent and BJP from 5.92 to 8.02. The LDF has been able to retain its mass base.

The election results to Lok Sabha and to Assembly in Kerala are always of different pattern. In 1996 Assembly elections, LDF won 80 seats and UDF won 60 seats. On the same day, Lok Sabha elections, LDF had won majority only in 67 assembly segments while the UDF had gained majority in 73 assembly segments. In 1998 elections, LDF has secured majority in 60 assembly segments and UDF has gained majority in 80 assembly segments. But the decrease of votes in 50 assembly constituencies is a serious matter to be taken note of.

The election results show that the balance of forces has not changed in favour of the Left Democratic Front. We should concentrate our efforts in expanding our influence among religious minorities and other toiling masses.

Tripura

Elections to Legislative Assembly were also held along with Lok Sabha elections. We won the two Lok Sabha seats—we had won in 1998. But it is to be noted that the percentage of votes polled by the CPI(M) declined from 52.45 per cent in 1996 to 48.80 per cent in 1998. It is a significant achievement that in spite of the difficulties raised by the extremists and the ethnic divisive forces, the Left Front has been able to maintain its base.

Shortcomings and Failures to be Rectified

The failure to make gains, in spite of the Party being the only party continuously conducting campaigns, struggles etc. and despite the general prestige of the Party has caused much frustration at all layers in the Party. Many State Committees have discussed the reasons for this. What stands out is that in spite of our activities, the Party has not grown in terms of strengthening the existing bases and in terms of spreading to new areas.

The task of ideological, political, organizational strengthening of the Party is not being attended to at the all-India and state levels. Even where some mass struggles or movements have been conducted, the influence generated is not consolidated organizationally, nor is political consciousness raised.

On the other hand, the election review reports have pinpointed factionalism, individualism and anarchic style of work and tendencies of corruption and growing lack of contact with the masses in various states. Many other vices and unhealthy tendencies that are spreading in the Party have also been noted.

The PB and the CC will have to attend to these problems, relating this to our political, ideological, organizational work as well as to our political tactics, as the priority task with a sense of urgency. The preparations for the Party Congress and the Party Congress itself should be utilized to undertake this task.

Some other important features

The activities of the BJP has helped the growth of Islamic fundamentalism. The demolition of the Babri Masjid followed by intense communal riots had a big impact on the minds of the minorities. These feelings are being utilized by certain fundamentalist forces encouraged by the ISI as well as some Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia. Both these forces are complementing and supplementing each other. Tamil Nadu election results clearly demonstrate this. Coimbatore incidents and some earlier clashes had resulted in Hindu backlash throughout the state leading to the electoral defeats of the DMK-TMC combine and success scored by the BJP-AIADMK alliance. A consistent propaganda has to be carried out among the Muslim minorities that the defence of minorities lie not in such activities but by joining hands with the democratic forces.

While carrying on our fight against Hindu fundamentalism represented by the BJP and other outfits to defend national unity, we should boldly expose the forces of Muslim fundamentalism and winning over the minorities to the secular cause by defending the genuine interests of the minorities.

The other notable feature of the election experience is that the intense caste based politics which emerged with great vigour in the post-Mandal situation is continuing in a big way vitiating the political atmosphere. Our consistent line of fighting casteism as a disruptive force, while fighting for the just rights of the dalits and the really backwards has to be carried forward.

POST-ELECTION TACTICS

The previous meeting of the Central Committee was held on March 6-7, 1998 to discuss the immediate post-election tactics to be pursued by the Party. The Central Committee at its meeting adopted a note which was elaborated and circulated as a PB circular for reporting to all units. The circular stated as follows:

“A meeting of the Central Committee was held on 6-7th March, 1998 to discuss the immediate post-election tactics to be pursued by the Party. Preceding this meeting, the PB met on 4th and 5th of March.

“The Central Committee discussed the post-election situation on the basis of the assessment given by the Polit Bureau.

“The election results show that the BJP and its allies have made substantial gains though they are short of a majority. Despite all its manoeuvres and money power, the BJP could get only 25 per cent of the votes. With its allies it got 37 per cent. This shows that 63 per cent of the people did not support its communal platform. The BJP combination has won 252 seats, which makes it feasible for the party to try and form the government. The Central Committee is of the opinion that this development portends a serious danger to the secular character of the state, the unity of the country and the Left and democratic forces.

“Though the BJP would try to come to power in a coalition government with its allies, it should be clear that this would be a BJP-run Government. The BJP is no ordinary bourgeois party, there is the RSS controlling and guiding it. With the BJP in power, the RSS will have access to the instruments of state power and will systematically penetrate the State apparatus. Its Hindutva

ideology will promote communalisation of the State apparatus and the resultant growth of minority fundamentalism. This will have serious consequences for the secular fabric of our society and the communal divisions will cause a direct setback to the Left and democratic movement. The recent bomb blasts in Coimbatore and the competitive communalism of Hindu and Muslim extremist groups is a grim pointer to what can happen in the country.

“The United Front has not fared well in the elections and its total tally of seats has been reduced by half. Except for the CPI(M) which maintained its strength of 32 seats and the SP, all other partners in the United Front have suffered losses particularly the Janata Dal, the DMK-TMC combination and the AGP.

“The Congress Party could not make any advance and has barely improved its position by 2-3 seats.

“The Central Committee was of the opinion that all efforts must be made to stop the BJP alliance from capturing the Central Government. This could have been possible only if there were efforts made to form an alternative secular government. However, these efforts could not proceed because of the attitude taken by the TDP which announced that it was not prepared to support a Congress-led Government and would be equidistant from both the Congress and the BJP.

“Keeping this in mind, the Central Committee decided that, since there is every likelihood of the President inviting Vajpayee to form the government, firstly, we should concentrate on making efforts to defeat a BJP-led Government when it seeks a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha. For this, it is essential that the United Front take a united position. We should try and rally all the non-BJP parties to defeat the vote of confidence.

“If this succeeds, then the question of an alternative government will be on the agenda. The Polit Bureau has been authorized to pursue in such a situation the line of rallying the United Front to support a Congress-led Government from the outside.”

In pursuance of these guidelines laid down by the Central Committee, the Polit Bureau pursued the tactics to intervene in the developing situation. The first question was as to who will be invited to form the government. As the single largest party, the BJP's leader Atal Behari Vajpayee was invited by the President for talks. In the meantime, AIADMK leader Jayalalitha, after two days of discussions in Delhi with the BJP went back and held a Press conference in Chennai in which she bitterly attacked the BJP leadership. This demoralized the BJP and they told the President that they could muster a strength of 240 members only and could not muster majority support. The President then began talks with the constituents of the United Front and the Congress trying to explore the possibility of forming a government. Subsequently, however, some understanding was arrived at between the BJP leadership and Jayalalitha and her forwarding letters of support from the AIADMK and its allies to the BJP to form a government. This raised the strength of the BJP and its allies to 264. But still they were short of a majority.

The BJP, in the meantime, came to some understanding with the TDP and the TDP leader Chandrababu Naidu informed the President that his party would remain neutral. It is on this basis that the President invited Atal Behari Vajpayee to form the government.

During this period we tried our utmost to maintain the unity of the United Front. Within the UF, all constituents except the TDP were agreeable to the tactical line suggested by us.

In the 6th March meeting of the Core Committee, Chandrababu Naidu agreed to reconsider the decision. But it seemed clear from his attitude that he had already made up his mind to lean towards the BJP and was marking time to justify his position. In the meeting he refused to accept the proposal that in case the BJP is called to form the government, the TDP like other constituents of the UF would vote against the confidence motion when it is taken up. The 10th March meeting of the Steering Committee was again a repetition of the 6th March meeting. He went on arguing against our stand on the BJP, completely forgetting the commitment

made in the UF manifesto, to which he was a party. The UF manifesto had stated: "The United Front is founded on the plank of strengthening secularism and democracy. The UF reiterates that secularism means the separation of religion from the state. the Supreme Court has defined secularism as a basic feature of the Indian Constitution. The efforts by communal forces to undermine the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguistic character of our society will be strongly rebuffed.

"The United Front will strictly implement the Protection of Places of Worship Act. It will actively combat all efforts by the communal forces to create fresh disputes in Kashi and Mathura. The Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute at Ayodhya will be resolved with reference to the Supreme Court or on the basis of a consensus.

"The right to freedom of religion contained in the Constitution will be respected and protected. The personal codes of different religious communities will not be altered unless and until a consensus has emerged for bringing about a change. The UF will make all efforts to bring together different sections of our society by strengthening the common bond to build a strong, modern, forward-looking secular democratic society."

The TDP has come to the rescue of the BJP Government, completely forgetting all these commitments that it made to the electorate. Earlier Chandrababu Naidu had made a statement that at the state level the Congress was enemy No. 1 whereas at the national level it was the BJP which was the main enemy. But subsequently he went on changing statements. He had no answer when the question was posed to him that why was it that when the Congress Party tried to blackmail the UF and demanded the resignation of Deve Gowda while the Left parties took a stand to go to the electorate he was in the forefront to strike a bargain with the Congress?

The 10th March meeting also asked him to reconsider his party's stand by the time the next meeting on 16th took place. Taking the plea of the budget session of the Andhra Assembly, he informed his inability to attend the meeting but promised to send

a senior leader of the TDP. But by then he had already taken a position and held a Press conference to announce his decision. The Core Committee meeting of 16th was postponed and another meeting was fixed, which he was asked to attend. It was at this meeting that his resignation from the Convenorship of the UF as well as withdrawal of the TDP from the UF was received.

In the meantime, the BJP-led Government headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee was sworn in office on 19th of March and parliament was convened on the 21st of March. The first item on the agenda was the election of the Speaker. The BJP was adamant on having its own man as Speaker of the Lok Sabha whereas the United Front suggested that the previous speaker P.A. Sangma be allowed to continue in office. His name was decided upon since last time also his name was suggested by the UF and his performance was appreciated by all. Sangma had earlier made a statement that he would agree to become the candidate only if he was the unanimous choice and there would be no contest. But after the UF stand, he agreed to contest. Since he would be able to rally more support from the North-East states his success was guaranteed at that point of time. The BJP which did not want to face defeat in the election of the Speaker expressed agreement with the candidature of P.A. Sangma. This was conveyed by the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Madan Lal Khurana to Sangma. But after this assurance, the BJP resorted to manoeuvres and entered into an agreement with Chandrababu Naidu offering the latter the post of Speaker to a TDP nominee. Naidu did not even inform his own Polit Bureau about this agreement that night. That night, however, Khurana informed Deve Gowda that they decided to put up a TDP nominee for the post.

Chandrababu Naidu contacted Farooq Abdullah and P.K. Mahanta and informed them about this decision and announced the formation of another front called the National Front and announced the holding of a meeting of these parties at Delhi.

At the Core Committee meeting of 23/24th March Farooq Abdullah attended and pleaded his case. We had drafted a letter in reply to Chandrababu's resignation letter. Farooq Abdullah was in

agreement with the contents of the letter. He promised to meet Naidu and get in touch with the UF. But the meeting took place at midnight and Farooq Abdullah let the next morning without informing the UF constituents about what transpired.

Before this, however, another development took place. Saiffudin Soz, a prominent NC leader, came out openly demarcating himself from the stand taken by Farooq Abdullah. He did this knowing fully well the consequences that he would have to face. The NC seemed to be badly divided at its meeting, though finally they decided to abstain during the confidence vote.

P.K. Mahanta was contacted. Our units in Assam also contacted him and prevailed upon him that it would be suicidal to support the BJP. He did not attend the meeting of the National Front and subsequently fell in line with us.

Vote of Confidence

These events were confirmed by the vote of confidence. The Congress Party, though badly divided, decided to mobilize all its members at the time of the vote. The debate was lively and the BJP and its allies were cornered during the debate. The BJP which even at this time was not confident of victory resorted to nominating members to the two nominated seats in the Lok Sabha. The United Front and the Congress had decided to press for a division. This exposed the game of the TDP which instructed its members to vote in favour of the BJP. The final outcome was 272 in favour of the motion and 261 against it. It was clear from the above that had not the TDP voted in favour of the motion, it would not have been carried. It is clear from the above that the TDP is responsible for bringing the BJP to power and also responsible for maintaining it in power. From neutrality, it has exposed itself to be a defender of the BJP. This has resulted in a big discontent among the minorities in AP and one of the TDP minister has resigned on this issue.

Repercussions in Andhra Pradesh

After the setback in the elections, Chandrababu Naidu had come to the conclusion, keeping the forthcoming assembly

elections in mind, that if he has an alliance with the BJP which has secured 18.5 per cent votes, he would be able to win. All his tactics are therefore, aimed at achieving this objects. He, however, ignores the fact that given his position he will lose the 10 per cent votes of the Left parties and more than 11 per cent votes of the minorities. But he seems to be under pressure from various quarters. Many of the youth that were earlier attracted towards the TDP now seems to have shifted towards the BJP.

Subsequently, two delegations of minorities came to Delhi to have discussions with various parties of the United Front. One of them advocated that to meet this challenge of the BJP, the UF and the Congress should unite and the other advocated that the UF should strengthen itself only then will it be able to rally the minorities. We took a firm position that there is no question of unity with the Congress. We are prepared to take initiative for strengthening the United Front there and mobilise different forces which can be mobilized against the TDP-BJP alliance and in opposition to the Congress. The UF constituents decided to hold a big rally in Hyderabad so that different sections can be rallied behind the UF. It is considered that this would help to consolidate the Left, democratic and secular forces emerging as a third force.

The results of the 1998 Lok Sabha Elections have shown the continued rightward shift in Indian politics which began about a decadeago. The BJP has grown strong with an increased percentage of votes and seats. With its allies it has added on more than 60 seats compared to the last elections. The growth of the BJP is accompanied by the continuing decline of the Congress Party. The rapid decline of the Congress in class terms has brought about a shift of good sections of the big bourgeoisie and landlords in favour of the BJP. It is this shift towards the reactionary party with a communal platform that has brought a radical change in the situation.

Coming into existence of the BJP Government does not mean that the BJP has succeeded in consolidating its position. They yet do not fully feel secure.

Situation of Instability Continues

The BJP is not satisfied with the result of the confidence vote since the margin is very small and they had used all means to come to power including money, offer of offices and positions and promising various things to various people. Now they have allied with 22 parties. These parties have different perceptions on different issues and their positions are contradictory to that of the BJP. Their support cannot be taken for granted. As far as the states in the North-East are concerned they are small states depending on the support of the Centre. They would join hands with whoever comes to power at the Centre. Their outlook and culture is different from that of the BJP. The other parties want to get the maximum out of this arrangement. Jayalalitha is dictating terms. She has got 8 ministers and wants some more to be inducted. She is pressing for some issues which are not easy for the BJP to accede. The Vajpayee Government is under pressure from two quarters. While Vajpayee was stating that he had only one agenda that is the National Agenda, Advani and S.S. Bhandari came out openly stating that they have their own agenda that of the BJP and they are not in a position to pursue it since they do not have the majority. The VHP has given a time of two years for the construction of the temple. The BJP in UP has declared that construction of the temple is high on its agenda. Apart from this different regional parties are focussing on their problems which can come in conflict with their allies in the neighbouring states. Jayalalitha has raised the question of Cauveri waters and the Mulaperiyar dam whereas Chandrababu Naidu has raised the issue of Alamati dam. These issues are not easily resolvable. In many other states, other such demands are being raised. Thus pressures are bound to mount on the government. Apart from this, among those who have not been made ministers, discontent is bound to be there. Realizing this situation, the BJP is trying to organize defections from within the constituents of the UF like the SP, from the RJD and the Congress Party.

Caste factor has also emerged as an important factor in electoral politics which instead of concentrating on ameliorating

the conditions of the oppressed sections aggravates the caste divisions in society.

Both these challenges can be met by bold initiatives of the United Front. Many new forces which cherish secular values and stand for unity of the country must be rallied together.

Changed Situation and Tasks

During the last two years, big changes have taken place in the political situation. The monopoly of power enjoyed by the Congress in the past has been broken. As a traditional party of the ruling bourgeois-landlord classes, the Congress is rapidly losing ground. The BJP, on the other hand, is growing and sections of the bourgeois-landlord classes are rallying behind it. The Congress and the BJP today enjoy a nearly equal support base in terms of the percentage of votes polled.

The decline of the Congress does not mean that its class character has changed. It remains a party of the ruling classes against whom we shall have to wage a political battle. The BJP which has emerged as a major party has, as its ideological and philosophical basis, the pernicious theory of 'Hindu Rashtra'. This suits the interests of imperialism and sections of the ruling classes but is disruptive of national unity and social harmony in a country as diverse and plural as ours. Its ideological basis is contrary to the fundamental pillars of secular democracy which forms the basis of independent India's Constitution. Its assumption of the reins of State power poses great dangers both to national unity and to the democratic movement.

It is based on such an understanding that the last Central Committee meeting decided that in the case of BJP being defeated in the confidence motion and in the event of the Congress being prepared to lead an alternative government and if our support is solicited, we shall support such efforts.

No question arises of having any front or alliance with the Congress. But in order to prevent the BJP from consolidating its hold over State power, and the infiltration of administration that it seeks to do, we had decided to support the Congress, if and when the situation arises, from the outside.

A proper appreciation of the dangers posed by a communal party holding the reins of state power must be made. It is not accidental that the BJP is getting a favourable response from imperialist countries which have promptly welcomed the formation of this government. Further, both the bourgeois-landlord ruling classes and imperialism would not prefer any government which requires the support of the Left. They will make all efforts to foil such a possibility.

A pro-imperialist party based on a rightist communal ideology taking hold of state power in its hands has serious implications for the body politic of the country. Though having come to power with the support of various allies and dropping of the communal agenda from the national agenda, it is clear that the BJP is pursuing its own agenda through different ministries.

Within days of assuming power, the administrative and personnel changes that have been made go to show that they intend to penetrate the administration by which the levers of power remain in their hands even when they are out of power. Such an attempt was noticeable even earlier. It is not accidental that 94 retired army officers and many bureaucrats joined the BJP on the eve of the elections.

The various fronts of the RSS are carrying on their agenda with the support of State power. The VHP has revealed that the construction of the temple to be erected at Ayodhya is proceeding at a fast pace in various workshops in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The Bajrang Dal has announced its decision to train Hindu youth in every block of the country to combat "the activities of Christian missionaries and cultural invaders". It is clear that the national agenda is merely a mask hiding the implementation of their hidden agenda. Even the Prime Minister has declared that he is guided by the party and they shall implement their agenda once they have their majority. The various constituents of the present government will be shown the door when the BJP is able to muster such a majority. By that time, however, immense harm would have been done to the secular fabric of our country.

In foreign policy matters, whatever achievements the United Front Government had made with regard to improving relations with neighbours is sought to be undone. The recent statements of the Defence Minister clearly indicate the anti-China stance of the government at a time when our country took the initiative and achieved considerable success in improving relations with China.

The BJP has retained absolute control of three key ministries—Home, Information and Broadcasting and Human Resource Development. Through these, they seek to penetrate the administration as well as transform the secular content of the education system and control the media.

Such developments pose a great danger not only to our secular fabric but to the democratic movement as well. The pursuit of such policies and the consequent disruption of national unity is bound to breed insecurity amongst the minorities leading to a spurt in minority fundamentalism. This, in turn, would benefit majority communalism making both feed on each other with serious repercussions. Further, the spread of communal poison will seek to disrupt the unity of the toiling people—the working class, agricultural labour and poor peasantry. That very unity which we seek to strengthen and on that basis to advance towards people's democracy. Such are the dangers that cannot be underestimated.

In order to meet this challenge, a powerful Left democratic secular movement needs to be built. Taking the country as a whole, the CPI(M) and the Left movement is a powerful force only in three states. In other parts, we need to strengthen our relations with secular democratic allies. It is in this context that the relevance of the United Front arises. The UF is not a class alliance which can take us forward in the pursuit of people's democratic revolution. The UF is an electoral alternative to meet a concrete situation developing in the country. In the absence of such a third alternative, many of the regional forces may be forced to rally behind the BJP or the Congress. With the consolidation of its hold over State power, the BJP is seeking precisely to do this and disrupt the UF and isolate the Left. They used the TDP and

through it tried to create a national front. This attempt, however, we succeeded in foiling.

Such a third alternative was what we have been advocating since the 14th Party Congress in Madras. This cannot be confused with the Left Democratic Front, which we speak of in our Party Programme. This is an electoral front and in the process of new developments certain parties may leave and certain new parties may join.

The Congress Party representing the bourgeois-landlord classes, despite its compromising attitude towards communalism still has a mass base, which by and large is secular. On issues of struggle against communalism and on foreign policy issues, this mass can be drawn. Though its class nature remains the same, the Congress is different from the BJP in the sense that it is not avowedly based on a communal ideology.

In the absence of strengthening a third alternative, the minorities gripped by a sense of growing insecurity may rally behind the Congress, as their consciousness, unfortunately, remains at the level of mere defence of minorities. Hence, under these circumstances, we shall have to concentrate our efforts to strengthen this third alternative.

Even after the 78 years of our existence, tremendous sacrifices made during the freedom struggle and after our electoral strength is confined mainly to only three states. In the Hindi-speaking states, the Party continues to remain weak. The mass of the people in these areas are still under the impact of feudal ideology. Though we organize struggles on economic issues from time to time, our political and ideological campaigns and struggles are weak. Sufficient attention must be paid to political-ideological campaigns in order to heighten the consciousness of the Party ranks and the people. In spite of a large membership of the mass organizations, effective advance in large areas of the country is not being achieved. The task of developing independent mass organizations of the toiling people on the basis of a concrete study of the concrete conditions must be undertaken.

While concentrating our fire against the dangers posed by communalism, we have to simultaneously ensure that the popular

discontent which is bound to grow further against the economic policies should be channelized behind the Left democratic secular forces. The BJP is following the same economic policies and its slogan of Swadeshi, it is now increasingly clear, was coined only to deceive the people. The recent export import policy, its declarations to amend the Patents Act and privatization of the insurance sector are all indicative of completely toeing the IMF-World Bank prescriptions. The popular discontent against this is bound to grow. But this discontent will not rally behind the Left and democratic forces automatically. The BJP would seek to divert this discontent on the lines of communalism and jingoism. It is only when a powerful struggle is conducted that the mass of the people will rally behind the Left and democratic forces. Such struggles, however, will not be conducted by many of our secular democratic allies who in their states are pursuing similar policies. The Left should take the initiative to draw the masses behind these parties into these struggles.

Under these circumstances, the Left, of which our Party is a main component, will have to play an important role in safeguarding the unity and integrity of the country, its social harmony and secular fabric, protecting the mass of the people from further economic assaults and advancing the rights and interests of the people. We have to undertake the following tasks immediately.

First, to expose the designs of the BJP and its communal allies. We have to intensify the ideological campaign against the communal agenda which is disruptive of national unity. In this campaign, we must make all efforts to rally as many democratic and secular forces as possible.

Secondly, a militant campaign against the economic policies that mortgage the country's economic sovereignty and impose greater hardship on the people. The concrete impact of these policies on various sections should be properly studied and correct slogans worked out accordingly. This requires the strengthening of the Party's mass organizations and for that purpose proper allocations of cadres at all levels has to be made.

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Thirdly, the Party itself has to strengthen its ideological and political content. Improvement of the circulation of the Party organs and other periodicals along with regular programmes of Party education has to be undertaken systematically at all levels.

The coming three months—May to July—must be utilized for implementing these tasks through a powerful mass campaign.

It is the fulfillment of these tasks which can enable us to face the present situation and meet the challenges posed by a communal party holding State power which is pursuing the same economic policies of liberalization.

ANNEXURE-I

**Partywise Percentage of Votes Polled in
1996 and 1998 Lok Sabha Elections**

PARTY	1996	Seats won in 1996	1998	Seats won in 1998
Congress(I)	28.8	140	25.88	141
BJP	20.29	161	25.47	180
JD	8.08	46	3.25	6
CPI(M)	6.12	32	5.18	32
CPI	1.97	12	1.75	9
Forward Bloc	0.37	3	0.33	2
RSP	0.52	4	0.55	5
SP	2.86	16	4.95	20
TDP	2.97	16	2.78	12
DMK	2.15	17	1.45	6
TMC	2.19	20	1.41	3
AGP	0.76	5	0.29	0
Congress (T)	1.46	4	—	0
Samata	2.17	8	1.77	12
HVP	0.35	3	0.24	1
Shiv Sena	1.43	15	1.78	6
BSP	3.64	11	4.68	5
TDP(LP)	0.97	0	—	—
AIADMK	0.64	0	1.84	18
JMM	0.31	1	0.36	0
SAD (Akali)	0.76	8	0.82	8
AC	—	—	0.05	2
AIIC(S)	—	—	0.12	1
ASDC	—	—	0.05	1
JKN	—	—	0.15	2
JP	—	—	0.12	1
KEC(M)	—	—	0.10	1
MUL	—	—	0.22	2
PMK	—	—	0.42	4
RPI	—	—	0.37	4
SDF	—	—	0.03	1
AIMIM	—	—	0.13	1
AIRJP	—	—	0.56	1
BJD	—	—	1.00	9
HLD(R)	—	—	0.53	4
LS	—	—	0.69	3
MDMK	—	—	0.44	3
MSCP	—	—	0.05	1
PWPI	—	—	0.07	1
RJD	—	—	2.71	17
SJP(R)	—	—	0.32	1
UMFA	—	—	0.10	1
WBTC	—	—	2.43	7

**All-India Partywise Results
General Elections, 1998**

PARTY	Contested	Won
BJP	388	180
INC	477	141
CPI(M)	70	32
SP	163	20
ADMK	23	18
RJD	116	17
SAP	57	12
TDP	35	12
BJD	12	9
CPI	58	9
SAD	8	8
WBTC	29	7
DMK	18	6
SHS	79	6
JD	191	6
RSP	5	5
BSP	250	5
HLD(R)	7	4
PMK	5	4
RPI	20	4
LS	33	3
TMC	20	3
MDMK	5	3
FBL	4	2
AC	2	2
IUML	7	2
HVP	4	1
AIRJP	39	1
AIMIM	1	1
AICC(S)	9	1
UMFA	1	1
SJP(B)	21	1
SDF	1	1
PWPI	2	1
MSCP	2	1
ASDC	1	1
KC(M)	1	1
JP	16	1
IND	475	6

ANNEXURE-3

**Votes Polled by CPI(M) in
1998 General Elections**

STATES	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	% of Votes
Andhra Pradesh	3	0	921972	2.89
Assam	2	0	274003	3.27
Bihar	4	0	147713	0.40
Haryana	1	0	25366	0.34
Karnataka	1	0	8127	0.04
Kerala	9	6	3121636	21.00
Madhya Pradesh	2	0	28313	0.11
Maharashtra	3	0	190850	0.61
Orissa	2	0	54217	0.41
Punjab	3	0	96893	1.06
Rajasthan	2	0	225822	1.28
Tamil Nadu	2	0	161452	0.63
Tripura	2	2	668736	48.80
Uttar Pradesh	2	0	126856	0.23
West Bengal	32	24	12931639	35.41
Andaman & Nicobar	1	0	8272	5.67
Total:	71	32	18991867	5.18

On The Dilatory Tactics of BJP-Shiv Sena Government in Maharashtra*

**Statement Dated April 22, 1998
Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the dilatory tactics being employed by the BJP-Shiv Sena Government in Maharashtra in further delaying in making public the findings of the Srikrishna Commission Report. Justice Srikrishna had given the 700-page report to the government on February 16, on the post-Babri Masjid demolition communal riots that rocked Mumbai in 1992-93.

It is clear that the state government is suppressing the report in order to shield many top leaders of the BJP-Shiv Sena who were responsible for the worst communal riots in which thousands of people lost their lives and were uprooted. The Chief Minister has, once again, violated the assurance he gave that the report would be tabled in the Assembly in the current budget session.

The BJP-Shiv Sena Government cannot be allowed to subvert democracy in such a blatant manner. The country and the people not only have the right to know as to who were the persons responsible for perpetrating such ghastly crimes against humanity but also to demand that the guilty should be punished. The BJP-Shiv Sena combine's culpability in protecting the guilty is now thoroughly exposed.

The CPI(M) demands immediate publication of this report and firm action against those found guilty. The CPI(M) calls upon all its units to expose the nefarious game of the communal forces in defending those guilty of engineering the gruesome communal riots that rocked Mumbai in 1992-93.

On BJP's Politicizing Institution of Governor*

Statement Dated April 23, 1998 Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the attempts being made by the BJP-led Government to politicize the institution of the Governor. The manner in which the resignations of some Governors have been obtained before the end of their tenure, and the choice of the new appointments, totally expose the blatant manner in which the BJP is seeking to politicize this institution and use it for its narrow partisan ends. Ironically, the President's Address to the joint session of Parliament had assured the country the contrary.

The appointment of Shri S S Bhandari as the Governor of Bihar is particularly obnoxious. Shri Bhandari is a leading member of the RSS, leader of the BJP in the Rajya Sabha, and was widely tipped as one of those who could have replaced Mr. Advani as the BJP president. The appointment of such an active politician as the Governor of a state, where one of the BJP's long-standing allies is demanding the dismissal of the state government, is indeed a blatant subversion of democracy and democratic institutions.

Such a gross abuse of power by the BJP to further the narrow partisan political interests can only undermine the sanctity and authority of democratic institutions.

On Evil Designs of The BJP In Regard to The Basic Features of The Constitution*

**Statement Dated April 27, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

In the course of his lecture on “the need for a review of the Constitution” delivered at Patna. Shri Advani, the president of the BJP and Union Home Minister of the BJP Government, has made many remarks which expose the evil designs of the BJP with regard to the basic features of the Constitution.

While the process of initiating a review of the constitution itself calls for wide consultations and debates in the parliament and outside, Mr. Advani, in the name of explaining the need for such a review, has expressed many definite views on the nature of the changes which are on the BJP’s “Agenda”. Mr. Advani has clearly elaborated on the terms of reference of the review committee, in course of which the presidential form of government, instead of the parliamentary form, is projected forcefully. Though he declares that the basic features of the Constitution would not be disturbed, he has clearly indicated that in the BJP’s view, the parliamentary form of government is not a basic feature!

The CPI(M) has been opposing the presidential form on two important grounds, amongst others. Firstly, this form leads to total undermining of the role of elected representatives and will result in all power, in effect, being concentrated in the hands of one individual. This will be a total denial of the true spirit of democracy. Secondly, the introduction of such a presidential system in India—a vast country with numerous nationalities, ethnic groups, languages, cultures and traditions—can seriously harm national unity based on the principle of unity in diversity.

In the last few years, whenever political difficulties came to the forefront, some unprincipled politicians had put forward the proposal for adopting the presidential form in India. But most political parties and democratic opinion had firmly rebuffed all such sinister moves.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the Home Minister's proposals. The Polit Bureau appeals to all democratic political parties and the public opinion to firmly stand up and defeat BJP's evil intentions to scuttle the Indian Constitution.

CPI(M) Condemns Fascistic Attack on Renowned Painter M. F. Hussein in Mumbai by Bajrang Dal Activists*

**Statement Dated May 2, 1998
Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the attack by Bajrang Dal activists on the residence of renowned painter and artist M. F. Hussein in Mumbai. This is not the first time that Mr. Hussein has been a victim of rabid intolerance of the Hindu communalists. Earlier, Shiv Sena activists had destroyed Hussein's paintings at an art gallery in Ahmedabad last year.

On this occasion the Bajrang Dal activists, on the basis of a report in a local tabloid, ransacked Mr. Hussein's house and some of the half-complete paintings. Clearly, they had the support and patronage of the local BJP MLA in this action.

Such extreme cases of intolerance, smacking of fascistic behaviour, were also in evidence recently when the renowned Pakistani singer Ghulam Ali and others were prevented from performing in Mumbai. The stated reason was an inflammatory communal one. Shockingly, the leaders of the State Government in Maharashtra have defended such vandalism. It is indeed an irony that just recently a goodwill *bhangra* troupe had visited Pakistan.

It is obvious that such extreme cases of intolerance are seeking to browbeat intellectuals and artists into falling in line with the communal ideology of the ruling party. It is inconceivable that such actions could succeed if the law and order machinery was alerted. The fact that they are allowed to get away with such an action, shows the patronage being extended to them by the communal forces which are controlling State power today.

Such developments do not augur well for the future of secular democracy in India. While condemning such attacks, the CPI(M) Polit Bureau calls upon the governments, both at the Centre and in Maharashtra, to strictly follow the rule of law and the constitutional norms. The Indian people will not allow such intolerant browbeating and intimidation.

CPI(M) on Countrywide College and University Teachers' Struggle for Revision of Salaries*

**Statement Dated May 5, 1998
Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The continuing deadlock on the question of revision of salaries of college and university teachers is causing much hardship to tens of thousands of students, who are facing examinations and to their anxious parents.

In this situation, the Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon the ministry of human resources development to conduct urgent negotiations with the representatives of various college and university teachers' organizations throughout the country to find a satisfactory solution at the very earliest.

CPI(M) On Nuclear Tests on May 13, 1998*

**Statement Dated May 13, 1998
Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The BJP-led Government is adopting a course on India's vital nuclear policy which marks a departure from the earlier widely accepted approach which has been in place for more than two decades. Five nuclear tests have been conducted in quick succession at Pokhran in the last few days. The Vajpayee Government has neither consulted nor cared to inform the national political parties and the people what has occasioned such a precipitate action. These tests make it obvious that the Vajpayee Government is going towards the BJP's manifesto pledge to "exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons." Such a unilateral change of policy is being effected by a Government which has a precarious majority and whose stability itself is not established.

The implications of the new policy for peace in South Asia and the potential of a nuclear arms race in the region is something which should concern all peace loving and patriotic citizens.

The USA and western nations which possess nuclear weapons and those who have upheld the unequal nuclear order have no right to impose sanctions on India.

The Vajpayee Government has also indicated that it is prepared to consider signing up with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Here again, the nationally accepted position is not to sign discriminatory treaties which impinge on India's sovereignty. It is imperative that the Vajpayee Government take all the parties and the people into confidence before making any major departure on policy matters which are vital to the country's interests.

CPI(M)'s Stand: India Should Not Induct Nuclear Weapons*

**Statement Dated May 15, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

It is a matter of great indignation that the Prime Minister, keeping the people and the political parties in the dark regarding the reasons leading to the reversal of India's long-established nuclear policy, has chosen to write about the same to the US President even before the second round of tests on May 13, 1998.

There had never been any doubt regarding the capacities of the Indian scientists in developing our indigenous capabilities in the field of nuclear technology. In fact, these tests would not have been possible but for the continuous work during the last 24 years since the first nuclear test.

While recognizing India's capacities and internal strength in this field, successive governments had chosen not to make nuclear weapons but to keep the nuclear option open, without jeopardizing our national security, as a commitment to India's long-cherished goal for achieving universal nuclear disarmament. The BJP, which all along adopted a strident jingoistic position, advocated inducting nuclear weapons. The BJP-led Government, however, assured that such a step would be taken after a comprehensive review of our security concerns. It has now gone back on its own assurance that it made to the Indian people by this unilateral reversal. And this has been done by a government which has a precarious majority and yet to prove its stability.

The earlier policy which stood India in good stead in the past has now been reversed. The BJP-led Government has to answer to the Indian people as to what dramatic changes have occurred in

our threat perception during the few weeks after it assumed office. It is clear that the BJP is pursuing a domestic political agenda of whipping up jingoism. This is more than clear by its call for celebrations and the simultaneous publication (on May 11) of the RSS mouthpiece, *Organiser*, exhorting India to become a nuclear weapon state.

Such a policy, apart from undermining the long-standing independent foreign policy of India, severely jeopardizes the ongoing initiatives taken by India towards improving relations with our neighbours. It negates the advances made during the period of the United Front Government. At one stroke the BJP-led Government has harmed the atmosphere of good relations being built. The strident anti-China campaign reverses the important initiatives for reduction in arms build-up and the confidence-building measures that the two countries have arrived at after a decade of diplomatic efforts. The consequences of nuclear arms race in the subcontinent will have a disastrous effect on the Indian economy and the livelihood of millions of working Indians.

While mounting an aggressive anti-China campaign in his letter to the US President, the Prime Minister has deliberately ignored the long-standing threat perception of India concerning the US nuclear military base in Diego Garcia. This Indian Ocean island base has been used by the USA in the Gulf war and its weapons have a range that cover India. Such deliberate silence about imperialist military manoeuvres and support to anti-Indian extremist activities reflects the pro-imperialist shift in Indian policy. Increased tensions in South Asia will enable the USA to actively intervene in the region.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly protests against the sanctions being imposed on India by the western powers. The nuclear weapon states and others who have all along supported an unequal and discriminatory nuclear order in the world have no right, moral or otherwise, to impose sanctions on India. All sections of the people will unitedly reject any intimidatory tactics directed against India.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) warns the BJP-led Government that the people of the country will not tolerate further attacks on their livelihood through further 'liberalization' and opening up of the economy to foreign capital in the name of combating the sanctions. Already the government has announced the decision to offer counter guarantees, like in the case of Enron, to three multinational companies for power projects. Accelerating this disastrous course will not combat the effect of sanctions but, on the contrary, will make India more vulnerable to imperialist economic pressures jeopardizing the country's economic sovereignty and simultaneously imposing greater burdens on the working people. The arms race, at the same time, will both divert scarce resources away from compelling economic needs and divert people's attention away from pressing problems.

Using the sanctions, greater pressures will be mounted on India by imperialism to sign the unequal and discriminatory treaties like the NPT and the CTBT. The BJP-led Government will not be allowed to capitulate on India's long-standing consensual decision of not signing these treaties.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands that the BJP-led Government openly declare that it shall not induct nuclear weapons and build a nuclear arsenal triggering a nuclear arms race in the subcontinent. This is not in the interests of the country and the people. Further, the government should categorically assure the Indian people that it shall not submit to imperialist pressures to be party to unequal and discriminatory international treaties.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon all peace-loving patriots to rally together in carrying forward India's long-cherished desire to rid this planet of all nuclear weapons and force the government to adopt positions which will help preserve peace and security in the region and strengthen good-neighbourly relations.

CPI(M) Criticizes Advani's Sabre-Rattling*

**Statement Dated May 19, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly criticizes the statement made by the Union Home Minister L. K. Advani linking the finding of a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem to India becoming a nuclear weapon state. The Home Minister has spoken about "a qualitatively new stage in Indo-Pak relations" after India's decision to become a nuclear weapon state.

India has been strongly condemning the Pakistani ruling circles for interfering in Kashmir and propping up the extremist and violent activities there. It is perfectly legitimate to take firm measures to deal with such activities in the state of Jammu & Kashmir. But to indulge in nuclear sabre-rattling to deal with Indo-Pakistan relations is totally unwarranted which can lead to dangerous consequences.

Following the earlier statement of the Prime Minister that India will use nuclear weapons in self-defence, the statement of the Home Minister sends out wrong signals that India is prepared to use the nuclear issue as a factor in settling disputes with neighbours.

The manner in which the BJP leadership is using the issue of nuclear weapons makes it clear that this is part of the overall plan to fulfil the Hindutva agenda.

The bomb, just as the Ram temple, is seen as a weapon in the armoury of the RSS-led combine. Already, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad has announced plans for the building of a "Shakti Peeth" (memorial) at Pokhran, which will be used for religious mobilization.

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The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon all sections of the people to be wary of such sectarian and divisive designs. The Vajpayee Government has taken steps to reverse India's long-standing policies and resort to jingoism which is no substitute for nationally accepted policies.

CPI(M) On The Railway Budget 1998-99*

**Statement Dated May 30, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly opposes the steep hike in passenger fares imposed in the Union Railway Budget proposals for 1998-99. Out of the Rs. 400 crore increase in fares, Rs. 350 crore will have to be borne by the second class passengers of ordinary, mail and express trains. Suburban rail passengers have also not been spared.

While the freight charges have not been increased, the whole burden to meet the deficit in revenue earnings and expenditure has been passed on to the ordinary people.

The budget proposes a substantial hike in the annual plan outlay, which is fixed at Rs. 9,500 crore. This is Rs. 120 crore more than last year. However, to garner resources for the plan, Rs. 2,900 crore are to be raised through market borrowings which makes it doubtful that such a plan target can be met.

In order to rationalize railway expansion, the Railway Minister has sought to give priority to the projects which can be economically profitable. Such a narrow approach would endanger the emphasis given to the development of railways in the north-eastern region and other backward regions in the past two years.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands that the proposed fare hike for second class passengers of all categories be rescinded. It calls upon all Party units to mobilize the people to protest against this new burden.

CPI(M) On The 1998-99 Union Budget Proposal*

**Statement Dated June 1, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The budget presented by the BJP-led Government is neither "Swadeshi" nor growth-oriented. By relying on resource mobilization through increase in indirect taxes, the budget spares the rich and imposes greater burdens on the working people. The opening up of the insurance sector and stepped-up privatization of public sector further undermines our country's self-reliance. The hike in railway fares, alongwith a hike in petrol and postal rates, will further erode the living conditions of the Indian people. This, in turn, will further deflate domestic demand accentuating the current recessionary conditions.

In an attempt to pander to the interests of foreign capital and domestic big business, Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha has presented a budget which is not merely lacklustre and unimaginative, but also patently anti-poor. What is more, the document does not address the basic fiscal crisis facing the government. The revenue deficit, which stood at 3.1 per cent of GDP in the fiscally disastrous year 1997-98, remains virtually at the same level in the budget for 1998-99. This is largely because no effort has been made to mobilize additional revenues from direct taxes. In fact, the direct-indirect tax balance has been tilted sharply in favour of the latter, which impinges heavily on the common people rather than the rich. What is more, within indirect taxes it is excise rather than customs duties that account for a dominant share of additional resources mobilized.

This is surprising in view of the fact that the new Exim policy had moved 340 commodities to the OGL list and the government

had clarified that the interests of the domestic producers would be taken care of through appropriate import tariffs. Not only has the government not fulfilled this promise, it has put domestic producers at a disadvantage through a sharper increase in excise duties. The hike in the excise duty on petrol will push up costs directly and will have a cascading effect on prices of a wide range of goods. The impact this would have on the competitiveness of India's languishing exports will have damaging consequences such as uncertainty regarding the exchange rate, especially in the wake of the South East Asian crisis and the post-bomb sanctions. Thus, not only has the government attacked the living standards of the poor through levies which affect them immediately, it has also forsaken its Swadeshi plank.

In keeping with the pro-rich bias of the budget, the Finance Minister has taken measures which hand over prime public assets to private operators and take over the debt default of big business. Besides continuing with the disinvestment of assets (now to the extent of 74 per cent of the total), the government has taken two major decisions. First, it would divest 51 per cent of the equity of Indian Airlines and virtually hand over the most successful domestic airlines to the private sector. Second, it has decided to open up the insurance sector to "domestic" private firms, without specifying what would constitute a domestic entity. While the private sector is being favoured with access to prime public assets, the government has decided to transfer the non-performing assets of banks, which are mainly debts on which big business has defaulted, to an agency which with government guarantees would seek to securitise and sell this debt. Since the value at which such sale would occur would not equal the original value of the debt, it amounts to an implicit write-off of credit provided by public sector banks to defaulting business houses.

This direction in policy of the BJP-led Government is confirmed by its decision to "separate" labour from assets in public corporations, by providing resources for a "golden handshake" scheme, and then selling the assets that remain to the private sector. Together with the decision to do away with the Urban Land Ceiling Act, this amounts to a decision to wipe out jobs, close

productive activity and encourage speculative sales of land and other assets.

Despite this willingness to use inflationary means of finance and sell prime public assets, the government, in order to sustain moderate increase in central plan outlay, has not merely had to rely on borrowing but has also had to squeeze budget support to state and UT plans. Such support is slated to go up by 9 per cent in nominal terms, which means virtual stagnation in real terms.

The opening up to multinationals, the winding up of the public sector, the encouragement to speculators and the attack on the working people are what the BJP Government really stands for—a fact which no amount of jingoism can conceal.

On Victory of Panchayat Elections in West Bengal

**Statement Dated June 1, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)***

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) warmly congratulates the rural people of West Bengal for their overwhelming and firm support to the Left Front in the three-tier panchayat elections held in the state. This victory for the Left Front and the CPI(M) is a reaffirmation of confidence in the policies and performance of the Left Front and its government. Policies in support of the rural poor in the sphere of land reforms, and the democratic participation and rights achieved for the entire rural people through the panchayat system, are a model for the whole country.

The election campaign for the panchayat polls saw a concerted effort to malign and discredit the Left Front, particularly the CPI(M). Almost the entire media in West Bengal joined in this vicious campaign to launch scurrilous attacks and spread disinformation. Despite these efforts, the Left Front has won nearly 58 per cent of the seats for the Gram Panchayats, 67 per cent in the Panchayat Samitis (block level) and 88 per cent of Zilla Parishad seats. The communal politics of the BJP has suffered a big setback as it could win only a single seat among all the seats in the 16 Zilla Parishads and a meagre percentage of seats in the Gram Panchayats despite its alliance with the Trinamul Congress.

In these elections, there was extensive use of money and muscle power by the reactionary vested interests in favour of the TMC-BJP combine, in a bid to dislodge the CPI(M) and the Left Front. So far, 26 activists belonging to the CPI(M) have been killed and many have suffered serious injuries in the attacks launched during the campaign.

The Polit Bureau conveys its revolutionary greetings to all the Party members and sympathizers for their courageous role in fighting back successfully this all-out offensive of the reactionary communal and right-wing forces in the state. The Polit Bureau is confident that the Party will take all necessary measures to continue the good work conducted through the panchayat system and to forge links with all those sections of people who have remained outside the ambit of the Left Front.

On Sell-out of Maruti Udyog Limited to Japanese Multinational, Suzuki*

**Statement Dated June 9, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly disapproves the surreptitious manner in which the BJP Government has enacted a total sell-out of the Maruti Udyog Ltd, to the Japanese multinational, Suzuki.

It needs to be recalled that when Suzuki tried to wrest control of this premier Indian automobile giant, the United Front Government put up a stiff resistance and upheld the sovereignty of our country and its economic self-reliance. Its strong stand was supported by all political parties, including the BJP then.

However, now, in the name of "Swadeshi", the BJP has virtually handed over Maruti's management control on a platter to the Suzuki in an out-of-court settlement.

Suzuki had earlier acquired control of 50 per cent of Maruti's equity. During the United Front Government period, they were seeking to enhance this to 80 per cent along with the full control of management. This was not allowed. Now Suzuki has been given complete control without investing a single yen in the company.

This constitutes a total betrayal of India's interests. Further, the clandestine manner in which such a decision has been pushed through, raises suspicions regarding the motives of the BJP.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly protests against such sell-out of India's public assets which had been built by the Indian people's labour.

Communiqué Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

Following Its Meeting Held in New Delhi
on June 15-16, 1998

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has called upon all its units to forge a powerful movement against the nuclear arms and observe August 6, the Hiroshima Day, as the day for complete nuclear disarmament, against the nuclear weapons. This was informed by the Party's General Secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, while he was addressing a Press conference at the Party headquarters on June 17, 1998 after the two-day meeting of the CPI(M) Polit Bureau on June 15-16, 1998. Underlining the irresponsible statements made by those sitting in positions of power after the explosions at Pokhran, Surjeet pointed out how these explosions have harmed the country's prestige among the developing countries and caused a grave setback to the process of normalization of relations with the neighbouring countries.

On this issue, the CPI(M) has demanded that India must not go in for making or deployment of nuclear weapons; that she must refuse to sign the discriminatory treaties like the NPT and CTBT; that she must declare no-first-use of nuclear weapons, and that she must run a powerful campaign for the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons.

The main agenda of the CPI(M) Polit Bureau meeting was to give a final shape to the draft political resolution for the 16th Party Congress before presenting it in the coming meeting of the Central Committee which will finalize it and issue it for pre-Congress discussion among the Party ranks.

The Polit Bureau also called for intensification of struggle against the budget proposals and welcomed the joint trade union call of an industrial strike in West Bengal on July 3.

On the Ayodhya issue, Surjeet came down heavily on the BJP leaders who are speaking in different voices at the same time and expressed apprehension that the Prime Minister's assurances about abiding by the court verdict carry no conviction in view of the Sangh Parivar's past record of breaking the assurances given to the National Integration Council, to the government and Parliament, to the Supreme Court and to the people of the country. Pointing to the pre-fabrication work going on in Ayodhya and in Sirohi, Rajasthan, he said that the BJP-RSS move to construct a temple at the Babri site would only jeopardize the country's unity. While refusing to demand the dismissal of the UP and Rajasthan Governments for their active support to the pre-fabrication work, Surjeet underlined the need to forge a broad-based mass awareness campaign on the issue.

Surjeet also described as wrong the demand for dismissal of the Bihar Government and said the Article 356 must be used only when there is a threat to the nation's integrity. In this context, he lambasted the Central Government's move to send teams to the states in the name of studying the law and order situation there, and described it as an authoritarian move. Earlier, Surjeet described the brutal murder of CPI(M) MLA, Comrade Ajit Sarkar, and other Party members as an instance not only of criminalization of politics but of the obnoxious nexus between the landlords, criminals, officials and the ruling class parties in the state.

The Polit Bureau communique issued on this occasion follows:

Gujarat Cyclone

The Polit Bureau expressed its deep sorrow at the heavy loss of life and destruction wrought by the cyclone which hit the coast of Gujarat. The port town of Kandla has suffered the worst devastation. The state administration of the BJP-led Government has failed to gear up to tackle the calamity in these crucial days. There is a danger of epidemic diseases in Kandla and other areas.

Vaccines are not available. The relief and rehabilitation work has to be stepped up in a big way.

CPI(M)'s 16th Congress

The Polit Bureau finalized the draft political resolution to be placed for discussion before the Central Committee meeting at Delhi from July 16 to 18, 1998. After the Central Committee finalizes it, the draft will be released for discussion amongst the Party ranks. The CPI(M)'s constitution stipulates that the draft must be subjected to an inner-party discussion before the Party Congress, for which purpose it is to be released at least two months before the Congress convenes. The Party Congress will be held at Calcutta from October 5 to 11, 1998.

Bihar Killing

The Polit Bureau strongly condemned the murder of Comrade Ajit Sarkar, CPI(M) MLA and member of the Bihar State Committee of the Party. This heinous killing by the agents of the landlords and their political representatives should not go unpunished. Comrade Ajit Sarkar was a symbol of the CPI(M)-led land struggles in Purnea district for decades. Recently, a strong movement was launched on the land illegally held by the sitting BJP MP who himself is a big landlord. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands a high-level judicial enquiry into this ghastly murder. The Polit Bureau is confident that the struggle for land and wages which were carried out under the leadership of Ajit Sarkar in Purnea district, will continue and intensify in the coming days all over Bihar.

BJP's Dubious Stand on Temple Construction

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expressed its strong opposition on the temple construction work by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad going on at different centres in Uttar Pradesh (Ayodhya) and Rajasthan. The preparatory building work has been going on under the patronage of the BJP Governments in these two states. With the BJP-led Government coming to power at the Centre, the work has been speeded up. The Left parties' parliamentary delegation

which visited Ayodhya has confirmed that the construction work is being carried out not far away from the site where the Babri Masjid stood.

The Prime Minister's effort to allay apprehensions on this score, by saying that the government is committed to implementing the court order, does not carry any conviction given the track record of the BJP leadership's assurances in 1992 regarding the protection of the Babri Masjid. The BJP leadership, however, has made it clear that its aim is to build a temple at the disputed site. The BJP vice-president, K L Sharma, has categorically stated that if the court verdict is adverse to the construction of the temple at the disputed site, then the BJP will get a legislation passed in Parliament to facilitate this. This is an open declaration that the BJP-RSS combine is once again conspiring to subvert the rule of law. With the BJP in the Central Government, the threat is real.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls for an immediate halt to the construction work going on in both Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. This is the only manner by which the Central Government can put into practice the Supreme Court decision that status quo will be maintained till a final verdict.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon all its units, unitedly with other secular forces, to launch a campaign to alert the people against these plans of the BJP-RSS-VHP combine.

Stop Nuclear Weaponization

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) reiterates its demand that the Vajpayee Government should not go in for deployment of nuclear weapons. The reversal of the long-standing nuclear policy has harmed India's vital interests. The Polit Bureau strongly condemns the chauvinistic and aggressive postures adopted by various ministers of the BJP-led Government who, through jingoistic statements, recklessly disrupted the improvement of relations with our neighbours.

The CPI(M) and the Left parties have firmly opposed the jingoistic turn given to the nuclear issue by the RSS and its outfits like the VHP. The statement of the Union Home Minister and others linking the solution of the Kashmir problem to India's nuclear

weapon status has played into the hands of the Western powers and Pakistan which seek to internationalize the issue. This has dealt a severe blow to Indian diplomatic efforts of nearly three decades in making international community accept that the solution to the Kashmir problem can be only through bilateral discussions based on the Shimla Agreement. This government cannot be allowed to succumb to such imperialist pressures to internationalize the Kashmir issue.

The Polit Bureau strongly opposes the sanctions imposed on India by the USA and some of its allies. The nuclear weapon states and the G-8 countries have no business to impose sanctions on India when they are themselves holding a monopoly of nuclear weapons and seek to impose discriminatory treaties like the NPT and the CTBT.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon all democratic and peace-loving citizens to stand for a nuclear policy which is in tune with our long-standing foreign policy of non-alignment and peace. After the Pokhran tests, India should:

- (a) not go in for deployment of nuclear weapons;
- (b) refuse to sign discriminatory treaties like the CTBT and the NPT;
- (c) declare no-first-use of nuclear weapons;
- (d) campaign for non-discriminatory agreements to check nuclear weapons proliferation and for achieving universal nuclear disarmament.

The Polit Bureau welcomes the initiative taken by some eminent citizens and various organizations to oppose the nuclear policy being pursued by the Vajpayee Government. It calls upon all its Party units to work for a broad-based movement against nuclear weaponization and to observe August 6, which is Hiroshima Day, as a day against nuclear weapons and for universal disarmament.

BJP Government's Authoritarian Streak

The decision of the Union Home Ministry to send Central teams to assess the law and order situation in a state completely violates the spirit of federalism and constitutes a gross interference in the rights of the state governments. Law and order is a state subject

under our Constitution. It is clear that the BJP is bent upon politicizing Article 356 of the Constitution. It seeks to invoke this article to further its political interests.

It is most scandalous that the Prime Minister chose to announce the decision to despatch a BJP's party team to assess the situation in West Bengal. This is a gross misuse of office by the Prime Minister. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) warns the BJP Government that the people of India will not tolerate such attempts to impose an authoritarian rule.

Budget Proposals

The Polit Bureau has come out strongly in opposition to the budget proposals which have stepped up privatization of the public sector leading to attacks on the working class and their employment. It has also opposed the petroleum price hike and sharp increases in excise duties on a large number of commodities of daily use by the consumers, which will fuel inflation and all-round price rise. The budget has given further concessions to the rich while failing to deal with the economic difficulties which will be accentuated by the sanctions imposed after the nuclear tests. The sharp depreciation of the rupee will have a harmful effect on the economy.

The manner in which the Finance Minister and the government are withdrawing their proposals is making a mockery of policy-making in economic matters. It is clear that the government's pre-occupation is its survival and hence, the country and the economy are made to suffer to the tune of thousands of crores of rupees. The goof-up on the petrol prices is illustrative of the government's complete incompetence. Worse, the working people are to pay for this incompetence on top of the already announced heavy burdens on them.

The CPI(M) will oppose the finance bill when it comes up in Parliament in July. The Polit Bureau welcomes the decision of the West Bengal trade unions to jointly call for an industrial strike on July 3. The Polit Bureau calls upon all the Party units and mass organizations to step up the movement against the budget proposals.

CPI(M) Condemns Murder of Ajit Sarkar, Member of Bihar Legislative Assembly*

**Statement Dated June 15, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) strongly condemns the dastardly murder of its leader and sitting MLA in the Bihar Assembly, Ajit Sarkar, along with three other comrades, in Purnea district yesterday (June 14, 1998). Ajit Sarkar was a member of the Bihar state committee of the CPI(M) and a symbol of the CPI(M)-led land struggle in Purnea district for many years. He has often been the target of the wrath of the landlord elements and their private armies. This is the handiwork of the landlord sections. Recently, land struggle had intensified on the illegally held land of the sitting BJP MP of the area. These landlord sections are supported by the ruling class parties which, unable to face the political challenge, resorted to these methods to eliminate Ajit Sarkar.

The CPI(M) demands a high-level judicial enquiry into the killing of Ajit Sarkar. It also demands that the culprits be apprehended and punished immediately.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) conveys its heartfelt condolences to his wife Babli Sarkar, his two daughters and son.

CPI(M) Condemns Delay in Introducing Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament*

**Statement Dated July 3, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly opposes the decision of the BJP-led Government to postpone introduction of the women's reservation bill. By going back on its commitment to introduce the bill in Parliament on July 3, 1998, the BJP has only exposed its hypocritical stand on the issue of 33 per cent reservation for women in legislatures.

The reason given by the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, that some parties have conveyed their opposition to the bill, is a meaningless pretext. It is well-known that a few parties are opposed to one-third reservation for women, but all other major national parties have made public commitments on this issue. It is for the Vajpayee Government to press ahead with the legislation and call upon these parties to stand by their promise to the electorate.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands, therefore, that the bill be introduced forthwith in Parliament without any delay.

On Delhi BJP Government's Outrageous Move*

**Statement Dated July 3, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The reported proposal by the Delhi BJP Government, to delete churches from the list of places of worship is an intolerant and outrageous move against the Christian community. As reported in the Press, the pretext for such a step is that a permit is being granted to the Catholic Church for procuring wine for use in religious ceremonies in the churches.

It is well-known that wine is offered symbolically during religious rites in the Catholic Church. To label this as serving wine in churches, and hence to exclude churches from the definition of places of worship, shows utmost intolerance and trampling upon the religious rights of minorities.

The State Government in Delhi should immediately abandon any such move and assure the citizens of all communities in Delhi that their rights will be protected. The BJP should remember that the Indian Constitution enjoins upon the state the responsibility to ensure that all religious communities have the freedom to profess and practise their religion.

CPI(M) Demands Clarification by BJP Government on Their Stand on CTBT*

**Statement Dated July 6, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

Reports have appeared in the Press, briefed by official sources, that the Vajpayee Government is negotiating with the United States about signing up on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The terms and conditions on which the BJP-led Government is negotiating, are being put out in vague terms, without any clear position spelt out by the government.

On behalf of the government, Mr Jaswant Singh will be meeting the US deputy secretary of state, Strobe Talbott, in Frankfurt on July 9, to carry on further talks. It is significant that these talks between the two sides are being conducted in a clandestine manner, in a third country, without the Indian people and Parliament being told of the exact nature and scope of the negotiations.

The United Front Government had, with the full support of all political parties, refused to sign the CTBT in 1996. India has consistently taken the stand that it will not sign any discriminatory treaty, notwithstanding western pressures. The Vajpayee Government, which embarked on an adventurist nuclear policy, seems ready now to capitulate to US pressure and the threat of sanctions. It is incumbent upon the Vajpayee Government to state clearly whether it continues to adhere to the stand taken by India on CTBT so far, or whether it is resiling from this position.

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, July 12, 1998. "CTBT" means "Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty".

CPI(M) on Postal Employees' Demands*

**Statement Dated July 10, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) extends its full support to the struggle of the postal employees who have gone on an indefinite strike from July 9, 1998 for the fulfilment of their demands. The major national federations of the postal employees had submitted a ten-point charter of demands which concerns some of the long-standing issues and problems of the postal employees. One of the major demands is for the implementation of the recommendation of the Justice Talwar Committee to provide government employee status to the 3.8 lakh extra-departmental (ED) employees.

The ministry of communications has only conceded one of the demands, i.e. upgradation of pay scales for the employees before the strike, negotiating with the ministry, indicating

CPI(M) Asks Major National Political Parties: Honour Your Commitment on 33 Per Cent Reservation for Women*

**Statement Dated July 16, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The CPI(M) reiterates its stand that the women's reservation bill should be introduced in Parliament in the present form, immediately. After the introduction of the bill, those who have any other point of view can express them in the discussions. The CPI(M) wants all the major national political parties which have promised 33 per cent reservation for women, to fulfil their commitment by getting the legislation adopted without delay.

The CPI(M) does not subscribe to any move to scuttle or delay the bill.

Commuque Issued by The Central Committee of The CPI(M) Following Its Meeting Held in New Delhi on July 16-18, 1998*

The CPI(M) has decided to launch a nationwide jatha programme to mobilize all sections of people against the growing attacks on their livelihood. The jathas will criss-cross the entire country, and the programme will get under way from mid-August. This campaign will specifically focus on the back-breaking price hike, imposed by the four-month misrule of the BJP-led Central Government, and will culminate in a massive rally at Delhi, in mid-September. This was announced by the Party General Secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, while addressing a Press conference, at the Party headquarters, on July 19, 1998 after the conclusion of the three-day Central Committee meeting. The meeting unanimously adopted the draft political resolution, for the 16th Party Congress, to be held in Calcutta between October 5 and 11, 1998.

Castigating the RSS-BJP combine for open and not so open pursuance of their communal agenda, Surjeet pointed out towards their open and continuing campaign on the construction of the Ram Mandir at the disputed site at Ayodhya, their systematic efforts for penetrating the state apparatus, educational institutions and the ICHR (Indian Council of Historical Research) the growing attacks on the minorities, particularly Christians and attempts to force conversion of religion among the Christians. Terming the BJP's proposal on the creation of new states as "divisive", Surjeet stated that the RSS never accepted the principle of linguistic states, as it is a major

*This commuque was released in the Press Conference held in New Delhi on July 19, 1998 and published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, July 26, 1998.

hurdle in the RSS belief of "one nation, one culture, one state" which is the basis of its theory of Hindutva.

When asked about the kind of political unity, the CPI(M) will aim at forging in the background of the anti-people record of the BJP Government, to dislodge it from office, Surjeet hinted at fresh realignment of forces constituting the third front. Since the unity amongst the various constituents of the United Front, was despite the fact that some of them differed on basic issues, therefore, the realignment as a natural phenomenon, had to take place. He also made it clear that the CPI(M) had no misconception that the once forged unity was forever. Surjeet made it clear that the CPI(M) apart from working at the immediate issues like bringing together all the forces committed to combat communalism, was also working in the direction of forging the unity of Left and democratic forces, which can present an alternative before the nation on the basis of their programme, and it is this unity which will be stable. Answering another query in this connection, the CPI(M) General Secretary, clarified that the meaning of removing the BJP Government, which is pursuing a communal agenda from office, does not at all mean any softness in the Party's struggle against the anti-people policies of the Congress and its opposition in the states. Surjeet further said that it is for the Congress, if it wants to save itself from extinction, that it should initiate steps to remove BJP from office.

Commenting on Talbott's India visit, Surjeet warned of the Vajpayee Government's preparation to surrender on the issue of signing the CTBT, and made a strong plea for adherence to the present stance of India, in not succumbing before the imperialist pressure, and made it clear that the country's opposition to this treaty was based on certain discriminatory provisions of the CTBT, and not on bargaining to derive some concessions as a price of signing the CTBT. Surjeet noted that the country should avoid escalating a nuclear arms race in the subcontinent, and all efforts should be directed at improving relations with the neighbouring countries. He referred to the ongoing countrywide campaign against the nuclear explosions, and said that August 6 will be observed as Hiroshima Day throughout the nation.

The CPI(M) General Secretary strongly criticized the BJP Government for backtracking on the Women's Reservation Bill. Answering a volley of questions on this issue, Surjeet made it clear that the CPI(M) stood for immediate introduction of the Bill in the Parliament, and all other objections to the Bill which are being raised by some political parties can be discussed after the introduction. He declared that the manipulations of the Congress and the BJP on this issue, were nothing but a "drama". Surjeet made it clear in unambiguous terms that the CPI(M) does not support the demand of reservation for OBC women separately within the parameters of the proposed reservation for women.

The Central Committee communique issued on this occasion follows:

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) met at New Delhi from July 16 to 18, 1998 and finalized the draft political resolution for the Sixteenth Congress to be held at Calcutta from October 5 to 11, 1998.

The draft will be released to the Party rank and file shortly. According to the CPI(M) Constitution, the draft must be available to all Party members two months prior to the Party Congress for an intense inner-party discussion.

BJP Pursuing Communal Agenda

The Central Committee reviewed the current political situation and noted the brazen manner in which the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Government at the Centre has continued to pursue its communal agenda. By now it is clear that the National Agenda was merely for public consumption while the RSS and its frontal organizations including the BJP are proceeding to destroy the secular democratic foundations of modern India.

The work on construction of the temple at Ayodhya continues. The efforts to spread the communal poison have found a new expression recently in the violent attacks on the Christian community in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and other states, and pernicious attempts by the VHP at "mass conversions" of Christians in the north-east. The RSS is ensuring that the educational system is thoroughly penetrated in the states run by

the BJP like Uttar Pradesh. At the central level, the penetration of the state apparatus is being planned systematically. Using the control of the HRD ministry, the Indian Council of Historical Research has been packed with RSS and pro-BJP historians. A National Reconstruction Corps for youth mooted in the budget is now being given shape by the ministry to provide a fertile ground for the RSS.

The Central Committee called upon all Party units to step up the campaign to expose the BJP-RSS plans to subvert the judicial decision and to build the temple at Ayodhya. It demanded that the Centre halt the temple construction by the VHP in Rajasthan and Ayodhya in order to implement the Supreme Court direction to maintain the status quo at the disputed site.

Resist Capitulation on CTBT

The BJP-led Government is now preparing to capitulate on India's long standing consensual position of not being party to the CTBT. The CPI(M) warns the government that the Indian people will not tolerate such surrender to imperialist pressures and India becoming party to a discriminatory international treaty. The CPI(M) calls upon the government to immediately announce that India shall not weaponize and deploy nuclear weapons. The CPI(M) also calls upon the government to immediately take initiatives for improving relations with our neighbours and reducing tensions in the region which was aggravated due to the BJP's nuclear jingoism.

On this issue, all units of the CPI(M) will conduct mass campaigns culminating on August 6 which will be observed unitedly with all other peace-loving forces throughout the country as Hiroshima Day.

Formation of New States

By announcing the decision to form three new states—Uttaranchal, Vananchal, and Chhattisgarh—the BJP Government has opened up a new divisive issue with demands for new states getting a fillip in different parts of the country. This will pose a danger to the linguistic principle of statehood as

similar demands have already surfaced in Telangana and Vidarbha. The RSS which has never accepted the principle of linguistic states and refuses to recognize the plurality of Indian society since its ideological tenets of Hindu Rashtra speak only of 'one nation, one culture and one people', the imposition of such an understanding will only lead to the growth of divisive and disruptive movements and channelize people's discontent away from the main problems confronting them.

Women's Reservation Bill

The Central Committee strongly condemned the BJP Government's decision to defer introduction of the Women's Reservation Bill, thereby conniving with those who oppose reservations for women. The Party reiterates its stand that the bill should be introduced in Parliament immediately. After the introduction of the bill, those who have any other point of view can express them in discussions. The CPI(M) wants all the major national political parties which have promised 33 per cent reservation for women to fulfil their commitment by getting the legislation adopted.

Serious Economic Crisis

The four-month reign of the BJP-led Government has resulted in an economic crisis of serious proportions on all fronts. The continuation of the disastrous policies of liberalization with greater vigour has resulted in the slowing down of industrial growth to 4.5 per cent. Foodgrain production is expected to fall by five million tonnes compared with last year. The trade deficit has widened to US \$ 6.8 billion, the highest in the nineties. The rupee has plummeted to a new low. This has resulted in external debt increasing by Rs. 44,000 crores. Since the BJP came to power, foreign exchange earnings have fallen by US \$ 1.6 billion.

Confirming that its slogan of *Swadeshi* was yet another mask to fool the people during the election campaign, the BJP has embarked on a course of seriously eroding India's economic sovereignty. It conceded counter-guarantees, like in the case of Enron, to three private power plants; it gave out contracts for oil and mining exploration to a host of MNCs; and totally surrendered to the Japanese MNC Suzuki in the Maruti deal. A massive

agenda of the privatization of the public sector has been unveiled. The insurance sector is being privatized. The open declaration that the sick PSUs will be closed and workers retrenched is brazen attack on the rights of the working class.

Back-Breaking Price Rise

The hike in railway, petrol and postal rates and the effect of the Union Budget proposals of increasing excise duties are all leading to an inflationary situation. The effects of these policies are being felt by the working people through a massive hike in prices. The rate of inflation which was 4.9 in April shot up to 7.4 by the end of June. The Consumer Price Index is galloping with the prices of all essential food articles rising phenomenally. The erosion of the real earnings of the people is taking place at such rapid pace that many articles of essential consumption like vegetables, edible oils, pulses etc. are going out of the reach of the ordinary family budget. For the majority of the people, life has become unbearable with the all-round price rise of all essential commodities.

Much of this price rise is due to hoarding by the BJP's social base—shopkeepers and traders. The Central Government is refusing to strengthen the Public Distribution System. On the contrary, it is considering scrapping the supply of sugar through the rationing system. The BJP even sought to bring in an amendment to the Essential Commodities Act aimed at relaxing measures against hoarding and had to hurriedly withdraw it in face of all-round opposition.

Call for Countrywide Agitation

The BJP-led Government has been in power at the Centre for four months. Its misrule has led to an unprecedented increase in the burdens on the people. It is imperative that all sections of the people be mobilized to fight against these attacks on their livelihood. In protest against this back-breaking price hike related issues, the CPI(M) Central Committee has decided to organize *jathas* that will criss-cross all over the country from the middle of August culminating in a massive rally at Delhi in the middle of September. The Polit Bureau was authorized to work out the exact details.

Report on Political Developments Since the Last Central Committee Meeting of The CPI(M)*

**Adopted by The Central Committee of
The CPI(M) in Its Meeting Held in
New Delhi on July 16-18, 1998**

The serious consequences of having a BJP-led Government at the Centre have been seen in the past three months since the last Central Committee meeting held in mid-April. The nuclear tests at Pokhran in May have reversed the long-standing policy which served India well in the past; the illegitimate efforts to prepare for temple construction by the VHP reveal the hidden designs of the RSS combine to undermine and circumvent the court decisions; the economic policy announcements and the Union budget signal more attacks on the people and concessions to MNCs in the background of a serious economic crisis; the announcement of the formation of three new states is going to lead to similar demands in different parts of the country. All this has taken place in the background of the persistent instability of the Vajpayee Government and the conflicts within the coalition.

Nuclear Tests: BJP's Jingoism

The Vajpayee Government took a deliberate decision soon after coming to power to conduct the nuclear tests at Pokhran. The five nuclear tests on May 11 and 13 were to be a precursor to nuclear weaponization and deployment of these weapons. So far the nuclear policy adopted by India has been to resist all efforts to make it part of the discriminatory nuclear order imposed through the NPT. That is why during the UF Government India refused to sign the CTBT in 1996. India developed its independent nuclear capability long back and kept its option open while exercising restraint by not going in for weaponization. India countered the

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discriminatory treaties which upheld an unequal nuclear order by advocating universal nuclear disarmament. In the post-cold war period there should have been a timeframe for the elimination of nuclear weapons by the nuclear weapon states but it became clear during the CTBT negotiations that there is no intention to go ahead on this path.

By reversing the long-standing nuclear policy, the Vajpayee Government has fulfilled the chauvinist RSS goal of making the atom bomb, a slogan it has raised right from the 1950s. Vajpayee's letter to Clinton on the day of the tests cited the security threat from China as the main reason for India acquiring nuclear weapons. This letter became public in the United States immediately and the Indian Press carried it. By doing so, the Vajpayee Government spoilt relations with China which had been improving since Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1988. The targetting of China is not accidental. It began with the statements by George Fernandes attacking China as the main threat to India and making all sorts of wild charges. The motive behind targetting China was to try and win favour with the US by offering a strategic alliance against China.

The second major motivation of the new nuclear policy was to adopt an aggressive anti-Pakistan position which fits in with the communal stance of the RSS-BJP against Muslims. L.K. Advani as Home Minister issued a written statement a few days after the tests in which he linked the final solution of the Kashmir problem to India's new "geo-political status" as a nuclear weapons country. He warned Pakistan to realize this new situation. The linking of Kashmir with India's nuclear weapon status provided the handle for Pakistan and the western powers to internationalize the issue. In a series of moves, the Permanent Members of the Security Council meeting (P5) at Geneva, the Security Council resolution at the UN and the joint statement by the G-8 powers, Kashmir found a mention directly or indirectly as an outstanding problem to be resolved alongwith the nuclear issue.

Whatever the UF Government had achieved in improving relations with our neighbours as well as China, received a setback. The decision to weaponize will spark a nuclear arms race

in the subcontinent. With Pakistan conducting its tests in response, tensions in the region have been heightened which will help the US to intervene further. Jingoism is being promoted in Pakistan also and emergency was declared after the tests.

Inside the country, the BJP-RSS combine took a jingoistic position and sought to rouse chauvinistic feelings. The BJP gave a call to observe Gaurav Diwas. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad announced it will build a Shakti Peeth at Pokhran which ultimately it had to give up. The VHP has decided on a campaign in support of nuclear weaponization. The media played a big role in the initial stages in arousing chauvinist feelings.

The CPI(M) has strongly opposed the sanctions imposed on India after the nuclear tests by the USA and some other countries. The USA which has the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons and is refusing to eliminate them even after the confrontation with the Soviet Union is over has no business to ask other countries not to have nuclear weapons. The United States continues to uphold the unequal and discriminatory nuclear order. While maintaining a facade of firmness, the BJP Government is showing every sign of succumbing to the pressures and trying for an unprincipled compromise with the United States by signing the CTBT. This is the meaning of the Strobe Talbott-Jaswant Singh talks, two rounds of which have been held so far and the third round to be held in the third week of July at New Delhi.

Signing of the CTBT at this stage will mean capitulation and giving up our principled objection to the discriminatory nuclear regime. It will also mean that the Vajpayee Government after conducting an aggressive nuclear policy has gained nothing by the tests as the USA is not prepared to give India nuclear weapon status which was what the BJP aimed for.

The CPI(M) and the Left parties have taken a firm position opposing the new policy stating that it goes counter to our long-standing foreign policy of non-alignment and peace and harming the improvement of relations with our neighbours. The CPI(M) took the initiative and had discussions with various opposition parties which after initial vacillations took a firm position in defence of India's consistent stand taken earlier. The CPI(M) has

called for (a) not going in for weaponization and deployment of nuclear weapons (b) India should continue to oppose discriminatory treaties and not sign the CTBT (c) India should continue to campaign for non-discriminatory agreements to check nuclear proliferation and for achieving universal nuclear disarmament. The CPI(M) has called upon all democratic and peace loving citizens to oppose the nuclear policy of the BJP-led Government and to rally the widest sections of the people on the above three-point stand on the nuclear issue. In order to mobilize support against nuclear weaponization conventions are being held in different parts of the country and on August 6, Hiroshima Day, will be observed as a day against nuclear weapons and for universal nuclear disarmament.

VHP Goes Ahead with Temple Construction

The BJP-RSS combine all through had not given up its efforts for the construction of the temple. But after coming to power at the Centre as well as in UP it has intensified its efforts. For this preparatory building work is going on under the patronage of the BJP Governments in three centres in Rajasthan and UP.

The Left parties' parliamentary delegation which visited Ayodhya has confirmed that the construction work is being carried out not far away from the site where the Babri Masjid stood.

The Prime Minister's effort to allay apprehensions on this score, by saying that the government is committed to implementing the court order, does not carry any conviction given the track record of the BJP leadership's assurances in 1992 regarding the protection of the Babri Masjid. The BJP leadership, however, has made it clear that its aim is to build a temple at the disputed site. They are not prepared to abide by the court verdict. It is in this context that the statement of the BJP vice president, K. L. Sharma, has to be seen. He has categorically stated that if the court verdict is adverse to the construction of the temple at the disputed site, then the BJP will get a legislation passed in Parliament to facilitate this. This is an open declaration that the BJP-RSS combine is once again conspiring to subvert the rule of law. With the BJP in the Central Government, the threat is real.

The Supreme Court decision is that the status quo at the site should be maintained till a final verdict. Since there is no doubt about the nature of the preparations for construction work going on in UP and Rajasthan and the VHP itself has declared its goal of using this material to build the temple at the disputed site, the Central Government should put a halt to the construction work in order to uphold the Supreme Court directive.

It is necessary to be vigilant to see that no further manoeuvres are conducted by the RSS combine to subvert the law and provoke another communal confrontation on the issue.

The BJP-RSS combine, irrespective of what is contained in the National Agenda, plans to use both the bomb and the temple issue to rouse chauvinistic and communal feelings to consolidate their position in a situation where it is becoming clear to them that the long-term prospects of the Vajpayee Government are bleak.

They have made it clear on various occasions that since they do not have a majority on their own it is not possible for them to implement their manifesto. But they are vehemently committed to what they have stated in their manifesto. The main purpose is to create a wedge between different communities, arouse chauvinistic feelings among Hindus, provoke minority fundamentalism and by that advance towards a Hindu Rashtra. That is why apart from Ayodhya they have also directed their fire at the Christian community. Even in Delhi, the capital of India, the BJP Government considered the proposal that churches should be deleted from the list of places of worship on the grounds that wine is offered in religious ceremonies.

Violation of State's Rights—Authoritarian Trends

Given the precarious position of the Vajpayee Government the BJP has been succumbing to all sorts of unscrupulous demands of its allies. The practice of sending central teams on any pretext demanded by Jayalalitha, Samata or Trinamul Congress to Tamil Nadu, Bihar and West Bengal has been strongly opposed by the Party. The stand taken by the Left Front Government of West Bengal refusing to cooperate with the central team sent to

enquire into the law and order situation has been highly appreciated by all democratic sections in the country. It called the bluff of the Central Government that it has a constitutional right to do so. The authoritarian trend manifested by the Vajpayee Government regarding the states where the opposition parties are in power must be fought back and all democratic sections rallied to see that rights of the states are protected.

The proposed review of the Constitution and Advani's speech at Patna spelling out the rationale for a Presidential form of government reveals the gameplan of the BJP-RSS combine to replace the parliamentary system of government and usher in a Presidential form which will be authoritarian in essence and militate against the federal set-up existing in the Constitution. The so-called "comprehensive review" will provide the pretext for targetting those clauses in the Constitution which ensure the secular character of the state.

Formation of New States

The government has formally announced that it will bring in legislation for the creation of three new states—Uttaranchal, Vananchal and Chhattisgarh—apart from providing full statehood to Delhi. The CPI(M) has been against the formation of new states. Delhi falls in a different category where it has already got status of a state with some restriction being the national capital. The stand of the Party has been that areas like Uttarakhand in UP and Jharkhand in Bihar should be provided with regional autonomy with sufficient powers. By announcing the decision to form new states the BJP Government has opened up a new divisive issue with demands for new states getting a fillip in different parts of the country. This will pose a danger to the linguistic principle of statehood as in Andhra Pradesh where some disgruntled forces are raising the demand for separate Telangana. Jayalalitha demanded that Pondicherry be also granted statehood if full statehood for Delhi is to be given, a long-standing demand which has also been conceded. In the case of "Uttaranchal" one of the districts, Udhampur Nagar, has a large population of Sikhs and non-hill people. They are agitating against inclusion in the

new state and the Akalis have also supported their demand. Our Party has maintained that the wishes of the local population must be taken into account when drawing up the boundaries of the new state.

The BJP's interest in forming small states is obvious. Small states will not be able to stand up to the Centre and this will pitch the balance in favour of the Centre. The RSS never accepted the principle of linguistic states in the fifties and it was opposed by the Jan Sangh. Increasing demands and counter demands on new states will help to divert the attention of the people from their increasing difficulties on the economic front and channelize them into disruptive channels.

The basic motivation of the BJP is that it is totally opposed to the concept of India consisting of various nationalities with distinct languages, culture, historical background etc. The assertion of linguistic-nationality identity proves a hindrance to the Hindutva ideology which the BJP wants to impose. They had not succeeded in achieving this objective so far since it has been vehemently opposed by the different linguistic formations. But after the breakup of the monopoly of power of the Congress at the Centre and due to the uneven development in different states resulting in certain areas remaining backward, the situation began to change. Instead of taking firm steps to overcome backwardness demands began to be raised by different political forces for the formation of small states. The question of Telangana is an old one. Subsequently, confronted with the unity of the Telugu people this died down. Same is the case in many other areas. Now the BJP Government is the first to pursue this policy of forming smaller states with the announcement of the formation of three new states. This will only encourage such movements in other states and if successful, ultimately achieve its objective of disrupting the unity of different linguistic formations.

Serious Economic Crisis

The four-month reign of the BJP Government has resulted in an economic crisis of serious proportions. The crisis developing on all fronts of the economy should not be underestimated.

The major cause is due to the disastrous effects of liberalization pursued for the past seven years and the immediate reason is the BJP Government's tackling of the problems and the current policies. Industrial growth has slowed down to 4.5 per cent. Foodgrains production is expected to fall by 5 million tonnes compared to the previous year. The trade-deficit has widened to 6.8 billion dollars in 1997-98, the highest in the nineties. The rupee value has fallen and it is now around Rs. 42 to a dollar. Due to the steady depreciation of the rupee, the external debt has increased by Rs. 44,000 crores in the past eight months. The situation created by the nuclear tests and the sanctions has led to the FII's withdrawing funds from the country and the foreign exchange reserves have fallen by 1.6 billion dollars since the BJP came to power.

The record of the BJP Government's policies makes it clear that it will continue with the policies of the liberalization and its *swadeshi* plank has proved hollow and is being jettisoned in practice. The first major policy announcement was the Exim policy which has shifted 340 items from the restricted list, to the open general licence list for import. This includes a large number of agricultural commodities which will affect domestic producers particularly from states like Kerala which export many of these commodities. To meet the imposition of sanctions, before the Union budget was presented, the government has declared an open door policy for all foreign investments. It immediately conceded counter-guarantees for three private power plants; it gave out contracts for oil and mining exploration to a host of foreign multinational companies and struck a deal with the Suzuki Motors over the Maruti Udyog Ltd. which was a surrender to the Japanese firm.

The Union budget proposals have continued the Chidambaram budget's line of not raising direct taxes even when the tax revenue of the government has declined. Instead there has been a big increase in excise duties on a host of commodities including an 8 per cent levy on branded foodstuff. The other major retrograde feature of the budget proposal is the open declaration to dismantle the public sector and go for privatization. The government has

declared that it will disinvest up to 74 per cent of the equity in "non-strategic" PSUs which mean the bulk of the public sector. It has announced the selling of the bulk of the Indian Airlines shares and opening up of the insurance sector to private Indian companies. This will be a backdoor method of foreign capital entry as they can hold shares in the Indian companies. The open declaration that the sick PSUs will be closed and workers retrenched is a brazen attack on the job security of thousands of workers. The budget had also announced an increase in the urea price by Re. 1 per kg.

Facing all-round opposition including protests from its allies, the government was forced to reduce the steep hike in petrol from Rs. 4 to Re. 1 and give up the urea price increase altogether. The way the petrol price issue was bungled showed the government in a poor light as the ministry of finance and the petroleum ministry worked at cross-purposes. The CPI(M) has strongly opposed the budget proposals for its failure to increase taxes on the affluent sections and the imposition of heavy burdens through excise duties and other levies on the common people.

Severe Price Rise

The budget proposals has already sparked off all-round price rise. This coupled with the increase in petrol, railway fares and postal hikes has already resulted in a galloping inflation. The rate of inflation which was 4.9 in April shot up to 7.4 in the end of June. Consumer price index has already reached the double-digit mark. The prices of vegetables, edible oils and pulses are going out of the reach of the ordinary family budget. Hoarding by traders has got a fillip because a big section of them see the BJP Government as their mentors. This was evident when the BJP brought an amendment to the Essential Commodities Act in Parliament which would have relaxed measures taken against hoarding. This had to be withdrawn hurriedly after facing all-round opposition.

The export-oriented agriculture and liberalization has led the peasantry into the vicious circle of price fluctuations and a debt trap. The high rates of suicides by farmers in Andhra Pradesh,

Maharashtra, Karnataka and other places expose the inhuman and destructive aspects of this policy.

The severe price rise, surrender to foreign capital in the name of combatting sanctions and the attack on the public sector—all have to be opposed and the BJP Government's policies in this respect reversed.

By-elections

The BJP had calculated that the nuclear explosions can be used to arouse nationalist feelings and consolidate its position domestically when faced with internal conflicts in its coalition. However, the by-elections held to 51 assembly and three Lok Sabha constituencies from 13 states show that the BJP had failed to cash in through the bomb. Of the total number of 51 assembly seats the Congress won 17 and the BJP 12. With its allies it could win 18. The rest of the 33 seats were won by parties which opposed the BJP. Even though the BJP and its ally the Akali Dal won two out of the three parliamentary seats with the third going to the National Conference in Ladakh, the overall impact was that the BJP could not make any headway.

The CPI(M) made gains in these by-elections. In Kerala, the Party wrested the Ernakulam seat from the Congress. In West Bengal, the Party won two out of the three assembly seats held previously by the Congress (Trinamul) including the Bowbazar seat in North Calcutta. In Tripura, the Party won the by-election for the sole seat by a comfortable margin.

Tripura & North-East

The situation in Tripura is marked by the intensified activities of the extremist groups. They continue to resort to kidnappings, extortions and violence. In this period, the NLFT ambushed and killed Com. Bimal Sinha, Minister in the state government and abducted the son of Party MP, Bajuban Reang. The extremists are targetting the Party's middle level tribal leaders and killing them.

After the BJP-led Government assumed office, the Left Front Government urged the Centre to send more security forces to the state to man the disturbed areas. However, the government withdrew

some of the existing forces. This will hamper the task of maintaining peace and security in the affected areas. Democratic opinion must be roused to see that the Centre cooperates with the state government and sends adequate forces. The people in the rest of the country must be informed about the vital role the Party and the Left Front are playing in defending national unity and tribal-non-tribal unity in this sensitive North-Eastern state.

In the north-eastern region, the depredations by the extremist groups disturb peace and ethnic harmony. The Bodo militants have disrupted normal life repeatedly in some parts of Assam by bomb explosions. Inter-ethnic clashes between Bodos and Santhals have led to many people being killed. The ISI has intensified its activities in the region and the ULFA, PLA and other groups are getting help from it. The RSS is also stepping up its activities with a view to countering the Christian church which will add to the existing tensions and help the separatist forces.

The BJP Government despite a lot of talk about paying attention to the north-east has a blinkered view which sees only law and order and security problems in the region.

BJP

The BJP-RSS co-ordination which became pronounced before the elections continues and has assumed dangerous dimensions after the formation of the Vajpayee Government. The RSS is orchestrating the multifaceted strategy. The VHP is going ahead with the temple construction; both the VHP and the Bajrang Dal are targetting the minorities and issuing threats to them. The latest round of attacks have been on the Christian community in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and other states. The RSS is ensuring that the educational system is thoroughly penetrated in the states run by the BJP like Uttar Pradesh. At the central level, the penetration in the state apparatus is being planned systematically. Utilizing the control of the HRD ministry, the Indian Council of Historical Research has been packed with RSS and pro-BJP historians. A National Reconstruction Corps for youth mooted in the budget is now being given shape by the ministry which will provide a fertile ground for the RSS.

Through the information and broadcasting ministry efforts are on to control Prasar Bharati.

Within the BJP, the expansion of the party has increased factionalism and disunity in several states. In Delhi the factional groupings for and against Madanlal Khurana continue. In Bihar elections to the state unit saw sharp divisions. In Orissa also there are simmering disputes. More and more the RSS cadres have to man the organizational work to maintain cohesion in the party. At the same time it is necessary to keep a careful watch on the expanding activities of the RSS and its outfits which will try to utilize the favourable situation of the BJP Central Government to penetrate new areas and to win over new sections. The BJP is stepping up its activities in the north-eastern region where efforts to spread the Hindutva ideology can lead to new tensions and separatist feelings.

Congress Party

The Congress party is still weakened by the loss of electoral support and credibility among the people. Sonia Gandhi finds it an uphill task to reorganize and rejuvenate the party. The appointments of new PCC chiefs in some of the states have not injected much enthusiasm as in Uttar Pradesh. In Maharashtra, the controversy over cross voting and the defeat of one of the Congress's official candidates who was a Sonia nominee has created new tensions between Pawar and those who oppose him within the Congress. There is concern that any division at this stage will harm the good prospects of the Congress in the forthcoming assembly elections in Maharashtra.

The Congress party under Sonia's leadership has not shown any inclination to review their economic policies or some of the basic approaches of the past which led to the debacle. On some important issues like temple construction and foreign policy, the Congress has taken a stand though at times it has hesitated or shown vacillations.

Instability Continues

The four-month period of the Vajpayee Government has been marked by instability. The constituents began raising various

demands focussing on issues which would aggravate relations between the BJP alliance and the opposition parties. Having put together an 18-party opportunistic coalition comprising parties with widely differing views, the Vajpayee Government has been rocked by one episode after another, by threats from Jayalalitha who has been continuously pressurizing for the dismissal of the DMK Government in Tamil Nadu. This has affected both the Vajpayee Government's credibility and its standard of governance. Three ministers have had to quit the cabinet in the first two months of the government. Jayalalitha was quick to demand the removal of Buta Singh who faces charges in the JMM case in retaliation for the removal of AIADMK minister Muttaiah who has been chargesheeted in a corruption case. In the last days of the first half of the budget session of Parliament, the AIADMK MPs in both houses of Parliament staged daily walkouts. Prior to the opening of Parliament on July 3, Jayalalitha once again raised the issue of dismissal of the government and attacked the BJP leadership for backing out of the commitment they had given before the elections to do so. She did not attend the coordination committee meeting and her MPs did not attend Parliament on the first day. It is only after hectic talks that she relented and announced that the AIADMK will continue to support the government for the present. The crisis has only temporarily blown over.

It is not only the AIADMK but the various partners of the BJP have in their own way contributed to the instability. The Biju Janata Dal was on the verge of a split when its leader Navin Patnaik suspended five MLAs in Orissa for cross voting in the Rajya Sabha elections. It is only the withdrawal of this action, which finally averted a split. Within the Samata Party also there have been dissensions. The question of another cabinet expansion was shelved, as there are many aspirants.

As a result of these pressures and counter-pressure, the BJP-led Government found itself repeatedly in embarrassing situations. The central slogan of the BJP during the elections was a stable government and an able leader. This stable government

now seems an illusion and even the staunchest supporters of the BJP are unable to defend the dismal record of governance.

Based as it is on sheer electoral opportunism and the coming together of disparate elements, it will not be possible for the Vajpayee Government to have smooth governance. There is also the contradiction between the actual agenda of the BJP such as the temple construction, the resort to chauvinism and communal appeal and the aims of the smaller partners.

Attitude to Alternative Set-up

It is at the height of the confrontationist stance of Jayalalitha that speculation arose about the fall of the BJP-led Government and the prospects of an alternative government. Our Party indicated that in the eventuality of the downfall of the Vajpayee Government there has to be a secular alternative government as mid-term elections cannot be thought of immediately. In such a situation, we reiterated the stand taken at the time of the confidence vote that we would extend support from outside to the formation of a Congress-led Government in the framework spelt out in the last CC report.

Need For Third Alternative

A new development in this period was the formation of a new front by Mulayam Singh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party and Laloo Prasad Yadav's RJD. Both these leaders came together declaring that they will work for the ouster of the BJP Government and appealed to the Congress to take the initiative to form an alternative government. Both these leaders are against the Janata Dal and in the first Press conference Mulayam Singh also criticized the Janata Dal leadership and the United Front for failing to act to check the BJP and the communal forces.

Before this combination came about, the Polit Bureau in its June meeting had discussed the attitude we should take towards the RJD in the changed situation. In Bihar, the RJD still remains the major party which is fighting the BJP. At the same time the record of the state government is such that it has affected the common people badly and the government is hostile to the

movements of the rural poor and the working class. Laloo's caste-based politics has also proved damaging to the democratic movement in the state. In such a situation, we have to maintain our opposition to the state government's policies and demarcate from the RJD in the state. However, at the national level, we have to take into account that the RJD has 17 MPs and will play a role in the anti-BJP issues.

Laloo and Mulayam Singh coming together will have a good impact in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar as far as the fight against the BJP is concerned. But at the same time, their attitude can hamper wider unity of the Left and secular opposition parties which we want to forge as the third alternative. It is therefore necessary for the CPI(M) and the Left parties to adopt such an approach whereby the new front and other secular opposition parties can be brought to work together. This means, we should have an attitude of cooperation with the new front while at the same time maintaining our ties with the constituents of the United Front such as the Janata Dal, DMK, TMC, etc.

As we have explained in the Draft Political Resolution for the 16th Congress, the current situation underlines the necessity for a third alternative. What this requires is a regrouping of the parties which represent the Left, democratic and secular forces. This regrouping will be facilitated by developing the mass movements and struggles against the BJP-led Government on all fronts. This will create the atmosphere for rallying of the other secular bourgeois forces so that the third alternative can get new shape and direction.

Mass Protest Actions

As visualized in the last CC meeting, the past three months have witnessed an upswing in the mass struggles and growing united actions. The railway and Union budgets sparked off widespread protest actions all over the country. The Left parties gave a call to oppose these burdens on the people and held joint protests in June. In many places rail rokos and demonstrations outside railway offices took place.

A significant development was the one-day industrial strike in West Bengal jointly by the central trade unions. This general strike was very successful in all sectors and voiced the protest against the new burdens imposed by the budget and the attacks on the working class and the public sector. The National Platform of Mass Organizations also gave a call to conduct protest actions in solidarity all over the country on 3rd July and chalked out a programme for a protest day on 14th July and a national convention on August 12. It is expected that this convention will give a nationwide strike call.

There have been other important struggles in this period. The nationwide strike by the postal employees on a ten-point charter of demands paralyzed postal services all over the country for eight days before the strike was withdrawn after negotiations. There have been joint demonstrations of different public sector workers like the IDPL and textiles. Public sector employees are also planning a strike struggle against the disinvestment policy.

It is necessary to build up united struggles of different sections of the people against price rise, privatization of the public sector, the problems faced by the peasantry with fluctuating prices of commodities and against growing unemployment and loss of jobs. At the same time it is necessary to step up the campaign against the manoeuvres of the communal forces. The Coimbatore rally held jointly by the CPI and the CPI(M) following the intensive campaign in the areas affected by the communal polarization after the bomb blasts is an instance of how such campaigns can be conducted. The ideological struggle against the communal danger and the nuclear jingoism must be carried forward. Hiroshima Day on 6th August should be marked by protests and wide mobilization of all sections against nuclear weaponization by the BJP Government and for universal nuclear disarmament.

Launch Countrywide Movement

The price-rise which is seriously eroding the living standards of the people has to be checked and the BJP Government's policies responsible for this state of affairs fought back. There are

other burning issues affecting the working class, peasantry and the people.

In order to carry forward the fight against price-rise and related issues, the Central Committee called for a *jatha* campaign to cover all parts of the country from the third week of August, culminating in a big rally at New Delhi in the middle of September. The Polit Bureau should work out the details. All Party units should gear up to make this independent call of the Party a big success.

CPI(M) Decries US Move to Expel Indian Scientists*

**Statement Dated July 25, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) condemns the decision of the US Government asking certain Indian scientists, engaged in research programmes, to leave the USA. Such arm-twisting tactics are not only contrary to international conventions but are aimed at restricting the dissemination of scientific knowledge which is the property of entire mankind. The USA must realize that there are a large number of scientists of Indian origin who continue to immensely contribute to scientific and technological development in the USA. The US Administration, hence, cannot afford to be selective. The Indian people will not tolerate such actions which are aimed at stifling the development of Indian science and technology.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon the Indian people to protest against such coercive tactics of US imperialism.

On Murderous Attack on Comrade Sankariah, Central Committee Member of The CPI(M)*

**Statement Dated July 29, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) strongly condemns the murderous attack on Comrade N Sankariah, Central Committee Member and Secretary of the Tamil Nadu State Committee of the CPI(M), at Chidambaram in Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu.

Comrade Sankariah was proceeding to attend an all-party meeting to protest the murder of an MDMK leader by the local mafia gang. The same gangsters attacked Comrade Sankariah's car. The alertness of the driver, who sustained serious injuries, foiled the gangsters' intentions.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon the state government to take stern action against these gangsters.

CPI(M)'s Polit Bureau Statement

Issued on August 3, 1998 Following

Its Meeting Held on August 1-2, 1998

in New Delhi*

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) met in New Delhi on August 1 and 2, 1998. It issued the following statement on August 3, 1998:

September 16 Rally

The Polit Bureau decided to hold an all-India rally organized by the Party at New Delhi on September 16, 1998. This rally is being held as per the decision of the Central Committee of the Party to voice the people's opposition to the severe price rise and the communal threat posed by the BJP-RSS combine with the Vajpayee Government at the Centre. The short span of the BJP-led Government has been marked by an economic crisis and policies which have badly affected the people; the government is bent upon dismantling the public sector; the Vajpayee Government has resorted to nuclear jingoism to divert the attention of the people. Above all, the communal forces are making efforts to subvert the court directives on Ayodhya and launching attacks on the minorities.

The Polit Bureau called for a month-long campaign after August 15 on the above issues in preparation for this rally. The state committees of the Party will organize *jathas* in all the states to explain the issues to the people and mobilize them to demand immediate steps for checking price rise, curb hoarding and strengthening the public distribution system and for curbing the activities of the communal forces.

Jain Commission Report

The final report of the Jain Commission presented in Parliament confirms what was obvious about the interim report that the charge of tacit connivance by the DMK Government in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi was a baseless allegation. It is on such a wild charge that the United Front Government was destabilized then. There is nothing in the final report which confirms or substantiates any involvement of Chief Minister Karunanidhi or the DMK Government in a conspiracy to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi.

The Action Taken Report of the Vajpayee Government is arbitrary and makes selective use of portions of the report for political purposes. One aspect of the report which requires further enquiries is the role and involvement of foreign agencies and persons connected with them. This is an area which pertains to the country's sovereignty and integrity which should not be ignored.

Stop Harassment of Indian Nationals

The Polit Bureau condemned the targetting of Bengali-speaking Indian citizens residing in Mumbai as "Bangladeshi infiltrators" by the Shiv Sena-BJP Government. On this pretext, many genuine Indian nationals have been arrested and taken via West Bengal to deport them to Bangladesh. This was done without even informing the Government of West Bengal. In the batches sent from Maharashtra under police escort, many turned out to be genuine residence of West Bengal. To brand every Bengali-speaking Muslim living outside West Bengal as a "Bangladeshi" is a favourite tactic of the RSS-led outfits and such a communal approach has to be opposed by all the secular minded citizens. The CPI(M) demands that the Central Government should intervene and ensure that identification of illegal migrants is done by adhering scrupulously to the legal process in Maharashtra and in all other states. No harassment of Indian citizens should take place on the grounds of their religion.

Goa Governor's Role

The Polit Bureau considered the action of the Goa Governor, dismissing the State Government headed by Rane, as totally

unconstitutional and motivated by partisan political interests. When there is a split in the ruling party, the governor has no business whatsoever to install an alternative government ignoring the proceedings of the state assembly. The BJP Government at the Centre has brazenly used its appointee as governor to assault the federal principle.

Kerala Party Matters

The Polit Bureau discussed matters concerning the Kerala unit of the Party after meeting with all the Central Committee members belonging to Kerala. The Polit Bureau came to the conclusion that there are no basic political-ideological differences in the Kerala state unit. However, there are certain problems of an organizational nature. The Polit Bureau decided on certain concrete steps to tackle these problems.

CPI(M) On Prasar Bharati Bill*

**Statement Dated August 5, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

Despite the demand from all the opposition parties, the Vajpayee Government did not present the Prasar Bharati Bill in the Rajya Sabha after its adoption in the Lok Sabha.

One hundred and twenty-four members of the Rajya Sabha, who represent a majority, had written to the Prime Minister requesting that the bill be taken up for consideration in the House. Yet the Minister for Information and Broadcasting gave specious reasons for not bringing it in the Upper House.

The Vajpayee Government has bypassed Parliament in this manner so that it can promulgate an ordinance. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) wishes to record its strong opposition to such anti-democratic manoeuvre. It appeals to the President to advise the government to follow democratic norms in this regard.

CPI(M) Condemns Massacres in Chamba District in Himachal Pradesh*

**Statement Dated August 5, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses its shock and strong condemnation at the massacre of 35 people in two places in Chamba district in Himachal Pradesh. These inhuman killings of construction workers by armed extremists comes soon after the incidents in Doda district of Jammu. It is a matter of great concern that all the security measures taken so far in the affected regions of Jammu have not yielded results in checking the designs of the Pakistan-backed extremists.

It is clear that the various policy pronouncements of the Central Government do not conform to the ground realities in the sensitive border regions where ordinary citizens are subjected to such merciless depredations. It is incumbent upon the Centre to concentrate on checking the menace of extremist activities in the border areas and protect the lives of citizens.

CPI(M) Demands: Manohar Joshi Government of Maharashtra Should Resign for Scathing Indictment Against It in Srikrishna Commission Report*

Statement Dated August 6, 1998 Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The report of the Srikrishna Commission on the communal riots in Mumbai after the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the bomb blasts has shed light on many aspects of these terrible events which took place in the city. The commission has squarely blamed the Shiv Sena for instigating the violence against the minority community. It has also blamed Bal Thackeray for making inflammatory statements which led to the worsening of the violence.

The Shiv Sena-led State Government, by rejecting the main conclusions of the report, has only exposed its guilt in the matter. The serious lapses of the state administration and the then Congress State Government have also been pointed out by the commission.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands that all the persons held responsible for the communal violence by the commission be prosecuted under the relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code. The Shiv Sena which is the main guilty party, has no right to continue in government. The Manohar Joshi Government should submit its resignation after such a scathing indictment.

CPI(M) Opposes FEMA, PML Bills*

**Statement Dated August 7, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The BJP-led Government has introduced the Foreign Exchange Management Bill (FEMA) and the Prevention of Money Laundering Bill (PML) in the Lok Sabha. These two bills were introduced towards the end of the session and have not yet been discussed.

These two bills are meant to replace the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA). There are many objectionable features in these bills.

The FEMA will allow for large-scale money laundering and encourage flight of capital from the country. It has provided for convertibility on the capital account, a backdoor change in policy. It has defined a resident of India on whom the FEMA provisions will apply in such a manner as to enable affluent Indians to utilize the loopholes to keep their assets and money abroad. Further, unlike FERA the new bill proposes to give discretionary powers to the Central Government to suspend or relax any of the provisions over-riding the decision of the due authority. This will enable the government in power to use it for the benefit of influential persons who may be offenders.

Under the PML bill, the enforcement authorities are deprived of effective powers both in the way offences are defined and the scope of their investigative and punitive powers. Under pressure from big business, "economic offences" are no more to be treated as a crime. The net result of these laws being adopted would mean a big increase in hawala transactions and the flight of capital which will immensely harm the country's economy.

There is an apprehension that the FEMA may be promulgated as an ordinance while the Money Laundering Bill is kept in abeyance due to the objections raised by the corporate sector. This will mean creating a vacuum in which black money transactions and money laundering will flourish.

The Polit Bureau, therefore, demands that the government should not proceed with the proposed legislation till a full discussion takes place in Parliament and opinions of all sections are elicited on such a major issue.

On Transfer of Director of Enforcement Directorate*

Statement Dated August 14, 1998 Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The prolonged period of instability at the Centre due to the wranglings within the BJP-led coalition is resulting in an unhealthy situation. The sudden transfer of the Director of the Enforcement Directorate, M. K. Bezbarua, is one such instance. It is well-known that continuous efforts have been made for some time to interfere with the investigation of certain sensitive cases by the Enforcement Directorate.

The transfer of the director of this body at a critical juncture, by the Vajpayee Government, will be seen as an action against an officer who has been discharging his responsibilities impartially without giving in to political pressures.

This step is an act of political expediency undertaken by a government which is fighting for survival. It will further damage the image of the BJP-led Government.

CPI(M) On Cauvery River Water Settlement*

**Statement Dated August 19, 1998 Issued by
Harkishan Singh Surjeet, General Secretary of CPI(M)**

The CPI(M) welcomes the agreement arrived at by the Chief Ministers of the four concerned states—Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, and Pondicherry—on distribution of the waters of the Cauvery river. This issue was pending since long and the interim award remained unimplemented for seven years. Because of instigation of the people of one state against the other over this issue, the dispute has even led to loss of property and human lives in the past.

The CPI(M) has always maintained that the award of the tribunal should form the basis for an agreement. As per the current agreement the upper riparian state, Karnataka, has to release 205 tmcft water to Tamil Nadu in a water year (June to May). This has been welcomed by the people of all the concerned states.

The agreement also paves the way for coming to an understanding on disputes between other states over river waters. Apart from land reform, the development of agriculture mainly depends on utilization of irrigation potential. All states are vying with each other for the share of river waters because this is the cheapest source of irrigation. Power and diesel engines, tubewells and other methods are much costlier than canal water. It is, therefore, hoped that other states will also be inspired by the Cauvery agreement and resolve similar disputes amicably.

Commuque Issued by The Central Committee of The CPI(M) Following Its Meeting Held in New Delhi on August 20-21, 1998*

Worsening Instability

The five-month rule of the BJP has been marked by deepening political instability and vicious attacks on the livelihood of the common people. The galloping price rise is bound to become worse with the decision to delicense sugar. Sugar will no longer be available at fair prices through the public distribution system. This would have a cascading effect on the prices of all essential commodities.

The Central Committee noted the enthusiastic response that the CPI(M) is receiving from the people in the various protest actions that are being organized all over the country. These will culminate in a massive rally at Delhi on September 16. The Central Committee finalized the preparations for this rally and called upon the people to join in large numbers.

BJP's Surrender to Imperialism

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) strongly denounced the endorsement given by the BJP-led Government to US imperialist brazen military attacks in Sudan and Afghanistan. India, over the last half a century, has firmly opposed all imperialist military interventions that violate the sovereignty of independent nations. The BJP-led Government has thoroughly and completely exposed itself as one upholding the interests of US imperialism violating the overwhelming anti-imperialist sentiments of the Indian people.

Srikrishna Commission Report

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) has demanded that the recommendations of the Srikrishna Commission should be implemented and strict action should be taken against all those named guilty of instigating the worst communal riots that rocked Mumbai following the Babri Masjid demolition. All-India level protest actions are taking place to force the Maharashtra and the Central Governments to implement this report. The Central Committee of the CPI(M) denounces the decision of both the State and Central Governments that have brazenly rejected the commission report. This is the first time in independent India that a report of a commission of enquiry has been summarily rejected.

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) warns the BJP Government that the people of India will not tolerate such authoritarian steps that seek to undermine our secular democratic foundations.

Natural Disasters

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) expressed its heartfelt condolences at the large scale death of over 200 people caused by landslides. The pilgrims who were on their way to Kailash Mansarovar fell victim to these unprecedented landslides.

The Central Committee expressed its grief over the death and devastation caused by floods in Assam and Bihar. The Central Committee calls upon the Central Government to provide immediate relief and assistance to the state governments to tackle the situation.

Tripura Situation

The Central Committee expressed concern at the intensification of the activities of extremist groups in Tripura who are resorting to kidnappings, extortions and killings. This is a conscious effort to create inter-ethnic tensions in a state where the CPI(M) and the Left-led government have consistently nurtured and defended tribal non-tribal unity. It is unfortunate that despite the repeated urgings of the state government, the Central Government has not responded to the request for more security

forces. On the contrary, there has been a withdrawal of two battalions from the state. The Chief Minister of Tripura had visited Delhi to request the Centre to immediately send additional forces, but there has been no response so far.

The Central Committee asks the Central Government not to delay matters further and immediately dispatch the necessary additional forces required to combat the violent activities in this sensitive border state.

Organizational Matters

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) discussed the inner-Party situation in Kerala and adopted a resolution to resolve problems. The Central Committee strongly denounced the activities of some elements in the name of "Save CPM Forum". The Central Committee noted that the Kerala unit of the CPI(M) being the largest unit in the country had, in the past and continues today, to play an important role in developing the CPI(M) as an all-India force, and expressed confidence that the inner-Party problems will be resolved at the earliest.

On BJP Government's Decision to Delicense Sugar Industry*

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), then in session at New Delhi, issued the following statement on August 21, 1998:

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) denounces the decision taken to delicense the sugar industry. This is going to adversely affect both the availability and price of sugar to the common man.

With this decision, there would henceforth be no obligation on sugar producing units to earmark a portion of their produce for selling to the government. Presently, sugar producers have to mandatorily keep 40 per cent for supplying to the government for public distribution system. With this being no longer applicable, the working people will be forced to buy sugar in the open market, whose price will be much higher. It is ironical that the BJP-led Government has taken this decision on the eve of the festive season when the demand for sugar soars.

The timing and the haste in which this decision has been taken smacks of suspect and improper transactions between the sugar mill owners and the government. The CPI(M) demands that this aspect must be probed urgently.

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) calls upon the people to protest against this latest onslaught on their livelihood. The rise in sugar prices will have a cascading effect on the prices of other essential commodities, making the daily existence of millions of Indian more miserable.

CPI(M) Condemns Brazen US Attacks*

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), then in session at New Delhi, issued the following statement on August 21, 1998:

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the military attacks and missile bombardment by US imperialism against installations in Afghanistan and Sudan. The official explanation for such brazen military intervention is given as a retaliation to the bomb attacks on American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania earlier. It is reprehensible that in the name of fighting terrorism, scores of civilians have been killed in such attacks.

The Talibans of Afghanistan, which are today accused of harbouring terrorists, were encouraged, instigated and militarily supported by US imperialism all these years. In a diabolic manner, US imperialism has used all such groups to advance its strategic interests. The same US imperialism cannot be allowed today to assume the role of world policeman.

It is clear that the US President has taken this decision to divert attention away from the sordid affair that continues to plague his political and personal standing.

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) calls upon the people to protest against these brazen US imperialist military attacks.

Condolence On Comrade P. Ramachandra Rao*

The Central Committee of the CPI(M), then in session at New Delhi, adopted the following condolence resolution on the death of Comrade P. Ramachandra Rao on September 18, 1998:

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) expresses its deep shock and sorrow at the sudden passing away of Comrade P. Ramachandra Rao, Member of the Central Committee and Secretary of the Karnataka State Committee of the Party. Comrade Ramachandra Rao had arrived in Delhi to attend the meeting of the Central Committee. He suffered a massive heart attack and died in the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital at 2 a.m. on September 18. He was 69 years old.

Comrade Ramachandra Rao joined the Party in 1951. He began his career as a school teacher in the Dakshin Kannada district of Karnataka. After being active in the teachers movement, he started working among the unorganized workers such as beedi and tile workers, and became an established trade union leader in the 1960. He was a member of the General Council of the AITUC. After the CITU was formed in 1970, he became district Secretary of the CITU, a member of the CITU General Council and later the General Secretary of the CITU State Committee. In the 1970s, he also played a key role as a Kisan Sabha organizer and toured the state extensively to build the Kisan Sabha in Karnataka.

Comrade Rao was the Secretary of the District Committee of the Party, a post in which he served for over two decades. He became a member of the State Committee of the united Party

in 1960. He served as the Secretary of the State Committee of the CPI(M) from 1984 till his death. He was elected to the Central Committee of the Party at the 12th Congress in 1985.

Comrade Ramachandra Rao was noted for his devoted service in every responsibility he undertook. As a school teacher, he was highly respected among the people. As a trade unionist, he worked tirelessly among the working class, and as a Kisan Sabha leader, he assiduously worked to develop the peasant movement. He was known for his simplicity and amiable temperament. In his death, the Party and the Left movement in Karnataka have suffered a big loss.

The Central Committee pays homage to the memory of this dedicated Communist leader. It conveys its heartfelt condolences to his wife, daughters and all family members.

CPI(M) on BJP Government's Clandestine Deal on Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)*

**Statement Dated September 10, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Vajpayee Government is going ahead in a clandestine fashion towards signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) under the relentless pressure of the United States. This is evident from the way the four rounds of talks between Strobe Talbott and Jaswant Singh has been going on. The latest report is of an unscheduled meeting at the New York airport between these two negotiators. All this indicates that the Vajpayee Government wants to reverse India's known stand on CTBT without taking the country into confidence.

Such a capitulationist course is the inevitable result of the post-Pokhran tests policy of the government which has made India vulnerable to international pressures. The country is entitled to know what are the terms and conditions which the Vajpayee Government is entering into with the United States. Its eagerness to ensure President Clinton's visit to India indicates the nature of the unequal terms of the dialogue. The CPI(M) has already made it clear that it does not accept the Vajpayee Government's policy of weaponization and attempting to come to terms with the United States by joining the CTBT.

The Vajpayee Government is now reduced to competing with the Pakistani Government in signing the CTBT to re-establish its bona fides with the US and its allies. After this, to talk of arriving at a consensus by discussions with all political parties is meaningless. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands that the Vajpayee Government come out with a full statement of the content of the talks carried on with the United States so far.

CPI(M) Demands: Reject TRAI Proposals*

**Statement Dated September 10, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly opposes the recommendations of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) which will lead to a big increase in the rental rates of telephones and the charges for local calls. The proposed steep hikes in rental charges and the cost of local calls will prevent the expansion of the telephone network as a public utility for the people.

On the other hand, the TRAI has proposed reduction of the cost of calls through cellular phones and long distance international calls which cater to the affluent sections. The policy of increasing the minimum tariff for ordinary subscribers will be contrary to a telecom policy which should be geared to providing the maximum coverage of telephones both in the rural and urban areas.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon the government not to accept these retrograde proposals.

CPI(M)'s Central Committee Appreciates Kerala Fund Drive for EMS Academy*

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) expresses its deep appreciation of the tremendous response of the people of Kerala to the call to donate to the fund for the proposed EMS Academy. It warmly greets all the workers, peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth, women, intellectuals and ordinary citizens who donated generously whatever they could give to the fund. The target of Rs. 112 lakh was far exceeded and the total collection was Rs. four crore two lakh.

Such a massive response shows the deep affection and respect for the great contribution of EMS Namboodiripad to the democratic movement in Kerala and the cause of the working people all over the country. The Central Committee congratulates the Kerala State Committee of the CPI(M) for successfully organizing this record mass collection.

Commuque Issued by The Central Committee of The CPI(M) Following Its Meeting Held in New Delhi on September 18-20, 1998*

If the Vajpayee Government imposes President's Rule in Bihar despite all-round opposition to the move, it will be "a disaster" and set a precedent that "no one can justify", asserted the CPI(M) General Secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, while expressing the Party's strong condemnation of the proposed move to invoke Article 356 to dismiss the Rabri Devi Government. The CPI(M) Central Committee has appealed to the President of India to intervene to stop the misuse of Article 356, and Left leaders had sought time from Rashtrapati Bhavan to personally convey this to the President, Surjeet said.

Addressing a Press conference on September 21, 1998 afternoon, at the Party headquarters, in New Delhi, following the three-day Central Committee meeting of the CPI(M), Surjeet said the main agenda before the Central Committee was finalization of the draft Political-Organizational Report for the 16th Party Congress. Apart from that, the current political situation was also discussed.

Speaking at length on the Bihar issue, Surjeet said, "We have vast differences with Laloo Prasad Yadav and our Party has been campaigning against him in Bihar. But we have always opposed the misuse of Article 356". He pointed out that the CPI(M) had earlier stood for scrapping the Article altogether but was now of the view that it should be used very sparingly only when national unity was under threat and the secular principle was compromised as had happened following the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

In the case of Bihar, the Vajpayee Government and the State Governor, Sunder Singh Bhandari, were playing blatantly partisan politics with the Governor publicly stating that the Rabri Devi Government would be dismissed. Surjeet pointed out that all major political parties including the BJP's allies such as the MDMK and Akali Dal had opposed the imposition of President's Rule. If the Centre still went ahead with the move, it would be a disaster, he said.

Expressing the CPI(M)'s opposition to the formation of a separate state of Vananchal in Bihar, Surjeet went on to explain why the formation of new states was a dangerous ploy to divide the people and divert attention from real problems. He said there were very many linguistic identities in this country and Indian unity could be maintained only on the basis of linguistic states. He recalled the long history of struggle for the formation of linguistic states in the years after Independence in which the Communists had played a key role. The BJP's plan of carving out smaller states on the pretext of "administrative convenience" was aimed at breaking the linguistic unity, weakening the states, diverting people's attention from the real causes of backwardness, and facilitating the penetration of its Hindutva ideology.

He said many areas, particularly tribal dominated areas, suffered from backwardness and this fuelled discontent which was misused to raise demands for separate states. But statehood would not solve the problems of backwardness. In the case of Vananchal, the tribal people of Jharkhand would not benefit from a separate state. The tribal people would be a minority in the proposed state, constituting just about one third of the total populace. Neither the problems of identity nor backwardness would be solved by a separate state, rather it would help only vested political and business interests in the region, he said. The Bihar State Committee of the CPI(M) would firmly oppose the Vananchal Bill and was organizing a statewide 'rasta roko' on September 21, 1998 against the division of Bihar.

Regarding the economic situation, Surjeet said even as the people were reeling under the effect of the worst price rise ever, the BJP Government was the least concerned. Instead, it was

blatantly supporting and helping traders and big business in raking in more and more profits at the cost of the people. The disinvestment of shares in profitable public sector companies and the brazen cooperation with big business showed the extent to which the BJP was selling out the people's interests, he said. In this connection, he announced the Party's decision to fully back the two-day public sector strike on December 10 and 11, 1998 and the general strike on December 11, 1998.

On the CTBT issue, Surjeet said the Government was "enacting a drama" with periodic statements that it would not sign the CTBT and at the same time conducting secret talks with the US on signing it. Given the BJP-led Government's determination to continue whole hog with the liberalization of the economy, it could not withstand US pressures on the CTBT issue, Surjeet said while reiterating the CPI(M)'s total opposition to signing the treaty.

In reply to a spate of questions on the proposed "third alternative", Surjeet said the experience of the past and the current situation had underlined that "in the present situation, the third alternative is of the utmost necessity, the third alternative is a must and it is an alternative that cannot include the Congress or BJP", he said.

Asked whether the Rashtriya Loktantrik Morcha, the DMK, and other political parties would form part of this alternative, Surjeet said, "I do not want to go into details, but want to emphasize the need to work towards a third alternative. It cannot be done in one day".

Asked why the Left was ready to back a Congress(I)-led Government while talking of a third alternative which would not include the Congress(I), Surjeet pointed out that at this moment if the BJP is to be replaced, a non-Congress Government was simply not feasible. Therefore, while the aim to build a third alternative remained a primary goal, in the short term other tactics would have to be adopted keeping in mind the need to remove the BJP.

On the question of cooperating with the Rashtriya Janata Dal in order to build a third alternative, Surjeet said in Bihar our

opposition to Laloo Prasad Yadav remained. However, on specific issues such as the Vananchal question or Article 356, there could be cooperation. He pointed out that the CPI(M) had given the call for protest actions against Vananchal and the Rashtriya Janata Dal had decided to back it. "Should we have refused their support to our call?" Surjeet asked. On whether the Rashtriya Loktantrik Morcha would be included in the third alternative, Surjeet said, "They have their own front. Let us see. I will not say I will have nothing to do with them".

The Central Committee communique issued on the occasion follows:

Bihar : Stop Use of Article 356

The Central Committee strongly condemned the BJP-led Government's move to invoke Article 356 of the Constitution to dismiss the Rabri Devi Government and impose President's Rule. The Governor of Bihar, S.S. Bhandari, a senior RSS leader, is being used as the instrument for this totally undemocratic and dangerous game. The Prime Minister, much before the Governor's report to the Centre, had already announced the Centre's decision to remove the Bihar Government. The BJP has no qualms about brazenly violating the constitutional norms as spelt out by the Supreme Court in the Bommai judgement.

The Central Committee appealed to the President of India to intervene to stop this blatant violation of the Constitution.

The Central Committee endorsed the stand taken by the Bihar State Committee not to support the Vananchal Bill in the assembly which will lead to the division of Bihar. The Central Committee reiterates its stand that the formation of new states by the BJP Government is motivated to weaken the states' rights and violate the linguistic principle of formation of states.

Relentless Price Rise

The Central Committee expressed its deep concern at the deteriorating economic situation. There is recession in the industrial sector, falling exports and rising inflation. The prices of essential commodities continue to rise relentlessly with the

Vajpayee Government showing its open bias in favour of the big traders and hoarders. The shocking scandal of the adulteration of mustard and other edible oils which has led to a large number of deaths in the capital city' is a glaring example of this nexus between the BJP and unscrupulous traders.

The Central Committee strongly condemned the announcement of the Finance Minister, Yashwant Sinha, that disinvestment of shares in four public sector companies which are profitable, will be done from this month itself. The Central Committee warns the BJP Government that its drive to dismantle the public sector will be resisted and fought back by the working class and all democratic forces. In this connection the Central Committee decided to extend full support to the two-day public sector strike on December 11 and 12 and the general strike of all sections on December 12, 1998. The Central Committee called upon all Party units to make this call a success by mobilizing all sections of the people to join this protest action.

Alongwith the moves to privatize the public sector, the Vajpayee Government is fully aligning with big business. The Prime Minister has set up a Council of Trade and Industry consisting of representatives of big business. In the name of a "partnership between industry and government" this council has been given a free run to even co-opt government officials to sub-committees headed by the big businessmen. This subordination of the government machinery to the big corporate houses is illegal and will be detrimental to the parliamentary democratic system of governance.

The worldwide crisis affecting the financial markets and the capitalist system is having adverse effect on the Indian economy too. All those who were advocating the IMF-World Bank dictated policies of liberalization in India, are now being exposed for their blind adherence to policies which are proving harmful for one country after another. The collapse of the Russian financial system is the latest example after the East Asian Crisis.

Stop CTBT Negotiations

The Central Committee warned the BJP Government not to go ahead with signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

The clandestine negotiations which have been going on between Strobe Talbott and Jaswant Singh, and the similar talks between the US envoy and the Pakistan foreign secretary, show that both countries are now desperately trying to come to terms with the USA by offering to join the CTBT. To adhere to a policy of weaponization while succumbing to US pressures on CTBT and other related matters is an unprincipled position which will be against the interests of India.

September 16 Rally

The Central Committee noted the good response to the September 16, 1998 rally organized by the Party at New Delhi. It congratulated all the Party units which conducted a one-month campaign against price rise and the communal policies of BJP Government, which mobilized people to come and attend rally.

Grim Flood Situation

The Central Committee expressed its serious concern at the devastating floods which have affected the states of Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and parts of Gujarat and Orissa. Thousands of people have lost their lives and lakhs have become homeless and lost their properties. Despite repeated requests the Central Government has not declared this a national calamity. Unless this is done and sufficient special provision of funds made, the wide ranging destruction cannot be tackled. The Central Committee has now set up a fund to help the flood affected people with a donation of Rs one lakh. It calls upon all Party units to raise money for this fund.

Party Congress Preparations

The Central Committee discussed and finalized the political-organizational report for the 16th Party Congress to be held in Calcutta from October 5 to 11. The report reviews the political and organizational work done by the Party since the 15th Congress.

The Central Committee will now meet in Calcutta on October 4, 1998 on the eve of the Congress.

CPI(M) Condemns Move of BJP Government to Dismiss State Government in Bihar*

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), while in session at Delhi, issued the following statement on September 19, 1998:

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the move to invoke Article 356 against the Bihar State Government. The reports suggesting that the Governor has already submitted his report and the Central Government is giving it a serious consideration smacks of authoritarianism of the worst kind. This has come following the repeated statements by the Prime Minister and Home Minister that the Bihar Government will be dismissed soon. Such a move is all the more obnoxious since the Bihar Assembly is currently in session and the motion of confidence moved by the Chief Minister has been admitted to be discussed on September 21, 1998.

It is, indeed, a matter of shame that the Central Government is resorting to such a blatantly anti-democratic manoeuvre at a time when crores of people in Bihar are languishing under the ravages of unprecedented floods. Further, the assembly is also slated to discuss the other important issue of considering the Central Government's proposal for the creation of the Vananchal State. It is clear that the BJP places the petty interests of its partisan coalitional politics above the interests of the people of Bihar and the democratic content of Indian Constitution.

If the BJP-led Government goes ahead and invokes Article 356 in Bihar against all established legal opinion and democratic norms pre-empting the Bihar Assembly from exercising its right of testing the majority on the floor of the House, this would, indeed, constitute the most disgraceful rape of democracy.

On Dismissal of Bihar Government*

**Statement Dated September 22, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) denounces the decision of the BJP-led Government to recommend the dismissal of the Bihar State Government and imposition of President's Rule in the state. This is a crude attack on democracy and the federal system. Article 356 of the Constitution is being cynically misused by the Vajpayee Government with the help of the Bihar Governor. Breaching all conventions, the Governor, an RSS leader, publicly announced his intention to remove the Bihar Government.

The people of this country will not tolerate this attack on democracy. The CPI(M) is confident that the President of India will uphold constitutional and democratic norms when dealing with the matter. The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly protests this assault on the rights of the states.

On Minorities Commission Proposals*

**Statement Dated September 28, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The proposal made by the National Commission for Minorities for setting up an independent and impartial high-powered body to decide on the action to be taken on the Srikrishna Commission report on the Mumbai riots has, once again, drawn attention to the refusal to take any action against those held responsible in the report for the riots. The National Commission's recommendations to the Union Government highlight the responsibility of the Centre in a situation where the Shiv Sena-led Government has obstructed any steps to be taken on the report's recommendations.

The Mumbai riots led to widespread loss of lives and persecution of the minorities. The Central Government has to consider the specific steps suggested by the Commission seriously and take an immediate decision in the matter.

CPI(M)'s Greetings to PDS, Germany*

The following letter, dated September 28, 1998 was addressed by Harkishan Singh Surjeet, General Secretary of CPI(M) to Lothar Bisky, Chairman, PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) of Germany:

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) sends its warm congratulations to the PDS of Germany for the good showing of the Party in the just concluded elections in Germany.

With the over five per cent of the vote polled by the Party, the PDS will get a sizeable representation in the German Parliament.

The CPI(M) has been following with keen interest the developments in United Germany and the activities of the PDS. The CPI(M) hopes that in the coming days the PDS of Germany will be able to gain the confidence of more and more people in Germany and reach newer heights.

Once again, on behalf of the Central Committee of the CPI(M), let me extend congratulations to the PDS. Please convey our greetings to all members of your Party.

On Vishwa Hindu Parishad's Attacks on Christian Community and Church Institutions*

**Statement Dated September 29, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the statement issued by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, virtually justifying the spate of attacks on the Christian community and church institutions. A statement of the VHP has claimed that "the assault on the missionaries in Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh, and the violence and loot against them in Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh, was the direct result of conversion of Hindus to Christianity by the Christian priests". It is shocking that the rape of nuns in Jhabua is being justified in this manner. Such rabid and inflammatory statements should be dealt with firmly.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands that the authorities take legal action under the penal laws against such elements who incite communal hatred against a minority community. The Polit Bureau demands that firm action be taken against the VHP-Bajrang Dal elements who are instigating attacks against the Christian community in different parts of the country. It calls upon all sections of the people, who are concerned with democracy and communal harmony, to protest against these attacks.

Welcome Address by Jyoti Basu, Chairman of The Reception Committee for The 16th Congress of The Communist Party of India (Marxist), Held in Calcutta, on October 5-11, 1998*

On behalf of the Reception Committee, I welcome all the delegates and participants in the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) which is being held in Calcutta. It is an honour for us to hold the Congress. We are happy to greet the foreign delegates who are attending our Congress to express their solidarity with us. The CPI(M) considers itself an integral part of the international struggle against imperialism and for national liberation. India, the second most populous country in the world, is faced with serious and complex problems in the political, economic and social spheres even after 50 years of independence.

Our Party's draft Political Resolution was circulated to all the units of the Party two months earlier to discuss and send suggestions and amendments to the Party Congress where delegates will finalize it. The other agenda is the discussion on the draft Political Organizational Report which the delegates will discuss and adopt.

The CPI(M), despite its uneven growth and limited influence, has earned prestige in the political life of the country because it has been playing a principled and significant role in all spheres. It has withstood repression and calumny and carried on economic struggle against bourgeois-landlord policies, opposed blind and unthinking acceptance of IMF and World Bank prescriptions. Whilst not isolating ourselves from the global economy, we have been advocating the need of foreign investments in mutual interest; we have been emphasizing the need to build in our

country a self-reliant economy while learning from others. We are against developing an economy only for ten to fifteen per cent of the people as is happening now, but for the vast masses. Whilst not minimizing the need of exports, we are for expanding an internal market by raising the purchasing power of the people in such a vast country like ours.

We take seriously the UN Human Development Reports 1996 and 1997 in which it is stated:

- "(i) The world has become more polarized and the gulf between the poor and rich of the world has widened even further.
- (ii) Even the industrial countries still have major human development concerns: millions of people live in constant insecurity menaced by crime, drugs, pollution, unemployment and homelessness.
- (iii) During this whole process of liberalization, adjustment and privatization, concern for the poor was pushed into the background. Policy-makers assumed that even if poverty increased in the short-term, this was the price to be paid for long-term stability and growth."

The Human Development Report, 1997, while discussing about the developing countries, has raised several issues such as a more supportive macro-economic policy for poverty eradication, a fairer institutional environment for global trade and selective support for global technology priorities, action on global debt and better access to finance for the poor countries.

The trickle-down theory has not worked even in the developed countries let alone a developing country like ours.

The CPI(M) has been conducting political and ideological struggle against reactionary and divisive forces and raising the consciousness of the people emphasizing the need of value-based politics and democratic processes.

It has stood firmly against fundamentalism, corruption, opportunism and criminalization of politics. It has been continuously attempting to build Left unity and gather together all the Left, democratic and secular forces.

In the capitalist-feudal set-up it has been able to establish Left and Left democratic governments in the three States of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura with a population of 120 million (12 crores). In the face of severe constitutional limitations and discrimination most of the time by the governments at the Centre, these state governments have been able to set an example of an alternative type of governance in the present capitalist feudal system by implementing common minimum programmes to advance the cause of the people as never before. These governments have carried out land reforms, programmes for rural development. They have also recorded considerable success in decentralization of power and unleashing people's initiative in developmental work. These governments have assured democratic rights to workers and other sections of the people. This is an unparalleled achievement and an example for the rest of India. In West Bengal, our government has been in existence continuously for 21 years.

Now, with the formation of the Central Government of 18 parties led by the BJP, a fundamentalist, communal, corrupt, opportunist, undemocratic party, a new danger has arisen. The Hindu religion is also being denigrated and insulted by the BJP. Hindu religious preachers and *gurus* have never advocated hatred against other religions or destroying their places of worship. The BJP's policies have also encouraged fundamentalism among some sections of the minorities which needs to be spurned in their own interest. Already, within a few months, guided by the IMF and World Bank, severe burdens are being imposed on the people. Indian industries are being adversely affected—both state and private. Democratic rights are being trampled upon by advocating President's Rule in Bihar by removing an elected government, which enjoys the majority in the Assembly. To divert the attention of the people, its recourse to atomic blasts, really meant for political purposes, has been counter-productive particularly after the blasts in Pakistan. The government has earned the scorn of the people and India stands isolated in the comity of nations. India's foreign policy has undergone a fundamental change.

The Congress(I), the main opposition in the Lok Sabha has ruled from Delhi for 45 years. It is not a communal party but it has been surrendering to the communal forces. In the economic sphere, its policies have helped only a tiny section of the upper layer of the society, neglecting the vast majority. India's dependence on outside has increased and our industries in both state and private sectors have been weakened. It cannot be of any satisfaction for the Congress(I) that the BJP and some of their allies have surpassed it in corruption. All these and its increasing isolation from the people surely calls for self-introspection on its part.

The United Front, which we were supporting, has been weakened and the call for another UF Government lacked credibility in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections and in fact, gave an electoral advantage to the BJP. The CPI(M) and the Left parties have, in such a situation, greater responsibility in mobilizing the forces which stand for secularism. With courage and faith in the people, we shall overcome difficulties and carry out the immediate tasks by undertaking struggles in the economic, political and ideological spheres. We need to expand our Party into a mass revolutionary party to carry out not only the immediate tasks but for achieving our ultimate objective of People's Democracy and Socialism—a non-exploitative society.

**Political Resolution Adopted by
The 16th Congress of The CPI(M)
Held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998***

INTERNATIONAL

1.1 The events during the last three and a half years since the 15th Congress confirm the fact that the political, economic and ideological offensive unleashed by imperialism after dismantling of the socialist system in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is being increasingly resisted by progressive forces the world over. However, as was noted, these reverses to the forces of world socialism provide an opportunity for the expansion of capitalism, temporarily shifting the balance of forces in favour of imperialism.

1.2 Notwithstanding this, during this period, capitalism has shown more clearly its inability to solve the basic problems facing humanity. The tremendous growth of productive forces aided by scientific and technological advance has resulted in a situation where the economic growth that is taking place in the advanced capitalist countries is best described as "jobless growth". Another feature of this growth is fast growing disparities within and among countries the world over. The very class nature of capitalism is manifesting itself with a greater ferocity, intensifying exploitation of the working people and of the developing countries throughout the world. Such a pattern of development is posing a serious threat to the world's environment also. The ever growing and enormous potential for developing productive forces which have been opened by the scientific and technological revolution is being limited by the logic of

capitalist production relations and its search for maximum profits. In this process, all the major contradictions between imperialism and socialism, imperialism and the third world countries, labour and capital, and inter-imperialist contradictions are getting intensified.

1.3 Globalization has acquired a worldwide dimension in the financial sphere with the current practically unhindered circulation of transnational capital. This process is helped by developments in science and technology, particularly information technology. The internationalization of finance capital and the relatively greater options for exploitation of the third world countries together allow not only the consolidation of capitalism but also new imperialist offensives that are mounted against the majority of the people of this world. The attempts to doctor the economies of the third world countries to suit imperialist interests while seriously assaulting their sovereignty is proceeding through the IMF-World Bank and the WTO.

1.4 The overall development in the world capitalist system, however, is marked by the contrasting development of a degree that was not seen earlier. Reflecting the uneven and cyclical nature of capitalist development, Germany and Japan which witnessed rapid growth in recent decades are now in the midst of a crisis with sagging growth rates, rising unemployment and weak currencies. The crisis in Japan has reached unprecedented levels. On the other hand, the United States and Britain have turned around from relative stagnation to register higher GDP growth rates than the OECD average, along with a relatively lower and even declining unemployment levels.

1.5 In the advanced capitalist countries, particularly of Europe, important developments have taken place. The rightwing offensive which began in the eighties targeted the social welfare benefits earned by the working class through decades of struggle. The absence of socialist system in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe heightened the cuts as social security expenditure was no longer imperative to check the spread of socialist ideas. This trend was intensified with the efforts of the European Union countries to implement the Maastricht Treaty provisions.

In order to keep the fiscal deficit down to 3 per cent of the GDP which is the criterion for the European Monetary Union, the ruling classes in Western European countries are reducing public expenditure drastically and cutting down pensions, health, education and other welfare benefits of the working people. The restructuring of industry has been leading to high levels of unemployment.

1.6 The important productive force, the working class is being undermined. The "jobless growth" has, according to the Human Development Report, 1996, resulted in 39 million unemployed in the OECD countries. Describing the worldwide situation the Report states, "Unemployment is high and growing". The 1997 report notes that, "Many industrial countries have watched unemployment soar to levels not recorded since the 1930s and income inequality reach levels not recorded since the last century". On the impact of the neo-liberal economic policies the report notes, "Rising unemployment, falling wages and cuts in social services are driving many people into poverty in industrial countries—and threatening the futures of millions more. Many of the poorest are kept at the bottom by social exclusion".

1.7 It is on these issues that big working class struggles have taken place all over Europe particularly in France, Italy and Germany. The most significant protest action was the general strike in France by the public sector employees in the winter of 1995 which was directed against globalization and privatization. This growing resistance was also reflected in the massive South Korean workers strike of 1996. Similarly, growing resistance to the neo-liberal economic offensive is seen in the widespread struggles in Latin America. Though these struggles have so far been defensive in character (i.e. protecting the existing rights and benefits), they nevertheless constitute a growing resistance to new capitalist offensives.

1.8 The struggles of the working class against the attacks on social welfare and rights of the working people and the growing abandonment by the State of its social responsibilities are finding expression not only through trade union struggles but also have its political impact. This is seen in the recent election

results in France, Italy, Britain, Greece and Germany where the rightwing ruling parties were dislodged from power and social democratic parties and Centre-Left Governments took office. However, a disquieting feature has been the growth of xenophobia and neo-fascist forces in some of these countries. Racism is also growing as a result of the social distortion and unemployment caused by the present conditions. The reactionary forces are seeking to exploit the growing popular discontent to their advantage.

1.9 An important development that continues to have a significant bearing on world capitalism is the crisis that erupted in the economies of South-East Asian countries. These so-called Asian Tigers held out as 'models' for third world countries were used to spread the illusion that the third world economies can only advance by following the prescriptions of the IMF and the World Bank. Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and South Korea, which experienced high growth rates for several years are now in the midst of a deep crisis which began with the flow of capital out of their countries and weakening of their currencies. This currency crisis spread to Hong Kong and had global ramifications manifested in the world-wide stock market crash in 1997. Subsequently, the crisis deepened leading to a collapse of Russian financial markets.

1.10 In order to contain the crisis, the IMF and World Bank doled out an unprecedentedly massive financial assistance to shore up these economies. Yet, the crisis did not abate. On the contrary, it deepened affecting Japan. The Japanese yen has depreciated significantly and the government has officially admitted that the country is in the grip of a recession. This in turn will further compound the crisis with serious implications for world capitalism. The economic crisis manifested itself in the severe defeat of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party in the recent elections to Japan's upper house of Parliament leading to the resignation of the Prime Minister.

1.11 The internationalization of finance capital and its consequent pressures for the removal of all barriers for its free movement in search of predatory speculative profits is the main

factor triggering this crisis. The specific aim is to open the economies, particularly the capital markets of the third world countries for quick profits. This has shattered the illusion that the third world can develop as appendages of imperialist capital.

1.12 These IMF-World Bank pressures to open the economies of third world countries to international flows of speculative capital had ruined the Mexican economy in 1994. In 1997 the same policies have plunged the South-East Asian economies in a serious crisis. Millions of people have been ruined and adversely affected by this crisis. Militant protests and spontaneous outbursts like food riots took place in many countries.

1.13 In Indonesia, militant student demonstrations catalyzed a massive popular upsurge against the dictatorial regime of Suharto. He was forced to step down after nearly three decades of tyrannical rule. But the successor he nominated is continuing with the same ruinous economic policies to the detriment of the living conditions of the common people.

1.14 The lesson for the third world countries from this is obvious. With the IMF insisting that they switch over to full capital convertibility their economies will be at the mercy of international speculators and predatory capital. The G-15 summit held in Malaysia in November 1997 voiced the concerns of the developing countries about the predatory role of speculative finance capital and the unequal terms of trade. The IMF, in the meantime, is amending its articles of agreement to incorporate a mandate to oversee global capital account liberalization.

1.15 In the erstwhile socialist countries, the process of restoration of capitalism is facing resistance due to the huge drop in living conditions of the people, increased poverty, unemployment and violent ethnic conflicts which occurred after socialism was dismantled. The Human Development Report 1996 states, "In Eastern Europe and the CIS countries unemployment has ballooned (from zero) since the start of reforms in 1990, with wage employment falling sharply—by as much as 30 per cent in Bulgaria and Hungary". The 1997 report states that these countries "have seen the greatest deterioration in the past decade. Income poverty has spread from a small part of their

population to about a third—120 million people". The recent financial crisis in Russia has sharply aggravated the miseries of the people. The political crisis that this triggered off has seen the Communist Party of Russian Federation mobilizing the popular discontent in a big way. Yeltsin could not finally appoint a Prime Minister of his choice with the Communist dominated Parliament twice rejecting his nominee. He had to finally compromise. The popular discontent in many of these countries is expressed in the rejection of some of the rightwing regimes which had embarked on outright capitalist restoration in these countries. In some others, parties organized by the former Communists have gained popular support and have come to power reflecting popular discontent with the capitalist restoration, though they do not mean a return to the socialist path.

1.16 The imposition of structural adjustment, the severe exploitation of labour, the system of unequal trade, the plunder of natural resources by the imperialist powers and the multinational corporations continue to unbearably burden the third world people. According to the Human Development Report of 1996, of the \$ 23 trillion global GDP in 1995, \$ 18 trillion is in the industrialized countries and only \$ 5 trillion in the developing countries even though they have nearly 80 per cent of the world's people. According to the 1997 Report, "The share of the poorest 20 per cent of the world's people in global income now stands at a miserable 1.1%, down from 1.4% in 1991 and 2.3% in 1960. It continues to shrink. And, the ratio of the top 20% to that of the poorest 20% rose from 30:1 in 1960 to 60:1 in 1991—and to a startling new high of 78:1 in 1994".

1.17 The development of regional economic blocs, noted in the last Congress, reflects the existence of the three major centres of world capitalism, their mutual rivalries and attempts to consolidate their position. The European Union with its drive to achieve monetary union is one pole. The other is the NAFTA led by the US trying to extend it southwards into Latin America. The third pole is Japan and its efforts to expand its sphere in East and South-East Asia.

1.18 The United States maintains its hegemonic role in the imperialist system. This continues despite some conflicts with other powers like Japan, France and Germany. It is the US backing which emboldens Israel to violate the terms of even the unequal peace agreement to deprive the Palestinians of real autonomy and block the formation of an independent Palestinian State. The USA continues with its military manoeuvres in West Asia and inhuman sanctions against Iraq. Libya is also subject to sanctions. The brazen and unilateral missile attacks on Sudan and Afghanistan by US imperialism, once again, reveals its hegemonic designs. These attacks confirm that the USA uses all reactionary and terroristic forces to advance its objective. The "Dayton Accord" provided the basis for US intervention in the Balkans. The US is actively working to subvert and suppress progressive and revolutionary forces in Nicaragua, El Salvador and other Latin American countries. In Central Asia, the former Asian Soviet Republics are gaining increasing significance in US strategic designs. Besides US imperialism seeks to control the economic resources in this area, particularly the oil reserves.

1.19 The US imperialism strengthened by the current revival of its economy is seeking to consolidate its global hegemony. The expansion of NATO eastwards and the membership of some of the East-European countries in NATO is a glaring expression of the US designs. The USA and other imperialist powers refuse to destroy nuclear weapons thus sabotaging all efforts to achieve universal nuclear disarmament. The much touted propaganda that the 'end of the cold war' would see marked reduction in armament expenditure resulting in a 'peace dividend' benefitting humanity, has just not materialized. The 1997 Human Development Report notes, "The post-cold war reductions in military expenditures should have been seen as a major opportunity for social investment. Instead, the priority seems to be saving money and reducing services. The very idea of the welfare State has been called into question and is under threat". On the other hand, by persisting with the theory of "nuclear deterrence", work on programmes for production of new weapons is growing, thus ensuring the nuclear monopoly in the hands of a few imperialist powers.

1.20 The United Nations instead of promoting disarmament, development, political solutions to conflicts and international cooperation tends to become an instrument of hegemonic policies of the US and its allies. The democratic restructuring of the United Nations and its Security Council is urgently called for. The IMF, World Bank, WTO, NATO, a UN manipulated by the US and other great imperialist powers, constitute the main pillars of the imperialist vision of a new order. The imposition of its global economic agenda, political pressures and military interventions constitute its new offensive.

1.21 The socialist countries China, Vietnam, Cuba and DPR Korea, Laos have sought to protect their path of socialist development in the face of the adverse world situation. China which has undertaken economic reforms has emerged as a strong economic power with rapid progress registered in every field of the economy. This development will have an important bearing in the future days in the resistance to imperialist domination. Hong Kong which remained a colony of British imperialism has now been reunited with China. This is the result of the policy adopted by the Communist Party of China of "one country—two systems". It is a setback not only to British imperialism but for imperialism in general.

1.22 Cuba which has been the relentless target of US imperialism and subjected to economic blockade and subversion has today reorganized its economic relations and is courageously defending the social achievements which are the fruits of the socialist system. Vietnam has made steady progress in rebuilding its economy and raising the living standards of the people. The DPRK has been firmly resisting US-Japanese pressures to undermine its sovereignty, while facing a difficult food situation domestically.

1.23 Islamic fundamentalism, a phenomenon which has been prominent since the eighties, continues to pose a threat to secular-democratic forces in many countries. The Taliban in Afghanistan represents the most virulent and reactionary form of this trend. The US imperialism is tacitly backing the Taliban to establish its hegemony so that it can reach out to Central Asia.

The civil war in Afghanistan continues causing severe suffering to the people. Despite the Presidential elections Algeria is still in the grip of terrorist violence perpetuated by the Islamic fundamentalist groups.

1.24 South Africa, the most developed capitalist country in the African continent, is grappling with the problem of ensuring a just multi-racial society where the black people can advance towards economic emancipation and social progress. This struggle is being waged by the progressive forces in a situation where big capital controls the economic system and the vestiges of the old regime hold powerful sway.

1.25 The CPI(M) reaffirms its deep commitment to defend socialism and expresses its firm solidarity with the socialist countries which face hostile imperialist manoeuvres.

1.26 The worldwide resistance to the attempts by imperialism to impose its unequal order and intensify exploitation is gathering momentum. This period has seen the revival and regrouping of Communists, progressive and democratic forces and the growing fight back by the working class. The international trade union conference in Havana against globalization and neo-liberalism in August 1997 manifested the growing urge for united struggles against the imperialist onslaughts, as have subsequent international meetings all over the world commemorating the 150th anniversary of the publication of the Communist Manifesto. The CPI(M) considers itself an integral part of this international struggle and solidarity against imperialism. As a Party based on proletarian internationalism, the CPI(M) will ceaselessly mobilize the Indian people to play their due role in the struggle against the imperialist order and for democracy and socialism.

NATIONAL SITUATION

2.1 A new situation arose in the country with the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Government assuming office in March 1998. For the first time, the reins of power at the Centre are in the hands of an avowedly communal party which works under the guidance of the fascistic Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. This has greatly

intensified the threat posed by the communal forces to the secular and democratic foundations of the polity and the preservation of national unity. Further, the right reactionary character of the BJP-RSS combine portends a bigger onslaught on the working people and the Left and democratic forces.

2.2 Before assessing how this changed situation came about it will be pertinent to recall how we analyzed the situation in the 15th Party Congress held in April 1995. The Congress had come to the following main conclusions: (a) the period ahead will be marked by growing political instability; (b) the economic policies being pursued by the Congress(I) Government will push the country towards greater indebtedness threatening our economic sovereignty and impose greater burdens on the working people; (c) the growing communal challenge gravely threatens the secular democratic foundations of independent India, its unity and integrity and disrupts the unity of the working class and toiling people.

2.3 On this basis the 15th Congress laid down the tactical line of (a) intensifying the struggles against the ruinous economic policies; (b) intensifying the struggle against the communal forces both politically and ideologically; (c) strengthening the unity of Left, democratic and secular forces. In order to achieve these objectives, the Party Congress highlighted the need to rally all sections of the people in developing resistance to these challenges. The Party Congress gave the slogan "to defeat the Congress and the BJP" and to work for the success of the third alternative.

2.4 Two general elections have taken place since then, in May 1996 and in February-March 1998. Both these elections have confirmed what was anticipated in the 15th Congress that the period of political instability continues with no party winning a majority in either of the elections. The results showed that (i) the period of one-party dominance has ended with the Congress losing its monopoly of power. The Congress suffered a rout in the 1996 elections and could not recover ground in the 1998 elections; (ii) alongside the decline of the Congress was the rise in the strength of the BJP which became the single largest party

in the Lok Sabha in 1996 and also in the subsequent election; (iii) the Left and democratic forces being weak, the discontent against the Congress misrule was utilized by the BJP to make substantial gains. The Left could not increase their strength in Parliament.

2.5 The years since the 15th Party Congress have seen the continuing decline of the Janata Dal. It lost many seats in 1996 and suffered a split and further erosion in 1998. The regional parties are strong in certain states and their role at the national level has increased. However, given their state level preoccupation some of these parties adopt opportunist positions like what the Telugu Desam Party did in supporting the Vajpayee Government after the recent elections.

2.6 As the two general elections results show, unless the Left gets strengthened and the intervention of the Left and democratic forces steadily increases, radical change cannot be brought about. The communal and rightist forces will continue to channelize the popular discontent generated by the bourgeois-landlord rule, despite the fact that these very forces support the policies of liberalization which forms the basis for the growing popular discontent. This is due to the weakness of the Left and democratic forces. Only the growing intervention of the Left and democratic forces can checkmate the communal and divisive forces which are misleading the people.

2.7 The 15th Congress political resolution had stated that both in the struggle against communalism and for opposing the economic policies, we should strive to ally with the secular bourgeois opposition parties. But in doing so it should be realized that their approach to economic policies is not the same as ours. Similarly, they will tend to take opportunistic positions in the struggle against communalism, if it affects their electoral prospects. It is based on this understanding that the Central Committee worked out electoral tactics and made efforts to forge a third alternative.

2.8 The Party took the initiative after the 1996 general elections to stop the BJP from forming the government by the formation of the United Front. It was this wide unity forged

which led to the abrupt end of the unrepresentative 13-day Vajpayee Government. Apart from the Left, the United Front consisted of parties such as the Janata Dal, Samajwadi Party and the regional parties including the TDP, DMK, TMC and AGP. The United Front was not in a position to form a government on its own. It was possible to form a secular government only with the outside support of the Congress.

2.9 In these circumstances, the Central Committee decided that the Party would not join the government and to support it from outside. On the basis of this, the United Front was formed and a Steering Committee was constituted with our participation in it.

2.10 Fully conscious of the fact that all the secular bourgeois-landlord parties also favour the ruinous economic policies of liberalization, the Party nevertheless participated in the efforts to draw up a common minimum programme with the prime objective of thwarting the attempt by communal parties to capture State power.

2.11 This Common Minimum Programme was a compromise document reflecting the views of the majority constituents of the UF regarding the direction of economic policy which was a continuation of the earlier Congress economic policies. However, at the same time it contained many other features which would have helped to advance the democratic movement in the country. These pertain to federalism, secularism, social justice etc. as well as some commitments to give relief to the working people on certain economic issues.

2.12 While supporting this government from the outside, the Central Committee also decided that the Party should step up its independent activity, demarcate from the anti-people policies of the UF Government and consolidate the Party's position and influence. Since the economic policies continued to impose burdens on the people, the consequent popular discontent would be sought to be exploited by the communal forces for their advance. The Party's intervention should, therefore, be directed at trying to mobilize this growing popular discontent into democratic channels.

2.13 The Congress party, which was increasingly worried about the investigations into corruption of its top leaders, intervened and withdrew support to the Deve Gowda Government and demanded his ouster as a price for continuing support. In the United Front, despite the firm stand taken by the CPI(M) and the Left parties, most of the other constituents succumbed to this pressure. With the installation of the Gujral Government, the Congress party increasingly sought to make its presence felt. The overall performance of the United Front Government shows that despite positive steps in foreign policy and Centre-state relations, it vigorously pursued policies which favoured liberalization and privatization. It failed to implement the major policy commitments in the CMP which were in the interests of the people: the one-third reservation for women in legislatures, the central legislation for agricultural workers, the Lokpal Bill, recognition of trade unions through secret ballot and strengthening the public distribution system by providing for foodgrains at half the price for people below the poverty line were all measures which were not seriously taken up for adoption or implementation.

2.14 The UF Government fell because of the unjustified withdrawal of support by the Congress using the pretext of the interim report of the Jain Commission. The elections held in February-March 1998 led to a situation where the BJP advanced further through forging new alliances with regional parties and was able to form a coalition government at the Centre—led by Atal Behari Vajpayee. The advent of Sonia Gandhi into the leadership did not mark any basic change in the discredited policies of the Congress party. The United Front suffered a setback and lost almost half the number of seats. The performance of the UF Government could not make a positive impact on the people due to its pursuance of the same economic policies and failure to implement pro-people aspects of the Common Minimum Programme, the negative impact of the policies pursued by the state governments run by the non-Left constituents of the UF and the lack of cohesiveness and unity in facing the 1998 elections.

2.15 The formation of the Vajpayee Government is part of the continued rightward shift in Indian politics which began a decade ago. The BJP has grown stronger with an increased percentage of votes and seats. With its allies it has added on more than 60 seats since the previous election. The growth of the BJP is accompanied by the continuing decline of the Congress party. The erosion of the Congress has resulted in a shift in class terms of considerable sections of the big bourgeois-landlords in favour of the BJP. It is this shift towards the reactionary party with a communal platform that has brought about a major change in the situation.

Economic Policies: Harmful Effect of Liberalization

2.16 The liberalization and structural adjustment policies pursued by successive governments since 1991 at the behest of the IMF and the World Bank are being carried forward much further by the BJP Government. Even the short period it has been in office has thoroughly exposed the hollowness of the "swadeshi" plank, which it has been propagating. The period since the 15th Party Congress has debunked the claims of steady growth and the consequent benefits for the people touted by the advocates of liberalization. Increasingly, these policies which favour foreign capital and big business are being shown up for what they are—inimical to economic sovereignty and harmful to the interests of the vast majority of the people.

2.17 Despite the adverse impact of the policies introduced by the Narasimha Rao Government in 1991, the UF Government which took office in 1996, carried forward these policies and in some respects went further ahead. In the 18 months of the UF Government, there was further opening up to foreign capital, import liberalization, efforts to disinvest in public sector, emphasis on export-oriented growth and liberal concessions to the affluent sections through tax cuts.

2.18 The BJP-led Coalition Government has quickly abandoned its "swadeshi" platform. It openly started wooing the MNCs in a big way. This has been accelerated in the name of combating sanctions imposed by the USA after the nuclear tests.

One of the first acts of the Vajpayee Government was to announce an Exim policy which shifted 340 items to the Open General Licence list including a large number of agricultural commodities, thus removing quantitative restrictions on their imports. The first Union budget announced delicensing of coal, lignite and petroleum products, privatization of the Indian Airlines and throwing the insurance sector open to private capital. The government has also declared war on the public sector by announcing that in all profit-making public sector units, 74 per cent of the equity shares would be sold off.

2.19 Under liberalization, the process of dismantling of the public sector is on, completely reversing the basis of self-reliant development in post-independent India. This will remove the only bulwark the country has against domination by imperialist capital. It hands over virtually free to the foreign and Indian monopolists assets which were created by the people with great sacrifice. The experience of the last few years show that proceeds from the sale of PSU shares have been used for bridging the budget deficit and not for modernization and upgradation of the PSUs. The BJP Government's policy of privatization of the oil industry and opening up the mineral reserves for exploitation by multinational mining companies is most harmful for the country's interests as it leads to the looting of its exhaustible natural resources. The UF Government had earlier listed 35 industries for automatic entry of foreign capital up to 51 per cent equity and raised the foreign equity limit from 51 per cent to 74 per cent in nine core and infrastructure sectors. The BJP Government has gone ahead to provide counter-guarantees to power projects just as the Congress(I) Government.

2.20 On the question of foreign investment, the issue is not whether we need foreign capital or not but what type of investment is required and on what terms. A large majority of the capital flows into the country has been in the nature of portfolio investment, which has the character of "hot money". In the seven-year period of liberalization there has been 15 billion dollars of such investment, which is meant for speculative activities and not productive capital. Such portfolio investment is

also leading to take over of Indian companies by buying up their equity shares. Foreign direct investment which comes in as productive capital has mainly been for either production of luxury consumer goods, or for catering to the domestic market usually at the expense of domestic producers.

2.21 The seven-year period of liberalization has been marked by a distinct slowdown of growth in the main productive sectors of the economy. The real GDP originating in growth and other activities, which had grown at 3.7 per cent per annum during the 1980s, grew at only 2.8 per cent during 1990-91 to 1996-97. This is compounded by the absolute stagnation in per capita foodgrain output. Between 1990-91 and 1996-97 the annual growth of foodgrain production has been 1.7 per cent, falling below the rate of population growth. This points to the emergence of a serious food crisis caused by agricultural slowdown due to cutbacks in public investment and shift of acreage to export agriculture. Instead of implementing land reforms, land ceiling acts are sought to be diluted as witnessed in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

2.22 The living conditions of the rural poor has worsened. The cutbacks in public investment and expenditure in rural areas, the lower employment intensity of export-oriented agriculture compared to foodgrains, and the increase in the average price which the poor have had to pay for their food, are the factors responsible. The wide fluctuation in the prices of non-food crops is adversely affecting the poorer sections of the peasantry. The peasantry, which was supposed to have benefited from the shift to export agriculture, is caught in a new trap. The plight of large number of cotton farmers who have been driven to suicide in Andhra Pradesh and similar cases in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Punjab are indicative of this. The reliance on loans with high interest for purchasing inputs like pesticides, seeds and fertilizers leads to peasants getting into a debt trap when the prices of cash crops collapse or when crops fail.

2.23 In the industrial sphere, the slowdown in production led to a recessionary condition in 1996-97 and growth in industrial production will be even less in 1997-98 with capital goods sector

exhibiting negative growth. The current stagnation is not just because of cutbacks in public spending but is also partly a result of dumping of foreign goods on the Indian market. The small-scale industries which made a substantial contribution to production and employment are badly hit by these policies. Sections of domestic capitalists have become apprehensive about the entry of multinationals on favourable terms and its adverse effects on domestic industry.

2.24 The trade deficit has widened sharply in the last two years and it is 6.8 billion dollars in 1997-98. This is despite the fact that the period witnessed an industrial recession, which depressed import demand. The basic trade imbalance, which was an excuse for "structural adjustment", has worsened rather than improved during the period of "structural adjustment". The WTO regime compels India to give up quantitative restrictions on imports which adversely affect domestic industry and agriculture. Change in patent laws are called for to suit the interests of the advanced capitalist countries.

2.25 On the fiscal front, the government has consistently refused to mobilize resources from the affluent sections through direct taxation. India's central tax revenue to GDP ratio remains one of the lowest in the world. The 1997-98 budget presented by Chidambaram gave away concessions worth Rs. 10,000 crores to the rich and the BJP Government's 1998-99 budget has also refrained from raising any additional revenue from direct taxes. Lowering the taxes on the corporate sector and the rich and increasing resort to indirect taxation, which burdens the common man, is a marked feature of liberalization. After refusing to tax the rich and then complaining about a resource crunch, successive governments have made this the basis for inviting multinational corporations. The scrapping of the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) and the proposed legislations in its place will legitimize economic offences and give a fillip to hawala transactions.

2.26 The adverse developments of the nineties since the introduction of liberalization have finally culminated in the present crisis of 1997-98. Foodgrain production is estimated

to drop by over 50 lakh (5 million) tonnes compared to the preceding year, slowdown in the growth of industrial production continues and it will be less than 5 per cent in 1997-98. Trade deficit stands at the highest ever in the nineties. The fiscal deficit is growing as also the government's revenue deficit. The sanctions imposed by the USA and its allies in the wake of the nuclear blasts will create serious difficulties with regard to foreign financial flows into the country, speculators will pull out capital from the country leading to further depreciation of the rupee. The rupee has touched a new low of 42 to a dollar. The external debt burden increased by around Rs. 44,000 crore in the eight-month period between end-September 1997 and June 1998 on account of the 15 per cent depreciation of the rupee against the dollar. The BJP Government's policies will end up strengthening the leverage of imperialism on the economy and India becoming more vulnerable to speculation by international finance capital.

Conditions of the People

2.27 The seven-year period following the IMF-World Bank prescriptions have been a period of unremitting deterioration in the living conditions of the ordinary people, particularly the rural poor. The percentage of people living below the poverty line rose from 34.3 in 1989-90 to 39.6 in 1994-95. Sixteen per cent of the rural population have access to less than Rs. 3 per day. The real wages of agricultural labourers fell during the 1991-95 period. Per capita availability of pulses declined from 41.6 gms in 1991 to 34 gms in 1996.

2.28 Continuous price-rise has affected all sections of the people with the poor hit the hardest because of the prices of food items increasing most in the past few years. After the BJP came to power and the first budget, there has been a steep rise in the rate of inflation. Prices of vegetables, pulses, edible oils and all other essential commodities have shot up and made life unbearable for the people. The public distribution system is in shambles in most places and the BJP-led Government with its pro-trader bias wishes to dismantle the system, while providing greater opportunities to the big traders to reap super profits.

The decision to delicense the sugar industry will adversely affect the price of sugar and its availability in the PDS.

2.29 The period has witnessed shrinkage of employment opportunities affecting agricultural workers and women workers most. Employment in public sector undertakings declined by one lakh (0.1 million) in the five-year period since 1991. The ranks of registered job seekers have swelled to 3 crore 76 lakhs (37.6 million). The State has reduced its responsibilities in the social welfare sector. Expenditure of Central and state governments on education and health as a percentage of GDP has shown a steady decline in this period resulting in the deterioration of education and health services for the ordinary people. Fifty three per cent of all children under five years in India suffer from malnutrition according to the UNICEF.

Struggle for Alternative Economic Policies

2.30 The CPI(M) has a full-fledged alternative economic policy. The alternative approach is based on raising domestic resources by widening the tax net and increasing direct taxes on the affluent sections; unearthing black money, curbing inessential expenditure and increasing public investment. The industrial policy should streamline and strengthen the public sector in the strategic and core areas while encouraging domestic industry and indigenous technology. Foreign capital must be solicited on the basis of national priorities and technology needs.

2.31 The 15th Congress had placed an alternative path which required implementation of radical land reforms and rural employment generation schemes which can expand the domestic market, a significant increase in public investment in agriculture for generating higher agricultural growth, a public distribution system which covers 14 essential commodities and caters to all areas in the country, expansion of primary education, literacy and health services, greater decentralization of powers and larger devolution of financial resources from the Centre to the states and down to the panchayat level.

2.32 For realizing these alternative policies, the struggle against the current economic policies will have to be intensified.

In this context it needs to be highlighted that the impact of these policies is not confined to the economic sphere alone. Its retrograde impact can be seen in all spheres of political and social life like media, culture, democratic institutions and the polity itself. The decadence that it spreads eats into the vitals of our social fibre.

The Communal Threat

2.33 The build up of the communal threat since the BJP-RSS-VHP offensive on the Ayodhya issue has now acquired a new dimension with the BJP-led Government at the Centre. What was being sought to be achieved through injecting communal poison and arousing communal feelings among the masses will be supplemented by the use of State power and the penetration of the State apparatus by the RSS outfits. The agenda of the BJP-RSS will now be sought to be advanced through the government in both an overt and covert manner. The "National Agenda" of the BJP and its allies does not contain some of the key aims of the Hindutva forces. The building of the temple at Ayodhya, the abrogation of Article 370 and Article 30 which gives protection to minorities and the imposition of a uniform civil code are some of the measures which have been kept outside the official agenda but which are being pursued by other means.

2.34 The RSS fronts like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal are going ahead with their communal agenda utilizing the advantage of having the BJP in power at the Centre. For the Ram temple at Ayodhya, building materials and stone work is being carried out in various places in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh by the VHP. The Bajrang Dal has announced that it will train Hindu youth in every block of the country to combat "the activities of Christian missionaries and cultural invaders". The BJP has taken control of three key ministries—Home, Information and Broadcasting and Human Resource Development. These are being utilized apart from the Prime Minister's office which in the present dispensation decides appointments to key posts, to penetrate the administration and the educational system and the media. Secular principles are being subverted by the introduction

of the communal ideology in the educational system and cultural institutions. The proposed National Reconstruction Corps will facilitate RSS penetration among the youth. The Maharashtra Government's rejection of the Srikrishna Commission Report and its refusal to take action against those found responsible for the communal riots in Mumbai exposes the culpability of the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance in the criminal violence. The Centre's support of this stand signals open encouragement to communalizing the administration and subverting the rule of law.

2.35 Even in the "National Agenda" the BJP is pushing for those measures which will advance the aims of the RSS. The nuclear tests and weaponization is one such step. The other is the review of the Constitution which has been promised both in the BJP election manifesto and in the "National Agenda". Under the cover of making a comprehensive review of the Constitution, the BJP wants to legitimize the change of the present parliamentary system and replace it with the presidential form of government. Such a move will facilitate an authoritarian system, undermining the federal character and trampling upon the rights of the states, which will suit the RSS in its pursuit of a Hindu Rashtra.

2.36 Despite the facade of a coalition and alliance with many state-based parties, the BJP's talk of devolving more powers to the states is deceptive. Its conception of more powers to the state is confined only to the financial sphere, while in the political sphere it seeks to reduce the role of state governments and force them to kowtow to the Centre. The arbitrary use of Central teams despatched to opposition ruled states to enquire into the law and order situation illustrates this anti-federal approach. The moment the BJP feels confident to go it alone it will ride roughshod over the rights of states especially those which have ruling parties politically opposed to it. The promise to form smaller states beginning with three new states is designed to break the linguistic basis of states so that an authoritarian Centre can dominate the smaller states.

2.37 The reactionary character of the BJP has also been clearly brought out by the record of the state governments it has been running. The Shiv Sena-BJP Government in Maharashtra

has been openly anti-dalit exemplified by the massacre of 10 dalits in police firing in Mumbai. It has been forcibly removing Bengali-speaking citizens from Mumbai on the pretext of deporting illegal Bangladeshi migrants. In Rajasthan, the BJP Government refuses to act against atrocities on women and openly sides with feudal elements and big business. The Kalyan Singh Government was formed in Uttar Pradesh after the BJP shamelessly organized defections of the Congress and the BSP MLAs by using money power and other corrupt methods. Some notorious criminals were sworn in as ministers and a 94-member ministry, the largest ever in the country, was formed. The UP episode showed to what depths of sordid intrigue the BJP can descend to in order to capture power. The BJP Government in Delhi has set a new record in misrule with severe price-rise, alarming crime rate, factional fights and blatant corruption. In all these states, the BJP shamelessly woos MNCs while talking about "swadeshi". The BJP-ruled states are marked by hostility to working class struggles and the use of repressive measures such as ESMA.

Minority Rights

2.38 The CPI(M) is committed to protect the legitimate rights of the minorities and defend them from the attacks of majority communalism. Contrary to the false propaganda of the Hindu communalists, the Muslims are a deprived community. Most of them are poverty-stricken and they are discriminated in education and jobs. The CPI(M) will work for equal opportunities in all spheres of society for the Muslim minority. It will strive for this by drawing the Muslim masses into the common struggles and democratic movement.

2.39 At the same time, the CPI(M) will counter minority communalism. Fundamentalist forces like the Jamaat-e-Islami and other organizations which are finding sustenance from abroad are seeking to exploit the alienation of the minorities. The fundamentalist forces seek to isolate the minorities from the rest of the people and prevent social reforms which will help the community to progress. They adopt a reactionary attitude

to women's rights. The CPI(M) will fight for the equal rights for Muslim women and will seek to break down the barriers which isolate the minorities from their class brethren in other communities.

2.40 The disruptive role of the Muslim fundamentalist groups was highlighted by the bomb explosions in Coimbatore on the eve of the general elections which killed around 60 people. These blasts were in retaliation for the communal violence unleashed by the Hindu Munnani, an RSS outfit, against the Muslims earlier on in the city. Such tactics are counterproductive for the minorities themselves and play into the hands of the Hindu communalists. The minorities become the worst sufferers when the State takes repressive measures and in the counter-offensive of the Hindu communalists. It is essential that the Party along with other Left democratic forces intervene well in advance before such a situation develops to see that the minorities are rallied along with other secular forces to defend their rights and do not fall prey to fundamentalist influence. The democratic consciousness in the minorities must be raised to enable them to see how the fundamentalist tactics are self-defeating.

2.41 The minority Christian community is also coming under increasing attacks by the majority communal forces. The RSS-BJP is specifically targeting the Christian community. The front organizations of the RSS such as the VHP are threatening and intimidating these sections. Some churches in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh have been destroyed or damaged. It is imperative in the interest of national unity and social harmony that such attacks by majority communalism are resisted and defeated.

Against Nuclear Jingoism

2.42 The Vajpayee Government has surreptitiously and illegitimately reversed the long-standing nuclear policy of the country. Up to 1998, India's policy consisted of three components. Firstly, India did not accept the discriminatory treaties like NPT and CTBT which favoured nuclear weapon states and their monopoly over nuclear weapons. Second, India

kept its nuclear option open and updated its nuclear technology which was primarily used for peaceful purposes. Third, India consistently advocated universal nuclear disarmament and called for specific steps to be taken in this regard by the nuclear weapons states. It is this policy which stood India in good stead, maintaining its sovereign rights, in tune with the non-aligned foreign policy and the policy for world peace through nuclear disarmament.

2.43 It is only the BJP which advocated the making of nuclear weapons. To fulfill the long-cherished RSS demand that India make the atom bomb, the Vajpayee Government which itself is beleaguered with difficulties within its coalition and having a precarious majority in Parliament, went ahead with conducting nuclear tests and announced that India is weaponizing. The tests accompanied by a build up of statements against China by the Defence Minister was followed up by the letter of the Prime Minister to Clinton citing China as the main security threat along with Pakistan. At the same time, the BJP is conspicuously silent about the US military base at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean which stocks nuclear weapons. The disruption of the process of normalization of relations with China going on for the past one decade will only help US imperialism to intervene in the region in a bigger way.

2.44 The tests were followed by the jingoistic statements of the BJP-VHP-RSS leaders. The Union Home Minister, Advani warned Pakistan that the Kashmir problem will be solved in the light of the new situation of India being a nuclear weapons power. The belligerent statements directed against Pakistan and on Kashmir have provided the opportunity for the western powers to internationalize the Kashmir issue as is evident from the statement issued by the G-7; by the meeting of the permanent members of the Security Council held in Geneva and subsequently, the UN Security Council resolution.

2.45 The nuclear tests by Pakistan in response to the Pokhran explosions can lead to a nuclear arms race unless both countries stop the competitive race and declare they will not weaponize. Any confrontation and arms build up between India and Pakistan

will lead to diversion of priorities the country should have in dealing with the vital problems of the people concerning poverty, hunger, disease and unemployment. The resources which will be squandered in such a unclear arms race will hit the poorest sections of our country most. Further, this will provide grist to the mill of the communal forces on both sides which using this atmosphere of confrontation will further spread the communal poison for their political benefits. We should pledge no use of nuclear weapons and initiate a dialogue with Pakistan so that both countries draw back from a nuclear arms race.

2.46 Communalism and jingoism will be the weapons utilized by the reactionary forces to launch further attacks on the livelihood of the working people and to suppress their democratic rights. This path must be stopped and rolled back. Otherwise there will be the threat of an authoritarian set-up being imposed on the country.

2.47 The BJP's nuclear policy has made India more vulnerable to imperialist pressures. A situation of instability in the region will only help imperialist strategic designs. India has been made more vulnerable to pressures to sign discriminatory treaties like the NPT and the CTBT. The Vajpayee Government's offer to consider signing the CTBT signals capitulation to these pressures. In the name of resisting economic sanctions, the process of opening up the country to imperialist finance capital is being speeded up. The nuclear arms race will require resources for which India would be forced to take recourse to international borrowings, further mortgaging our economy.

2.48 The CPI(M) has consistently opposed the US-led hegemony of an unequal nuclear order and treaties like the NPT which perpetuate the monopoly of nuclear weapons in the hands of some countries without advancing towards universal nuclear disarmament. The sanctions imposed by the western countries must be opposed by all patriotic forces in the country.

These nuclear weapon countries and the others who have supported an unequal nuclear order in the world have no right, moral or otherwise, to impose sanctions on India.

2.49 The CPI(M) firmly opposes the BJP-led Government's nuclear policy which goes counter to the longstanding foreign policy of non-alignment and peace and harms the relations with neighbouring countries. The CPI(M) calls for (a) not going in for weaponization and deployment of nuclear weapons, (b) India should continue to oppose discriminatory treaties and not sign the CTBT, (c) India should continue to campaign for non-discriminatory agreements to check nuclear proliferation and for achieving universal nuclear disarmament.

Situation of Instability Continues

2.50 The BJP-led Government was able to survive in office through a narrow majority thanks to the support extended by the TDP. The BJP-led alliance is riddled with inner conflicts and divergent pulls and pressures. The AIADMK led by Jayalalitha is demanding a price for its support—the undemocratic and illegal dismissal of the DMK Government. A similar narrow partisan agenda dictates the outlook of the Trinamul Congress which has opportunistically aligned with the BJP. The dropping of three ministers successively within the first two months of the government, the clashes between Jayalalitha and Hegde which includes the Cauveri waters issue and the shameless appeasement and compromise with opportunist leaders out to get office makes the BJP-led coalition a mockery of the slogan of "stable government" which it had put out during the elections.

2.51 Heading such a rickety coalition, the BJP will be all the more desperate to take measures to try and consolidate its political position. Just as the nuclear bomb issue, other sudden manoeuvres can take place which can harm the interests of the country and national unity. Already the compromise with corruption has led to large-scale interference in the

income tax department and other sectors of the government machinery. This opportunism and appeasement of corruption both in the case of Jayalalitha and Sukhram exposes the hypocrisy of the BJP.

Fight Caste Oppression

2.52 An important feature of this period has been the continuing political and social assertion of those sections who are subjected to caste discrimination and oppression. As noted in the 15th Congress, there is a dual aspect. There is a growing awareness among the dalits and other oppressed communities for social equality and to fight oppression. This is a welcome development which has to be integrated with the democratic movement and the anti-feudal struggle. At the same time there are some negative aspects. Certain leaders of the dalits attempt to keep these sections away from the democratic movement and use them for electoral manoeuvres. The BSP leadership provides a graphic example of this opportunist vote-bank politics which led it to ally with the BJP. The Party has to vigorously take up the fight against caste discrimination, untouchability and social oppression along with the class issues of land and wages for the mass of the scheduled castes in the rural areas. The dalit Christians should be provided reservation as other scheduled castes. While countering all narrow caste exclusiveness, the Party should emerge as the consistent fighter against all forms of social oppression.

2.53 The caste situation during this period has further aggravated with the growth of caste feelings. Aggressive efforts by certain upper caste sections to suppress the growing consciousness of the socially oppressed is accentuating conflicts. There is also the harmful trend of clashes between the OBCs and dalits when the latter try to assert their rights. The bourgeois parties are fomenting casteism for their petty electoral considerations. These developments are intensifying fragmentation of the people and disrupting class unity. This is

leading to caste tensions. This tendency is very harmful to the growth of the democratic movement and has to be combated by the Party and the Left forces.

Adivasi Rights

2.54 There is great unrest among the adivasis who after 50 years of independence are deprived of their elementary rights endangering their very identity. They are subjected to the worst forms of exploitation. Their lands are snatched away, their right to forests denied, their lives disrupted by displacement from projects and they are ruthlessly exploited by moneylenders and contractors. Their plight is being utilized by the bourgeois landlord parties to divert their discontent by raising the slogan of separate states. The RSS has been working through its front, the Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad, to mobilize non-Christian tribals in different parts of the country. They seek to disrupt tribal solidarity on a Christian-non-Christian basis to counter the influence of the church in these areas. The RSS seeks to uproot the tribal cultures and traditions and implant the Hindutva ideology among the tribals who have been outside the Hindu fold. This is being done in a systematic manner.

2.55 The Party should come out against such forces in defence of the rights of the tribal people to save their lands, access to forests, full rehabilitation when displaced and protection of cultural rights. Based on the Party's programmatic understanding the tribal people should be provided with regional autonomy with maximum powers in contiguous areas where they live in large numbers so that they can manage their affairs and protect their rights better. This slogan must be taken up seriously and popularized among the adivasis.

Women's Status

2.56 The worst impact of the new economic policies has been on poor women with loss of existing jobs and shrinking

employment opportunities. This new onslaught comes on top of the increasing atrocities on women and oppressive customs such as dowry, sex determination tests and female foeticide. Even caste and community feelings are roused to justify atrocities on women and to oppose any action under the law. The much publicized demand for reservations in Parliament and legislative has still not seen the light of the day as most of the bourgeois parties are opposing it. It is only the Left parties which have firmly backed the women's movement on this issue. The Party should actively work for the emancipation of women. It must combat the increasing activities of the communal and fundamentalist forces amongst them.

Demand for New States

2.57 During this period demands for separate states have arisen from various quarters like Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Chattisgarh, Vidharbha, Bodoland and Telangana. The economic imbalance and the consequent backwardness of certain areas, the perpetuation of backwardness in the adivasi belts and the utilization of regional sentiments constitute the factors leading to such regional movements.

2.58 Some of the bourgeois parties are vying with each other to exploit regional sentiments by raising such slogans to gain political support. Further, certain parties particularly the BJP which have consistently opposed the linguistic formation of states are making efforts to divide the states. The CPI(M) has opposed further division of the existing states as this will only fuel more divisive and disruptive demands. The basic issue is that of overcoming the backwardness of these regions. Whereas for the tribal compact and contiguous areas, regional autonomy should be provided, the situation is different for the regions which are backward. Here in regions such as Telangana and Vidharbha, the Party has to seriously take up the campaigns for overcoming the backwardness of these regions while opposing the demands for creation of separate states.

Regional Parties

2.59 Regional parties have been in existence in various states for a long period of time. However, it is in the recent period, particularly after the 1996 elections that these parties have begun to play a heightened role through the coalition politics at the Centre. Some of these regional parties reflect the linguistic-nationality sentiments of the people of these states. Although in class terms, these parties generally represent the regional bourgeoisie and landlords, it will not, however, be correct to characterize all the regional parties in a single category. There are some that exploit chauvinistic or communal passions for their political advance. The regional parties are able to garner some popular support because of the aspirations of the people in these areas remaining unfulfilled due to the policies of the bourgeois-landlord parties at the Centre. Given the state-level preoccupation of these parties, they can take opportunistic positions purely dictated by narrow considerations of being in power. Thus in the past some of these parties allied with the Congress. Now with the BJP getting strengthened, parties like the AIADMK, TDP and the National Conference have extended support to the BJP.

Jammu and Kashmir

2.60 The elections to the state assembly in Jammu and Kashmir in September 1996 marked an important stage in the struggle against the secessionist forces backed by Pakistan. The initiative taken to hold the elections at the appropriate time with about 50 per cent of the voters participating, was an achievement of the United Front Government. The National Conference headed by Farooq Abdullah won with a two-thirds majority. However, the state government is yet to address the basic problems of the people who have suffered a lot in the past years. Ensuring security for the people, improving the economic conditions and providing employment should be the priority. Conditions for the return of the minority community who fled the Valley has to be ensured. The ISI-sponsored groups are still active and their terroristic violence in places such as Doda, Poonch and Rajouri has to be firmly checked.

2.61 Instead of carrying on the struggle to get the Central Government to fulfill the earlier commitment to provide maximum autonomy to the state, Farooq Abdullah has caused immense harm to the cause of the Kashmiri people by allying with the BJP-led Government at the Centre. Given the hostility of the BJP to the aspirations of autonomy and its stand of scrapping Article 370, there is the danger of alienation of the people in the Valley growing which will benefit the fundamentalist-separatist forces. The CPI(M) reiterates that the basis for a lasting solution is to provide maximum autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir within the framework of the Indian Union. Regional autonomy for Jammu and Ladakh should be given within this overall framework.

North-East

2.62 The entire North-East is a region which has suffered badly due to the wrong and discriminatory policies of successive bourgeois-landlord governments at the Centre. The narrow partisan aim of the Congress to garner support by patronizing different groups of politicians and nurturing a corrupt nexus led to development being hampered and growing alienation. The United Front Government made a good beginning by addressing the problems of the region by the successive visits of the two Prime Ministers of the UF Government. The focus was on economic development and improving communications and infrastructure. With the BJP coming to power at the Centre, there is a danger of the situation worsening in the North-East. The BJP and the RSS have stepped up their efforts in this region. Their purpose is to counter and reverse the growth of Christian influence. Such an approach will aggravate the existing tensions in the region. The predominantly Christian communities of the North-East will get further alienated and this will help the separatist forces.

2.63 The ethnic problems have become acute with inter-ethnic clashes in Manipur, Meghalaya and Assam. In Tripura, the two main extremist groups, the NLFT and ATTF, are operating with shelters across the border. All effort should be made to

ensure that the Central Government cooperates with the Left Front Government and provides sufficient security forces to tackle the violent activities of these groups. The Bodo problem continues to fester. Imperialist agencies led by the CIA and the ISI of Pakistan are actively involved in fomenting discord and fueling separatism. The ULFA in Assam, the NSCN in Nagaland, the PLA and UNLF in Manipur are actively engaged in advocating separation. It is essential that these problems are dealt with an overall political perspective of seeking to eliminate the roots of the alienation and providing democratic avenues for the ethnic and minority groups. Every effort should be made to draw these groups into political negotiations. Priority should be accorded in the country's agenda to ensure the speedy development of the North-East region by giving up the attitude of neglect which has been prevailing so long.

Bankruptcy of the Bourgeois-Landlord Rule

2.64 The overall degeneration of parliamentary and state institutions is a symptom of the crisis of the bourgeois-landlord system. Apart from the decay of the Constitutional institutions, there is the growing menace of the criminalization of politics which has now invaded all the bourgeois parties. The threats to ordinary citizens from mafia groups and criminals who are often in connivance with the police has grown in the recent period and has now extended to the political system. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra have seen this phenomenon grow rapidly.

2.65 The growing instability of the bourgeois-landlord system is leading to calls from influential circles for modifying the political system. One such proposal, backed by the BJP, is the introduction of a presidential form of government to replace the parliamentary system. This is an authoritarian response to the political instability. Other suggestions include guarantee of a five-year term for the Lok Sabha, formation of national governments and direct election of Prime Minister by the Lok Sabha. The BJP Government's move for a comprehensive review of the Constitution by a committee of experts must be seen in this light. All these measures seek to truncate parliamentary democracy and must be firmly opposed.

High Level Corruption

2.66 The 15th Party Congress and subsequent CC resolutions pointed out that corruption intensified due to the policies of liberalization. It has further exposed how this institutionalized corruption comes directly from the new economic policies involving a large number of leaders of the Congress, the BJP as well as other political parties. The hawala scandal, the Sukhram affair, the JMM bribery case, the Satish Sharma cases, the urea scam, the fodder scam in Bihar and the corruption cases against Jayalalitha are all glaring instances of corruption in high places.

2.67 The BJP is shamelessly appeasing and wooing corrupt politicians in order to keep its governments going. At the Centre, it accommodated Buta Singh, charge-sheeted in the JMM bribery case. It was forced to drop him after the Supreme Court rejected his appeal. In Himachal, it has joined hands with Sukhram who is facing a host of corruption charges. In its desperate quest to remain in power, the Vajpayee Government has already allowed interference in the administrative and judicial departments to facilitate scuttling of cases against Jayalalitha. There is no difference between the BJP and the Congress as far as attitude to high-level corruption is concerned.

2.68 The Party has consistently fought against corruption as a part of the struggle against the economic policies. This has to be intensified by exposing the BJP's role.

Development Issues

2.69 There is a growing demand among the people for grassroot level development. However, much of the benefit from the various developmental schemes do not reach the people who require it the most. Recent experience has shown that only when such funds are devolved by the state governments to democratically run local bodies and through them to the beneficiaries, the people in rural India get some benefits. The people's plan movement in Kerala involving the people at all levels of planning is an outstanding example. The experience of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura clearly show that an effective Panchayat administration with adequate funds at their disposal

can substantially improve the welfare of the people. This issue of expansion and proper utilization of funds for developmental work must be earnestly taken up by the Party through mass mobilization all over the country.

Health and Population Policy

2.70 The promise of providing basic health care to all citizens by 2000 A.D. is illusory. There is a serious recurrence of infectious diseases. An expanded and strengthened primary health centre network and a greater involvement of Panchayats in health care are urgent necessities. The fast increasing population which will cross the one billion mark at the turn of the century is a matter of concern. It reflects the failure of the population policies of successive governments. The current emphasis on target-oriented methods focussing exclusively on fertility control of poor women and use of hazardous contraception has to be changed. The CPI(M) stands for a non-coercive policy based on creating awareness for family planning among both men and women. Such a policy should include important issues as development and improvement in living standards, control of infant mortality, adult literacy with specific reference to women's literacy and incentives for small families.

Child Labour

2.71 The indefensible practice of child labour continues despite growing democratic opinion against it. In order to effectively remove this practice it is necessary to introduce universal and compulsory primary education backed by adequate finances and infrastructural support. The economic wherewithal to poor families would have to be provided through widespread provision of free tuition fees, mid-day meals, uniforms etc.

Expand the Educational System

2.72 Education and public expenditure on the educational system have suffered due to the policies of liberalization. Fifty years after independence, nearly fifty per cent of the people are illiterate—a shocking commentary on ruling class policies.

A majority of children drop out before completing the elementary stage of schooling. There will be no scope for changing this dismal situation unless the public education system is expanded and strengthened. For this, the privatization and commercialization of education encouraged by the current policies have to be reversed. The cuts in higher education outlays have to be halted and adequate funds provided. The CPI(M) will support the movement by the students and teachers for alternative policies which will make education accessible to all citizens.

2.73 The Vajpayee Government is making conscious efforts to recast the content of education and infiltrate the Hindutva ideology into the educational and academic fields. The BJP control of the Human Resources Development ministry is being utilized for this purpose as is being done by its state governments in UP and Rajasthan. All secular forces must be mobilized to ensure that the government run or funded educational institutions and bodies of higher research function on secular and democratic principles.

Culture and Media

2.74 The CPI(M) will support all efforts for the creation of a democratic cultural ethos which will serve the diverse cultural aspirations of the people. This requires combating the twin threats of an anti-secular, communal value system invading our culture and the onslaught of market-oriented consumerist values which debase our cultural foundations. Culture must be the preserve for secular-humanist values. Campaigns for literacy, popular science and for fighting obscurantist and socially reactionary values must be stepped up by mobilizing progressive cultural forces and popular cooperative efforts.

2.75 The facilities granted to the foreign electronic media and the increasing privatization of television broadcasting is having a disastrous effect on our society and particularly its cultural fabric. It is a conscious attempt to influence society and the youth with socially pernicious values like obscurantism, consumerism, greedy individualism and emphasis on violence and sex. Foreign control of the media will pose a serious threat to our sovereignty

by facilitating imperialist penetration. There has to be regulation of the foreign satellite channels. The entry of foreign enterprises in the print media should not be allowed. The Party will oppose the growing trend towards privatization and commercialization of the media. The prime need is to ensure an effective public broadcasting service through an autonomous Prasar Bharati. The ordinance promulgated by the BJP Government undermines the autonomy of Prasar Bharati. The Party will oppose any effort by the BJP Government to interfere in the working of the Prasar Bharati Corporation.

Environment

2.76 The liberalization policies are also leading to dangerous environmental degradation. Vast tracts of land are being sought by the multinational corporations and Indian big business which will further reduce the fragile forest cover required for India's ecological balance. Pollution of air and water resources is posing serious health hazards. Toxic industrial wastes are imported and dumped here. Safe drinking water is becoming scarce. The contractor/bureaucratic nexus gets away with the indiscriminate destruction of forests. While development cannot be a casualty in the name of ecological conservation, environmental concerns must be incorporated in a strategy of sustainable development.

Science and Technology

2.77 One damaging effect that these economic policies of liberalization are having is the virtual stifling of domestic scientific research. Outmoded or ill suited technology is brought into the country which really does not suit our conditions or benefit the people. Its aim is only to garner greater profits. This is bolstered by newer pressures being mounted by the WTO particularly to amend the Indian Patents Act. In every field of modern science, Indian scientists have major accomplishments. Adequate attention would have to be paid to domestic scientific research and development and the creation of a strong technology infrastructure.

Judiciary

2.78 Consequent to the institutionalized corruption pervading the whole system, the Narasimha Rao Government did everything possible to protect and shield corruption in high places. It was the higher judiciary which intervened to see that investigations into corruption scandals were not covered up as in the hawala, St. Kitts, fodder and JMM cases. The failure of the executive brought into prominence judicial intervention. Unless the executive is made accountable and discharges its responsibilities, problems will arise if all matters are left to the judiciary. A proper balance between the Parliament, executive and judiciary should be maintained. It must be borne in mind that the present legal system is not able to cope with the enormous number of cases and dispense justice in time. In the recent period, there have been judicial decisions which reflect the anti-worker bias of liberalization. The prohibition on bandhs, the order to close down factories in Delhi on environmental grounds without adequate safeguards for workers are some such instances. Further, the all pervading corruption is having its corrosive effects within the judiciary also. In order to insulate the judiciary from unhealthy pressures and to ensure its independence it is essential that a National Judicial Commission is set up for the appointment of judges to the high courts and the Supreme Court.

Foreign Policy

2.79 India's foreign policy based on non-alignment and peace has come under direct attack by the BJP-led Government. Under the United Front Government, steps were taken to improve relations with our neighbours particularly Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The ongoing improvement of relations with China led to the visit of Jiang Zemin and the signing of the agreement on confidence building measures in 1996. At one stroke, the Vajpayee Government has jeopardized these gains. The openly hostile stand against China by the Defence Minister and the targetting of China by the Prime Minister in his letter to Clinton have set back the process of normalization. The UF Government had taken the correct decision not to sign the CTBT.

By conducting the nuclear tests and boasting that India is a nuclear weapons state, the Vajpayee Government opened the doors for mounting pressures on India to join the discriminatory treaties under threat of sanctions. The Kashmir issue has been internationalized and relations with Pakistan further strained. The Durban Summit of the non-aligned countries showed the isolation of India due to the shortsighted politics of the Vajpayee Government.

2.80 The Vajpayee Government while protesting against the sanctions imposed by the United States, is not moved by any anti-imperialist principles. It is willing to sign the CTBT to appease the US. It wants to continue the strategic dialogue with the United States and develop further the Indo-US military cooperation and joint military exercises which were first begun by the Rajiv Government in 1988. In order to appease the US in the post-Pokhran period, the Vajpayee Government virtually endorsed the wanton US missile attacks on Afghanistan and Sudan.

2.81 The BJP Government marked a break with the foreign policy orientation which has served India well in the past. The CPI(M) has to accord the highest priority to mobilize the people to fight the jingoistic foreign policy postures of the BJP. A broad unity can be forged for the restoration of the foreign policy orientation towards non-alignment, South-South cooperation and world peace. Contrary to the BJP's pro-imperialist postures, the struggle to restore India's anti-imperialist orientation in foreign policy must be waged vigorously. India has to take a firm stand to oppose all imperialist attacks on third world countries and national liberation movements. Defence of non-alignment, strengthening of bonds with neighbouring countries in South Asia and more South-South cooperation should be foremost on the agenda.

FEATURES OF THE NEW SITUATION

3.1 The BJP, which has emerged as the major party in the 1998 elections, has its ideological and philosophical basis in the

pernicious theory of Hindu Rashtra. This suits the interests of imperialism and sections of the ruling classes but is disruptive of national unity and social harmony in a country as diverse and plural as ours. The BJP coming to power is not an ordinary change of government from one bourgeois party to another. This is so because, unlike other parties, the BJP is the political wing of the RSS which has a fascistic ideology.

3.2 The BJP has grown in strength. It found new allies like the AIADMK, the Biju Janata Dal, the Trinamul Congress and Lok Shakti for the 1998 Lok Sabha elections, apart from its earlier allies the Shiv Sena, Samata Party and Akali Dal. It was able to poll 25.5 per cent and together with its allies it could get 37 per cent of the vote. But it was able to form the government. Though the BJP has grown in new areas and states, it must be noted that it is still a weak force in many states. It requires allies to come into power at the Centre.

3.3 The BJP-led coalition is an unstable and an opportunist alliance. Despite the BJP's best efforts and massive use of money, it could get only around 25 per cent of the vote. It suffered reverses in states like Rajasthan and Maharashtra where it is in government. Resort to communal appeal, jingoism and corrupt manoeuvres cannot hide the fact that the BJP's hold on power is precarious. Its popular base is still a minority of the electorate with 63 per cent voting against the BJP alliance.

3.4 It is clear that at present, no single party can come to power on its own. Both the major bourgeois-landlord parties, the Congress and the BJP, each have roughly one-fourth of the people's support. In order to assume the reins of State power, both need to find allies to form a coalition government at the Centre. The allies they are trying to win over do not fit in with their political-ideological framework but such temporary allies are sought opportunistically to meet the present situation.

3.5 The current situation is a result of the policies pursued by the bourgeois-landlord ruling class and their political agents. The Congress party's continuous decline is due to its adherence to the liberalization policy dictated by the IMF-World Bank; its record of compromise with the communal forces resulting in the

alienation of minorities; and it being corroded by high level corruption. The ideological erosion in the secular values of the Congress is glaringly shown in the last two years. Firstly, there was a defection of the majority of Congress MLAs from the UP assembly to the BJP. Later with the fall of the United Front Government, some Congress leaders deserted the party and joined the BJP. Though the entry of Sonia Gandhi checked the exodus, there has been no attempt to critically review why such an erosion took place. The Congress is still riven by factionalism in most states.

3.6 Though the BJP appealed to the people in the garb of a "party with a difference", its policies in the economic sphere have only further strengthened the process of liberalization and imposing greater burdens on the people. Having promised to fight corruption in high places during the elections, the BJP has in the most brazen manner embraced corrupt politicians and continues to defend them in order to remain in power. Despite all its tall claims of discipline, it is ridden with internal dissensions.

3.7 The United Front stood united in the face of the Congress blackmail and refused to succumb to the demand for the removal of the DMK ministers on the pretext of the Jain Commission report. However, the United Front got weakened and divided after the elections. The weakening of the Janata Dal, the Telugu Desam's betrayal and defection to the BJP and the opportunism of the National Conference reflects this disarray. One of the features of the non-Left constituents of the United Front has been the pursuit of the policies of liberalization where they are in power in the states. Whether it be the TDP Government in Andhra Pradesh, or the DMK Government in Tamil Nadu, or the Janata Dal Government in Karnataka, they are in tune with the economic policies being pursued by the Centre. Despite these problems, the forces which can comprise the third alternative have to be regrouped.

3.8 The imperialist countries headed by the USA welcomed the formation of the BJP-led Government. This was because of the assurance that the BJP would be following economic policies basically similar to that of the Congress. Further the imperialist

forces do not want a government at the Centre, which would be dependent on the support of the Left. Despite the strain in relations with the western countries due to the BJP Government's nuclear policy, the Vajpayee Government has been signaling that it is prepared to come to an understanding with the United States.

3.9 The systematic purveying of market and consumerist values, the erosion of commitment to secular and democratic principles in the bourgeois-landlord circles and the enormous rise of communal forces; the loss of moral and ethical values witnessed in the large-scale looting of public funds and the willingness of ruling class politicians to act as the agents of big business have had their impact on the political situation.

3.10 The development of capitalism over the decades has created a large middle class. In the absence of a powerful democratic movement they come under the influence of the bourgeois-landlord classes. Illusions are fostered amongst them about the benefits of liberalization. The communal forces are also able to exert an appeal on the urban middle classes. The bourgeois media targets these sections to foster mindless consumerism and anti-democratic values. They seek to depoliticize the younger generation belonging to the middle classes. The Party has to conduct intense ideological work amongst them to draw them into the democratic movement.

3.11 In the past three and half years, the struggles of the working class have seen strikes by coal workers, jute workers, insurance and bank employees, public sector employees, and other sections against the dismantling of the public sector, closures, retrenchments and cuts in their benefits. The struggle against financial sector liberalization, in particular the opening of the insurance sector, privatization of coal mining, oil industry, fertilizer and other sectors are continuing. The Central Government employees conducted successful struggles on bonus and the implementation of Pay Commission recommendations. The state government employees launched struggles against downsizing and related issues. The struggles of the peasantry and agricultural workers for land, wages and against social oppression

have taken place in different parts of the country. Notable among them being the agricultural workers' struggle in Andhra Pradesh, peasants' struggles in Rajasthan, Bihar and Karnataka. The fishermen have fought back the entry of foreign and joint venture trawlers. There have been many protest movements against atrocities and social oppression of women. The youth and students have been fighting against privatization of education and lack of employment opportunities. The nationwide postal employees' strike and the college and university teachers' strike were important struggles after the BJP came to power.

3.12 Despite all these struggles, it is a fact that in the 18-month period of the United Front Government, there was no all-India general strike or bandhs against the economic policies as during the Narasimha Rao Government period between 1991 and 1995. This lull in the mass movement was not helpful in channelizing the popular discontent towards the Left and democratic forces. With the advent of the BJP-led Government and the new attacks through the Union Budget and the stepped up privatization, it will be necessary to develop wider and more intensive struggles.

Tasks Before The Party

3.13 In the present situation, the struggle against the BJP-RSS combine and the communal forces assumes utmost importance. There must be a proper appreciation of the danger posed by a communal party holding the reins of State power. The Party will have to make the fight against these forces its central task in the coming days.

3.14 The present political situation is also marked by the continuing onslaught of the policies of economic liberalization which have harmful consequences for the people and our economic sovereignty; and the widespread corruption which has corroded the ruling establishment. The Vajpayee Government faced with sanctions after the nuclear tests has stepped up the drive for liberalization and privatization to woo foreign capital. The growing economic difficulties presages more attacks on the working class and the people. The struggle against the current

economic policies is part of the overall struggle against the global offensive of international finance capital and the imperialist countries which have made India a major target for their operations.

3.15 In the present conditions, the struggle against the communal forces, their designs to disrupt national unity and the democratic movement assume importance. This can be done only on the basis of a broadbased mobilization. The efforts to forge and strengthen the third alternative, in electoral terms, will have to be renewed. While there is no question of an alliance, or, United Front with the Congress with its present policies, efforts must be made to reach out to its mass following which has a sizeable section of people adhering to secularism.

3.16 In order to advance the struggle to isolate the communal forces and to resist the attacks on the livelihood of the people, it is necessary to project a third alternative despite the setback to the United Front in the last elections. The forging of a third alternative is still relevant. The reforging of the unity of all the Left democratic and secular forces to meet the immediate situation is essential. The formation of the third alternative is a continuing struggle. Some of the secular bourgeois parties will come and go out of this formation. But strengthening of the third alternative depends on how far the Left and democratic forces are able to mobilize the people by unleashing mass struggles on key issues such as fight against communalism and liberalization.

3.17 The Party and the Left forces must take the lead in fighting the economic policies. They have to take constant initiative for intensifying this resistance. It is necessary to see the link between the struggle against liberalization and the fight against the communal forces. While striving for cooperation with all the secular bourgeois parties to isolate the BJP, the Party will not relax its opposition to the liberalization policies either at the national or state levels.

3.18 In the context of the current situation, while carrying on the struggle against the communal danger, the struggle against the liberalization has to be carried forward together. The key importance of the independent role and intervention of the Left becomes centered on these tasks.

3.19 It is the Left forces which have to take the initiative continuously to mobilize all the forces to fight the different aspects of liberalization and its pernicious consequences, whether it be the working class, the peasantry, the agricultural workers, women, artisans and other toiling sections. All who are victims of the globalization-liberalization process should be brought into struggle by the Left-led united forums.

3.20 The Party attaches the utmost importance to the resistance being organized and built up through the forging of the broadest unity of trade unions, mass organizations and groups which have come together in such forums as the National Platform of Mass Organizations. The resistance to the economic policies put up in the last few years have shown that these policies can be fought and checked if mass struggles are built up. The fight for the reversal of these policies and the struggle for an alternative economic policy requires the further widening and intensification of the united mass movements and struggles.

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

3.22 In the coming days, struggles on the basic class issues of the industrial workers and of agricultural workers and poor peasants must be stepped up in a big way. Struggle for redistribution of ceiling surplus land, record of rights, minimum wages for unorganized workers and agricultural labourers and fight against social oppression are all issues for all-India movements.

3.23 Attention should be paid to build up an anti-imperialist movement against the pressures of the US imperialism to curtail India's sovereignty and security interests and the relentless efforts to make India conform to the demands of finance capital through the IMF-World Bank and WTO institutions. While opposing the

BJP Government's nuclear weaponization and jingoism, the Party should mobilize people against any compromising stand towards US imperialism.

3.24 While strengthening the Left and democratic forces, the Party will have to pay attention to developing the Left, democratic and secular alternative to meet the immediate situation. Its concrete shape can be determined on the basis of the developments in the coming days. Our efforts should be directed towards such an alternative that meets the immediate requirements, in which the Left plays its due role.

Strengthen Left Unity

3.25 These key tasks require above all the strengthening of Left unity and the growing strength of the Left forces. For this, first of all the independent strength of the Party has to be expanded. This can be done if the Party is in the forefront of all the struggles against communalism, to defend national unity and against imperialism. The Party has to take up the political-ideological and cultural fight against the reactionary and divisive forces in a much bigger way. The pernicious philosophy of Hindutva, its inherently anti-democratic and reactionary character must be exposed among the people. The increasing reliance of the bourgeois parties to utilize caste appeal and perpetuate casteism must be countered. The Party's independent positions based on its programmatic understanding must be taken to the people and projected on a large scale. It is with this continuous political-ideological activity that the Party can consolidate politically the work done in the sphere of mass struggles and fight against economic policies.

3.26 The other aspect of strengthening Left intervention is the necessity to consolidate and carry forward Left unity. On the major national political issues, the Left parties have a broad common understanding which should be the basis for continuous united Left activities. Left unity has to be consolidated by joint political campaigns and organizational coordination. Both at the national level and the state level, this process has to be carried forward. This process has to be carried forward through the

Coordination Committee of the four Left parties and by closer ties between the CPI(M) and the CPI. The Party should strive to bring all Left-minded groups, intellectuals and individuals into common activities on the issues spelt out in the Left and democratic programme.

3.27 The CPI(M) and other Left parties supported the United Front Government from outside. In spite of the CPI participating in the government, the coordination between the Left parties helped to tackle the situation from a common standpoint. There were differences with the CPI on some issues such as the formation of smaller states and implementation of reservation for the OBCs with creamy layer excluded etc. After the 1996 general elections, the Left together was able to play an important role in rallying all the secular forces to stop the BJP coming to power. It rallied other democratic and secular parties in forming the United Front. However, it could not exercise sufficient influence for the implementation of those policies which benefit the common man. A joint election manifesto was adopted for the first time by the Left parties during the 1998 general elections. This was a significant step forward though it could not be sufficiently projected during the election campaign.

3.28 The Left's emphasis on developing joint struggles and movements and drawing in the masses from all other parties should help the Left to widen its base and increase its strength and influence in the coming period. .

The Left-Led Governments

3.29 West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura with its Left-led Governments represent the strongest bases of the Left and democratic movement in the country. Foremost among them is the West Bengal Left Front Government which has completed a historic 21 years in office. The Left Front in West Bengal represents the most developed formation of the Left forces in the country which has been built up over decades of class struggles and mass movements. The Left Front Government has shown that within the present framework, the Left can implement certain alternative policies despite the limitations of the bourgeois-

landlord system. It has been able to consistently implement policies in favour of the working class, peasantry and other sections of the working people. The record of the Left Front Government provides a standing testimony to the central importance of implementing land reforms for making a breakthrough in altering the social conditions of the people. This has resulted in a steady increase in agricultural production and instilled confidence in the rural poor who have found a voice through the elected Panchayatiraj system and decentralization of power. The holding of panchayat elections in May 1998 for the fifth successive term and the victory of the Left Front marks a unique record in the country. The Left Front Government is now attending to the work of promoting industrialization keeping in view the overall policy of liberalization and ensuring that the public sector does not get weakened. The 21-year record of the West Bengal Government also shows the difference of how a government can firmly uphold secular values in contrast to the record of bourgeois governments.

3.30 In Kerala, the Left Democratic Front Government took office once again in 1996 after winning the elections. It has given primacy to decentralization of powers and initiated a unique scheme for people's participation in the planning process at all levels. The LDF Government has shown how the interests of the common people can be protected in the face of continuous price rise by preserving and strengthening the public distribution system. The LDF Government has also taken concrete steps to eliminate high level corruption which was a marked feature of the previous Congress-led UDF regime.

3.31 In Tripura, the Left Front Government for the past five years has been firmly defending national unity and communal amity by countering the extremist challenge. In the North-East, it has set an example by consistently defending tribal-non-tribal unity, reviving the panchayat system and the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council and taking measures to improve the economic conditions of the people in this inaccessible and landlocked state. In the 1998 assembly elections, the people voted the Left Front back to power with a big majority.

3.32 When the entire country is faced with the twin onslaughts of liberalization and communalism, the Left-led Governments have been the centres for projecting alternative policies, defending secularism and protecting the democratic rights of the people. It is the duty of the Party and the Left and democratic forces to support and project the policies and achievements of these governments.

Build Left and Democratic Front

3.33 The CPI(M) is pledged to work for the People's Democratic Revolution. In the course of this basic aim, it sees the Left and Democratic Front as the transitional stage in the struggle to build the people's democratic front. As distinct from the third alternative against the BJP and the Congress, and the broad unity to keep the communal forces at bay, the real alternative to the bourgeois-landlord policies can only come from the Left and democratic alternative.

3.34 The only way to change the correlation of class forces is by strengthening the Left and democratic forces and winning over the masses following the bourgeois parties on the basis of concrete slogans and demands arising out of the fight against the bourgeois-landlord policies and the political and ideological struggle against the ruling class ideologies. The immediate tactical line followed by the Party helps us to meet the concrete situation facing us today. But it alone is not sufficient to bring a real alternative which requires a radical change in the correlation of class forces.

3.35 All the work of the Party, politically, ideologically and organizationally, should be geared to the basic task of strengthening and building up the Left and Democratic Front. This is a Front which has to be built on the basis of mass struggles, popular movements and the forging of the widest unity of the working people. The Left and democratic platform alone can offer a full-fledged alternative to liberalization and the destructive path of communalism and casteism.

Programme of Left and Democratic Forces

3.36 The 16th Congress of the CPI(M) presents the main features of the programme on which the Left and democratic forces can mobilize the people and advance.

(i) *Defend Secularism*

Separate religion from politics under the Constitution, strengthen secular character of the State and its institutions and combat anti-secular ideologies in the social sphere. Defence of national unity, countering divisive communal and separatist forces. Enforce rule of law and judicial process for resolving disputes such as Ayodhya.

(ii) *Federalism*

Restructure Centre-State relations with more powers to the states; revitalize panchayat system and devolve administrative and financial powers. Replace Article 356 with suitable clause to be used only with the sanction of Parliament when national unity or the integrity of the country is threatened. Revamp role of Governors.

(iii) *Strengthen Democracy*

Expand democratic rights of citizens; withdraw repressive legislations like ESMA and NASA; strengthen parliamentary democracy by proportional representation with partial list system for elections; electoral reforms to eliminate malpractices; fight against corruption at all levels.

(iv) *Economic Policy*

(a) Roll back regime of liberalization and privatization. Self-reliant economic growth; strengthen public sector in core and strategic sectors; encourage medium and small-scale industries; ensure adequate resource mobilization by increasing direct taxes and curbing black money. Foreign capital investment to be based on national priorities and requirements of advanced technology.

(b) Implementation of radical land reforms, distribution of surplus land and cultivable waste land to the landless; adequate public investment for agricultural development; expansion of irrigation facilities; credit to poorer sections of peasantry.

(v) *Rights of Working People*

Need-based minimum wages for workers; recognition of trade unions on the basis of secret ballot; statutory provision for

worker's participation in management; end discrimination of women workers; equal wages for equal work. Ensure minimum wages for agricultural workers and other rights through Central legislation. Right to work as a fundamental right in the Constitution.

(vi) *For People's Welfare*

Provision of a comprehensive public distribution system to cover 14 essential commodities; adequate procurement of food stocks by the State for this purpose; compulsory primary education and universal elementary education; free education up to the secondary stage. Revamping educational system on democratic and secular and scientific lines. Improvement of public health system and expansion of primary health centres with adequate stocks of medicines. Housing to be given status of a basic right.

(vii) *For Development*

Promoting balanced development of all regions through planning. Decentralization of development decisions up to the panchayat and local bodies level. Environmental policy integrated with needs for rapid and sustainable development. Promoting indigenous scientific and technological research for independent development.

(viii) *For Social Justice*

Equality for women in all social spheres by ending all forms of discrimination. Equal rights in property; joint pattas for women; provision of one-third reservation for women in legislatures and Parliament;

Eliminate untouchability and atrocities against scheduled castes and tribes by stringent action. Ensure reservation quotas for them are filled. Ensure right to forests, land and cultural identity of adivasis. Regional autonomy for contiguous areas with majority adivasi population.

Equality of all Indian languages. Development of a democratic, secular culture.

(ix) *Foreign Policy*

Non-aligned foreign policy with anti-imperialist orientation; no nuclear weaponization; strive for universal nuclear disarmament;

strengthen relations with socialist countries; support to anti-imperialist struggles and world peace; policy of friendship and closer ties with neighbouring countries.

Strengthen The Party

3.37 The success in advancing the Left and democratic forces by rallying all sections of the working people based on struggles for the Left and democratic programme requires a rapid and significant increase in the strength of the Party. The CPI(M) represents the most advanced sections who embrace the ideology of the working class. It has, even in the period since the setbacks to socialism, stood firmly by the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism. It is essential that the Party renew and sharpen its ideological outlook based on Marxism and proletarian internationalism, so that it can discharge its responsibilities to forge the Left and democratic alternative and advance towards the People's Democratic Revolution. The ideological discussions initiated in the 1992 Ideological Resolution should be carried forward.

3.38 In the present context, the Party has to be the foremost fighter against the twin evils of majoritarian communalism and the IMF-World Bank sponsored liberalization. It must be on the basis of developing mass movements drawing the vast sections of people who are today outside the purview of the Communist movement.

3.39 Sufficient attention has not been paid to building the Party organization and streamlining organizational work. To be equipped to expand politically and organizationally, the Party must overcome the defects and shortcomings in its organization and style of work. The entire Party has to be vigilant to ensure that alien class influences and harmful trends such as parliamentarism, factionalism and erosion of Communist values which have surfaced do not take root. The revolutionary character of the Party based on democratic centralism must be protected and strengthened. The rectification campaign conducted in the recent period must be carried forward to rid the Party of all unhealthy trends at all levels.

3.40 The Party must adopt a correct approach to the development of mass organizations. The independent broadbased mass organizations drawing in millions of the working people with live contact with their lives and problems are the basis on which the Party can rapidly advance. The Party has a special responsibility to see that class unity and the unity of masses are forged through united activities launched from the united platforms of mass organizations.

3.41 On the basis of such intervention and activity the Party should appeal to the vast sections of people presently rallying behind the bourgeois parties. The conditions described above will adversely affect the livelihood of a vast mass of Indian people. The consequent discontent must be channelized behind Left and democratic forces. In achieving this, the Party should seek political allies who share our concerns.

3.42 The year-long observance of the 50th anniversary of independence concluded on August 15, 1998. The year was utilized by the Party to conduct an ideological campaign against the communal, fundamentalist and casteist ideas which militate against the ideals of the freedom struggle and to assert the values of patriotism and secular democracy which alone can strengthen the basis of Indian unity. The anniversary year was also the occasion for the CPI(M) and the Left to create awareness among the masses of the failure of the bourgeois-landlord class to fulfill the aspirations of the people who made tremendous sacrifices for national independence. The experience of the past fifty years shows that fighting the economic battles, which are of great importance, alone is not sufficient. We have to also conduct the ideological struggle with equal emphasis against the bourgeois-landlord classes. This struggle has to be carried forward in the coming days.

3.43 Fifty years have passed since India became independent. Our Party has played an important role in the life of the country during this period in fighting against imperialism and bourgeois-landlord rule. On this occasion we pledge to build a mass revolutionary party capable of rendering historic service in leading the Indian people to full socio-economic emancipation and for an India free from poverty and exploitation.

Political-Organizational Report*

Adopted by The 16th Congress of The CPI(M)
Held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998

PART I

INTERNATIONAL

The 15th Congress had reviewed and assessed the developments in the world situation and noted that despite the shift in the balance of forces in favour of imperialism, providing opportunities for the consolidation and expansion of capitalism, the world capitalist system is showing itself, as always, incapable of solving the basic problems facing humanity.

On the contrary, utilizing this situation US imperialism is mounting vicious attacks to establish its unrivalled hegemony both in the economic and political spheres. This new offensive by imperialism has continued since the 15th Congress which, on the one hand, is intensifying all the four fundamental contradictions that characterize our epoch, and on the other hand is imposing unprecedented burdens on the majority of the world's population.

Capitalist Economic Crisis

Notwithstanding the ideological offensive that continues to parrot the so-called invincibility and eternality of capitalism, the capitalist economy worldwide is on the verge of a serious crisis. However, as repeatedly noted, a crisis irrespective of its intensity, does not lead to an automatic collapse of capitalism. It nevertheless proves that capitalism can never be crisis -free.

The Political Resolution had noted that the present phase of capitalist development is marked by two specific features—

*Published as a booklet in November 1998.

“jobless growth” and the sharp widening of inequalities. The period since the 15th Congress has seen the sharp rise in global unemployment. The ILO World Employment Review concludes that the unemployment situation has become worse than what it was during the great depression of the 1930s. On an average, in all the developing countries, the unemployment level has reached figures higher than 8 per cent of the labour force. There are 120 million (12 crore) people officially registered as unemployed and over 700 million (70 crore) are under-employed. In addition, 1.3 billion (130 crore) people live in absolute poverty on less than \$1 a day while 3 billion (300 crore) people live on less than \$2 a day. The worst affected is the youth. In the OECD (28 developed countries), youth unemployment grew from 11.6 per cent in 1990 on the average to 13.4 per cent in 1997. In some countries like Spain, youth unemployment is a staggering 39 per cent while in France it is 28.1 per cent. In countries like France, Germany, Italy, the overall unemployment percentage is in double digits.

It is clear that the nature of capitalist development taking place globally is based on advances in science and technology which permit the constant replacement of human beings by machines. The net result is, while moderate growth is achieved, it is done without generating employment and in fact, reducing its future potential.

The period since the 15th Congress has also been marked by sharp widening of inequalities between the developed capitalist countries and the third world and within the capitalist countries between the top 20 per cent of the population and the rest. This is starkly illustrated by the fact that the combined assets of the 358 billionaires in the world is greater than the combined annual income of countries constituting 45 per cent of the world's population of 2.3 billion (230 crore) people. Further, the net wealth of 10 richest billionaires (\$ 113 billion) (11300 crore), is one and a half times more than the national income of all the least developed countries put together. The share of the poorest 20 per cent of the world's population now stands at a miserable 1.1 per cent down from 1.4 per cent in 1991 and 2.3 per cent in 1960. The 1998 Human Development Report shows that the ratio of overall consumption of goods and services between the richest 20% and poorest 20% of the world's population is 16:1!

Internationalization of Finance Capital

This period saw a marked development in the internationalization of finance capital. Over \$ 1.5 trillion (\$ 1.5 lakh crores) today moves in and out of the world financial markets every day. The global stock of principal derivatives (options, futures and swaps involving interest rates and currencies) was \$ 6.9 trillion (\$ 6.9 lakh crores) in 1991. It was estimated roughly to be over \$ 20 trillion (\$ 20 lakh crores) in 1993. The global communication revolution since has led to a greater speed of this growth in terms of volume, turnover and spread of financial transactions.

This enormous amount of capital creates no value and adds nothing, directly, to the wealth of nations. But it has the potential to wreak havoc on the economies, particularly in the third world. It is this internationalization of finance capital that is today assaulting the sovereignty of independent nations, seeking free and uninhibited access to their economies in pursuit of super profits that massive transnational banks and financial corporations seek to derive.

It is, however, important to note that the present-day finance capital is highly globally mobile sucking in finance capital from individual countries dominated by finance capital originating from the advanced countries. Further, this finance capital is more pre-occupied in its search for quick speculative gains rather than its amalgamation with industrial capital leading to economic development. It, therefore, truly represents the parasite that thrives at the expense of real economic growth. In pursuit of quick and super profits, this finance capital moves in and out of countries at amazing speed. When it moves out of a country (like in Mexico in 1994 and now in South East Asia) it bursts the bubble plunging the entire economy into a crisis.

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

This, in turn, leads to a situation where the advanced countries turn to the third world economies and intensify exploitation. The imposition of neo-liberal policies serves this purpose of removing obstacles to the free operation of internationally mobile finance capital. In addition, it seeks to impose a new form of international division of labour, this time not through direct colonial occupation but through coercing third world economies to dovetail to imperialist interests.

Global Financial Crisis

South-East Asian Crisis: It is this rapid internationalization of the finance capital and the consequent pressures on the third world countries to open their capital markets that contributed directly to the continuing crisis in the capitalist system which began dramatically in mid-1997 in Thailand and spread like a forest fire engulfing the other South-East Asian 'tigers' in 1997 and continues today to plague the whole world with the latest crisis affecting Russia. The impact of the crisis was such that on a single day in October 1997, the Wall Street stock exchange lost \$ 500 billion (50 thousand crores)—around twice the GDP of India in recent years! In the first week of September 1998, the Dow Jones industrial average at Wall Street was more than 3% lower than at the start of 1998.

Within the framework of the WTO, all member countries are bound to liberalize or open their capital markets for unrestricted operations by international financial institutions. The so-called Asian 'tigers' registered phenomenal growth in recent years. The South-East Asian countries were held as examples by imperialism to third world that economic prosperity and growth was possible only by following the prescriptions of the IMF and by integrating their economies with the world capitalist system, as appendages of the advanced countries.

Within a span of few weeks, this illusion lay completely shattered when a serious currency crisis began with the crash of the Thai currency Baht. Since then, it spread in varying degrees to all South Asian countries and continues to affect the world economy till date.

The worst affected of these have been Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and South Korea, where trillions (lakhs of crores) of dollars worth of productive economic assets have been ruined. Though this finance capital by itself does not engage in productive activity, it has the potential to wreak havoc. A virtual full blown depression has descended on these countries with a loss of more than a trillion dollars of purchasing power and addition of 30 million (3 crores) to the ranks of the unemployed. These countries have been reduced to such a state that scavengers today pick over the bones of what once were 'tigers'.

The revival of these economies through the initial IMF package worth more than 113 billion (1130 crores) dollars, however, has not seen the light of the day. Japan was to become the engine of growth spearheading such a revival. Not only has this not happened but the Japanese economy is currently contracting at an annual rate of 4 to 5 per cent. Recession has deepened with record post-war unemployment and steepest fall in Tokyo consumer prices since 1989. 2.84 million (28.4 lakhs) are out of work, 24 per cent more than a year ago. The number of jobs—51 for every 100 applicants—is also falling.

Though China has categorically stated that it will not devalue its currency in the coming year, traders feel that such a devaluation is in the offing. A Chinese devaluation, making its products cheaper in the international market, would eliminate all hopes of an export-led revival of other countries. This fear is given as the reason for the fall in stock markets in Tokyo, Singapore, Thailand and South Korea on August 10, 1998. Stock prices around the world slumped on that day "following fears of a new round of Asian currency devaluations and its potentially corrosive effect on corporate profits". The declining value of yen played the role of a catalyst in this stock market slump.

Meanwhile, the smaller Asian economies continue to flounder. South Korea's exports fell 13.7 per cent in one year (June 1997 to 1998). The Asian woes will dent Korea's bid to export its way out of recession. The figures suggest that the 28.4 per cent decline in the Korean currency over the past year did little to boost exports.

Vietnam devalued its currency, the dong, by 7 per cent on August 7, 1998. This was the third devaluation since last October in order to save the currency from the devastation wreaked on other Asian currencies.

In Indonesia, where there is no sign of recovery, the government declared four private banks insolvent on August 6, 1998.

Emerging Global Crisis

The chief economist for Deutsche Bank Group Asia Pacific said, "This crisis is not an Asian crisis. It is a global emerging market crisis".

The recession in Japan remains a major cause for the crisis. Japan's banking crisis has led the country to withdraw credit from the world economy and this has further squeezed smaller Asian economies. Moreover, the fall in the value of yen makes Japan's products cheaper in western markets, driving out exports from the other Asian economies which had been banking on an export-led recovery.

Earlier in 1994, the IMF's General Assembly meeting at Madrid had proudly portrayed Mexico as a model for the third world. A few weeks later, with the sudden withdrawal of speculative capital, Mexico declared that it could not pay its debt commitments, its currency was devalued by more than 60 per cent and the country had to submit itself to strict and humiliating conditions and pay the debtors by selling its oilfields at cheap prices. This warning was not taken seriously, on the contrary, imperialism deliberately went about forcing the third world countries to open their capital markets as the only solution against such crisis like Mexico.

The mechanics of the internationalization of finance capital operate in such a manner that the third world countries having been inflicted by a severe currency crisis and consequent declining export earnings are forced to service international capital by liquidating their productive economic assets. Even the World Bank Chief Economist Joseph Stiglitz, declared in Manila earlier this year that, "The crisis would not have taken place if there had not been a liberalization of capital operations in their economies".

In three years, from 1990-93, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) increased from \$ 26.3 billion (2630 crores) to \$ 67 billion (6700 crores). In contrast, Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) increased from \$ 9.3 billion (930 crores) to \$ 93 billion (9300 crores)! The speed of its rise continued in subsequent years. The Malaysian premier has recently banned any currency trading (prohibiting free conversion of the local currency Ringgit into dollars and other hard currencies) to prevent further damage. He has also introduced many measures making it difficult for foreign investors to speculate. All these amount to virtual rolling back of the IMF prescription of liberalization of capital markets.

Russian Crisis

The mid-July, 1998 financial crisis in Russia was the fourth one since the East Asian crisis began. Russian financial markets have been under severe strain continuously over the last year because of the nervousness of foreign investors. Its share prices had fallen by 75 per cent and short term interest rates rose from 21 per cent in mid-1997 to 150 per cent in June, 1998. In a bid to stave off a financial collapse, the Russian Government on August 17, 1998 violated the principal objectives of its IMF inspired transition strategy for the restoration of capitalism. It effectively devalued the rouble, going back on its promise to the contrary, by 30 per cent. Further, it shocked the world by imposing a unilateral 90-day moratorium on the repayment of privately held foreign debt. These measures come less than a month after the IMF announced a \$ 22.6 billion package to salvage Russia. Yeltsin wants further resources which have now been refused.

Given this, the crisis is bound to intensify. The process of restoration of capitalism in Russia is marked by naked appropriation of public assets by the emerging capitalist class. Billions of dollars of worth of government's prime assets have, over these years, been appropriated through a process of "primitive accumulation of capital" by various of Yeltsin's cronies. This has denied the government of a sizeable revenue for its expenditures. Further unable to impose direct taxes (Russia's tax-GDP ratio is around 8 per cent well below that of many

developing countries) and the massive impoverishment of the mass of the people has severely reduced domestic demand leading to recession, closing the doors of any possibilities of revenue collection through indirect taxes. Thus, with the government being unable to raise its revenues to meet its expenditure, with foreign agencies unwilling to pump in more resources, Russian crisis will deepen with global ramifications.

The crisis has affected the Hong Kong market as well. Its stock market values fell by 30% over the year. Its GDP is dropping at a 5% annual rate. Its unemployment has doubled. South Korea's unemployment rate rose from 2.1 to 7.6% this year. Indonesia's GDP will drop by more than 20% this year.

The G-7, in a panic reaction, has told Russia to stick to economic reforms while Japan has proposed an emergency G-7 Summit to discuss a way out of the crisis that is rolling back global stock markets.

Thus we find, true to Marx's analysis of capitalism, the rapid centralization of capital at a global scale (note, for example, that a survey of *The Economist* in 1993 estimated that the total worldwide assets of the transnational corporations (TNC) amounted to roughly \$ 20 trillion (20 lakh crore). This has subsequently grown much higher and is nakedly revealing its predatory and capricious nature. Marx in *Capital* (Vol. 1) says, "With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 per cent will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 per cent certain will produce eagerness; 50 per cent positive audacity; 100 per cent will make it ready to trample on all human laws; and 300 per cent and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged".

These features, put together, are today intensifying all the major contradictions, though in varying degrees.

Labour and Capital

In addition to the growing unemployment that is being imposed by the present nature of capitalist development, the working people and the poor in the capitalist countries are being subjected to vicious attacks on their livelihood. All the major capitalist

countries during this period have undertaken substantial cuts in social spending. The USA has decided to reduce social welfare expenditure by \$ 66 billion (6600 crores) over a period of five years beginning 1995. Germany has cut its long-term unemployment benefits by a whopping 3.7 billion (370 crores) DM. It has also decided to reduce public expenditure on roads and rail construction by DM 2.3 billion (230 crores) affecting the possibilities of job opportunities for thousands of people. In 1995, England cut its public spending by a massive 3250 million (325 crores) pounds.

These cuts in social expenditure are imposing additional burdens on the people. It is estimated that over a hundred million people in the OECD countries are today living below the poverty line. In the European Union, 18 million (180 lakhs) are unemployed and 57 million (570 lakhs) live below the poverty line. Homelessness has also grown significantly with a quarter million people in New York living and sleeping on the streets. It is estimated that there are 4 lakh homeless in London and nearly 6 lakh in all cities of France. *

The predatory nature of capitalist exploitation can be seen by the fact that the real weekly wages in the USA, between 1992-97 dropped below the 1987 levels while the share of profits in the gross value added in the non-financial businesses sector rose by 3.5 percentage points. The rate of return on capital in the G-7 countries grew from 12.5 per cent in early 1980s to over 16 per cent in mid-1990s. The UNCTAD calls this "the counterpart to declining wages".

It is against such vicious attacks on livelihood that massive struggles have taken place all over Europe during this period. The working class came out in a big way to defend its existing rights from the right-wing offensive of the neo-liberal economic policies which seek to further cut public expenditure and drastically reduce welfare benefits. The general strike in France in 1995 paralyzed the economy. Likewise, strikes in Germany and Italy, apart from other European countries brought out the working class in huge numbers. The farmers in Europe joined the working class on issues connected with the subsidies and tariffs of

agricultural products threatened by WTO clauses. Road blocks virtually paralyzed the movement of vehicles all over Europe in 1996. This growing resistance of the working class was also reflected in the month-long South Korean workers strike of 1997.

The resultant discontent amongst the people found expression in the defeat of ruling right-wing parties in many capitalist countries during this period. France, Italy, Britain, Greece, Japan are only some where the ruling parties suffered severe electoral reverses. In these, wherever the Communist parties had taken the lead in organizing the resistance amongst the right-wing offensive, they have gained. In France, the Communist party today is part of the present government. In Italy, the government of the Olive Tree coalition is crucially dependent on the support of the Communist Refoundation, which has chosen not to join the government but to support it while defending and advancing the rights of the working class and other exploited sections. In Japan the JCP has made significant gains in the recent elections to the Upper House of Parliament. This only confirms the fact that wherever the Communists, organizing themselves on the revolutionary tenets of Marxism and scientific socialism are leading the working class and the people in their struggles, they are overcoming difficulties and making progress. This is as true in the above countries as well as in Greece, Portugal in Europe and other parts of the world.

Imperialism and The Third World

During this period, the contradiction between imperialism and the third world countries has sharply intensified. Utilizing the present correlation of forces on the world scale, imperialism has mounted a systematic economic offensive that seeks to virtually recolonize, economically, the third world countries. The IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have emerged as the principal instruments of this restructuring of the world economy. All the recipes they prescribe are aimed at throwing open the economies of the third world countries to unhindered loot by transnational corporations and international finance capital. Imperialism seeks to negate the economic

sovereignty of the third world countries and convert them merely as its appendages. The net result has been the intensification of exploitation and the consequent impoverishment of the people of the third world. And, this comes at a time when the UNIDO's Industrial Development Global Report of 1995 states that over a hundred developing countries are seriously struggling to escape the poverty trap.

The UNCTAD Report states that the per capita income in 48 least developed countries has declined in absolute terms during this period since our 15th Congress. It further suggests that the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) would lose \$ 600 million (60 crores) annually under the WTO agreement. This comes over and above the fact that the world's 48 LDCs with 10 per cent of the world's population have only 1 per cent of the world's income. In the LDCs today, the average incomes are less than in 1980. In 43 of them these are less than what they were in 1970. Such an imperialist offensive also comes at a time when the debt of 41 highly indebted countries rose to \$ 215 billion (21500 crores) from \$ 183 billion (18300 crores) in 1990 and \$ 55 billion (5500 crores) in 1980.

As a result of all this, today 250 million of the world's children are forced to work, nearly half the population in sub-Saharan Africa is living in absolute poverty and more than 9 million children in the developing countries under the age of five die every year due to malnutrition and avoidable diseases. The Human Development Report, 1998 states: "Among the 4.4 billion people who live in developing countries, almost three-fifths live in communities without basic sanitation; almost one-third are without safe drinking water; one-quarter lack adequate housing; one-fifth live beyond reach of modern health services; one-fifth of the children do not get as far as grade five in school, and an equal percentage are undernourished. For most of the world's very poor, transportation for everyday chores, including the gathering of fuel and water, is by foot."

The neo-liberal economic offensive which is today being mounted on the third world is bound to further intensify. The pressure to further open up the capital markets of the third world

countries will only result in the repetition of the crisis that has gripped the South-East Asian countries with global ramifications.

Such an unprecedented attack on the livelihood of the overwhelming majority of the world's population is meeting with resistance in some countries. But it is absolutely necessary that these efforts need to be both intensified and coordinated to develop into a global anti-imperialist struggle. Such efforts are beginning to take shape. For instance, 58 Communists and Workers Parties in the world have jointly appealed to the world's working class and the people to resist the new imperialist sponsored "multilateral agreement on investment" (MAI). This proposal seeks to become a new "constitution of a single global economy", one firmly under the control of the most powerful transnational corporations and international banking and financial institutions. Apart from granting complete mobility for international finance capital, this agreement provides it the unfettered right to penetrate national markets at will, free from regulations applied by national governments. It poses a *colossal* threat to the democratic and social rights of workers and people of all countries and to the sovereignty of all nations.

Such efforts, at coordinated anti-imperialist activity, would have to be intensified. It is incumbent upon us, while strengthening the struggles against these economic policies within the country highlighting the anti-imperialist content, to coordinate with the international working class in these struggles. Such anti-imperialist struggles, in the present stage, reflect the internationalism of the Communists. The CPI(M) will have to do much more to strengthen the campaign against imperialism amongst the Indian people.

US Imperialist Skullduggery

During this period, US imperialism has resorted to blatant military interventions in order to strengthen its global hegemony. Apart from expanding the NATO eastwards, by admitting former Warsaw Pact countries the Czech Republic, Slovakia, etc., to strengthen itself globally, US imperialism has been militarily intervening in third world countries to pursue its hegemonic designs.

In these efforts, it used the United Nations as a smoke screen, initially. Following the Gulf War and the interventions in Somalia and Rwanda, US imperialism has, during this period, militarily intervened in former Yugoslavia and Iraq once again. The USA sought to establish its hegemony in the Balkans through the notorious 'Dayton Accord'. The US, once again, attacked Iraq while it was continuing its inhuman economic blockade, under the pretext of Iraq's operations within its country against the Kurds. Despite the Iraqi troop's withdrawal from the Kurdish populated areas, the USA chose to launch missile attacks only to demonstrate its hegemonic intentions.

The most blatant, however, have been the recent missile attacks against Sudan and Afghanistan. These were undertaken by a beleaguered President Clinton facing domestic problems, under the pretext of attacking 'terrorists', who had earlier targetted US missions in Sudan and Tanzania. Unlike in the past, even the pretext of using the UN auspices was arrogantly abandoned. There was, in fact, no warning, no build up, no attempt at any dialogue or negotiations to verify and check US claims. This is a legally and morally indefensible action smacking of imperialist arrogance. Further it portends the brazenness with which US imperialism seeks to enforce its vision of a 'new world order'.

Apart from the political and economic attacks against the third world countries, this period has also witnessed a massive imperialist cultural and media invasion utilizing advances and information technology. In the spheres of culture and information dissemination, imperialist controlled agencies have been seeking to control the flow of information and facts to the third world countries. This, in fact, has become an important medium of imperialism's ideological offensive extolling values and principles that underpin its exploitative and hegemonistic designs.

Inter-Imperialist Contradictions

Though US imperialism continues to maintain its leadership of the imperialist camp, inter-imperialist contradictions continue to express themselves in an intensified manner.

During this period, in the economic sphere, the inter-imperialist contradictions have been manifested in a proxy war between the major currencies—dollar, yen and mark. In April 1995, the dollar depreciated to a record low upsetting the global economy. The USA refused to intervene to shore up the dollar leading the German Chancellor Kohl to state that the "US is holding the world economy to ransom". The USA had utilized the situation to bolster its exports at the expense of Japan and thus improve its sluggish growth rate. In fact, the USA had unilaterally invoked the Super 301 clause to threaten sanctions against Japan on the question of automobile exports. Japan was forced to give concessions to the US to avoid an open trade war. The US, thus, prised open the Japanese market to the export of its automobiles in order to reduce its trade deficit with Japan. Later, during this period, with the planned intervention of the Central Banks of Japan and Germany, the dollar appreciated and a balance was found but to the advantage of the USA. It is through this process, in the main, that the US economy during this period revived itself at the expense of its rivals, as noted in the Political Resolution.

In the days to come, the major area of conflict, however, will be between the three economic blocs that have emerged in the world. The process of European integration is reaching a culmination with the transition towards the single European currency, the Euro, is slated to be fully operational by the beginning of the next century. With the NAFTA led by the USA in the Western Hemisphere and the Japan dominated attempts towards a regional bloc in Asia, the triangular conflicts of interests between these blocs, each dominated by the economic power of the region, is bound to intensify. However, with the crisis triggered off by the South-East Asian turmoil, Japan's economy is in the throes of a recession. The impact of this would temporarily strengthen the other two blocs particularly the US economy. This would enable USA to exercise more power through the international system. This, in turn, would set in motion the intensification of contradictions between imperialist powers.

Notwithstanding this, it must be noted, once again, that as far as the question of exploitation of the third world is concerned,

through the institutionalized mechanisms, particularly, the WTO, the imperialist powers act in concert.

The conflicts in the political sphere have also surfaced during this period. On a number of occasions, France had to openly disagree with the US. This was so particularly in relation to the US role in West Asia as well as the US unilateral attacks on Iraq. Similarly, Germany expressed its difference on the US involvement in the Balkans. Notwithstanding such differences, the USA forces its way in its efforts to strengthen its global hegemony.

Imperialism Vs. Socialism

Cuba: This period saw the continuous efforts by US imperialism against socialist Cuba. The Helms Burton Bill was adopted in October 1995 which called for more stringent economic blockade against Cuba. But despite all such US efforts, there was a near universal decrying of such a move by the international community. The European Union and many advanced countries had disapproved this Bill and have begun developing economic relations with socialist Cuba. On four consecutive occasions, since 1995, the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly voted against the economic blockade of Cuba.

Despite the severe pressures mounted against Cuba, the Cuban people under the leadership of the Cuban Communist Party and Fidel Castro have heroically not only resisted but are beginning to turn around the Cuban economy while firmly defending socialism and its gains. Despite all these hardships during the last eight years since the collapse of the USSR, socialist Cuba has been able to maintain the gains of the people in the social sector. The recent Human Development Report places Cuba second in the list of 78 developed countries in terms of the Human Poverty Index (HPI).

International solidarity with Cuba is being consolidated. This constitutes the concrete expression of solidarity with socialism and its defence against the all-out effort of imperialism to destroy socialism. This is a task that our Party will have to undertake and strengthen in the future.

People's Republic of China: Since the initiation of the reform process in China, its economy has been registering an impressive growth adding to the overall prosperity of the people. It has accumulated huge foreign exchange reserves and trade surpluses, particularly against the United States of America. Despite the large flow of foreign investments to China, US imperialism continues to put pressure on China to further open its domestic market for the penetration of imperialist capital. China's resistance against this is cited as the reason publicly for the USA to block China's entry into the GATT and WTO. While imperialist pressures on China continue to mount in the economic sphere, the formidable progress made by China to emerge as an economic power is enabling it to resist these. The successful transition of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China and the fact that the entire western propaganda that spelt doom for this economic power has been negated by factual developments and confirms the correct policy adopted by China towards Hong Kong. Despite the massive South-East Asian crisis, which affected Hong Kong as well, it remains a formidable economic power-house.

The Communist Party of China has launched an intense campaign against the ill effects of such massive economic transformation such as the manifestations of corruption, nepotism etc. A massive anti-corruption drive has been launched and senior members of the Party found guilty of such crimes have been given exemplary punishment to serve as a deterrent. According to the CPC, the main domestic contradiction in China is between the aspirations of the people that have grown tremendously during these decades of socialism and the limitations in the system to meet fully these aspirations. Unless this is resolved through rapid economic growth and overall prosperity, the future of socialism¹⁰ in China itself cannot be assured. The CPC is seeking to resolve this contradiction through its understanding of the 'Socialist Market Economy' and with the help of capital and technology from advanced countries. Imperialism, however, is seeking to use this opportunity provided to the penetration of its capital and technology to undermine socialism. This, in essence, is the manner in which the contradiction between imperialism and

socialism is manifesting in China. In this struggle, the CPI(M) unequivocally declares its solidarity with the efforts to strengthen socialism in China.

People's Republic of China has, this year, been a victim of one of the worst floods that continue to ravage large parts of the country. More than 2000 people have reportedly died in the fury of the Yangtze. Atleast 24 billion dollars worth of damage has been reported. Some oil wells in China's largest oilfield Daqing had to be closed down for some time due to the floods.

In an unprecedeted display of unleashing popular initiative, more than 4 million men and women led by the People's Liberation Army have been pressed into service to contain the damage. Such severe floods are bound to affect the double digit growth rates that China has been experiencing for the past many years. Agricultural production is also likely to be affected. There is a fear that the growth rate will fall below 8 per cent which, the Chinese feel, is a rate that is necessary to pursue reforms under stable conditions. It is only hoped that the Chinese people, who showed tremendous resilience on a number of occasions in the past, will rise to the occasion in the face of such a big human tragedy.

Vietnam: Vietnam has been registering a steady growth of its economy since the introduction of the reforms—Doi Moi. It registered an impressive growth rate of 8.8 per cent in 1994. More importantly, poverty levels reduced by 37% since the reform process began. Life expectancy rose to 66 years with 93 per cent of the population literate and health care being provided to 90 per cent. The process of economic reform has also permitted certain vices and habits, alien to socialism to surface. The Communist Party of Vietnam, fully conscious of this, has called for greater vigilance and is undertaking campaigns against such manifestations. It is expected that the reform process will further strengthen socialism in Vietnam.

North Korea: The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been facing a very difficult economic situation during this period. The failure of successive crops has created a difficult food situation and the country had to accept international food aid. Despite these difficulties, the DPRK has risen to the occasion in

the absence of its founder and leader Comrade Kim Il Sung. It has recently observed the 50th anniversary of its founding in an impressive manner.

Imperialism, during this period, has continued to put pressure on the DPRK. First, on the so-called nuclear issue and latter through sanctions. The US imperialism continues to hold provocative joint military exercises with South Korea escalating tensions in the region. The DPRK under the leadership of the Workers Party of Korea and Com. Kim Jong Il is resisting these imperialist pressures and defending its right to build its own social system.

Former Socialist Countries

The process of restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union and East European countries, as anticipated by us in our 14th Congress, has spelt unprecedented misery for millions of people. The rate and pace of erosion in the living standards of large tracks of population that has occurred in these countries has been unprecedented in the twentieth century. Within a span of six years, more than 50 per cent of the population in Russia has been reduced to a state of absolute poverty. The dismantling of the high quality social security which socialism provided has stripped the people of their security while the economic loot that is taking place has deprived them of their livelihood. In all the countries of the former Soviet Union, people living below the poverty line increased from less than 4 per cent in 1988 to over 32 per cent in 1994 (according to the Human Development Report, 1998). In terms of numbers, from less than 14 million to nearly 120 million. The worst affected have been the children in these countries with nearly 62 per cent of them living below the poverty line in the Russian Federation. What is happening in these countries is an absolute decline in population, unheard of in the twentieth century during peace time. Unemployment has been soaring while inflation rate has reached absolutely fantastic levels like 7,380 per cent in Georgia, 5,273 per cent in Armenia, over 2,000 per cent in many other former Soviet Republics in one year (Human Development Report, 1997).

Similar is the picture in all the former East European countries and in Germany. It is now clear that after a decade of so-called unification, what actually transpired has been the occupation of the East by the West. The former East Germany continues to be plagued by high rates of unemployment, social insecurity and constant fall in the real incomes.

The current economic crisis in Russia which, despite all the aid pumped in by western agencies, continues to deepen leading the country to bankruptcy. The political fallout of this crisis has been intense. The relations between Yeltsin and Parliament dominated by Communists reached a flash point. Twice the Parliament rejected Yeltsin's nominee Chernomyrdin as Prime Minister. Yeltsin finally had to buckle and compromise candidate Primakov was made Prime Minister.

Thus, the conclusion that the CPI(M) drew at its 14th Congress that the restoration of the capitalism in these countries cannot improve the status of the people is being resoundingly vindicated. What is happening in these countries is a human tragedy of colossal proportions and with vengeance, capital is ravaging the economies and the people in a most horrendous form of primitive accumulation.

Regrouping of Communist Forces

This period has seen the strengthening of mutual relations amongst Communist parties in the world and regrouping of Communists in many countries.

Many parties have taken the initiative for international meetings commemorating the 150th anniversary of the publication of the Communist Manifesto. The Cuban, Greek and some other parties took such initiatives. A large number of parties exchanged their views and experiences which help the process of Communist solidarity.

The Communist parties in the republics of the former USSR have strengthened their cooperation and coordinating activities.

An important development during this period has been the normalization of relations between the Communist Party of China and the Japanese Communist Party after three decades. A joint communique has been issued by both the parties.

Neighbouring Countries

The period since the last Congress had seen a steady improvement in India's relations with its neighbours under the United Front Government. However, with the BJP-led Government's coming into power, India's relations with neighbours underwent a sea change following the Pokhran-II tests. The near decade-long efforts to improve relations with China received a severe setback. The Kashmir issue has been internationalized. The threat of a nuclear arms race in the subcontinent looms large. India's standing in international bodies has taken a beating. The SAARC proposal to establish a South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) has been virtually abandoned.

Pakistan: Following Pakistan's reply to India's nuclear tests, the country has been plunged into a deep economic crisis. It is now in a situation where it is likely to default on its \$ 32 billion (3200 crores) debt. Its foreign exchange reserves are sufficient to meet only three weeks of imports while it needs \$ 7 billion (700 crores) dollars to service its debt in 1998-99. Its currency has hit an all-time low vis-a-vis the dollar. To escape a total economic collapse, Pakistan needs the IMF loan of \$ 226 million (22.6 crores) which is in the pipeline. But with the sanctions imposed after the nuclear tests, this loan has been suspended. Pakistan is under tremendous pressure to sign the CTBT in order to have this loan released.

While the economic situation is in dire straits, the political situation continues to be unstable.

With the aim of diverting the attention of the people the Nawaz Sharief Government introduced a law to create a new Islamic order in Pakistan and establish a whole legal system based on the Koran and the Sunnah (doings of Prophet Mohammad). This new law effectively seeks to put the federal government above the Constitution itself by vesting all authority with it to issue directives about what the Islamic law is. This is a dangerous development that will strengthen the Islamic fundamentalist forces. These developments in Pakistan will be exploited by the Hindu communal forces in India. However, it will not be easy to enforce such a system. Experience goes to show that though it may be easy for fundamentalism to penetrate a single nation state

but in a multinational state where people of different nationalities are interested in protecting their identities such a proposal cannot become the rallying point for the people. At the time of the formation of Bangladesh the Pakistani regime tried to impose the Urdu language on the Bengali speaking population. This led to the liberation of Bangladesh and Islam could not remain a binding factor. In Pakistan also there are assertions of national feelings in different parts of the country like the Pakhtoons in the North-West region who have been aspiring for long for a Pakhtoon state; Baluchistan has been fighting to protect its identity; in Sindh, there is a strong feeling of Sindh nationalism. It is not accidental that the MQM consisting of the refugees from Bihar and UP mostly concentrated in Karachi have not succeeded so far to get properly integrated in Pakistan. That is why this proposal is facing stiff opposition from all the major political forces in Pakistan. A few days ago the Bar Association of Pakistan has vehemently come out against it. Therefore, it will not be easy for Nawaz Sharief to pursue his game plan.

Sri Lanka: A solution continues to elude the strife-torn island country. The provincial council elections provided under the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord, to be held in August, 1998 have now been postponed. A state of emergency has been extended throughout the country. The process of restoring peace and normalcy in the Jaffna Peninsula has been complicated with two major assassinations recently: the Commander of the Government Forces and the Mayor of Jaffna. The Sri Lankan Government is still continuing with its longest military campaign in its independent history against the LTTE at Vanni. The continued political instability only provides the ground for imperialism to intervene and manoeuvre in the region. The CPI(M) reiterates that a solution to this problem lies in providing sufficient autonomy to the Tamils living in composite areas within the framework of Sri Lankan unity. Only this can provide the basis for a lasting solution.

Bangladesh: Sheikh Hasina came to power through elections during this period. Islamic fundamentalist forces have been active in Bangladesh. Both the major political parties in Bangladesh

continue to take a vacillating and compromising position *vis-a-vis* the fundamentalist forces. This has dangerous implication.

In the meanwhile, US imperialism in an effort to consolidate its position in the region had proposed the 'Status of Forces Agreement' (SOFA). This facilitates unhindered entry of US troops even without visa and passport formalities. Military equipment can also enter without any customs clearance. Such an agreement, apart from providing US imperialism a strong presence in the region, will also facilitate the arming of insurgency in our North-East. Following the withdrawal of its military bases in Philippines, US imperialism is seeking facilities for a new base in the region. Apart from its military strategic interests, the US is also keen on controlling the exploration of potential oil and gas fields in Bangladesh. Since 1982, the Pacific Command of the US Navy and the Bangladeshi military had been in close cooperation conducting joint exercises.

However, due to popular protests, the SOFA has not been endorsed as yet.

Bhutan: Following the campaign for the Bhutanization of people of Nepali origin in Bhutan an exodus began in 1991. Over one lakh refugees left Bhutan and are settled in camps in Nepal. Since they have to pass through Indian territory, this is creating law and order problems for India and particularly West Bengal. Despite nine rounds of Bhutan-Nepal talks so far, the future of the refugees remains uncertain. The newly formed political formations which spearheaded the struggle for democracy in Bhutan have been outlawed. Under pressure, the King of Bhutan has recently announced handing over some powers to the future elected government. But this declaration does not include a solution to the problem of the Nepali and Surchope speaking population who have been driven out from Bhutan during the campaign for Bhutanization.

Burma: The struggle of the Burmese people for the restoration of democracy has entered a new phase. The National League for Democracy under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi had won a landslide victory in the 1990 general elections polling more than 80 per cent of the vote. But the Parliament has not been convened

till date. The campaign for the convening of the Parliament is gaining popular support. The ruling military *junta* prevented Aung San Suu Kyi to travel and address her party workers and people and virtually confined her to house arrest, once again. The CPI(M) has expressed its solidarity with the struggle of the Burmese people for restoration of democracy.

Nepal: Political uncertainty is growing in Nepal with the unfortunate split in the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist). The CPN(ML) with a sizeable support of the members of Parliament has lately decided to go in for a coalition government with the Nepali Congress which has assumed office. The disconcerting aspect of these developments is the growing anti-India feeling that is being generated. This can only help imperialism to strengthen itself in the region and the Nepali reactionary circles. In the interests of both India and Nepal and for good neighbourly relations, any problem between the two countries should be settled on the basis of negotiations keeping in mind the interests of both the countries as well as the necessity of unity and cooperation between them as it was being done during the last few years.

Afghanistan: The Taliban scored a decisive military victory recently to control about 90 per cent of Afghanistan's territory. The Pushtun dominated Taliban has succeeded for the time being in defeating the rival ethnic group of the Tajiks led by Ahmad Shah Masud and the Uzbek ethnic group led by Rashid Dostum. The Taliban have been supported, even directly, by the Pakistani armed force as well as the USA. Otherwise it would not have been possible for them to make such advances. But it will not be easy for them to consolidate because of the fact that socially Afghanistan remains by and large a tribal society and it also consists of different ethnic groups, inhabited in the area bordering Iran and Central Asian Republics. There has been a total destruction of Kabul and many other cities which were important trade centres for centuries. The US imperialism has always had its eye on Afghanistan so that it can manoeuvre in order to be able to dominate the area neighbouring Russia, Iran and India. The Taliban are based on a fundamentalist outlook and want to impose

a fundamentalist regime on the people of Afghanistan under the cover of an Islamic Emirate.

The consolidation of Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan has a direct impact not only in India but also on the Central Asian Republics of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The Russian Army which patrols Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan has intensified its activities to protect the secular regime against fundamentalist onslaughts. Following the recent developments of the killing of five Iranian diplomats and reports of some others missing, tensions with Iran have intensified. The military exercises on both sides of the border creates the possibilities of an armed conflict. This will further escalate tensions in the region. Apart from the possibility of large-scale refugees that may pour into neighbouring countries including India, these developments will only strengthen the consolidation of Islamic fundamentalism in the entire region. The USA had all along supported the Taliban to ensure the smooth construction of oil and gas pipelines from Turkmenistan via Afghanistan. Apart from military and strategic interests, Afghanistan is a key factor for the consolidation of US economic interests in the region.

Islamic Fundamentalism

This period has seen the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in various parts of the world. The US imperialism which today blames Islamic fundamentalism for terrorist activities, was the main force that permitted the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and actively aided many of these groups in its covert actions against the Left and progressive forces in many countries. Whether it is Algeria, Sudan, Iran or today Afghanistan, it was the US policy of active hostility to the progressive forces, direct military intervention against progressive regimes and the propping up of rootless dictatorships that facilitated the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Apart from Algeria, even in Turkey which underwent a secular revolution under Kamal Ataturk, the Islamic Welfare Party emerged as the single largest party during this period. Islamic fundamentalism constitutes today a reactionary onslaught against the progressive movements in the world and

despite the possibility of temporary anti-imperialist positions, its main target is to thwart the advance of the revolutionary and democratic movement, the world over.

West Asia

Formidable obstacles are being created by Israel in the implementation of the West Asian Peace Accord. The assassination of Premier Yitzhak Rabin by Zionist extremists reflected the depth of hostility amongst the reactionary Jewish forces to the peace agreement. The ascendancy of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saw an official Israeli intransigence. The repeated obstacles by Israel are not only delaying the implementation of the accord but even denying the Palestinians of their legitimate rights. Despite the fact that the accord in itself was far short of the Palestinian claim for an independent state, even the limited agreements are being repeatedly scuttled. New conditions are being put by Israel even to transfer the land in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to Palestine. On the basis of the Oslo agreement of 1994 by May 4, 1999 Palestine was to get sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza Strip with Jerusalem as the capital. Efforts are on to sabotage this and Israel has started raising the question that West Bank and Gaza Strip is a disputed territory not occupied as claimed by the Palestinians. America has proposed the deferring of this date for one year.

Having earlier settled large sections of Jewish population, Israel is now demanding that the Palestinians must erase the anti-Israel references in their Covenant. At the moment, the talks appear to be in a deadlock and the Palestinians who had been denied their right to a homeland by a gigantic international conspiracy are once again victim of a new conspiracy. This, despite the fact that most Western powers want the accord implemented since that is the best bargain they could have got in the region.

The uncertainty and discontent amongst the Palestinians is sought to be exploited by the fundamentalist forces which may well create tensions in the future.

Ireland

In a historic referendum, on May 22, 1998 more than 90 per cent of the Irish population of North and South endorsed the peace accord opening the possibility of the end to the armed strife. Though Ireland gained independence in 1922, the British retained control over Protestant-dominated Northern Ireland. The armed campaign started by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) based in the Catholic dominant South waged a struggle for the country's independence from the British. According to the accord, the IRA and the Protestant militants are to lay down their arms within two years. That tensions are far from over is evident from the recent bomb blasts. The first ever talks between the Sinn Fein and the pro-British Protestant Ulster Unionist Party are to be held shortly.

Cambodia

In the recently held general elections under the auspices of the United Nations Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party won a decisive victory wresting 64 out of the 122 National Assembly seats. The erstwhile Prince and his allies threatened to boycott the National Assembly thus creating a stalemate since two-thirds of the elected members are required to be present for convening the assembly. Despite the fact that UN agencies and the National Election Commission have certified that Cambodian People's Party has won the election, the opposition stand taken by the US-backed parties is an attempt to prevent strife-ridden Cambodia from establishing peace, democracy and stability in the country. Recently with the intervention of King Sihanouk an agreement has been arrived at for the convening and participation in the National Assembly by Prince Ranariddh and Sam Rainsy. Further negotiations are on as to how far their cooperation can be sought in the formation of the government.

Latin America

The imperialist inspired neo-liberal economic policies continue to impose greater burdens on the working people all across Latin America. This continent has for long been subjected to intense imperialist exploitation and brazen political and military

interventions. However, during the period since our 15th Congress, the popular struggles against the impact of neo-liberal economic policies, particularly IMF inspired "austerity measures" like wage freeze and cuts in subsidies have grown.

Brazil saw big protest actions during this period. Mexico, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Colombia have witnessed many struggles by workers, peasants and other sections of the working people. In Puerto Rico, which continues to languish under direct US control, a big general strike took place in July 1998 against the privatization of telecommunication services, grinding to a halt many crucial sectors of the economy.

Such actions by the working toiling people continue to grow all over Latin America. These reflect the growing resistance to the IMF/World Bank inspired economic policies and the domestic ruling classes which under US patronage are meeting popular struggle with increased repression.

Central Africa

Congo: Even 15 months after Laurent Kabila overthrew Mobutu Sese Seko civil war conditions prevail in the country. A dangerous potential for a regional military showdown is in the offing. The conflict in Congo has driven a political wedge between several African nations, including South Africa. The rebellion which began along the Rwandan border has moved steadily towards the country's centre. It is alleged that Rwanda and Uganda are supporting the rebellion while Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe are militarily intervening in Kabila's favour. The conflict in Congo is, in a way, a consequence of the gruesome killings of hundreds of thousands of people in Rwanda earlier in the ethnic clashes between the Tutsi and the Hutu tribes. Rwandan Government is Tutsi dominated while the Hutus are given protection by Congo.

Sudan

In neighbouring Sudan, civil war continues to take its toll. Southern Sudan is in the grip of drought and starvation. While instability plagues this country, the recent US missile strikes and

the decision of the US Senate Department last year to earmark five million dollars for overthrowing the government in Khartoum signals uncertainty and instability in the future.

Angola: The long wait for the deadline of February 28, 1998 as the day for the implementation of the Lusaka Peace Accord did not materialize as the UNITA led by Savimbi reneged on the agreement. Sixty thousands of its soldiers are yet to be demobilized. The civil war that began with imperialist inspiration and support against the progressive Angolan Government three decades ago has claimed a million lives so far with hundreds of thousands maimed and uprooted. The UNITA controls that part of the country which is rich in diamonds while the mineral rich country earns, even in such troubled times, \$ 1.5 billion (150 crores) revenue annually through sale of its oil. The US interests in the region is in controlling these mineral and oil resources.

South Africa

The main issue confronting the ruling tripartite alliance of the ANC, South African Communist Party and the trade union federation COSATU is the content of the economic transformation of post-apartheid South Africa. The alliance had adopted a broad programme called Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). At the same time, one reality that had to be recognized was the fact that the control of the economy and its key levers remained in the hands of the White minority population. They continue to own all the major mines in South Africa and over 70% of the cultivable land. Further, in the course of the negotiations, the White minority successfully engineered to maintain its control over the bureaucracy and so drafted the Constitution where the state's effective control over the economy was minimal. Under these circumstances, very difficult problems arose in the course of the implementation of the RDP.

While the aspirations amongst the Black community grew rapidly, the economic situation did not provide any radical relief. Even today, over 50% of the Black population is unemployed.

In fact, employment is falling in absolute terms. And there is no surplus land available for redistribution unless the government nationalizes land or adopts certain ceiling laws. Either of these require technically a two-thirds majority which the ANC doesn't have. More importantly, it would have to face the reaction of the minority White population which can paralyze and disrupt the economy.

In these circumstances, the Nelson Mandela Government adopted an economic policy called GEAR (growth, employment and redistribution). This is nothing but a rehash of the IMF conditionalities imposed in the name of structural adjustment. Politically, by forcing the government to adopt such a policy, the White minority population seeks to ensure that the tremendously rich resources of South Africa would rather be owned jointly by them and the MNCs rather than the Black population.

While a majority of the Black population opposes these policies which are imposing greater economic burdens on them, a minuscule section of the Black elite supports this policy which is reflected in powerful voices in the ANC leadership. Clearly the process of class formation amongst the Blacks is finding expression in support or opposition to these policies.

It is a difficult period ahead for the South African Communists. At the political level, it is imperative that they maintain and strengthen the alliance in order to consolidate and carry forward the national democratic revolution. At the level of economic and other policies, they will have to defend and champion the interests of the exploited classes. It is under these complicated circumstances that the South African Communists are working.

Sahara

Morocco aided by imperialism continues to block the near decade long UN decision to hold a referendum, thus blocking the restoration of normalcy and denying the Saharwi people their legitimate right of a homeland. It has now been agreed to hold a referendum in the settlements and the modalities are being

worked out. The recently held NAM Summit has called for a final resolution of this matter. The CPI(M) reiterates its solidarity with the Polisario.

NAM

During this period, the 11th NAM Summit at Cartegena, Colombia and the 12th Summit at Durban, South Africa took place. The objective conditions with the growing exploitation of the third world countries, the new instruments of exploitation being employed by imperialism and the increasing gap between the rich and the poor nations should have created the basis for revitalizing the role of NAM. However, the NAM still remains to sufficiently reorient itself to provide a countervailing force to the imperialist efforts for a new world order. Vacillations were evident in both the Summits in the fact that there were no references to the need for dismantling foreign military bases. In fact the G-7 countries were invited to attend the 12th Summit as guests. The recent world financial crisis requires a concerted effort by the countries of the South to prevent them going down the path of bankruptcy. The 12th Summit while discussing these issues did not come up with sufficient resolve in strengthening South-South cooperation.

However, NAM still retains the potential to develop into a powerful movement of the non-aligned countries against imperialist designs, particularly its efforts to economically recolonize the third world.

Conclusion

We, thus, have a situation in the last decade of the 20th century where double-digit unemployment stalks most of the advanced countries, when the former socialist countries' embrace of capitalism has led to a colossal economic decline unknown in human history, to the extent that population, itself is declining in absolute terms. We have a situation when the so-called 'miracle' economies of South-East Asia have virtually collapsed leading to bankruptcy, massive unemployment and food riots. The hopes created by holding these countries as example have crumbled shattering the illusions that the third world countries could

achieve prosperity under capitalism and as appendages of imperialism. We are in a situation where both Africa and Latin America have witnessed declining per capita incomes with millions under poverty. Famines have become the order of the day in large tracts of Africa. Popular struggles continue in various parts of Latin America like in Chiapas.

In other words, despite the favourable conditions that the collapse of socialism provided to imperialism, capitalism today has, once again, proved itself incapable of either solving the basic problems confronting humanity or of promising a bright future to those who follow the capitalist path.

The Communist parties worldwide are, today, functioning under these conditions. The renewed ideological offensive against socialism, however, continues unabated. But the objective reality brings forth conditions that are favourable for the advance of socialist forces. The popular discontent that emanates from this international plunder by imperialism has to be channelized behind revolutionary popular struggles. Our experience shows that wherever the Communist parties adhering to fundamental revolutionary tenets of Marxism and scientific socialism have intervened, they have succeeded in forging deeper and stronger links with the working people of their countries.

This, however, is not to suggest that the advance of the Communist forces would be automatic. But the objective conditions open up possibilities which the Communists can utilize in strengthening the popular movement for ending a system based on exploitation of man by man. The responsibility of strengthening the subjective factor—the revolutionary ideological struggle led by the working class, uniting other exploited classes and its decisive intervention under the leadership of a party wedded to Marxism-Leninism—falls on our shoulders. This is imperative to utilize the objective situation and intervene to advance our movement for social emancipation.

Reaffirming its commitment to Marxism-Leninism, proletarian internationalism and anti-imperialist solidarity, the CPI(M) pledges to intensify the ideological and political struggles to meet the enemy's offensive.

PART II

NATIONAL

Implementation of the Political Line since 15th Congress

The period since the 15th Congress has been one of intense activities which involved two general elections. The Polit Bureau and the Central Committee had to constantly intervene in the evolving situation to implement and carry forward the line worked out in the 15th Congress.

This period can be divided broadly into three distinct phases. The first, the period up to the 1996 general elections with the Central Government under the Congress. The second, the 1996 elections and the period of the United Front Government, and the third, the 1998 general elections and the period since the BJP-led Government came to power.

The Political Resolution of the 15th Congress had anticipated that political instability will deepen during this period. This has been confirmed by the developments during this period. The 15th Congress also highlighted the growing dangers arising out of the new economic policies of liberalization; the increasing threat to national unity and social harmony arising from the growth of the communal forces; rampant corruption in high places and the separatist threats mainly in Kashmir. The 15th Congress had also stated that the popular discontent arising out of the Congress policies was sought to be exploited by the BJP and its communal combine. In the absence of a coherent Left, democratic and secular combination, the BJP could take advantage of the situation. Hence, the 15th Congress decided that an important task before the Party was to forge the unity of the Left, democratic and secular forces in the ensuing electoral battles; strengthen Left unity both for strengthening the unity of democratic and secular forces as well as united mass movements against the economic policies and communal forces; and, called upon the 'Party to further strengthening the resistance against the anti-people policies through mass movements'.

The Period up to 1996 General Elections

That the Congress(I) was steadily losing popular support and the people chose the third alternative wherever it emerged as a

viable force was confirmed in the assembly by-elections that were held soon after the 15th Congress. Of the 28 seats spread over 13 states, the Congress could barely retain its position by winning 10. The BJP won only 3, while the constituents of the third alternative, put together won 13. Thus, with the proper projection of the third electoral alternative it was clear that the people's response could have been consolidated.

Growing Struggles: This period also saw big working class actions. The five-day telecom strike against privatization was important in the sense that the strike was being conducted on a direct political issue and not on economic demands. Though sections of the reformist leadership of the unions vacillated leading to the withdrawal of the strike after five days, this strike was important in drawing the attention of the working class against the larger impact of the economic policies and privatization. This period saw a big movement against the Enron Agreement. There was a big one-day strike in Mumbai of about 10 lakh workers and employees against the pension scheme at the initiative of the CITU. Over 5 lakh coal workers went on a strike; lakhs of fishermen went on a strike against the loss of their livelihood due to deep sea trawlers and forced the government to review the decision; the bank employees strikes; strikes of the workers of the jute mills in Bengal; the all-India students' strike which was observed in 125 universities and over 2900 colleges against privatization. The big mobilizations at the call of National Platform of Mass Organizations and various state level actions mobilized lakhs of working people throughout the country against the economic policies. This deep resentment that was growing amongst the people was strengthening sections of the Left democratic forces where they were able to present themselves as a viable alternative. In other areas, the communal forces were rallying the discontent by giving deceitful slogans like 'swadeshi'.

The Party played an important role in ensuring that the Patent Act Amendment Bill brought by the Congress in conformity with the WTO was blocked in the Rajya Sabha. Similarly, the Criminal

Law Amendment Bill that would have perpetuated the misuse like in the case of TADA was also defeated in the Rajya Sabha.

Corruption: This period saw a sordid record of corruption under the Narasimha Rao Government. The protection provided by that government to people like Chandraswami etc. and the subsequent exposure of the Jain hawala case evoked large-scale condemnation amongst the people. Our Party had taken the lead in exposing the various scandals like the bank/security scandals, the sugar scam, petroleum and gas deals etc. This also strengthened the growing disaffection amongst the people to the Congress rule.

Kashmir: The burning down of the Charar-e-Sharief shrine had a serious impact. The fundamentalist forces which had been active and trying to foil the revival of the political process in the state perpetrated this destruction. The bungling and mishandling at the shrine sharply illustrated the total failure of the Narasimha Rao Government's policy on Kashmir. Supporters of the CPI(M) were specially targetted by the extremists in the Anantnag district and at least three persons were killed including a leading CPI(M) cadre.

At our Party's initiative, a meeting of the Left parties was held in the wake of this incident and called upon the Central Government to take the following immediate steps:

(1) Effective and speedy steps must be taken to rebuild the shrine at Charar-e-Sharief and all the houses destroyed by fire in the town;

(2) The present Governor has to be replaced and the set-up revamped. The Governor must have a political vision. To motivate the administration and to provide access to the people, an advisory committee with people of political background should be constituted;

(3) The vital question of providing maximum autonomy within the Indian Union must be taken up. The agreement of 1975 between Sheikh Abdullah and Smt. Indira Gandhi provides the basis for this. The Centre must announce its initiative in this regard;

(4) Serious efforts must be made to open a dialogue with sections who stand for the protection of Kashmir identity.

All-round efforts must be made to isolate and combat the forces which are directly backed and sustained by Pakistan; and

(5) There has to be a massive campaign in Kashmir and the rest of the country to explain how the extremist activities have disrupted the economic and social life in the valley and to rally the people for the defence of secularism and national unity.

Efforts to Forge a Third Alternative: During this period, the BJP succeeded in its manoeuvres to split the SP-BSP alliance in Uttar Pradesh. The SP-BSP alliance had a lot of problems mainly due to the absence of any socio-economic programmatic understanding. Both confined themselves merely to caste appeals and the conflicts between their respective caste bases also contributed to the break-up. Our Party opposed the formation of the BSP Government backed by the BJP. Unfortunately, the state units of Janata Dal and CPI took a narrow opportunistic stand of supporting the BSP because of their opposition to Mulayam Singh Yadav.

During this period, our Party made all efforts to try to create an effective electoral alternative to the Congress and the BJP. This was based on the 15th Congress Political Resolution which stated:

"The CPI(M) and the Left must strive for an understanding with the secular opposition forces to present an effective electoral alternative to the Congress(I) and the BJP. The Left alone cannot, in the present situation, defeat both forces. The secular opposition parties have, though constrained by the absence of a coherent programme, an important role to play in projecting the immediate electoral alternative."

On this basis, at the national level, the joint appeal was issued to the electorate by the Left parties, the Samajwadi Party and the Janata Dal. At the state level, our Party had forged electoral understanding with the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh, with Asom Gana Parishad in Assam apart from Janata Dal and Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Karnataka and elsewhere. In Maharashtra, a Progressive Democratic Front was formed with the Left parties and the Peasants and Workers Party. In Tamil Nadu, while the CPI chose to go with the DMK and the TMC, we aligned with the MDMK.

1996 General Elections and the Formation of the United Front

The elections to the Eleventh Lok Sabha resulted in no single party or formation winning a majority. The results revealed the decline in the Congress(I)'s mass base with a sharp decrease of 6.7% of its vote and the number of seats coming down to 142, the lowest ever in the history of the party. This decline of the Congress, instead of paving the way for advance of the Left, democratic and secular forces led to the situation wherein the reactionary BJP with its communal platform made gains though its voting percentage registered only a marginal increase of 0.7%, i.e., from 20.1 to 20.8%. It won 160 seats and emerged for the first time as the largest single party in the Lok Sabha. With its allies like the Shiv Sena, Samata Party, Haryana Vikas Party and the support of the Akalis, the BJP has a strength of 194 in the Eleventh Lok Sabha. The third force consisting of the Janata Dal, the Left parties and the Samajwadi Party got 113 seats along with the regional parties like the AGP and the TDP, the total came to 134. In Tamil Nadu, the DMK-TMC alliance secured 37 seats. However, the Left parties could just maintain the position, though there was a small decline in strength from 56 to 54. Thus, the third force could only acquire the third position after the BJP and the Congress(I).

The 1996 Election Review of the Central Committee, after analyzing the results, took serious note of the failure of the Party and the Left to make significant electoral advances. The resolution stated:

"The failure to make any significant electoral advance in the country as a whole over a long period, the inability to utilize the favourable situation of mass discontent against the bourgeois landlord policies of the Congress and the success of the BJP in such a situation does raise some basic questions. Some of these issues have been raised in the discussions in some of the state committees while reviewing the elections.

"Critical Examination Required: Since 1991, we had conducted at the All-India level and in the states, a number of struggles and campaigns against the economic policies of the

Rao Government and played a leading role in the broadbased resistance which has developed through formations like the National Platform of Mass Organizations. Similarly, our Party has been consistent in organizing anti-communal campaigns and rallying the wider sections in defence of secularism. We have also been in the forefront in exposing the corruption scandals. Despite all these activities by the Party and the mass organizations we are not able to go beyond our existing areas and increase our electoral strength. This requires deeper consideration.

"In those weaker states, where the Party has some presence and pockets of influence, our political-tactical line enjoins us to forge alliances with the secular bourgeois parties which are opposed to the Congress and the BJP. Over a considerable period of time, we have adopted concrete tactics which have resulted in alliances, and joint election campaigns with bourgeois parties which are stronger than us. The experience of how our Party has utilized these joint platforms and united fronts must be examined. In successive Party Congresses we have stressed the importance of developing the independent activities of the Party in the political-ideological and organizational spheres. We have set out the importance of increasing Left intervention and Left unity in the context of forging the wider alliance and for paving the way for the advance of the Left and democratic forces. However, both in mass movements and in elections such joint platforms and fronts have not led to the commensurate growth of the independent strength of the Party and its mass organizations. It is a common experience in many of the weaker states that our independent strength has stagnated or declined compared to the advance made by other bourgeois-landlord parties.

"Lag in Independent Party Positions: In projecting the independent political line of the Party among the people, in taking ideological and class positions distinct from the bourgeois parties, the Party is lagging behind. When such wider alliances and joint fronts with other political parties are forged and this independent political-ideological stand is absent or lagging, the Party's growth gets limited. It is difficult for the people to see the distinct identity of the Party.

"Secondly, the call for independent activities of the Party is often ritualistically observed in a formal manner without sufficient initiative taken at the grass-roots level to take up the class and mass issues and launch struggles and movements. The capacity to take up independently issues by the Party and to wage militant struggles has been giving way to general campaigns and reliances on electoral tactics not very dissimilar to bourgeois parties. In such a situation, the methods utilized by the bourgeois allies such as caste mobilization, populist slogans devoid of a class content and tendency to tail behind the slogans of the dominant bourgeois partners is becoming increasingly manifest.

"In such a situation, neither the Party's independent strength nor its electoral influence grows and the tendency to tail behind the bourgeois parties ends up in strengthening them and not the Party and the Left forces. How seriously the Party takes the task of projecting the independent political line of the Party, building up the all-sided independent activities, political-ideological and organizational and guarding against the tendency to tail behind the bourgeois parties must be seriously looked into. This will entail further self-critical examination of our political-tactical line since the 10th Congress particularly our experience in allying with the bourgeois parties both electorally and in general political terms."

Formation of the United Front

In the context of the new situation in the Lok Sabha with the BJP emerging as the leading party, the country was faced with the very serious prospect of a reactionary communal party coming into power at the Centre. The Central Committee noted the dangerous consequences of such a prospect. The Central Committee came to the conclusion that given the strength of the formations within the Lok Sabha, it was necessary to strive for bringing into existence a broadbased non-Congress secular government which could be supported by the Congress from outside. Therefore, the Party decided to make all efforts to rally all non-Congress secular parties to forge a broadbased combination to stake its claim to form a government. This led to the formation of the United Front. Following the defeat of the 13-day

BJP Government in the motion of confidence, the UF staked the claim and formed the government with Deve Gowda as the Prime Minister. This was supported by the Congress from the outside. The Central Committee decided that the Party would not join the government but would support it from outside.

On the Question of Participation in Government

Immediately after the election, when we succeeded in forging a broad non-Congress secular alliance, the question arose as to who should lead the government. After discussions, the constituent parties suggested that Comrade Jyoti Basu would be the most acceptable choice for the post of the Prime Minister. We had to take the decision whether to join the government and lead it.

The Central Committee at its meeting, on May 13, 1998, discussed this issue. The majority in the Polit Bureau and the Central Committee rejected the proposals for joining the government. When its decision was conveyed to the allies by Comrade Surjeet and Jyoti Basu they requested the Party to reconsider the decision. The CC, therefore, met on May 14 once again and reiterated its decision not to join the government.

Differences of opinion had arisen in the Central Committee on the question of the participation of the CPI(M) in the Central Government with Jyoti Basu as the Prime Minister. The majority in the Central Committee rejected this proposal. The Central Committee also decided to place these differences before the Party Congress so that it can be finally clinched.

The minority position is given below:

The understanding of the majority of the CC is based on the 1967 resolution of the CC on *New Situation and Tasks*. This issue came up for discussion when in eight states the Congress monopoly of power was broken and many parties and combinations were able to form governments. Taking into consideration the correlation of forces and the combination of parties in different states, the CC decided about the approach to be adopted in different states. But lot of developments have taken place since this approach was formulated.

Firstly, the total assessment of the situation existing at that time was based on the premise that we are passing through a period where capitalism is collapsing and socialism is becoming the decisive factor. All the Communist parties were laying down their tactical approach on the basis of this understanding. It undoubtedly had its impact on our documents too. This understanding has proved to be incorrect. This fact was accepted by us in the ideological resolution adopted at the 14th Congress.

Secondly, there is a big change in the correlation of class forces existing in the world after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and dismantling of socialism in the East European countries. As against the understanding mentioned above, after this development, a radical change has come about in the international situation. From a bipolar world, it has changed to a unipolar world for the time being with US imperialism trying to impose its hegemony all over the globe. This has adversely affected the revolutionary movement the world over. In many Latin American countries, people fighting for liberation with arms in their hands had to come to an understanding with the existing regimes on the basis of restoration of democratic rights and protection of gains of the revolutionary movement made in some areas. The Palestinian liberation movement had to go in for a compromise. They are trying to defend their rights in a very difficult situation. From the documents of various fraternal parties, we will be able to understand how these parties have adapted to the new situation and are working out tactics commensurate with the new situation obtaining today.

Since we were not able to carry on further discussions on ideological issues and its implications in India, though we had promised to carry out a deeper study of the same in the 14th Congress Resolution on ideological issues, it is natural that some serious controversies arise in working out the tactical line in certain respects.

Thirdly, there is complete agreement in the Central Committee about the communal danger facing the country. The draft Political Resolution for the 16th Congress has rightly pointed out that the fight against the BJP and its allied outfits is the central task facing

the Party today in the coming period. However, differences have arisen on how to combat this danger and what is the attitude that we have to take towards it.

Fourthly, we have to understand how the slogan of Left, democratic and secular alternative came to be evolved.

At the 7th Congress, we gave the slogan of People's Democratic alternative. This was repeated at the 8th Congress. From the 9th Congress onwards, however, there was a change. Realizing that the slogan of People's democratic front, as an immediate alternative was unable to click, we had to change to the slogan of Left and democratic front. This slogan was reiterated at the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Party Congresses. The situation had changed by the time we went in for the 13th Congress. The rightist forces were seeking to utilize the discontent arising from the anti-people policies of the Congress Government. The Left and democratic forces, however, were unable to make sufficient headway. To meet this growing danger the 13th Congress advanced the slogan of working for a Left, democratic and secular alternative—to defeat the Congress and isolate the BJP. By the time we went in for our 14th Congress the situation had changed further with erosion in the mass support of the Congress and the increased strength of the BJP. The 14th Congress, therefore, came out with the slogan, commensurate with the changed situation, of defeating both the Congress and the BJP. Again, this was reiterated at the 15th Congress. The 15th Congress resolution stated: "The CPI(M) and the Left must try for an understanding with the secular opposition parties to present an effective alternative to the Congress and the BJP. The Left alone cannot, in the present situation, defeat both these forces. Secular opposition parties though constrained by the absence of a coherent programme, have an important role in projecting the immediate electoral alternative". This does not mean that we have given up the slogan of Left and democratic front that was being projected in the various Congress resolutions, but in the present situation, it could not yet emerge as an electoral alternative. The character of the bourgeois parties was also known. Most of the parties with whom we had been cooperating at the regional-central level have been pursuing the World Bank/IMF

dictated policies of liberalization and are in no way different from the Congress or the BJP in this respect. But it is also true that despite this we have been cooperating with these parties, whether it be the DMK, TDP or the AGP. We have had both electoral adjustments and joint election campaigns with them. We have been opposing them in the states on issues concerning liberalization but at the same time at the crucial time of the election battle, which is the biggest political battle, we cooperate with them. Last time the reason of parting of ways with the DMK was not on economic policy issues but the efforts of the DMK to try for an alliance with the Congress. That is why the 15th Congress resolution underlined that "these parties are constrained by the absence of a coherent programme".

Subsequently, however, the threat of the BJP coming to power became a reality, after the worst defeat suffered by the Congress in the 1996 elections and the emergence of the BJP as the single largest party. This development alarmed all the Left, democratic and secular-minded people. How to meet this situation was the question that had to be answered in that situation. There were no two opinions inside the Party that every effort should be made to unite all secular forces to ward off the danger of the BJP coming to power. It was, in this context, that the question of who would lead and head the government was posed.

In the past, in the struggle against Congress monopoly of power, we have joined hands with the bourgeois parties in spite of our basic differences on economic policies with them, that too without any conditions. In 1977, the combination of rightist parties along with the socialist party and the Lok Dal formed the government on the slogan of demolishing the authoritarian framework. Our Party joined hands with them, conducted a joint campaign and supported the government from outside with a view to demolishing the Emergency framework. Even while doing so, we knew the history of these parties—the Congress(O), the Jan Sangh and other forces. When the possibility of demolishing the Emergency framework got exhausted, we did not hesitate in voting against the government.

Again, a situation arose in 1989 when the Congress lost its majority. Our Party took the initiative in bringing into existence

the National Front Government which was also simultaneously supported by the BJP from outside. We were quite aware that the NF had no difference with the Congress as far as economic policies were concerned. However, the NF and the Janata Dal took a firm stand on the Ramjanmabhoomi issue. This government again was brought down by the BJP on the one side and the Congress on the other.

After the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992, a big change had come about in the situation, with the communal danger becoming more serious. It was, in this situation, that the 15th Party Congress reiterated the slogan of Left, democratic and secular front—to defeat both the Congress and the BJP, since by this time the BJP had become a serious danger. Various CC documents have elaborated the implications of this danger and it is not necessary to elaborate it since there is no difference of opinion in the CC on this question. But it seems that the significance of this slogan is not being properly appreciated.

To substantiate their point, the majority view apart from referring to the 1967 document *New Situation and Tasks* has also advanced the argument that Para 112 of the Party Programme does not envisage the formation of a government at the Centre.

Yes, this is true. But if we go into the history of Para 112, one will find that the original draft does not contain this para at all. This para was incorporated on the basis of an amendment proposed by Comrade EMS Namboodiripad (amendment No. 118 to the original draft). Such an amendment was necessitated by the situation obtaining then. Immediately after the Party Congress, the Party in Kerala had to face elections. The issue arose whether being a major party in Kerala, we were to raise the question of an alternative or not. It was in answer to this question that the amendment was proposed and incorporated. During the debate on the programme, we did not receive many suggestions with regard to this para. Nobody at that time had visualized that our advance would be slow and it will take time to present a People's democratic alternative.

There is no doubt that there is a difference between occupying office in a state as opposed to that at the Centre. Even with regard

to the state, in the same para the programme points out the limitations. Practice shows that the formation of such governments had helped the development of our movement and we were able to gather more and more strength, uniting the Left and democratic forces. These governments, despite limitations, have been sources of inspiration for our movement in the rest of the country. Here the specific question arose in a situation where at our initiative the UF was formed after the elections. The constituents of the UF were parties many of whom had fought against each other. But all of them had fought against both the Congress and the BJP.

When the programme was being drafted, we had not visualized that events will take such a turn where we will have to support a government pursuing policies favouring the bourgeois-landlord classes, or even participate or head such a government at the Centre. But due to various changes in the political situation and differences which arose among the ruling classes and the formation of political parties like the Janata Party and other regional parties after breaking away from the Congress, the Party decided to support different governments, as mentioned earlier.

During the 1996 election campaign when we were asked whether we would participate in a future set-up that would come about to replace the Congress at the Centre, our allies advised that propagation of non-participation is bound to harm the prospects of the proposed alternative set-up. The December 21-22, 1997 CC resolution noted: "Other important question which is being posed is about the alternative government. One fact which forced us last time to say that we will consider the question about the participation after the elections arose because of the concrete situation to enthuse the people in the elections. After the United Front had come to power, some hopes are raised in the minds of the people for this alternative as against that of the BJP and the Congress. This is of great significance. It is not a mean achievement that it has stood us together. We have to present the question in a way where we do not declare non-participation in government and the concrete decision will be taken after the election."

It was also known that such a government can come into existence only with the support of the Congress from outside. Even, after the 1998 elections, when the BJP could not muster a majority of its own until the TDP deserted the UF, the CC did not find it improper to state that we will support a Congress Government from outside, if it came into being. Earlier, we have never talked about supporting a Congress Government. But we had to resort to these tactics after taking note of the grave danger from the BJP to the democratic fabric of our society.

This proposal of making Jyoti Basu the Prime Minister did not come from our Party. It was made by the 12 parties that had come together to form the United Front. It was made due to the respect in which our Party was held and our record in West Bengal where we are leading a coalition for the past 20 years, with Jyoti Basu as the Chief Minister. It is for the first time in history that parties of the bourgeoisie came forward unanimously proposing the name of a Communist to take over the PM's office. They were aware that in the wake of the opposition to the Congress and the BJP, the government needed some credibility. Since the Left's prestige was high, since it had given a governance in the states ruled by it free of corruption and other scandals, since it had an unblemished record, as it was fighting uncompromisingly against the imperialist forces and in defence of the rights of the common man and also to consolidate their own position, was this proposal made. Opposition to this proposal came only from imperialist sources and the monopoly houses.

But the CC did not accept this proposal. However, at the same time, it decided to be part of the United Front, supporting the government from outside, while being part of the Steering Committee of the UF. Though our Party did play a big role in keeping these parties together, nothing much could be done about implementing the pro-people content of the CMP, the achievements in the realm of foreign policy, improvement of relations with neighbours, holding of elections in Kashmir, paying attention to the North-East, strengthening federal structure etc notwithstanding.

However, it must be understood that under our parliamentary system, the PM's office is vested with great powers. He holds the

key in the Cabinet and has a great say over all matters of administration.

The majority opinion had argued that the government could not do anything and no change in the economic policies could be brought about. Moreover, it would not be allowed to function properly. In the obtaining political situation, a government headed by us with three other Left parties also participating, much more could have been done to implement the CMP and confront to some extent the IMF-WB dictated policies for some time. At the ground level also, it could have generated a new enthusiasm among our supporters which could have helped strengthening our Party and mass organizations. This is not to deny that basic policies could not have been changed. But we could have accorded priority to implementing the pro-people content of the CMP. No party could have dared to oppose such items such as strengthening the PDS etc. We could have put a halt to the disinvestment of the PSUs. But pressure would have come from the big business and multinationals and such a government would not have lasted very long.

Such a government which did not fall due to its failures but for adopting pro-people policies and measures would have generated sympathy for itself from the people. Such a feeling among the people would have helped us and stood the Party in good stead for the future of the Party and the Left movement, the future struggles—both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary.

We would surely not have surrendered and compromised our position and given into reactionary pressures to remain in government. As a result, if the government fell, the people would not have blamed us. We had no illusion that we could really carry on for long especially with the outside support of the Congress.

The prestige of our Party and the example of Left Front and the LDF is our strength, what has been achieved by these governments has not been achieved elsewhere. Existence of such a government at the Centre would not have been a bar on our movements and struggles.

Now, we are facing a more difficult situation with the BJP coming to power at the Centre leading an 18-party coalition government.

They are attacking the secular fabric of our society, attacking democratic institutions. This has created a new awakening among the masses. The spontaneous response of various political parties to the Union Cabinet's recommendation for dismissal of the Bihar Government is an indicator.

The uneven development and the inability to spread to vast areas of the country has nothing to do with the existence of the UF Government. Parliamentary deviation must be shunned. At the same time, along with struggles on various issues affecting the people, we must take up measures to participate in the electoral process. Whereas intensifying class struggle is necessary for the growth of the movement, drawing in all sections of the common people into electoral battles also enables us to politicize them. This would enable them to understand the difference between us and the other parties of the bourgeois-landlord classes with regard to our approach and solutions to various issues.

The majority of the masses including the working class are under the influence of the bourgeois-landlord class ideology. Change has to be brought about in the correlation of class forces in our favour.

While participating in the elections, we will have to be opposed to both the Congress and the BJP. In such a situation, what is the alternative that we propose to build and put in place has to be concretely placed before the people. But if we say that we want to build a Left, democratic and secular alternative but will not join any such government, this will only alienate us from certain sections of the masses. We have to bear in mind that we are not on the verge of a revolution. In such a situation, if the masses come to know that we are not going to participate, they will not be enthused to support us. We have also to understand that by refusing to participate, large sections of the masses have considered us to be refusing to take responsibility.

Why did the CC conclude that in the current situation obtaining in the country, if the Congress forms a government, our Party would extend issue-based outside support, despite our differences?

The majority decision is going to isolate us, since we will not be able to play our rightful role in the present political situation. In fact, with the BJP danger being underestimated, we will not be able to rally all the Left, democratic and secular forces and carry out an ideological campaign against the BJP and its ideology.

In the last Lok Sabha elections, the UF was not taken seriously by the people. In fact, there was no united campaign in vast areas of the country.

The BJP has been able to make use of the discontent generated from the policies of liberalization in the absence of any other alternative to it in those areas. This was true in 1967 also. In the 1967 document *New Situation and Tasks*, it is nowhere mentioned that the people rallied behind the Jan Sangh because of its programme. The argument about the West Bengal experience does not tally. In the early days, in that period, in many parts of the country, the Party had led mass struggles and movements. It is because of this factor that we succeeded in rallying majority of the Party members behind our Party. In West Bengal too, our influence was confined to five districts as far as the present movement is concerned. It is the combination of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities which brought the Communist Party in the fore and after joining the government in 1967 with flexible tactics with the same approach of unleashing mass movements as well as skilfully making use of the parliamentary forum we succeeded in expanding our base throughout Bengal. It is because of our growing influence that the ruling Congress party unleashed semi-fascist terror against our movement.

The whole argument given by the majority would lead us to the conclusion that formation of the UF was a useless exercise because the correlation of forces is not such where the Left can have its way. By this the danger of the BJP, the fight against which the draft resolution characterizes as the central task, is sought to be underestimated. The statement that the entire experience of the UF underlines the validity and the correctness of the decision taken in May 1996 completely ignores the achievements of the UF Government in the sphere of foreign policy, improvement of relations with neighbours, restructuring Centre-state relations,

strengthening federal structure and taking a non-confrontationist attitude towards strikes of the workers. In fact, the Party has recently started underestimating the role of imperialism which in no case should be minimized.

The minority is opposed to the majority's viewpoint that subsequent events have proved the validity and correctness of the May 1996 decision.

The majority in the Central Committee, while rejecting the above minority agreements, has stated the following:

The 1996 election results confronted the Party with a complex situation which required an immediate response. The emergence of the BJP as the largest single party, facilitating its claim to form the government, created a new situation. The threat of the BJP, guided by the RSS, coming to power at the Centre became a real possibility. It would have created a dangerous situation for the country and the Left and democratic movement. The Polit Bureau and the Central Committee which met in Delhi in May concluded that keeping the BJP out of power at the Centre should be the immediate priority. How to ensure the formation of a non-BJP, non-Congress government keeping in view the electoral verdict, was the main question before us.

The PB and the CC correctly decided to thwart the BJP's efforts to come to power and help the formation of a non-Congress government. To accomplish this, it was necessary to rally all the non-BJP, non-Congress forces and groups including those who were not allied with our combination before the elections.

Even after this combination could be forged, a non-BJP government could be formed only with the support of the Congress which had 136 members. Our Party decided that there should be no coalition government with the Congress which would be contrary to the decisive verdict of the people against the Rao Government. But in order to keep the BJP out of office, a coalition government could be formed by getting the support of the Congress from the outside. The Congress would have no choice but to support a secular coalition rather than allowing a BJP Government to be formed.

It was in the context of the formation of a wider combination to make the bid to form the government that the question of our participation and leadership in such a government arose. The parties in the alliance, after the refusal of V. P. Singh to head the government, came to the opinion that the most acceptable choice would be Comrade Jyoti Basu to lead the government.

It was this issue of our participating and leading the government which was debated in the Central Committee meeting on May 13. The majority in the Polit Bureau and the Central Committee rejected the proposal for joining the government. When this decision was conveyed to the allies by Comrades Surjeet and Jyoti Basu, they requested the Party to reconsider the decision. The CC, therefore, met on May 14 and once again discussed the matter and reiterated the decision not to join the government.

After the formation of the CPI(M), we had taken a consistent stand that the Party should join a state government only if it were in a position to shape the policies of that government and implement them. When the question of joining state governments was posed in 1967 after the Congress lost power in eight states, the Central Committee had explained this stand on the basis of the Party Programme position as spelt out in Para 112. This was contained in the CC document *New Situation and Tasks*.

It was based on such an understanding that the Party joined or formed state governments in West Bengal and Kerala (and later Tripura). We did not join other non-Congress governments in UP, Bihar and Punjab as the CPI did because the Left and democratic forces did not have sufficient strength in terms of mass support to influence policies.

There is a fundamental difference between joining state governments and participating in a Union Government. State power resides at the Centre and successive governments have represented the interests of the bourgeois-landlord combine led by the big bourgeoisie.

We have assessed in all the successive Party Congresses that there has been no change in the correlation of class forces in favour of the Left and democratic forces. The strength of the Party inside Parliament and outside in the situation following the

1996 elections was not such that we would be able to shape policies or have the strength outside to translate these policies into action. The Party had only 33 seats in the Lok Sabha. We had to keep the basic position of the Party and the existing correlation of forces in mind in deciding the matter. The majority in the Central Committee felt that supporting the government from outside would place us in a better situation to intervene in policy matters, while at the same time maintaining our independent positions and freedom to oppose wrong policies.

In the combination which was being formed (later called the United Front) the majority sections would belong to the bourgeois parties. While cooperating with the secular bourgeois parties, we have to be conscious of the class limitations of such formations particularly in a situation when the Party and the Left is not a strong independent force at the national level. The 15th Party Congress resolution while stressing the necessity of allying with the secular bourgeois parties had also stated that we have to demarcate ourselves from them on basic policies whenever it is necessary. The composition of the United Front with parties of a disparate character would place severe restrictions on our Party's capacity to implement alternative policies especially when it would be a minority government dependent on the support of the Congress from the outside. The problem of depending on the Congress to maintain the government became evident in the experience of running the UF Government subsequently.

For the Party, the essence of being in government is for implementing alternative policies. The real alternative policies can only be those spelt out in the Left and democratic alternative. In a coalition where the majority of the parties are of a bourgeois character, it would be sheer illusion to expect to implement alternative policies. This is all the more so when such a coalition government is in a minority in Parliament.

It is one thing to extend support to a bourgeois combination at the Centre to keep out a more reactionary combination. This was a valid consideration in the face of the threat of the BJP coming to power. It is another thing altogether to join such a government.

To argue that we would be "leading" such a government by having our leader as Prime Minister overlooks the basic class nature of the Central Government.

The decade of the 1990s has witnessed a major change in the international situation with the reverses suffered by socialism and the renewed offensive of imperialism. Change in tactics is necessary in keeping with the change in the international situation and this will vary from country to country according to the specific conditions. But this cannot lead to any conclusion as argued by the minority that participation in government is warranted in the new situation even though we will be in a subordinate position in a bourgeois dominated coalition. The ideological discussions which we began in 1992 at the 14th Congress needs to be continued with in-depth discussions so that our Party can effectively withstand the ideological offensive hostile to Marxism and be able to work out correct positions.

Using its dominant position imperialism has increased its onslaughts on the third world countries through IMF-World Bank-WTO imposed liberation and structural adjustment policies. We see its impact on India too where not only the Congress but all other bourgeois parties have embraced the ideas of liberalization and market economy in varying degrees. It is all the more necessary in such a situation for the Party and the Left to fight back this offensive and not accept the ruling class consensus, leave alone becoming party to its implementation by being in a Central Government.

The call for forging an understanding between the Left and secular bourgeois opposition parties was raised from the 13th Congress onwards. It was meant for rallying the Left and secular bourgeois opposition parties to fight the Congress and the BJP. This slogan became all the more relevant in the context of the growth of the BJP subsequently. The 15th Congress at Chandigarh, based on this understanding, called for the forging of an immediate electoral alternative which we call the third alternative. Unlike what the minority position argues, the tactical line spelt out in the 15th Congress cannot be taken as an

endorsement for joining the Central Government as a minority partner with a common minimum programme.

After the Party Congress, the CC in three consecutive meetings in July and October 1995 and January 1996 discussed the concrete election tactics on how to forge "an effective electoral alternative" as set out in the Chandigarh Congress. The Central Committee discussed the question of having a common minimum programme with the JD-National Front allies and ruled out such a possibility.

In the Report on Political Developments since the 15th Congress in July 1995, we had stated: "On the basis of the JD-NF formulating a clear-cut common programme, our Party can extend cooperation to them to project an effective third force in the electoral arena. To reach this stage we must continue to press them to come out with alternative policy positions..... This means that the Left would cooperate in ensuring that an effective electoral alternative is presented before the people together with the National Front and other secular opposition forces. At the same time, we should not give the impression that this is the real alternative for which the Left is working. This means that our Party cannot subscribe to a common minimum programme with the National Front. Such a joint programme would project a front committed to a common manifesto for the elections. This is not only impractical but would also blur the Left's independent position and image. Instead, from the Left, we can at a later stage issue an appeal jointly with the National Front to the electorate."

In the subsequent CC meetings also we came to the conclusion that while striving our utmost to forge the widest alliance of all the Left and secular bourgeois opposition parties, at the same time, we must maintain our independent position and demarcate on policy questions where necessary. The fact that the Central Committee did not propose an alliance based on a minimum programme was itself because we did not consider it possible to join a government based on a minimum programme in which we will have to make basic compromises.

The comrades who advocated joining the government and assuming the Prime Ministership argued that the failure to do so would doom the efforts to forge a viable alliance. Our wrong stand

would thus be responsible for facilitating the BJP coming to power; in fact, it would amount to betraying the aspirations of all the secular and democratic forces. This rationale for accepting the offer of Prime Ministership is not convincing. First of all, the Central Committee decision was to actively work to rally all the non-Congress secular parties to forge an alliance. Our Party would have to take the major initiative for this. Secondly, all the parties had a common basis for coming together as they had not aligned either with the BJP or the Congress in the elections. The CC majority was to form a government even though there was no common programme beforehand. It would, therefore, be possible to find a suitable candidate for the Prime Ministership. Hence, the insistence that only if we led the government that the alliance could be forged was incorrect. Subsequently, the formation of the United Front Government and it lasting for 18 months proved these fears were misplaced.

On the contrary, with a Communist Prime Minister who would be unwilling to adopt policies promoting liberalization, the conflicts would have precipitated in a quick exit of the government. The entire big bourgeoisie and imperialism would have worked to destabilize the government. This would have negated the purpose of the formation of a secular, non-Congress Government meant to block the way of the BJP. If, on the other hand, we had made major compromises on economic policy in the name of keeping the unity against the communal forces, our Party's image would have been compromised and this would have helped the reactionary forces.

Moreover, once such a government headed by us is pulled down either through internal contradictions within the UF or withdrawal of support by the Congress, it would have led to a situation of disarray of the front itself. For under these circumstances, we would have had to decide to go in for fresh elections. This would not have been accepted by the other UF partners and there would have been a distinct possibility of the bourgeois partners of the UF either ranging behind the Congress or the BJP depending on their regional considerations. This would have led to the virtual negation of all efforts we had made for the evolution of the third alternative.

A major argument for joining the government presented by the minority in the PB and the CC is that this step was essential to fight the growing threat of the BJP and rally all the secular-democratic forces. This view was rejected as there would have been no benefit in being in the government with the limited strength and mass base of the Left which is confined to a few states. If we are to project the government's policies and translate them into action, it would require the Party's active intervention and mass base. In large parts of the country, particularly where the BJP has a strong base in the north and the west, our Party does not even have the minimum strength to reach out to the people to explain our role in the government. If we are not able, in such a government set up with the sole purpose to keep the BJP out, to adopt some alternative policies particularly in the economic sphere, it would have an adverse effect on the working people whose support we depend on. Given the economic crisis and the burdens being imposed by the process of liberalization, the living conditions of the working people are badly affected. By being in government we would be unable to counteract the policies in favour of the big bourgeoisie and international finance capital.

It is the Party and the Left which have played a consistent role in combating the communal forces. If this capacity gets weakened, it would only help the BJP cash in on the popular discontent.

This was not an abstract or unrealistic position taken by the majority. We have to see it in the context of the deep financial and economic problems faced by the country. The problems of budgetary deficit, oil payments crisis, foreign debt, adverse balance of trade were all very acute. Even the meagre land reforms achieved were under attack. The new government would be compelled to take unpleasant and unpalatable decisions which would affect the living conditions of the common people. With the Congress party supporting the government from outside and exerting continuous pressure on the new government, with our limited strength, we would not have been able to counteract and would be placed in difficult situation. Our capacity to defend the interests of the people would be severely restricted. The BJP and

other reactionary groups are bound to use the potential discontent and attack us and the new government and pose themselves as the real champions of the interests of the people. Such a situation would be ideal for the BJP to channelize popular discontent.

The main reason for forming a post-election alliance bringing together all the non-BJP, non-Congress parties and groups in Parliament was the imperative need to foil the BJP's efforts to form the government. In such a coalition, the struggle against liberalization and the need to change the economic policies could not be the priority. For the CPI(M) to join such a government which does not pay priority to this issue would have been extremely harmful. If we were compelled by circumstances to compromise repeatedly on basic questions of economic policy, it would undermine the struggle against the IMF-World Bank dictated policies—a struggle which the 15th Congress had termed as a central task for the Party.

The twin fights against liberalization and communalism and its inter-connectedness was emphasized in Party documents since the 14th Congress in 1992. In order to discharge our duties in this regard, the best course was to support from outside a government whose primary job was to keep the communal forces at bay and retain our independent role to continue the struggle against liberalization.

Another argument advanced in the Central Committee was that being in government even for a temporary period of six months would help the Party project alternative policies and bring forth legislations on these lines. Even if the government falls, this would have a lasting impact favourable for the Party. Such arguments stem from not properly estimating our strength and capacity, and relying only on parliamentary manoeuvres. Just declaring some policies and promises without being able to implement them and provide tangible benefits to the people, would have been counter-productive. In large parts of the country, our Party would not be able to even take our positive message to the people while the BJP and other class forces hostile to us, would be able to exploit all the weaknesses and contradictions of a minority coalition government.

In the 1996 elections, the fight against high-level corruption of the Congress Government was a major issue. Given the impact on liberalization and the degeneration of values which has set into the State apparatus, corruption has become institutionalized. The Central Committee majority were of the firm opinion that being in government, our capacity to check corruption among our bourgeois partners would be limited, thereby damaging the Party's image.

In order to counteract the argument that the Party does not have the requisite strength inside and outside Parliament to join the government at the Centre, some comrades cited the experience of the United Front Governments in the 1960s in West Bengal. It was argued that though we were having a minority of MLAs in the Assembly, we joined the first United Front Government in 1967 and advanced our strength and our position in the government in subsequent elections. This comparison is untenable as it ignores the concrete situation in West Bengal at that time. The Party was a growing force based on the advancing class struggles and mass movements of the working class, peasantry, and other sections of the people. The policies and legislations of the UF Governments became an instrument to further the struggle and movements to expand our base. No such situation exists at the national level currently. We were not working out tactics on the basis of the rising class struggles and advance of the Left and democratic forces. What was being discussed after the elections was a purely defensive tactic of how to keep the BJP out of power by bringing together a new parliamentary combination.

Unlike the united fronts forged in West Bengal through mass struggles and movements based on common demands, the "United Front" formed at the Centre after the elections of 1996 was an exception to our basic understanding of united fronts. The July 1996 Central Committee report explained the difference by pointing out that "the present United Front is unlike the normal united fronts in which parties come together for joint struggles and movements based on a common set of demands or a programme".

The combination formed in the aftermath of the 1996 elections was based on all the parties and individuals represented in

Parliament, including some with whom we did not have even an electoral understanding.

The majority opinion saw the United Front as a temporary formation to stave off the imminent threat of the BJP forming the government. It did not envisage such a combination to evolve into a general United Front which would begin the process of implementing alternative policies. It was an immediate tactic which would give time for the Party and the Left to work for a more favourable situation to carry on the struggle against the rising threat of BJP and communal forces.

The minority cites the decision of the December 1997 CC meeting at Calcutta on the eve of the 1998 elections on how to pose the question of participation in government as a "reversal" or "re-consideration" of the earlier decision taken in May 1996. This is not the way the decision should be interpreted. Comrades holding the minority position had raised the question of how the issue of participation in government should be posed in the elections. Hence, it was decided that "We have to present the question in a way where we do not declare non-participation in government and the concrete decision will be taken after the elections". The CC recognized that the issue of participation or non-participation should not be taken up during the election campaign and it is only after the election results that the matter can be taken up for consideration. This in no way was meant to be a reversal of the May 1996 decision, but accepting the fact that depending on the situation after the elections, the issue may be discussed afresh. However, after the election results, the question became irrelevant.

It is by assessing the experience of the line adopted by the Party and its implementation that we can come to conclusions about its correctness. After the decision taken in May 1996, the United Front Government lasted for 18 months till the Congress withdrew support. An examination of this period and our experience of the United Front and the government confirms the correctness and validity of the decision taken by the Central Committee.

The Party made an important contribution in the functioning of the United Front. We contributed to the positive steps taken by the

UF Government in the sphere of foreign policy and Centre-State relations. The beneficial effect of such a government at the Centre was experienced by the states as it was not hostile or discriminatory. But the basic policies and the continuance of the government was not in our hands. They were dependent on a lot of other factors on which we had no control.

As the assessment of the performance of the United Front in a later section shows, a major handicap proved to be the dependence on Congress support. Within 10 months, the Congress party withdrew support to the Deve Gowda Government. Behind this move was the anger of the Congress leaders that corruption cases against them were not suppressed. After the change of the leader, within eight months the Congress again withdrew support after demanding the removal of the DMK ministers citing the Jain Commission Report.

The experience of the implementation of the Common Minimum Programme confirms that the UF Government pushed through economic policies which favoured the big bourgeoisie and foreign capital while refusing to take up the pro-people economic measures in the CMP. It is not only in the economic sphere but other commitments such as the Women's Reservation Bill, the Agricultural Workers Bill, the Lokpal Bill which remained unfulfilled. This confirmed the assessment of the CC majority that given the composition of the Front and the strength of the Left it would not be possible to push through alternative policies.

The disparate and unstable nature of the United Front also manifested itself in the conflicts between the constituents and between individual leaders which did not heighten the image of the Front. The crisis created by the fodder scandal in Bihar and the chargesheeting of Laloo Prasad Yadav led to a sharp struggle in the UF and Janata Dal leading to a split. This highlighted how the issue of corruption could also pose obstacles for the functioning of the government.

The overall assessment shows that despite our continuous intervention and demarcation on policy matters we could not sufficiently mobilize the people to launch mass struggles and

movements on a whole range of issues. Much of our energies was devoted to keeping the unity of the Front and ironing out the difficulties. If we had joined the government, we would have been in an unenviable position. Our independent identity would have been blurred. The Party would not have come out of government backed by a rising movement and with a stronger position among the people.

The entire experience of the United Front underlines the validity and the correctness of the decision taken in May 1996. While striving to forge alliances with the secular bourgeois opposition parties to project and build a third alternative, the situation is not mature for participation at the national level in a government where we cannot shape policies and carry them out.

The Party Congress endorsed the Central Committee decision of May 1996 not to participate in the Central Government.

The Period of the United Front Government

The Central Committee meeting in July 1996, after the formation of the United Front Government had outlined the tasks before the Party by stating:

"Utilizing the presence of the UF Government at the Centre all positive measures to strengthen federalism, secularism, democratic reforms and providing relief to the people must be pursued. At the same time, the Party has to preserve its independent identity, demarcate our position on policies which adversely affect the people, mobilize and launch struggles and movements to defend the interests of the working people.

"The advance of the Left and democratic forces can be ensured only if we carry out the major tasks of combating the communal danger and resisting and reversing the imperialist sponsored economic policies. Success in this direction can be ensured only if the Left is strengthened and united.

"Following from the election experience, the Party has to address itself to the following tasks immediately.

"1. Build up independent movements and struggles of the Party based on the charter of demands of the Left and Democratic Programme set out in the 15th Congress Political Resolution.

At the same time strengthen the united struggles of the different sections of the working people on their economic demands and against harmful economic policies.

"2. Strengthen and widen the anti-communal mobilization and step up the struggle against the communal-divisive ideology."

Following the defeat of the 13-day BJP Government and the installation of the United Front Government headed by Deve Gowda, the United Front constituents set up a Steering Committee to help the effective functioning of the new formation. We decided to participate in the Steering Committee and also draw up a Common Minimum Programme which could be the framework for the government's policies. On the nature of the CMP and the United Front itself, the Central Committee adopted the following understanding:

"CMP: Given the diverse nature of the formation, the common commitment being opposition to the BJP, the Common Minimum Programme represents what is common in the understanding of all these constituents while at the same time there are compromises and divergent views on other subjects. The CMP has a positive content on subjects such as secularism, Centre-State relations, defence of secularism, commitment to social equity and democratization of the polity including electoral reforms. These aspects of the CMP provide a political platform for the secular and democratic forces to combat the BJP and demarcate from the previous Congress Government's approach. However, on certain basic questions of economic policy, the CMP does not represent the views of the Left. In key areas of the economy, the thrust is towards carrying forward the liberalization policies of the Rao Government and the IMF-World Bank framework. Such areas are in foreign investment, privatization of infrastructure, opening up of insurance sector, tax reforms, import liberalization and concessions to the landlords and rich peasants. But there are some provisions such as increased allocations for the social sector like education and health, strengthening of the PDS and poverty alleviation and employment generation schemes which are on correct lines.

"Nature of United Front: The present United Front is unlike the normal united fronts in which parties come together for joint

struggles and movements based on a common set of demands or a programme. The present United Front combination has emerged out of the efforts of the Left and secular parties represented in Parliament to keep the BJP out of office. The bulk of the parties in the UF Government are those which wish to continue with the economic policies of the Congress. However, it is in the interests of the Left and democratic movement that such a government continue in office, implement policies which help strengthen secularism, restructure Centre-State relations to strengthen federalism and provide even limited relief to the people. This will help meet the expectations of the people who voted out the Congress and who did not want the communal forces to capture power.

"It is in this framework that our Party must define its attitude to the United Front Government."

In the subsequent period, our Party's approach was: While extending overall support to the government and pushing for implementation of these measures in the CMP which help mobilization of the people to strengthen the Left, democratic and secular forces we have to maintain our independent position and demarcate on specific issues and policies which are detrimental to the interests of the country and the livelihood of the people.

Our experience during this period has been such that on many issues, we took the initiative in the Steering Committee such as the approach towards the Kashmir elections; Centre-State relations; Chief Ministers' conference on minimum needs programme; on foreign policy matters to improve relations with our neighbours etc. The holding of the elections in Jammu & Kashmir was a significant achievement. In the sphere of Centre-State relations, the Inter-state Council was revived. Its Standing Committee headed by Com. Jyoti Basu had concretely suggested proposals to prevent the misuse of Article 356. Important decisions like transfer of funds under the Centrally-sponsored schemes to the states were taken. The short life of the UF Government prevented its full implementation.

In the sphere of foreign policy, the United Front Government achieved many successes. Relations with our neighbours

markedly improved. The signing of river water agreements with Bangladesh and Nepal removed a long-standing irritant between the countries. the visit of the Chinese President and the significant agreements signed between India and China on confidence building measures carried forward the process of improvement of Sino-Indian relations. The visit of Indian Prime Minister to Russia further strengthened the traditional ties between the two countries and cooperation in the spheres of defence and space technology. The improvement in dialogue with Pakistan was creating the ground for reducing tensions. The Summit meeting on economic cooperation between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh was held for the first time. The SAARC accepted our proposal to establish a South Asian Free Trade Agreement.

However, as was anticipated, the United Front continued to pursue virtually the entire framework of the economic policies of liberalization in great earnest. The process of privatization, opening the economy for foreign capital in the core sectors, imposing greater burdens on the people through increased indirect taxes, big concessions given to the rich through cuts in the direct taxes etc. The whole thrust of the Congress(I) economic policy was being continued and many of the pro-people policies in the CMP like providing foodgrain to people living below the poverty line at one half of the prices were being ignored.

Likewise, many legislations proposed in the CMP like the Lokpal Bill, Central Legislation for agricultural workers, women's reservation, electoral reforms, recognition of trade unions through secret ballot etc. never saw the light of the day.

On many occasions, both inside the Steering Committee and outside we had demarcated ourselves from these policies. The hike in petroleum prices on the first occasion was reduced at our initiative from 30 to 15 per cent. On the second occasion, our campaign helped in postponing and finally lessening the burden on the common man. With relation to the Pay Commission recommendations, bonus for Central Government staff etc., our intervention proved decisive in ensuring that these are implemented.

However, such demarcation by itself was not sufficient to convince the people that we are championing their interests while, at the same time, supporting the government.

During this period, the pre-occupation with keeping this government in office and the running of the Steering Committee diverted our attention away from developing the mass struggles and mass movements against the anti-people policies. This led to a lull in the movement, particularly in the background of the big actions against the economic policies during the Congress rule. On the one hand, we were seen as an important element in keeping the United Front together while, on the other, our demarcation and opposition to policies appeared to be only formal. Though we succeeded on some issues, it nevertheless was not sufficient to help us in rallying the popular discontent behind the Left.

UP Episode

During the period of the Gujral Government, the BSP withdrew support from the BJP reducing the Kalyan Singh Government to a minority. With regard to the Supreme Court judgement regarding the Bommai case, we took the position that it was applicable only in cases of a single party government which lost its majority through defections. In such a case, the majority must be tested on the floor of the House. But since a coalition partner withdrew support in this case and there was no possibility of a majority being acquired except through open horse-trading we had taken the stand that the Kalyan Singh Government cannot continue.

However, once the UF Government decided to give time to the Kalyan Singh Government to prove its majority on the floor of the House, we took the position that the decision of the House must be honoured. When even after Kalyan Singh Government showed its majority, despite the violence and corruption, we opposed the move by some sections of the UF to impose President's rule.

The Role of the Congress

All through this period, the Congress with no other option but to support the United Front Government from the outside, started creating problems for its functioning. Under the presidentship of Sitaram Kesri, the Congress seeking to protect its corrupt leaders from any possible action and with an aim of joining the

government as coalition partner and later claiming leadership as the single largest party of the coalition, chose to destabilize and bring down the Deve Gowda Government. Our Party had taken a principled position that as the Congress(I) was decisively rejected by the people, it cannot be provided the opportunity to enter the government through the backdoor. This would be tantamount to betraying the people's verdict. If the Congress persists, we had taken the stand of going in for fresh elections. But bowing to the position of all other parties of the UF which did not favour elections, in the interest of maintaining UF's unity, we agreed for a change in leadership. Primarily because of our efforts and the position taken by the Left, the Congress's game plan could not succeed and they had to eventually support an alternative UF Government headed by Gujral.

The developments within the United Front, particularly Janata Dal, were not conducive to putting up a stiff resistance to the Congress efforts. The contest for the JD presidential election between Laloo and Sharad Yadav led finally to a split with the formation of the Rashtriya Janata Dal and a sizeable erosion of the JD in Bihar. The differences in the JD leadership finally led the UF to settle for the candidature of I.K. Gujral as the Prime Minister. The wrangling that took place for berths in the new ministry and the public discord discredited the United Front further amongst the people.

Our Party took the position that a UF Government without Congress participation must be there to foil the attempts by the BJP to come to power. We, hence, supported Gujral as the Prime Minister though a majority of the UF had favoured Mulayam Singh Yadav.

As events proved subsequently, even this government could not last long. The Congress now, using the pretext of the Jain Commission Interim Report, demanded the ouster of the DMK ministers from the Cabinet. We had taken the position that the Congress is being unreasonable and foisting another general election on the country only for its political bargaining and prevented the United Front from succumbing to this demand. We had stated that the unity of the UF was important in the present

context and the Congress's efforts to disrupt it by raising such demands and forging understanding with Laloo Yadav's Rashtriya Janata Dal on the other was only an effort to change the correlation within the UF and to somehow manoeuvre itself to head the government. By rallying the UF parties together we had succeeded in keeping the United Front united till 1998 election and foiling the Congress designs.

However, forced by the internal logic of their own opportunism and manoeuvring the Congress withdrew support to the Gujral Government thus foisting another general election in 1998.

Tactics During The 1998 Elections

The CC at its December, 1997 meeting stated:

"The tactical line to be adopted in elections depends on the concrete situation prevailing today. The Congress party which had the monopoly of power for long is weakened very much. Whether they will be able to maintain the present position is doubtful. But one should not underestimate its strength because of the old mass base which exists in the country. Even during the last elections the Congress polled 28.8% and the impact in the minds of the masses about the traditional organization is still there. It also depends on the new alliances which they will be able to build. It seems that in some of the states where the Congress can benefit, BSP will go along with them such as in Bihar, MP and Punjab. In Bihar may be the BSP does not count and except in the areas adjoining Uttar Pradesh is not a force. In Madhya Pradesh it can become a determining factor in favour of the Congress. Similarly it can help the Congress in Punjab too to an extent. In the North-East and the South, BSP does not count.

"The BJP is trying to do everything to emerge as a major force if not getting majority and is developing alliances with regional parties. It has come to an understanding with Laxmi Parvathi in Andhra Pradesh and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu. But in Uttar Pradesh as it seems the BSP will not go with the BJP. We are not a force there. Nor are the other Left parties. We have to watch how the SP will be able to supplement its strength to fight the BJP which is the main contender in UP elections where 85 seats are at stake.

"Bihar position is not certain because of the attitude of the Central Government towards Laloo Prasad Yadav. But the mass response to our combination has been there. Laloo Prasad Yadav banks upon the support of the Yadavs SCs and minorities. While the bulk of the Yadavs are with Laloo Prasad, it is not the same position with the scheduled castes and minorities who can shift to the UF combination. If the United Front constituents like the Janata Dal, SP and Left parties go together, then it has to be seen whether the minorities shift and come this side and this becomes quite a strong force. There is a split in the Congress party with Jagannath Mishra forming his own party. Its impact has to be seen.

"The situation in other states is complex as in Maharashtra. The earlier alliance which had got 20 per cent of votes, has broken with the RPI coming to an understanding with the Congress and they want to rope in the SP also. The PWP is also inclined towards that. Because of the aggressive attitude of the Shiv Sena and the BJP, minorities are very much frightened there. In view of that it is likely that SP also comes to understanding with the Congress on seat adjustments. Janata Dal and the Left is a very weak force and the combined strength of Janata Dal, Communist parties and the PWP and RPI is quite significant, which was seen during the last elections. But it is the division of votes that the Shiv Sena came to power. There has been a shift in the Congress base towards BJP-Shiv Sena. It has to be assessed.

"The present situation is complicated and we have to work out the tactical line to meet the present challenges. There is no difference of opinion in the Party now on the formation of the United Front. The Central Committee has also endorsed in the draft political resolution for the 16th Congress, the line followed in this respect. In consonance with our position we have taken a consistent stand that the Party will have to fight against both the BJP and the Congress but in consonance with our line we have to see that where the Left is not a force and the United Front is not effective viz. Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Himachal and Delhi fire should be concentrated against the BJP. Such cases can be concretely discussed in the state committees. The Left and the UF constituents should contest in those seats where they can put up an effective fight. But the line must be worked out from the Centre and the state units should not be allowed to go their own way without the approval of the Centre.

We have earlier also taken such a position in the elections even when the Congress was more powerful. Now the Congress is a declining force while its place is being taken by the BJP. This poses a big danger to the democratic movement.

"Other important question which is being posed is about the alternative government. One fact which forced us last time to say that we will consider the question about the participation after the elections arose because of the concrete situation to enthuse the people in the elections. After the United Front had come to power some hopes are raised in the minds of the people for this alternative as against that of the BJP and the Congress. This is of great significance. It is not a mean achievement that it has stood together. We have to present the question in a way where we do not declare non-participation in government and the concrete decision will be taken after the elections.

"Regarding the manifesto, we should go in for a joint manifesto of the Left parties in which we can put forward the main points based on the Left and democratic programme so that the Left's independent position on all issues goes before the people. At the same time we should come out with a common declaration on policy issues on behalf of the United Front in which apart from the political issues like defence of secularism, strengthening of federalism, national unity and democratic steps like electoral reforms and anti-corruption measures, we should also highlight some pro-people economic measures that can be taken.

"For the election campaign, we should go with the following slogans: elect the United Front with a majority to form the Central Government; defeat the BJP and the Congress; strengthen the representation of the CPI(M) and the Left parties."

Result of 1998 Elections

In the elections, the BJP was able to emerge with 180 seats with 25.47% of votes and with its allies like the AIADMK, the Samaj Party, the Trinamul Congress etc., its strength came to 262. The Congress party could only get 141 seats, though it secured 25.88% of the votes. The decline of votes of the Congress was mainly due to its losses in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Orissa.

However, the United Front which had won 170 seats in 1996 elections secured only 99 seats in 1998. The setbacks suffered by

the Janata Dal, DMK, TMC and AGP contributed to the decline of the United Front. The Janata Dal which had 46 seats in 1996 won only 6 seats in 1998. The major setbacks of Janata Dal were in Bihar, Orissa and Karnataka.

The Left parties which got 52 seats in 1996 have now only 48 seats in the Lok Sabha. The CPI's strength has been reduced from 12 to 9 and Forward Bloc's from 3 to 2. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the RSP have been able to retain their seats. The percentage of votes polled by Communist Party of India (Marxist) declined from 6.1 per cent in 1996 to 5.2 in 1998. The percentage of votes polled by CPI(M) declined in many states except in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. We lost our sitting seats Barpeta in Assam and Khammam in Andhra Pradesh.

The Central Committee Election Review, however, noted:

"The Party has to undertake a deep and thoroughgoing analysis of the reasons for the serious defeats suffered by the third force as represented by the UF. Some of the reasons for the major setbacks to the UF have to be gone into to draw proper lessons for the immediate as well as long-term tactics.

"It is very clear that the UF, which was formed to meet the specific situation that arose in May 1996, was unable to project itself as the effective alternative to the BJP or the Congress. Even in this election, the United Front had decided to fight against the BJP and the Congress. But this objective could not be realised due to various factors.

"The continuous disunity, mutual conflicts and the absence of any purposeful efforts to strengthen its unity had vitally affected the image of the UF.

"Though a Common Minimum Programme had been worked out to endow the UF with some commonality of purpose, some of the bourgeois parties were not much bothered even about these guidelines.

"The dissension and conflicts in the UF manifested themselves in a most acute manner in the course of the run up to the elections. In most states leave alone agreed common lists of UF candidates there were not even electoral adjustments among the constituent parties. Except for the Left parties, all the parties were interested

only in their narrow interests and the resultant mutual conflicts vitally affected the very image and standing of the UF.

"Most state reports indicate that the JD was adopting a high and mighty attitude to the Left parties with regard to seat adjustments refusing to even concede one or two seats.

"As a result of all these, practically there was no common campaign by the United Front in the country as a whole. Only in Hyderabad and Calcutta, mass UF rallies were held.

"Absence of a common campaign is highlighted by the fact that Common Manifesto and Policy Declaration was adopted belatedly just three or four weeks before the elections. This Policy Declaration was hardly referred to by most of these parties.

"A very important reason for the setback is the most unsatisfactory performance of the United Front Government in very many respects.

"The CC had repeatedly warned that the BJP would benefit by this growing discontent. The election results have confirmed the correctness of our warning."

United Front Experience

Since the 15th Congress of the Party, in the context of the major changes in the political line of the country in the period from 1996 to 1998, the Party had gained very significant and valuable experiences in the relations with the bourgeois opposition parties and the application of United Front tactics. These rich experiences flowed from general elections in 1996, the crisis that followed the formation of the United Front Government and actual functioning of the government and the mid-term elections in 1998. These experiences have to be analyzed in depth, self-critically to enable the Party to draw proper lessons.

The CC in its two election reviews had stressed the need for an integrated in-depth review and analysis of entire experience from the 10th Congress to the present Congress. But this task requires much more study and discussion because the United Front tactics are closely connected with the total political situation of periods. Such a study calls for a total historical review of more than 20 years in the history of the Party. Though this task cannot be undertaken now, certain lessons on the basis of our experience deserve to be noted.

Concepts Behind UF Tactics

But in all Party documents since the 7th Congress, the concepts of forging joint actions, electoral alliances and united fronts have been emphasized. These aspects of our work coming broadly under the category of united front tactics is based on the concepts adopted by the Communist Movement throughout the world, especially after the 7th Congress of the Communist International.

In India, these united front tactics have the basic objective of rallying the widest possible support for the building of the Left and Democratic Front as a necessary step for advancing to the People's Democratic Revolution.

In the concrete circumstances in different periods, we have been following these tactics in the fight against the monopoly of power of the Congress, against authoritarianism of the ruling class parties and in defence of national unity, in the fight against imperialist intrigues, and the fight against the advance of reactionary Hindu communalism threatening the democratic fabric of Indian politics.

Need for Allies

Hence, the need for rallying allies is a cardinal concept. The possibility of rallying wider allies have been enhanced with the emergence of bourgeois opposition parties and combinations at the Centre and of regional parties in the states. Since the rise of these parties is closely linked with the decline of the major bourgeois-landlord party—the Congress—and the weakening of its monopoly of power, these parties had certain democratic content in their policies and activities. Similarly, the uneven development, over-centralization and authoritarian attitudes at the Centre and the nationality aspirations have contributed to the emergence of regional parties. Some of these parties also take certain democratic positions. They also perform a big role in the fight for major changes in the Centre-State relations. Of course, the continuing crisis in the country has also led to the formation of various splinter parties.

Key Aspects of UF Tactics

In deciding on our tactics in relation to these parties, the Party has repeatedly stressed certain key points. The first of these is the need for allies in the struggle for democracy and national unity. Secondly, we have noted that these parties have behind them, considerable sections of these masses who have to be won over to the democratic cause. Thirdly, the Party has taken into consideration the Leninist principle that every schism or rift in the rival camp have to be skillfully used to advance to our objective.

It is on the basis of these tactical concepts that we have been organizing joint action on common issues, electoral adjustments, electoral alliances and even united fronts at various levels. Only in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, where the CPI(M) and the Left parties are leading, have we succeeded in forging stable alliances on the basis of agreed common programmes for many years. In other states, we have had electoral alliances or seat adjustments to fight elections and in many cases we extended outside support to some of these parties to form governments. At the Centre, we have had the specific experience of the United Front with support extended from outside.

We have characterized these parties as bourgeois opposition parties or secular bourgeois opposition parties. These parties have their own class characteristics, but our Party has taken the view that these parties can play a positive role in the matter of strengthening democracy, including Centre-State relations, providing immediate relief for the people etc. Our Party has been consistently striving to have common understanding with these parties on specific issues and has been also trying to draw the parties and the masses to common mass activities.

Negative Features

However, it is our experience that these parties have serious shortcomings with regard to their policies and practices. In many Party Congress documents, we have stated that limitations of their policies and practices give them a vacillating character, and hence on many occasions, our relations with them are beset with difficulties and are unstable. It is our experience that since the

leadership of these parties are motivated by the eagerness to come to power in the states or aspire to share Central power, on many occasions, they take up opportunist positions. In the Party Congress and in the Central Committee resolutions, we have pointed out that most of these parties, including regional parties like TDP, DMK etc, accepted the IMF-World Bank dictated economic policies. This is due to their class limitations. We have also noted that these parties being very much dependent on the active support of the rural rich (the landlords, the rich peasants, the contractors etc) take a negative attitude towards land reforms and even to measures for the improvement of the condition of agricultural labourers. In many cases, the state governments led by these parties adopt hostile attitudes towards the struggles of the toiling people. In the context of the intensification of caste polarization, some of these parties are mainly carried away by the need to strengthen their caste support base and hence in various ways strengthen caste consciousness and conflicts. On social issues, such as equal status for women, some of these parties have a retrograde approach.

The very recent experience with the TDP has revealed the vacillating character of some of these parties even on the question of secularism.

It is the common experience of this period that though the leaderships are keen to win the support of the Left parties, especially during elections, they are very reluctant to have electoral adjustments or allotment of seats to Left parties.

These negative features have certainly affected the forging of genuine unity. In spite of all our sincere efforts to build joint actions, electoral alliances etc with these parties, we find that the negative attitudes have harmed the forging and sustenance of unity.

The very recent experience with the TDP has revealed the vacillating character of some of these parties even on the question of secularism.

The Correct UF Tactics

The actual experience of our efforts have to be properly analyzed and grasped. Despite the negative factors, we should continue to carry forward the line of building the broadest possible unity, based on the correct concept of continuously

striving to win allies. At the same time, as the Party Congress resolutions have repeatedly warned, we have to consciously guard against the tendencies of tailing behind these parties. As a working class party, we have our distinct programme and policies. We seek to follow united front tactics to strengthen the common mass activities and to unite the broad masses in the common struggle. With these views, our tactics should have the following distinct features.

(a) We seek to come to an understanding with these parties for joint campaigns on specific issues for specific periods or for particular junctures.

(b) While we will have joint actions, electoral seat adjustments or electoral alliances, these cannot be equated with united fronts on the basis of common programmes.

(c) Even when we have unity in action, we have to demarcate ourselves from the policies and practices of these parties which we consider to be harmful. There cannot be any unity without such demarcation. The tone and tenor of our demarcation or criticisms have to be such that they contribute to further strengthening of common understanding.

(d) Even when we have a common understanding with these parties on specific issues, the Party has to constantly project its independent political line before the masses.

(e) We have to always bear in mind that drawing the masses behind the bourgeois parties into common activity is the prime objective of our United Front tactics. This implies that the real united front can be forged through mass activity, strengthening of mass consciousness.

Project Real Alternative

As our draft Political Resolution states, we have to continuously make efforts to build the Left and Democratic Front as the true alternative in the context of the deep crisis in which the country finds itself. Such a Left and democratic alternative can emerge through building the unity of the masses and raising the political and ideological consciousness. This requires conscious efforts to establish, maintain and strengthen links with the

masses, the activists and leadership of other parties. As earlier Party Congresses have pointed out: "Simultaneously we have to put forward a political and economic programme distinctly and sharply opposed to the platform and policies of the bourgeois-landlord parties and fighting for it to enable the masses to move away from these parties."

Post-BJP-led Government Situation

The assumption of State power by the BJP-led coalition marks a significant shift in the political situation. The monopoly of power enjoyed by the Congress in the past has been broken. As a traditional party of the ruling bourgeois-landlord classes, the Congress has lost ground. The BJP, on the other hand, is growing and sections of the bourgeois-landlord classes are rallying behind it. The Congress and the BJP today enjoy a nearly equal support base in terms of the percentage of votes polled.

The decline of the Congress does not mean that its class character has changed. It remains a party of the ruling classes against whom we shall have to wage a political battle. The BJP which has emerged as a major party has its ideological and philosophical basis, the pernicious theory of 'Hindu Rashtra'. In this sense, the BJP functions as the political wing of the RSS. This suits the interests of imperialism and sections of the ruling classes but is disruptive of national unity and social harmony in a country as diverse and plural as ours. Its ideological basis is contrary to the fundamental pillars of secular democracy which forms the basis of independent India's Constitution. Its assumption of the reins of State power poses great dangers both to national unity and to the democratic movement. The communal forces seek to disrupt that very unity of the toiling classes—poor peasants, agricultural workers and the working class—which we seek to strengthen and on that basis change the correlation of class forces in favour of Left and democratic forces.

A proper appreciation of the dangers posed by a communal party holding the reins of State power must be made. It is not accidental that the BJP is getting a favourable response from imperialist countries which have promptly welcomed the

formation of this government. Further, both the bourgeois-landlord ruling classes and imperialism would not prefer any government which requires the support of the Left. They will make all efforts to foil such a possibility.

Attitude to an Alternative Government

After the 1998 elections, the Central Committee in its April meeting discussed the possibility of an alternative government being formed in case the BJP was defeated in the confidence motion after being called to form the government. In the event of the Congress being prepared to lead an alternative government, the Central Committee decided that we should support it from outside.

The Central Committee, at the same time, reiterated that, "No question arises of having any front or alliance with the Congress. But in order to prevent the BJP from consolidating its hold over State power, and the infiltration of administration that it seeks to do, we had decided to support the Congress, if and when the situation arises, from the outside".

Subsequently, when the inner conflicts within the BJP coalition heightened and Jayalalitha threatened to withdraw support, the issue of an alternative government again came to the fore. Regarding this, in the July 1998 CC meeting, we stated: "Our Party indicated that in the eventuality of the downfall of the Vajpayee Government there has to be a secular alternative government as mid-term elections cannot be thought of immediately. In such a situation, we reiterated the stand taken at the time of the confidence vote that we would extend support from outside to the formation of a Congress-led Government in the framework spelt out in the last CC report."

Underlying this stand was the understanding that we would not enter into an alliance with the Congress but have an approach of issue-based support to the Congress Government from outside.

Nuclear Jingoism

Following the nuclear tests, India's security concerns have worsened. India has become more vulnerable to imperialist

pressures and the BJP Government seems now ready to capitulate on India's long-standing position of not signing discriminatory treaties like the CTBT and the NPT.

In the post-Pokhran-II phase India's international standing has received a severe drubbing. This was glaringly evident at the 12th Non-Aligned Summit held recently in South Africa.

India has thus become more vulnerable to imperialist pressures. In the name of fighting sanctions, the BJP-led Government is further opening up our economy which precisely suits the interests of foreign finance capital. The economy is being made more accessible for imperialist loot and the country is being made more vulnerable to political diplomatic and military pressures by imperialism.

The PB statement came out firmly against the reversal of the long-standing nuclear policy and strongly opposed the jingoistic stance of the BJP and the government and spelt out the harmful consequences for relations with our neighbours and for peace in the region. Prior to that, a joint statement was issued by the CPI(M) and the CPI demarcating our position from the BJP Government's stand.

Subsequently, a Central Party letter was issued to all Party members and sent to the state committees. A Hindi version of the letter was also printed and distributed to the Hindi-speaking states.

Our firm stand and our discussions with other parties helped to rally them to demarcate them from the BJP Government's stand.

After the reporting of the Party stand on the issue, the Party Centre also approved the idea of holding broadbased conventions involving intellectuals and other eminent citizens to mobilize public opinion against nuclear weaponization and the jingoism of the BJP. The CPI(M) has called for (a) not going in for weaponization and deployment of nuclear weapons (b) India should continue to oppose discriminatory treaties and not sign the CTBT (c) India should continue to campaign for non-discriminatory agreements to check nuclear proliferation and for achieving universal nuclear disarmament.

A convention was held in Delhi on 9th June, sponsored by a committee of intellectuals and eminent citizens. The PB advised the state committees to organize similar conventions. So far conventions have been held in Mumbai, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Madras, Lucknow, Shimla, Thiruvananthapuram, Kozhikode and elsewhere.

The PB gave a call for the observance of 6th August, Hiroshima Day, against nuclear weapons and for universal nuclear disarmament. This was observed in many places through broad committees mobilizing wider sections by holding protest demonstrations, rallies, seminars and photo exhibitions. Notable was the massive 400000-strong rally taken out in Calcutta on the occasion. The Party Centre brought out a booklet "Against Nuclear Jingoism" for this campaign.

Growing Insecurity

The BJP-led Government and the RSS affiliates have unleashed actions that only increase the sense of insecurity and fear amongst the people, particularly the minorities. The direct fallout of the nuclear tests has been the sudden spurt of terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir. The several episodes of violent killings in Jammu and later Chamba have clearly belied the government's claims. In fact, reports have clearly exposed the RSS attempt to utilize the terrorist attacks as a pretext for whipping up communal passions that is leading to attacks on innocent Muslim families.

Likewise in Gujarat and north-east, the attacks against the Christian minorities have intensified. The Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad, through their own programmes under State patronage, are whipping up fear and insecurity amongst the minorities. They have gone to the extent of seeking to monitor inter-community marriages and examine the credentials of Hindus marrying non-Hindus.

In protest against the deportation of Bengali Muslims in the name of Bangladeshi immigrants, the Party took the initiative in Bengal and Maharashtra. Our MLAs in Maharashtra Assembly took the initiative in exposing the Shiv Sena-BJP Government.

Party MPs visited the areas in Mumbai which received good support and publicity. The Party condemned the communal attacks on artists.

Temple Issue

Media reports appeared about the construction work for the Ram temple being carried out in two sites in Rajasthan and at Ayodhya. This matter was raised in Parliament and there was a lot of apprehensions among the minorities and the secular people. In order to focus on this issue, a Left parties MPs team was sent to Ayodhya to find out what sort of work is going on for the temple construction. A seven-member team of MPs visited the workshop where pillars and other materials are being prepared by the VHP. Their report confirming this work was timely and highlighted the plan of the RSS combine to go ahead with the construction work irrespective of the court order to maintain the status quo and to subvert a future court decision.

Srikrishna Commission Report

The contempt with which the BJP-Shiv Sena Government outrightly rejected the Srikrishna Commission Report reflects their deep-rooted urge to destroy the democratic structures of modern India, apart from sending a chilling message to the minorities that they cannot expect even elementary rights and natural justice under their rule. The Maharashtra Chief Minister has gone to the extent of saying that he shall not arrest the Shiv Sena supremo even if the courts order to do so.

The Party took the initiative to organize protests against this decision all over the country. Public meetings and rallies exposing the Shiv Sena-BJP combine were held in many places. In Maharashtra, our state unit organized many protest actions. Efforts are being made in the state to organize broadbased citizen committees on this issue.

The Party Centre published the first part of the Srikrishna Commission's findings as a Party booklet.

Authoritarian Trends

In blatant violation of the Constitutional rights of the states, the BJP-led Government had sent Central teams to report on the law and order situation in Tamil Nadu, Bihar and West Bengal. The stiff resistance put up by the West Bengal Government and its refusal to entertain the Central team forced the BJP-led Government to backtrack. But this clearly reveals their intentions and willingness to subvert the Constitution to further its political agenda.

The repeated threats for invoking Article 356 against the duly elected state governments to please its coalition partners reflects once again that the BJP is willing to subvert the Indian Constitution and mercilessly attack the rights of the state governments. Our Party has openly opposed invoking of Article 356 in Tamil Nadu and Bihar.

Despite opposition, the BJP Government went ahead and recommended President's rule in Bihar. This was done in a brazen manner, a few hours after the Rabri Devi Government established its unambiguous majority on the floor of the Bihar Assembly. Our Party, while strongly condemning this, took the initiative to meet the President along with the Left parties and asking him to return the recommendation. Correctly seeing this as an authoritarian attack on democracy, we took the initiative to organize a joint protest action. The Left, Congress and the Rashtriya Loktantrik Morcha issued a joint statement calling for protests all over the country on September 25, 1998. The same evening the President returned the recommendation to the Union Cabinet. With many of its allies opposing the returning of the recommendation to the President for a second time, the BJP was forced to retreat. In doing so, the BJP not only lost face but its *mala fide* intentions were completely exposed.

The attempt to review the Constitution and introduce a Presidential system is also being made in tune with the BJP's current needs. This is a dangerous step. The RSS had publicly on a number of occasions declared the present Constitution is 'un-Hindu'. In the name of reviewing the Constitution what will be attempted is to negate the secular democratic foundations of

our present Constitution. Our Party has opposed such moves and stated that any review of the Constitution can be done only when the Parliament discusses and decides on the terms of such a review.

The BJP's authoritarian streak was also evident in the manner in which it chose to effect large-scale transfers of officials. The transfer of the Enforcement Directorate Chief, who was in the midst of pursuing cases against prominent people smacked of mala fide intent. Public outcry and the Supreme Court's intervention and its strong indictment of the government forced the reinstatement of the Enforcement Directorate Chief. The BJP Government was forced to eat humble pie.

Formation of New States

By announcing the decision to form three new states—Uttaranchal, Vananchal, and Chhatisgarh—the BJP Government has opened up a new divisive issue with demands for new states getting a fillip in different parts of the country. This will pose a danger to the linguistic principle of statehood as similar demands have already surfaced in Telangana, Vidharbha and elsewhere.

Our Party has opposed these steps and instead called for the creation of autonomous councils in these regions with adequate financial powers to tackle the problems of economic backwardness. Disregarding this, if separate states are created the Party has stated that the opinion of the people like in Udhampur Singh district in Uttar Pradesh must be taken before any decision. The CPI(M) MLAs in Bihar voted against the Vananchal Bill in the State Assembly. The Rashtriya Janata Dal which had earlier championed the creation of Jharkhand did a *volte face* by opposing Vananchal. Though this was done due to opportunistic reasons against BJP manoeuvres in the state, it nevertheless roused passions against the division of Bihar. This the RJD is seeking to exploit to bolster its political support.

Corruption

The BJP's promise of freedom from corruption looks more hollow than other promises. The BJP's betrayal on this score

began well before its government was formed. The unscrupulous manner in which it sought the support of the corrupt—Jayalalitha, Buta Singh, Sukh Ram *et al*—set new records in the degeneration of political morality. The same BJP stonewalled Lok Sabha proceedings for 13 days earlier demanding action against the very same Sukh Ram in the telecom scam! The worst was the manner in which the BJP engineered defections in UP and rewarded all 70 defectors with ministerial berths!

The brazen manner in which it virtually sold Maruti Udyog to a Japanese multinational smacks of large kickbacks. It is not the BJP's detractors but its own allies that have raised embarrassing and pertinent questions of "hefty bribes", leading to transfer of top officers. The decision to delicense the sugar industry on the eve of the festive season when the demand for sugar soars, benefits traders who have stocks of sugar and will reap super-profits. The timing of this decision is gravely suspicious.

The Party has openly opposed these and other scandals that have surfaced in BJP-led states.

Economic Policies

The economic policies being pursued by the BJP-led Government are further intensifying the attacks on people's livelihood while mortgaging the country further. The relentless rise in prices of all essential commodities has become the order of the day. Since the BJP Government assumed office, the domestic industry is in the grip of a recession which, far from easing, is worsening. The inflation rate has soared unprecedentedly. The stock markets lost over 1000 points (BSE index) during these five months. The exports have declined by eight per cent in the quarter ending June. Trade deficit has widened to \$6.8 billion in 1997-98. Foodgrain production is expected to fall by 5 million tonnes compared to last year. The rupee has stumbled from under Rs. 39 to a dollar in March 1998 to Rs. 43.65 on August 19. This has resulted in India's foreign debt increasing by Rs. 33,900 crore.

During these five months, the opening up of the Indian economy to the plunder of multinational corporations has gone on unabated. First came the removal of import restrictions and the

“freeing” of 340 items by the commerce ministry. This was followed by over-enthusiastic clearances of pending MNC projects in core sectors including petroleum, mining, steel and power. Counter-guarantee schemes like in the notorious Enron case have been signed with three other multinational corporations. The Indian ports have been privatized. The government has now drawn up plans for a large-scale privatization of the public sector.

The Party called for widespread protest actions against the railway and Union budgets. Joint Left actions were held in June. In many places, rail rokos and demonstrations outside railway offices took place. The LDF in Kerala gave a call for action on June 15th followed by picketing at Central Government offices on June 25th. In West Bengal, a massive campaign was organized including rail roko.

In Orissa, a rail roko agitation was organized by the Party at various centres. In Tamil Nadu, there was a one-day picketing outside Central Government offices all over the state against the rail fare hikes. In Andhra Pradesh, demonstrations were held in many centres, some of them jointly with CPI. Demonstrations against the railway budget were held in many other places in different states.

On 3rd July, at the call of the Central trade unions, West Bengal observed a one-day industrial strike. The general strike was very successful in all sections including all public sector units, transport services and educational institutions.

Growing Struggles

At the call of the National Platform of Mass Organizations (NPMO), protest actions were organized in various places on 3rd of July. The NPMO also organized protest actions on 14th July. Subsequently, convention of Central Public Sector Unions, on 11th August, gave call for 2 days' nationwide general strike in public sector on 10-11 December, 1998 and the NPMO from their convention on 12th August gave call of all-India general strike on 11th December, 1998.

Various sections of the people have been rising in struggles against these policies. During the last five months, major strikes

by health workers (nurses in particular), the postal workers, the university and college teachers apart from other sections reflected the growing discontent amongst the people.

The Central Committee, in July 1998, gave a call for a *jatha* campaign to cover all parts of the country from the third week of August culminating in a big rally at New Delhi on the 16th of September. All the state committees had conducted this programme. Some of the states faced difficulties due to the unprecedented flood situation. Despite this, the Delhi rally was a big success attended by a lakh of people.

Caste Question

During this period, the Party attempted to implement the 15th Congress's understanding of taking up issues of social oppression. This was based on the understanding of the dual nature of the caste polarization that is taking place. The growing upsurge among the dalits and other oppressed sections for social equality is a positive development which has to be integrated with the democratic movement. While, at the same time, the negative aspect of caste exclusiveness promoted by certain leaders which lead to tensions are being opposed.

The developments in Tamil Nadu recently show that the atrocities against the dalits, at times perpetrated by sections belonging to the OBCs continues to create tensions and conflicts. Our Tamil Nadu Party unit has intervened in an effective manner to protect the dalit rights and ease the caste tensions.

While the caste polarization and political mobilization on caste and sub-caste lines is becoming an acute problem in the Hindi-speaking states, such a trend is not confined here alone. Growing caste identity/consciousness and their electoral appeal on caste lines is growing in states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and so on in the non-Hindi regions too. While we continue to ally with the non-Congress secular bourgeois parties, the Party will have to seriously address the problem of casteism and its political and electoral implications. Here the Party's independent political-ideological stand on the caste question must be spelt out and widely propagated. The concrete situation

in each state must be studied and proper tactics and slogans worked out so that the potential of the awakening of the communities subject to caste oppression is carried forward on democratic lines while the narrow, sectarian and opportunist electoral manifestations which lead to dividing the working people and disrupting class unity is properly countered.

Women's Reservation Bill

From the time of the UF Government, when the women's reservation bill was introduced, the Party both in Parliament and outside actively supported the adoption of the bill. The one-third reservation for women in Parliament and legislatures was, once again, taken up after the BJP-led Government took office. The opposition from many bourgeois parties sabotaged the bill. The Party and the Left took a principled position on the issue.

Attitude to Rashtriya Janata Dal

The question of our attitude towards Laloo Prasad Yadav came up during this period. The Party had opposed his involvement in the fodder scam and demanded that he step down from the post of the Chief Minister till the enquiry is completed. His refusal to do so initially and later installing his wife as the Chief Minister was opposed by us. Further, his attitude of seeking to isolate and destroy the Left movement in Bihar which manifested in the attacks against our comrades during the land struggles and the efforts to marginalize the Left electorally had to be opposed in order to safeguard and expand our influence and following in the state. The Party Centre, accordingly, advised the state committee to oppose the state government's policies and carry on the struggle against corruption.

The Central Committee, at its meeting in July 1998, evolved our stand in the changed situation after the formation of the BJP-led Government by stating: "In Bihar, the RJD still remains the major party which is fighting the BJP. At the same time, the record of the state government is such that it has affected the common people badly and the government is hostile to the movements of the rural poor and the working class. Laloo's caste-based politics

has also proved damaging to the democratic movement in the state. In such a situation, we have to maintain our opposition to the state government's policies and demarcate from the RJD in the state. However, at the national level, we have to take into account that the RJD has 17 MPs and will play a role in the anti-BJP issues."

Attitude towards Rashtriya Loktantrik Morcha

The formation of the RLM by Mulayam Singh Yadav and Laloo Prasad Yadav with the support of Shankar Singh Waghela was a new development. In this regard, the July 1998 CC meeting said: "Laloo and Mulayam Singh coming together will have a good impact in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar as far as the fight against the BJP is concerned. But, at the same time, their attitude can hamper wider unity of the Left and secular opposition parties which we want to forge as the third alternative. It is, therefore, necessary for the CPI(M) and the Left parties to adopt such an approach whereby the new front and other secular opposition parties can be brought to work together. This means, we should have an attitude of cooperation with the new front while, at the same time, maintaining our ties with the constituents of the United Front such as the Janata Dal, DMK, TMC etc."

Observance of 150th Anniversary of Communist Manifesto

All over the country, the Party's state units have been observing the 150th anniversary of the Communist Manifesto. Seminars have been conducted in Thiruvananthapuram, Chennai, Guwahati and elsewhere. The CITU also is planning a series of seminars and it held the first one in Delhi on June 26th. Many of the Party journals are bringing out special numbers devoted to the manifesto and its relevance. We should use this anniversary as an occasion to propagate the basic Communist principles and educate our cadres and ranks to have a correct Marxist-Leninist orientation.

Anti-Imperialist Struggles

Solidarity with Cuba: Our Party had taken the initiative to organize the National Committee for solidarity with Cuba.

Various initiatives and campaigns were undertaken during this period. Calcutta hosted the Asian Regional meeting of Cuban Solidarity Committees. One hundred and sixty three delegates from 12 countries participated. Later, another meeting was held in Hanoi in June, 1997. A large delegation led by Comrade Surjeet attended this meeting. A nationwide programme commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the martyrdom of Che Guevara was observed during October and November, 1997. Che Guevara's daughter Aleida was invited. She participated in big solidarity meetings and activities at Delhi, Calcutta, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

During this period, Rs. 40 lakh worth of detergents (300 tonnes) was sent to Cuba. Currently, the National Committee is in the midst of a campaign to collect medicines for Cuba. Medicines worth Rs. 10 lakh have already been collected and the campaign will culminate in December, 1998.

Solidarity with Cuba today constitutes the concrete expression of solidarity with socialism and its defence against the all-out effort of imperialism to destroy socialism. This is a task that our Party will have to undertake and strengthen in the future.

US Imperialist Pressures: During this period, US imperialism has consistently followed a policy of curbing India's independent positions and potential for defence and security. It had mounted pressure on Russia not to sell nuclear reactors to India: Russia refused to succumb. As noted earlier, such pressures are now multiplying after the Pokhran-II by India.

The Party had strongly condemned, in this background, the decision of the Indian Government to continue to have military collaboration with US armed forces. Various rounds of joint naval exercises have been held. In 1997, the exercise code-named "Malabar-IV" was conducted. The Party had asked the UF Government earlier to review the agreement on military cooperation signed during the time of Narasimha Rao. However, the UF Government too pursued the same earlier policy.

In this context, it is relevant to recollect the observation made by the Central Committee in February 1997: "There has been insufficient campaigning on anti-imperialist issues and mass mobilization on the manoeuvres of US imperialism in India.

The Party should pay due attention to launching anti-imperialist campaigns both in terms of expressing solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles abroad and in taking up the issues where imperialism seeks to affect India's vital interests."

Tripura

The Left Front Government which came back to power in 1993 had to tackle a difficult situation created by the violent activities of the extremist groups which was going on for quite some time. The state government adopted a dual policy. It firstly called upon the extremist groups to lay down arms and enter into negotiations with the government and get rehabilitated in society. Secondly, the government decided to firmly tackle the violent activities, preserve tribal-non-tribal unity and protect the lives and security of the citizens. The first call met with partial success. But the hardcore NLFT and ATT (Tigers) groups did not give up their terroristic activities.

By the end of 1996, the situation worsened. Despite the improvement of relations with Bangladesh in the difficult terrain of the borders, the extremist groups continue to get shelter and conduct their activities which were increasingly aided by foreign agencies including the CIA and the ISI. A new conspiracy to destabilize the situation by large-scale killing of innocent people became evident. At this juncture, the Tripura state committee of the Party after a thorough discussion felt that parts of the state will have to be brought under the Disturbed Areas Act and the armed forces deployed there. This would be necessary to prevent any provocative activities resulting in inter-ethnic violence. The Polit Bureau discussed the matter. The Party in Tripura had so long not approved of the idea of deployment of the army under the Disturbed Areas provisions as there was every danger of the security operations targeting innocent tribal people. The Party and the Left Front Government felt that promulgating Disturbed Areas Act was essential. The PB and the CC approved this plan as all steps had to be taken to prevent the provocative attacks which can lead to large-scale communal violence. The United Front Government's attitude was positive and helpful in this regard.

Subsequently, the Party Centre has been assisting the Tripura State Committee to deal with the situation. It has been due to the continuous work and campaigns among the people by the Party that the tribal-non-tribal people have, by and large, maintained their unity and rebuffed the forces which want to disrupt normal life and amity.

Kerala Tribal Land Legislation

An issue which came up for discussion is the decision of the LDF Government in Kerala to amend the Kerala Tribal Land Legislation. This amendment bill was introduced by the government to meet the situation created by a High Court directive. The matter came to the attention of the PB only after the bill was adopted by the Assembly and sent to the Centre for approval. There were certain provisions in the bill which were not in the interests of the tribal people and did not conform to our all-India stand regarding restoration of alienated tribal land. Therefore, the PB proposed two amendments; first a distinction be made between small and big settlers and secondly to annul the change in the retrospective period for the enforcement of the Act. The Kerala State Committee decided to conduct discussions in the LDF on how to bring about the necessary changes.

Mullaperiyar

The question concerning inter-state waters between Kerala and Tamil Nadu arose in this period. It concerned the utilization of waters by Tamil Nadu from the Periyar dam and the question of the height of the dam. In Kerala Comrade V.S. Achuthanandan made some public statements regarding this matter. The issue became a matter of public controversy in both the states. The Polit-Bureau discussed the matter in August 1997. It was of the opinion that the issue should not have been raised in public. Given the fact that we have a government in Kerala the matter should have been discussed with the Party there and then in consultation with the PB discussions should have been held with the Tamil Nadu Party to arrive at an understanding. For this, the PB asked the Kerala secretariat to submit a note giving its position on the issue.

After which the PB would ask the Tamil Nadu secretariat to give its opinion and then work out a mechanism to resolve the matter. The note of the Kerala secretariat was received and this was sent to Tamil Nadu where the secretariat has discussed and sent its own note. This has come only recently. After the Party Congress the PB will have to pursue the matter.

Conclusion

The present developments pose a great danger not only to our secular fabric but to the democratic movement as well. The pursuit of BJP-RSS policies and the consequent disruption of national unity is bound to breed insecurity amongst the minorities leading to a spurt in minority fundamentalism. This, in turn, would benefit majority communalism, feeding on each other with serious repercussions. Further, the spread of communal poison will seek to disrupt the unity of the toiling people. That very unity which we seek to strengthen and on that basis to advance towards the Left and democratic alternative. Such are the dangers that cannot be underestimated.

With the BJP-led Government in power at the Centre, we have to deal with a new situation. Despite the fact that the BJP-led coalition is unstable and ridden with conflicts, it should not be forgotten that the RSS is making systematic efforts to penetrate the State apparatus. The BJP Government's economic policies constitute an outright attack on the public sector and in favour of privatization. It will add to the burdens on the people.

In such a situation, the Party and the Left forces must take the initiative to rally all the democratic and secular forces to fight the BJP politically and to dislodge it from power. Simultaneously, the Party has to step up the struggle against the economic policies which are ruining the people of the country. In order to build up an effective and broadbased struggle against the BJP's policies and the communal danger, we must pay utmost importance to the building of Left unity as it is the Left which has the most consistent positions in defence of secularism and against liberalization. The strengthening of Left unity and its growing intervention through mass campaigns, struggles and movements will help in mobilizing the other secular and democratic forces.

To fulfill the tasks set out in the political resolution to accord priority to the defeat of the BJP, the Left will have to strive to regroup and reforge the third alternative. The United Front which was constituted after the 1996 general elections is now in disarray. But the parties and forces which constitute the United Front are present even today. Some have taken opportunistic positions and deserted the secular combination but many others remain. The Left will have to take the initiative to regroup these forces. This can be done by uniting on issues against the BJP-led Government and by building up powerful united movements on the people's issues. It is only in this process that the third alternative can again become a vital force.

The need for a third alternative in the immediate context to fight the BJP-led Government and the threat from the right-wing reactionary forces requires us to formulate tactics to draw in the secular bourgeois parties on political issues on common platforms and for united mass movements on specific issues. This will help us to deal with the immediate situation where the Left requires allies for a broader mobilization to fight the BJP.

In the absence of such a third alternative, many of the regional forces may be forced to rally behind the BJP or the Congress. With the consolidation of its hold over State power, the BJP is seeking precisely to do this and isolate the Left. In the absence of a third alternative, the minorities gripped by a sense of growing insecurity may rally behind the Congress. Hence, under these circumstances, we shall have to make efforts to reforge this third alternative.

Distinct from this immediate task, we must emphasize the need for a real alternative which is the Left and democratic alternative. The Left and democratic programme which has been set out in the political resolution provides a set of policies and demands which are distinct from the approach of the bourgeois landlord parties. These are not meant only for propaganda. It is the duty of the Party and the Left forces to pick up the issues from this platform for struggles and united movements. Our appeal to the masses following the bourgeois parties including our allies must be geared to draw them in for united actions on the demands spelt out in the Left and democratic platform.

While concentrating our fire against the dangers posed by communalism, we have to simultaneously ensure that the popular discontent which is bound to grow further against the economic policies should be channelized behind the Left and democratic forces. But this discontent will not rally behind the Left and democratic forces automatically. The BJP would seek to divert this discontent on the lines of communalism and jingoism. It is only when a powerful struggle is conducted that the mass of the people will rally behind the Left and democratic forces. Such struggles, however, will not be conducted by many of our secular bourgeois allies who, in their states, are pursuing similar policies. The Left should take the initiative to draw the masses behind these parties into these struggles.

Increasing the independent activities of the Party and the Left forces, projecting the Left and democratic alternative and drawing in the masses into struggles on the basis of their platform and allying with the secular bourgeois parties to fight the threat posed by the communal and authoritarian BJP is the perspective on which we should base our work.

We should attach special importance to the development of the united struggles and mass movements by the Party and the mass organizations. Here, in the coming days, the call given by the National Platform of Mass Organizations for a general strike on December 11 and the campaign associated with it must be taken up by the entire Party. The struggle against liberalization is one which will be taken up firmly and consistently only by the Party and the Left. If we are able to develop powerful mass movements on economic policy matters, we will be able to draw in some sections of the secular bourgeois parties also into this movement.

Strengthening the independent role and activities of the Party is crucial for the advance of the Left and democratic forces. Our relatively weak position at the all-India level has been the major obstacle in translating into action the development and growth of the Left and democratic forces. Here the Party must draw the lessons from the recent period. Political ideological work of the Party must be stepped up in such a manner as to consolidate the

influence gained through the various struggles led by the Party and mass organizations. Continuous political campaigns to counter the slogans of the bourgeois-landlord parties and systematic ideological work to combat the communal and reactionary ideologies must be conducted and the Party organization must be equipped for such a task.

Under these circumstances, the Left, of which our Party is a main component, will have to play an important role in safeguarding the unity and integrity of the country, its social harmony and secular fabric, protecting the mass of the people from further economic assaults and advancing the rights and interests of the people. We have to undertake the following tasks immediately.

First, to expose the designs of the BJP and its communal allies. We have to intensify the ideological campaign against the communal agenda which is disruptive of national unity. In this campaign, we must make all efforts to rally as many democratic and secular forces as possible.

Secondly, a militant campaign must be undertaken against the economic policies that mortgage the country's economic sovereignty and impose greater hardships on the people. The concrete impact of these policies on various sections should be properly studied and correct slogans worked out accordingly. This requires the strengthening of the Party's mass organizations and for that purpose proper allocation of cadres at all levels must be made.

Thirdly, the Party itself has to strengthen its ideological and political content. Improvement of the circulation of the Party organs and other periodicals along with regular programmes of Party education has to be undertaken systematically at all levels.

Party Programme Updating

The Political-Organizational Report of the 15th Congress noting that the task of updating the Party Programme could not be completed as decided by the 14th Congress due to the demise of the Convenor of the earlier committee, Comrade Basavapunnaiah

and other reasons endorsed the Central Committee Resolution of March, 1995 which stated:

“Important national political developments have taken place which require the immediate intervention of the Party. Therefore, the Central Committee has decided to postpone the discussions on the updating of the Party Programme. This has been necessitated due to the urgent task of intensifying the mass movement against the new economic policies of the Narasimha Rao Government and the forthcoming assembly elections in major states where the Party will be engaged in the task of fighting the Congress and the BJP.

“Changes in the international and national situation need to be evaluated and the Programme updated. However, since the basic postulates of the Programme concerning the stage of the revolution, the character of the state, strategy and class alliance remains valid there is no difficulty in working out the tactical line of the Party.

“The 15th Congress will evolve a suitable mechanism to proceed with the updating of the Programme.”

The 15th Congress, on this basis, entrusted the newly elected Central Committee with the task of working out a time table and mechanism to proceed with the updating work.

Subsequently, the Central Committee constituted a new 6-member Commission comprising Comrades Harkishan Singh Surjeet (Convenor), Jyoti Basu, EMS, Anil Biswas, P. Ramachandran and Sitaram Yechury.

The Commission met a number of times and prepared a draft. However, due to the intense political activity during this period, the discussion on this draft could not be completed and brought before the Central Committee.

This Congress has to decide on the mechanism to finalize the updating of the Party Programme.

The Congress decided that the updating of the Party Programme must be completed by the end of 1999. For this, the new Central Committee is authorized to convene a conference.

PART III

ORGANIZATION

Introduction

The period after the 15th Congress was marked by quick changing political developments. Two general elections took place in May 1996 and March 1998. The last three and a half years have seen the existence of three Central Governments, the Narasimha Rao Government which continued till the May 1996 general elections, the 18-month tenure of the United Front Government which saw two successive Prime Ministers heading the government and finally the formation of the BJP-led Government after the March 1998 general elections.

During these three and a half year period, the two general elections took up a lot of energy and time of the Party's organizational work. Despite this pre-occupation, there have been various organizational activities to develop the Party and expand the mass organizations. During this period, the Party membership has grown from 6,31,171 in 1994 to 7,17,645 in 1998, an increase of 12 per cent. The class and mass organizations of the workers, peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth, and women in which the Party members are active have grown from 323 lakhs (32.3 million) to 372 lakhs (37.2 million) between 1994 and 1997. There have been some major campaigns on political issues which have taken place at the all-India level or at the states level such as the July 1997 campaign opposing certain policies of the United Front Government and demanding implementation of the pro-people measures in the Common Minimum Programme. Later, there was a big campaign against nuclear weaponization after the BJP Government came to power in 1998. The Party dailies, running in the five states, have registered progress. Publication of agit-prop material has increased in this period both at the Centre and the states. The efforts at Party education have been more systematic in some states.

The CC election review of the 1996 elections noted that "Despite all these activities by the Party and mass organizations

we are not able to go beyond our existing areas and increase our electoral strength. This requires deeper consideration.....At the organizational level, it must be examined why despite the considerable range of mass activities and movements conducted by the Party and the mass organizations, they have not found reflection in terms of the expansion of the mass strength of the Party.....The state of the Party organization at different levels is marked by various defects and weaknesses”.

It is on this basis that the review stated that “The Party Congress direction for initiating a rectification campaign must be taken up immediately now that the elections are over”.

The task of strengthening the organization is all the more important after the 1998 elections. The Party’s percentage of votes polled came down to 5.2% as compared to 6.1% in 1996 though we retained the number of seats in the Lok Sabha at 32. The CC review of the 1998 elections stated: “The failure to make gains, in spite of the Party being the only party continuously conducting campaigns, struggles etc. and despite the general prestige of the Party has caused much frustration at all layers in the Party.....The PB and CC will have to attend to these problems, relating this to our political, ideological, organizational work as well as to our political tactics, as the priority task with a sense of urgency. The preparations for the Party Congress and the Party Congress itself should be utilized to undertake this task.”

The most notable work on the organizational front taken up in this period has been the rectification campaign. Before we come to the actual details and assessment of the rectification campaign it is necessary to have an overview of the Party organization.

Party Membership

The membership at the time of the 15th Party Congress based on the year 1994 was 6,31,171. In 1998, the membership stands at 7,17,645. This represents an increase of over 86,000 members over a period of four years. In the 15th Congress, we had noted that the increase in membership of around 40,000 after the 14th Congress was significant in the light of the reverses of socialism and its international impact. The increase in the Party

membership is a stable trend for nearly three decades now. The membership has increased particularly after the Salkia Plenum, which called for a rapid expansion of the Party in order to develop a mass revolutionary party of the working class. The uneven growth of membership continues with over two-thirds of members coming from Kerala and West Bengal.

However, as the review of the organization since the Salkia Plenum made in the 14th Congress noted, while there has been expansion of the Party, we have not been able to sufficiently stress on the quality of the membership. The experience of the last few years shows that there has been a dilution in the standards of Party membership overall. We have to pay equal emphasis to the mass and revolutionary character of the Party.

The major increase in the last few years has been in the membership of the Kerala state unit. Even now, in the four-year period, the state has registered an increase of 40,000 members. While this reflects the big mass influence of the Party, it is necessary to concentrate on improving the political-organizational level of the Party members in the state. With factional problems existing, there should be vigilance to maintain minimum standards of membership.

Tamil Nadu has been the other state where membership has substantially increased. During the rectification campaign discussions in the state, the Polit Bureau stressed upon maintenance of minimum standards for recruitment and renewal of Party membership in the light of the fact that in certain areas 50 per cent Party members were not active during the election campaign.

The West Bengal State unit of the Party which has been maintaining high standards of Party membership has noted in its recent state conference report that "in general, the level of consciousness of the members is very weak".

Overall the dilution in the quality of membership is seen in: (a) the low level of political-ideological consciousness; (b) the inactivity of a substantial number of Party members in major political campaigns and election activities; (c) not being active in any mass organization; and (d) non-participation in the regular activities of the Party or the basic unit.

The directive given in the rectification campaign that all Party members should be active in a mass organization should be implemented. We should not keep members on the rolls who do not participate in Party programmes and in the mass organization.

Class and Social Composition

In terms of class composition we had noted in the last Party Congress that in the five major states, West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, the majority of the Party members belong to the working class, agricultural labour and poor peasants. In the last two Party Congresses we have noted the improved class composition in these five states which constitute more than 80 per cent of the total membership. However, it is clear from the reports of the state committees (except some like Kerala) that cadres from these classes do not find adequate representation in the intermediate, district and state committees. Despite expansion of the Party there is still the predominance of the middle class comrades at the leadership levels and the bulk of wholetimers recruited are coming from the educated students and youth who are manning key positions at various levels of the Party committees. A conscious-effort has to be made to equip and promote cadres from the basic classes. One of the follow-up measures of the rectification campaign should be to initiate concrete steps to train and equip cadres from the basic classes.

The report of the West Bengal State Conference noted a fall in the Party membership from agricultural labour (by around 2.5 per cent). This decrease is there in seven districts. Similarly the proportion of the poor peasant membership has also gone down. The West Bengal state committee should examine the exact position about this trend; whether it represents an actual fall or is it due to some reclassification.

As far as the social composition of Party membership is concerned, the percentage of scheduled castes in West Bengal has gone up substantially from 17.8 per cent in 1994 to 24.1 per cent in 1998. In Andhra Pradesh the percentage has gone up from 16.6 in 1994 to 19.9 in 1998. While the entry of scheduled castes in the

Party is satisfactory, however, the weakness among the Muslim minorities continues. Except in West Bengal where 18 per cent of the membership is drawn from the minority community and an improvement in Delhi with nearly 15 per cent drawn from these sections, in other states there is a low proportion coming from the minorities reflecting the lag in our work amongst this predominantly oppressed community. In the context of the offensive of majority communalism and the growth of minority fundamentalism in reaction, it is all the more important that the Party take special steps to work among them. The state committees should review their work in this regard. In particular efforts should be made to organize artisans, weavers etc, in professions where there is a concentration of workers belonging to this community.

There is slow and halting progress in recruiting women in the Party in spite of the emphasis given on this in Party resolutions. In West Bengal, the percentage of women has risen to 6.5 per cent in 1998 compared to 5.7 per cent in 1994; in Kerala it has increased to 6.8 per cent compared to 5.7 per cent, in Tripura it has gone up to 14.2 per cent compared to 9.9 per cent, in Andhra Pradesh it has gone up to 8.3 per cent from 5 per cent, in Tamil Nadu it has gone up to 7.3 per cent from 5.7 per cent. The overall increase in the number of women Party members is also better than the earlier period. There has been an increase in the women members in the district committees and state committees too. However, compared to the number of women active in the class and mass organizations, there is still a big lag in drawing women into the Party. As the rectification campaign has pointed out, this is part of the overall male dominated outlook which still exists in the Party.

Party Centre

A Polit Bureau of 15 members was elected by the Central Committee at the time of the 15th Congress. Out of this eight members were working from the Centre in Delhi. With the death of Com. Sunil Maitra in 1996, the number was reduced to seven—the same number as it was before the 15th Congress.

The PB sustained a grevious loss with the death of Com. EMS Namboodiripad in 1998. With this, the PB now consists of thirteen members. In order to assist the PB a seven-member secretariat was elected which included the General Secretary, two PBMs and four Central Committee members.

The work of the Party Centre and the CC was organized by setting up sub-committees and fraction committees. There are sub-committees for the trade union front, kisan-agricultural labour front and student-youth fronts. For the women's front there is an all India fraction committee. These committees have been meeting regularly.

The Polit Bureau, for organizing its work set up an organizational sub-committee and an agit-prop sub-committee. The main work of the organizational sub-committee has been the formulation of the rectification campaign and its conduct; apart from this it prepared a report on the problems of factionalism in Kerala. The agit-prop sub-committee planned and brought out 12 pamphlets for the 1996 general election campaign. We have to go towards regularly functioning departments for international affairs; Party organization and agit-prop.

In order to pay more attention to Party education, a sub-committee of the Central Committee was set up. Apart from this, the tribal and North-East sub-committees were constituted. The North-Eastern Sub-committee met twice and submitted a note to the Polit Bureau. This was not discussed and responded to by the PB. The tribal sub-committee has not functioned. There are a number of all India fraction committees industrywise. There are also fraction committees for teachers, lawyers and Hindi writers.

The Central Secretariat met regularly up to the 1996 general elections. After that it did not meet regularly as a unit though individual comrades have discharged some of the responsibilities assigned to them. The Secretariat members not in the PB were assigned responsibilities to go to some of the weaker states like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Andaman & Nicobar and Goa and they have been doing so. While some of the Party Centre work was shared by the Secretariat members, the overall work of the Secretariat as a collective unit was unsatisfactory. More thought must be given on how to function and integrate this body in the Party Centre.

Despite the shortage of leading comrades, the PBMs at the Centre, have been discharging their responsibilities with regard to daily meetings, attending the state committee meetings, participating in campaigns and writing for the Party papers. However, in discharging other major responsibilities such as ideological work, guidance to mass fronts and dealing with organizational matters, the PB is not able to address all these tasks in a systematic fashion. A shortcoming which is persisting for a long time is the failure of the PB to discuss reports of work in the mass organizations and place them in the CC periodically.

The work of the Party Centre can be improved only if there is an augmentation of cadre at the PB level and the various departments at the Centre. The strong states should provide leading comrades for this work otherwise the federal tendencies are bound to grow. The process of rectification of work at the Party Centre which has not yet been completed should be utilized for reorganizing some aspects of work at the Centre and provide for education and training to improve the ideological level of the cadres working in the various Party units at the Centre.

Ideological Work

During this period we have conducted a number of campaigns with an ideological content directed mainly towards educating our cadres, activists and sympathisers. The CC gave a call for the observance of the 50th anniversary of the defeat of fascism in 1995 and the 125th birth anniversary of Lenin. There was also a call for the observance of the death centenary of Engels and currently there is the year-long observance of the 150th anniversary of the Communist Manifesto. The anniversary of the Manifesto is being observed through seminars, meetings and special issues of Party papers at different levels by most of the state units.

While all these occasions have been utilized to some extent to propagate the Communist standpoint and disseminate Marxism, it is necessary to plan out more seriously such campaigns so that a more lasting impact is made. This requires both planning of theoretical and propaganda material and also organization of seminars/meetings with adequate preparations.

An important campaign which had a wider ideological and political significance was the observance of the 50th anniversary of Indian independence. The Central Committee decided that we should highlight the role of the workers and peasant movements and the contribution of the Communists to the freedom struggle. Secondly, we should present a critique of the 50 years of capitalist development and bourgeois-landlord rule and project our alternative. Holding of hall meetings and special issues of the Party papers marked the occasion. The *People's Democracy* and *Lok Lehar* brought out two special issues one at the beginning of the anniversary in August 1997 and the second at the conclusion in August 1998. In between, throughout the year, every week, there were two columns on the important anti-imperialist struggles and the memoirs of leaders of the national movement who were Communists or who joined the Communist Party. This was a worthwhile effort which helped all our publications to disseminate the role of the Communists in the freedom struggle. However, we did not succeed in the second part of the plan which was to bring out a series of pamphlets and books. Only two pamphlets on the freedom struggle could be brought out and none highlighting the critique of the 50 years of bourgeois-landlord rule.

Party Papers

There have been efforts to improve the content of the two central weeklies, *People's Democracy* and *Lok Lehar*. Special issues were brought out in connection with the 50th anniversary of the defeat of fascism, 80th anniversary of the October Revolution and the 50th anniversary of Indian independence. There is still insufficient coverage of the various struggles and movements which are taking place in different parts of the country and there is no regular reporting by a network of state correspondents in a systematic manner.

The central news service, the INN has been serving all the Party papers with PB/CC statements, articles, comments on national developments. Reports from a few states viz. Tripura and West Bengal on a regular basis were also circulated.

But Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Kerala where we have dailies have not been able to provide a regular reporter. With three dailies having their bureaus in Delhi, the nature of the INN's work and how to strengthen it needs further discussion.

A disturbing feature is the decline in the circulation of the two central weeklies since the last Party Congress. As the table published shows, there has been a decrease in the circulation of *PD* and a somewhat bigger drop in the sale of *Lok Lehar* compared to 1994. This is a serious failing at a time when the national political situation demands special efforts to project the Party's point of view on all important issues.

In the case of *People's Democracy* there has been a decline in all states except Tamil Nadu and Orissa; Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have maintained the previous circulation figures (of 1994). The decrease in the circulation of copies in West Bengal affects the overall figure as it is the major subscriber. The record of Kerala is the poorest with only around 450 copies being sold there.

As for *Lok Lehar*, the decline in circulation is worrying in the context of combating the communal and casteist trends in the Hindi-speaking states. Only Bihar and Delhi have shown increase; it has gone down in UP and Rajasthan. Madhya Pradesh which has been selling more copies has suffered a decline in the last two years. West Bengal circulation has also decreased in this period.

It is evident that despite repeated exhortations, the sale of Central Party papers is not taken up seriously as a task. In the Hindi-speaking states where no other Party journal exists this weakness is all the more glaring. Since the 14th Party Congress, the state committees are appointing one of the members to be responsible for Party papers and literature. However, it is only a formal decision which does not get seriously implemented either at the state or district levels..

While it is true that more and more, the dailies brought out in the states and the language weeklies are the ones which cater to the bulk of the membership, it is important that *People's Democracy* gets a wider circulation so that an all-India outlook develops among our cadres and Party members.

Party Dailies

There has been considerable progress made by the dailies run by the Party in the bigger states. *Deshabhimani* in Kerala began its fifth edition at Kottayam in 1996. A mass collection drive for it yielded Rs. 74 lakhs in two days. The circulation of the paper has gone up in the recent period. The *Ganashakti* has improved its get-up and content and it is planning to begin a new edition at Siliguri in North Bengal. In Tripura, the daily *Desharkatha* underwent a major modernization programme in 1995 with the installation of an offset press and computerization. Its circulation has since doubled. The *Prajashakti* in Andhra Pradesh has begun a third edition from Vishakapatnam. The pages have been increased from six to eight. The *Theekathir* continues to be published from two centres, Madurai and Chennai. But its circulation is yet to improve. Overall, it is necessary for all Party committees to actively take up the sale of Party papers. The circulation of dailies must be organized on a well managed system and on a professional basis.

The theoretical journal, "*The Marxist*", could not be brought out for two years between June 1996 and June 1998. This regrettable failure is mainly due to the inadequacy of cadre at the Centre. After this gap the journal has once again resumed publication from June 1998. Steps have been taken to regularly bring out the journal. Two issues of the journal have been brought out this year and a third special number will be devoted to the 150th anniversary of the publication of the Communist Manifesto.

An important achievement of this period has been the bringing out of the 25-volume documents of the History of the Communist Party covering the period 1920 to 1996. This major work has been accomplished by the editorial committee constituted by the West Bengal State Committee in a record time. All these volumes were brought out covering a total of 21,351 pages between 1996 and 1998. This 25-volume history constitutes a rich source material for understanding the development of the Communist movement for those active in the movement and for future research on history of the Party.

After the death of Comrade EMS Namboodiripad, the AKG Centre for Research and Studies has decided to bring out a 100-volume collection of writings of EMS. This will be a major venture which will add to the stock of the Communist works in the country. The plans to set up a EMS Academy with activities ranging from educational, research and cultural facilities is another major project which is being taken up.

Since the last Congress, the Party Centre has brought out a total of 40 pamphlets (English 24 and Hindi 16), apart from Party documents. Twelve pamphlets were brought out for the 1996 election campaign; other pamphlets were on the Hawala scandal, on the oil-pool deficit; on new economic policy; on exposure of BJP; on nuclear jingoism and Srikrishna Commission Report. But no full-fledged books could be published. This underlines the necessity for a central publishing house.

At the last Party Congress it was proposed to establish a publishing house at the all-India level. After discussions in the PB it was decided to set up a private limited company for the purpose. To provide the finances for this, the Central Committee gave a call in 1997 for a Party fund, a portion of which was allotted for the publishing house. Since then the private limited company has been registered and preliminary work begun. It is planned to start publishing books on a broad range of subjects from the year 1999.

Party Education

After the 15th Party Congress, it was decided to set up a CC sub-committee on Party education, so that a proper planning and syllabus for Party education can be organized. A sub-committee consisting of P. Ramachandran (Convenor), EMS Namboodiripad, Sukomal Sen, Biman Basu, B.V. Raghavulu and Shailendra Shailey was constituted. This committee brought out five booklets for Party education—on Marxist Philosophy and Political Economy; on Outline History of the Communist Movement in India; on Class Struggle and the Problems of National Unity; on Tactical Line of the CPI(M); and on Principles of Party Organization. By this, a long-standing commitment to prepare notes for Party education was fulfilled. In the second stage more subjects with reference to Indian philosophy, history and society should be brought out.

However, the Party Centre was not able to organize regular Central schools in the last three years. The only Central school conducted was a four-day school in Hindi for cadres of the youth student front drawn from the Hindi-speaking states in June, 1995.

There have been a large number of Party schools at the states level. In Kerala, the five Central pamphlets were translated and in order to see that these topics were taught in the classes for all Party members in all districts; three-day schools were held for selected teachers in which the state-level teachers team participated. In West Bengal, one round of classes at district-level were held by the State Centre on four subjects during this period. In Tripura, between 1995 and 1997, 40 educational camps of the Party and mass organizations were organized. Around 1,800 selected Party members and 630 activists of student and youth fronts had attended these camps. A group of 25 to 30 teachers were trained. The most comprehensive schooling has been conducted in Andhra Pradesh. Between 1995 and 1997, the Party and the various mass fronts conducted 738 classes in 19 districts. Around 80,000 attended these classes. Most of these classes were of 2-3 days duration. A one-week school was organized by the State Centre in 1997 for Party district committee members attended by 360. In May 1998, a teachers' training camp for 240 comrades was organized at Hyderabad. The state committee has noted that most of the classes are for 2-3 days period and the duration of the classes should be increased for adequate training.

As pointed out in the rectification campaign document, steps should be taken so that classes are organized for the entire Party membership. So far schools generally cover state and district level cadres. Secondly, more time should be devoted for mutual discussions by the students after studying the relevant material on a subject.

Strengthen Ideological Work

After examining the ideological work conducted in the recent period, it must be self-critically admitted that it is grossly inadequate. This is reflected by the following facts:

1. There have been no discussions after the 14th Congress "Resolution on Ideological Issues" of the new situation and the problems thrown up after the collapse of the

Soviet Union. There has been no ongoing discussions in depth on the theoretical issues which confront Marxism in the contemporary period.

2. The irregular publication of *The Marxist* and the delay in setting up a Central publishing house and the insufficient political-ideological material brought out by the Centre illustrate the weakness of our work on the ideological front.
3. The decline in the circulation of *People's Democracy* and *Lok Lehar* is an unhealthy symptom. This along with the stagnancy in the sale of Party literature brought out from the Centre in English and Hindi shows the lack of political-organizational consciousness to develop this important sphere of work.
4. The failure to organize Central Party schools since the 15th Party Congress also indicates the neglect of this work.

As we have noted in the political resolution, in the recent period, there has been a rightward shift with the advance of the BJP. It is often asked why despite our continuous mass activities and struggles, the Party's political influence and base is not extending? One of the major reasons lies in our failure to develop our political-ideological work both in terms of its range and effectiveness. Underlying this failure is the inability to comprehend that struggles on economic issues and immediate problems of the people alone will not lead to weaning away the masses from the influence of the bourgeois-landlord classes.

Our review of the political-ideological work and our organizational set up to conduct these activities should lead us to overcome the following weaknesses:

- (a) There is insufficient political campaigns on important issues among the people. We should not confine ourselves to stereotyped activities and slogans. We should concretely take up issues by which we can counter the bourgeois-landlord policies and project the Left-democratic alternative.
- (b) There has to be planned ideological work to counter bourgeois and feudal ideologies which are dominant among people through production of propaganda material and sustained campaigns.

(c) The Party organization should be geared up to equip our comrades to conduct propaganda on political-ideological issues effectively as part of their daily work.

Taking up economic issues and burning problems of different sections of the people is the foundation for developing our movement, but this alone is not sufficient to consolidate the Party's political influence and win over those sections who are under the influence of the bourgeois parties and their ideology.

It is in this context that we must reorient our work and create new avenues to approach the people. It is necessary to concretely take steps to counter systematically the RSS combine's propaganda among different sections of the people. Similarly, there is a need for the Party to take up social issues. There is a mechanical understanding that only political issues should be directly taken up by the Party. In the society in which we live there are a host of social problems which must be addressed by the Party and the mass organizations. These include caste oppression, obscurantist practices, oppression of women and growing social evils associated with the spread of bourgeois values. In Tamil Nadu recently, the Party has taken up an anti-untouchability campaign by holding conventions and meetings. The Party sub-committees and forums connected with the mass organizations must also discuss how these organizations can take up such problems among the working class, peasantry, agricultural labour, youth, students and women. Integral to mass organizations activities must be the setting-up of reading rooms, libraries, educational centres, sports activities and other social service work which attract the youth.

In this connection special attention has to be paid to work among the middle classes. The Political Resolution has noted the appeal of the communal forces growing among the urban middle classes. There is also the corroding effect on the social consciousness of the middle classes through liberalization and consumerism. Both these trends have weakened our appeal among the middle classes and the impact of the organizations working among them. We rely mainly on the day-to-day work of the middle class organizations of employees to inculcate a

democratic consciousness or a Left orientation among these sections. But this is not enough. Other avenues have to be created for approaching the middle classes and to attract them politically and ideologically based on the problems and issues which confront them in their daily life and experience.

Cultural Front

Culture is a vital sphere where the reactionary communal forces are actively intervening. The erosion of secular-democratic values has to be fought back by the struggle to push back these backward ideologies through different types of cultural activities. There are a range of cultural organizations in which Party members are active in the field of drama, street theatre, music, dance, painting and literature. It is essential to systematically organize and expand our work in the cultural sphere. It is not sufficient to use the old forms of communication. The electronic media has become a main vehicle to purvey the bourgeois and reactionary cultural ideas. We must intervene in this area too. For this work an all-India forum to exchange experiences and coordinate activities has been a long-felt need. Despite repeated decisions the Party Centre has not been able to constitute and function the all-India cultural fraction committee. This needs to be rectified. Due attention should be given to the development of literacy campaign and people's science movement.

Tackle Organizationally the RSS Work

The growth of the RSS-BJP combine and its allied organizations poses a serious challenge for the Left and democratic movement. Under the aegis of the RSS there are a number of front organizations which allow for the penetration of the Hindutva ideology and lays the basis for the advance of the BJP politically.

Apart from the known RSS fronts and its mass organizations like the BMS, ABVP and VHP, there are many other front organizations which are working systematically to penetrate new sections of the people in new areas and to conduct their ideological work.

For instance, there is the Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram which works in the tribal areas and has a big network of social service centres, schools and health centres in the adivasi areas of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Orissa and North-East. It runs 8,975 projects in different tribal areas such as schools, hostels, health centres and sports facilities. Another important organization of the RSS is the Vidya Bharathi which is the biggest body in the various types of educational institutions. By the end of 1997 there were 13,000 educational institutions affiliated to the Vidya Bharathi having 17.5 lakh students and 74,000 teachers. There is a Seva Bharathi which works among the slum dwellers and the scheduled castes. The RSS has stepped up its work among women through various forums including religious functions. There are a dozen such organizations run by the RSS which constitute the political-organizational infrastructure for the advance of the Hindutva forces.

Given the primacy for countering the RSS-BJP combine we have to pay attention to certain areas which have been neglected by the Party and mass organizations. We have to seriously consider how to intervene in the educational field. Apart from our commitment to the public education system, we have to consider whether educational institutions can be set up which can foster secular democratic values.

Similarly, in the tribal areas where the RSS has stepped up work, for dealing with the problems of the tribal people which are distinct from other sections it may be necessary to set up mass organizations of adivasis. The Andhra Pradesh state committee has set up a "Girijan Organizing Committee". A similar need has been felt in Orissa where the adivasis constitute over 22 per cent of the population. The Central Committee should take up such issues for discussion and provide some guidance to the state committees on how to take organizational steps to tackle the work of the RSS among different sections of the people.

Rectification Campaign

The Central Committee decided that the rectification campaign should be initiated without further delay in the light of the

direction given in the 15th Party Congress organizational report and the 1996 election review. The Central Committee met in October 1996 and adopted a resolution on the rectification campaign to be conducted at all levels.

Apart from the fact that alien class values constantly penetrate the party working in a bourgeois and semi-feudal environment, the Central Committee resolution outlined the immediate context which necessitated the rectification campaign. They are (i) the impact of the reverses to socialism worldwide and the renewed ideological offensive of the bourgeoisie; (ii) the thrust of liberalizing the economy and its attendant effects of consumerism, market values and bourgeois individualism; (iii) the growth of communal and reactionary forces and the growing fragmentation based on caste identities which are inimical to progressive and scientific ideas; (iv) the protracted nature of the struggle for change in the correlation of class forces and the slow and uneven development of the Communist movement leads to tendencies for adjusting to the bourgeois order and succumbing to its values; (v) the impact of the bourgeois parties' style and methods of use of money power etc. with whom we have alliances has a corroding influence on our cadres; (vi) the large number of new entrants to the Party and our organizational failure to provide political-ideological training and re-education of the old members results in low level of political consciousness.

The resolution set out the framework for rectification as follows:

“The Central Committee after discussing the scope of the rectification campaign has underlined its importance as part of our ongoing efforts to strengthen and rejuvenate the revolutionary character of the Party. This is the spirit in which the campaign has to be undertaken—to pinpoint the weaknesses and deviations and to rectify them for the wider aim of moulding the Party as an effective instrument of the working class and for strengthening the unity of the Party. Care should be taken to see that this is the direction of the campaign and it should not be used for mudslinging or for settling scores within the Party.”

The resolution called for eliminating the disease of parliamentarianism and parliamentary opportunism as a central task. The 14th Congress had sounded a warning about the spreading problem of parliamentarism and the crass opportunism connected with it. After the 15th Congress the Party had to expel Nripen Chakravorty, one of the veteran leaders of the Party and one of the founders of the Communist movement in Tripura. He went out of the Party as he became a victim of hankering for power. This highlighted how parliamentary opportunism can erode Communist consciousness and damage the Party.

The resolution noted that the bane of parliamentarism should not be seen merely as a deviation among some leaders and cadres for holding elected positions and power. "It is a totally reformist outlook that confines the Party's activities to electoral work and the illusion that the Party's advance can be ensured solely through fighting elections. Neglecting the work of organizing the mass movements, launching struggles and building the Party is a result of this parliamentary outlook."

The second problem pinpointed by the resolution is the growth of factionalism, careerism, individualism and the erosion of the principles of democratic centralism in the working of the Party. One aspect of factionalism is the effort to capture key positions in Party committees. The growth of careerism also reflects this trend. The associated problems connected with factionalism and groupism were noted in the 15th Congress and the resolution called for strict action against those who indulged in such anti-Party activities. The rectification required to check factionalism must start from the top and the leading committees.

The third aspect taken up in the resolution for rectification was the maintenance of Communist norms and the inculcation of progressive values. This pertains to the lifestyle of the Communist leaders and cadres, their social outlook, of abjuring socially reactionary practices whether it be caste or attitude to women and family matters.

Similarly, the Communist approach to scrupulously handle Party money and not fall prey to bourgeois vices when elected to high positions in government or legislatures was also stressed.

The resolution emphasized the necessity for remoulding Party education to meet the needs of the entire Party membership and to systematically combat alien ideologies and project the Communist positions was spelt out.

Finally, the immediate organizational measures necessary to rectify the style and methods of Party organization to make it conform to the basic principles of democratic centralism were spelt out. It called for combating factionalism, bureaucratism, ensuring minimum standards for recruitment of Party members, ensuring that Party members discharge their minimum duties as set out in the Party constitution. Proper attention to the development of whole timers and their needs; adopting a correct approach to the functioning of mass organizations and the Party's relations with such organizations. It is on this basis that nine concrete steps for rectification were set out in the resolution which are as follows:

(i) Countering parliamentarism and electoral opportunism. Educate the cadres at all levels on the correct approach of a Marxist-Leninist Party of combining parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities with the aim of strengthening mass movement and the class struggle. End the neglect of Party building by exclusive reliance and emphasis only on electoral activities, enforce the principle of limitation of terms for elected functionaries at different levels confining it to two-three terms. Exemption will be given in only special cases with the approval of the state committee in the case of legislative assemblies and the Central Committee in the case of Parliament. District committees similarly will have power to exemption for lower level elected positions.

(ii) Strictly implement the guidelines set out for elected representatives/leading Party functionaries which is spelt out in the annexure.

(iii) Educate the Party members to conform to Communist norms and eschew all social, caste and religious practices which are alien to it. Take firm positions to oppose and mobilize people against untouchability, caste discrimination and other social evils such as dowry, oppression of women and against discriminatory practices.

(iv) Take disciplinary action against proven cases of corruption among Party cadre. Educate the Party cadre about proper utilization of Party funds and mass organization money; there should be proper maintenance of account and auditing of the same. All money collected for the Party should be accounted for.

(v) There should be regular criticism and self-criticism in the Party committees about bureaucratic behaviour of leading cadre and also any careerist tendencies developing. An atmosphere of having free and frank discussions must be created. Eschew all forms of factional activities. Take action in case of persistent violation in this regard.

(vi) Tighten up recruitment of Party members, ensure proper scrutiny at renewals to check up if Party members are fulfilling minimum tasks, activise branches. Ensure participation of members in Party activities.

(vii) Insist on Party members working in a mass organization as a basic duty. Educate Party members on democratic functioning of mass organizations.

(viii) Organize systematic Party education to cover all Party members. Organize syllabus and method of classes keeping in mind level of consciousness and to facilitate more discussions by participants.

(ix) For the political-ideological work of the Party, the Party papers are a crucial weapon. We must ensure that all Party members read and subscribe to the Party papers. In the case of daily newspapers, those with sufficient income will have to subscribe to the paper as one of the minimum duties.

Implementation of the Rectification Campaign

The Central Committee decided in the October 1996 meeting that the document on rectification should be taken up for reporting and implementation in a timeframe of six months by end of June 1997. In order to implement the tasks set out in the resolution, the Polit Bureau was asked to sit with the state secretariats in the months of December 1996-January 1997 so as to prepare a document at the state level to implement the CC resolution. After which the state committees met to discuss the

rectification campaign and to adopt a document for the campaign in the state based on their specific conditions.

By the month of February all the states were covered in this process with at least two PB members attending the meetings of the state secretariat/state committee. By the end of June (except for Punjab) all the state committees had completed the process of adopting their state level resolutions and taking it down to the district committees and lower units.

Based on the experience of the state committees' discussions a report was prepared on the rectification campaign and adopted by the Central Committee. The Central Committee report noted that the discussions in the state secretariat and state committees showed there is widespread awareness about the need to set right defects and shortcomings in the Party. The discussions have enriched the understanding on the formulations contained in the CC resolution. The discussions revealed that the defects noted in the CC document are very deep-rooted and widespread than was conceived of at the outset.

The report noted that in both the strong states and the weak states there is a strong trend of parliamentarism. Connected to this reformist trend are attendant problems of careerism, parliamentary opportunism and groupism. Except for the three states of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, in all the other states, the common manifestation of parliamentary deviation is the failure to utilize electoral activities and elected representatives for building the Party, mass organizations and develop the mass movements. In some of the state committees this was linked to the loss of the basic perspective of the Party's programmatic understanding of developing the class struggle for achieving the people's democratic revolution. Instances were cited of how class issues and mass movements were subordinated for electoral requirements.

The Kerala report stated that "In order to attain parliamentary positions a compromising attitude is adopted towards class movements and class struggles". It also cites tendencies to make the Party subservient to the parliamentary work gaining ground. The Tripura report cited instances of the leadership from the

veteran leader (Nripen Chakraborty) to some other state committee members becoming prey to parliamentarism and craving for ministerial office. The West Bengal report provided a detailed account of the necessity to guard against the trend of parliamentary opportunism in circumstances under which the Party is in office for a long stretch of time. In weaker states too the discussions have revealed the extent of the growth of parliamentarism which has become more widespread than what the CC document envisaged.

The Andhra Pradesh report cited the glaring instance of the Nalgonda district where parliamentary deviation led to a state secretariat member (B.N. Reddy), a state committee member and seven district members having to be expelled from the Party on the question of who will contest the elections. The Andhra Report further states, "The problem of rebel candidates, spending more money, defying Communist norms in election propaganda, politically coming to secret or unscrupulous agreements with bourgeois-landlord parties, demanding money from the political parties with whom we have electoral understanding etc. were noticed during panchayat and municipal elections".

In other weaker states too the phenomenon of parliamentarism is widespread. Bihar, UP and Maharashtra reports have cited different examples of this trend. The Bihar report states that the "parliamentary deviation was worst manifested during the last assembly elections when many district committees wanted to fight elections without taking into consideration the mass organizations and the level of mass movements. Some of the district committees defied the higher committee's decision and were penalized. State secretariat and many state committee members also exhibited weakness".

A serious defect noted in the discussions in the rectification campaign and which confirmed the observation made in the CC document is the absence of educating the Party membership in adopting a progressive and scientific outlook in social life. Whether it be observance of religious obscurantist customs, feudal attitude to women, question of caste practices and discrimination or adopting a scientific materialist outlook there

has been little effort to initiate discussions or campaigns in the Party and outside. This has led to a dichotomy in the outlook of many Party cadres who take part in the political activities and economic struggles of the mass organizations and in personal life and social outlook maintain a non-Communist approach and adherence to petty-bourgeois and traditional values based on religion and caste. The discussions in the state committees highlighted the need to take up the caste issue seriously and educate the comrades on the need to fight casteism and practices like untouchability. The lack of Party intervention in this sphere leaves the field free to bourgeois parties and casteist forces to foster caste consciousness and channelize political activities based on this. The growing consciousness of the backward castes and dalits for their rights is sought to be utilized to perpetuate caste divisions. This has led to the weakening of our political intervention and hampering the class struggle in these areas.

The Bihar report states that many of Party members follow various obscurantist practices. Conscious efforts to eliminate these practices by Party members is not there. The Tamil Nadu, Orissa, UP and other state reports show that caste discriminatory practices against scheduled castes like not allowing them to draw water from the well, drink from common glasses in tea shops, taking out wedding or burial processions through main roads take place in some areas where the Party and mass organization influence exist, but the Party does not take the initiative to campaign against such caste practices and mobilize the people. In all the Hindi-speaking states where caste consciousness is at its height, the Party and the mass organizations do not take up the issue concretely in their day-to-day work. This is the feature in the other weaker states too.

The Party has to conduct an anti-caste campaign within the Party and also such campaign is necessary in the mass organizations. It is also necessary to inculcate the Marxist outlook to the caste question and issues connected with it in our Party syllabus at the central and state level.

The Central Committee decided that all members of the Central Committee, state committees and district committees

should submit their annual statement of their income and assets. For this a proforma was issued and this decision was to be implemented annually at the time of renewals of membership. This was to start from the renewals of 1998. As per the information available with the Party Centre, all Central Committee members have filed their returns. All state committee members of West Bengal, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have filed their returns. In Kerala only 50 out of the 80 members have submitted their returns. Because of the preoccupation with the elections, this year it has not been possible to collect and process all the information at the Centre. But this will have to be done in future.

The rectification work of the PB and the CC and Party Centre apparatus is yet to take place. The organizational sub-committee of the PB could not finalize the draft document for this purpose. Some of the units under the CC had submitted their reports on rectification. However, this work was left incomplete with the fall of the UF Government and the imminent general elections. The fact that the PB and CC could not conduct their own rectification discussion is a failure which must be set right. The new Polit Bureau will have to initiate this task after the Party Congress.

Some other aspects of the rectification campaign with regard to Party organization will be taken up in the sections which follow in this report. At this point what should be emphasized is that the six-month campaign undertaken for rectification based on the CC resolution should not be seen as the completion of the process. Rectification is an ongoing process. The decision taken at the CC and state committee levels must be pursued as part of the political organizational work of the Party at all levels.

Experience has confirmed that the initiative of the rectification campaign was timely and very necessary. One problem which was noted prior to the rectification campaign and has now assumed more serious proportions, is growing factionalism.

Problem of Factionalism

Kerala

The 15th Congress had noted that factionalism is growing in states like Kerala and some other places. In order to deal with this

problem in Kerala, after the Party Congress, the PB made specific efforts along with the state committee. The state committee decided to set up three commissions to look into the factional activities in three districts of Ernakulam, Kollam and Idukki at the time of the district conferences. The PB went through the reports of the commissions which confirmed that factional activities had taken place. It decided that the General Secretary should visit Kerala and meet the state committee and pinpoint the factional trends and launch a campaign against it. It is in this context that three regional meetings were held in July attended by around 3,000 comrades. The PB issued a letter to all Party members in Kerala in December 1995 to point out to them the factional problems and to appeal to them not to give quarter to such factionalism and to rally around the Party's correct political and organizational positions.

While dealing with the question of factionalism in Kerala, we should not lose sight of the overall picture in the state. The Party in Kerala has a big mass base. It is constantly active among the people and leading innumerable campaigns and struggles. The mass organizations have also advanced in this period. The electoral successes of the Party and the LDF in 1996 assembly elections, the Parliament elections of 1996 and 1998, the various by-elections and local body elections testified the confidence of the people reposed in the CPI(M) and the LDF. The record breaking mass collection of over Rs. 4 crore for the EMS Academy fund is a recent instance of the deep roots of the Party among the people. The attention the PB and the CC had paid to Kerala stems from the concern that nothing should harm this major unit of the Party and the strong base of the Communist movement in the country.

The current factional problems can be traced to nearly a decade ago when differences developed in the Kerala state leadership. From 1989-90 the PB had been intervening to assist the Kerala leadership to settle differences and arrive at a unified understanding. However, in the Kozhikode 1991 state conference, the Kollam conference in 1994 and the recent Palakkad conference in 1998, factionalism persisted and got intensified. This was seen in

the way the contest took place for state secretaryship in 1991, elections to the state committee in 1994 and in 1998. At the Palakkad conference the panel prepared by the outgoing state committee was contested and 7 comrades on the panel were defeated including 2 CC members and some important trade union leaders.

The PB decided to take up the Palakkad state conference and the inner-Party situation as a result of the Palakkad State Conference and subsequently the emergence of a "Save CPM Forum" which challenged the Party and tried to function as a parallel centre. The organizational sub-committee of the PB went through all the material and the written notes of the PBMs and CCMs from Kerala. The Polit Bureau discussed the matter. It also held a meeting with all the CCMs of Kerala and heard their views. Based on this, the Polit Bureau presented a draft resolution to the Central Committee. The Central Committee adopted this resolution in August 1998. The resolution noted that sections of the top leadership in Kerala including some PBMs, CCMs, state secretariat and state committee members have been indulging in factional activities. In the Palakkad conference, there was factional mobilization and a planned elimination of some comrades. It pinpointed that parliamentary opportunism and the struggle to control Party committees are at the root of this factionalism. On some political issues, differences had cropped up which had been discussed and resolved. Yet, they were sought to be used for factional reasons.

The Central Committee strongly denounced the activities of the "Save CPM Forum" and the bulletins it issued. This is nothing but an anti-Party formation meant to challenge the Party and to disrupt it. In this light, the CC endorsed the enquiry commission report of the Kerala State Committee and approved disciplinary action taken against four members.

The Central Committee noted that factional activities were indulged in by a section of the leadership. In this connection, the Central Committee pinpointed the responsibility of some individual comrades and took disciplinary action against some PBMs and CCMs. The Central Committee noted in its resolution

that, by and large, Party members and cadres at all levels have a sound and healthy attitude and wish to maintain the unity of the Party and not rally around individual leaders and groups.

The PB self-critically noted that on two occasions, it had failed to act promptly. The first instance was during the Kozhikkode State Conference in 1991 when the PBMs present did not intervene to unify the state leadership which would have averted the contest for Secretaryship. The second time was in 1996 when after the elections, the PB did not attempt to get a unified choice for Chief Ministership which led to a contest in the state committee.

The Central Committee noted that there is a likelihood of vindictive actions against individual comrades and units when a factional situation prevails. The Central Committee warned that it will not tolerate such vindictive actions. In order to report to the entire Party the decisions of the Central Committee, the General Secretary attended the Kerala State Committee meeting in August. The state committee has assured the Central Committee that it will take all necessary measures to unify the Party.

The Central Committee expressed confidence that the Party in Kerala with its glorious traditions of sacrifices and struggles will rally around the correct political positions and the principles of democratic centralism.

Punjab

Another state where factionalism has sharply divided the Party is Punjab. Before the state conference there were disputes about the conferences held in two districts, Sangrur and Ludhiana. There were disputes about the delegates to attend the conference and allegations and counter-allegations about the way the conferences were held. The Polit Bureau had to intervene to sort out matters before the state conference. Since the state secretariat and state committee was sharply divided the situation got aggravated. During the state conference two sets of proposals for the new state committee came up in the outgoing state committee. Finally, in the elections to the state committee, there was a vertical split among the delegates. The seriousness of the situation can be gauged from the fact that in the list of comrades

elected to the state committee no one was able to get a little over half of the delegates votes. In these elections, some outgoing state committee members were defeated including a Central Committee member.

The problems developed in Punjab after the May 1996 elections and the Central Committee decision not to join the United Front Government. Ostensibly the division took place on this issue, but group rivalries and individual conflicts became the basis for the factional divide.

After the conference, a five-member secretariat has been elected consisting of all the members of the old secretariat except one comrade who was not elected to the state committee. The process of unifying the Party will have to be undertaken patiently as in the factional line up the division has gone down to the lowest units in many districts.

In these two states, Kerala and Punjab, factionalism assumed serious proportions. This does not, however, mean that the problem does not exist in other states. Groupism and employing factional methods have surfaced in some Party units in other places too. In West Bengal, such problems exist in two districts. The corrosion in the consciousness of the comrades, struggle for control of committees and the defective observance of the principles of democratic centralism create the grounds for wrong trends to emerge in various Party units.

In this connection, it is necessary to continue the rectification campaign stressing adherence to the principles of democratic centralism. There has to be proper intervention to resolve problems and disputes instead of delaying and accumulating them over a long period of time, Party members have to be educated that factionalism and groupism are impermissible in the Party, that lobbying or canvassing for individual leaders or groups and for elections to committees are against the principles of the Party and disciplinary action should be taken in such cases.

Where there are genuine political differences it is impermissible to use organizational methods to settle such problems. Organizational measures including disciplinary actions should be taken only if there are persistent violations of democratic centralism and the open breach of Party norms.

Misuse of Bourgeois Press

The 15th Congress had expressed concern at the growing leakages to the bourgeois Press of inner-Party discussions. The systematic use of the media for factional purposes and to depict Party decisions in a distorted manner has grown since then. In Kerala, it has become a serious problem while in West Bengal too, it is occurring. Even decisions at the PB and CC level have been, on certain occasions, leaked to the Press.

This reflects the erosion of consciousness at the leadership levels. It has a detrimental effect on democratic centralism. There has to be an inner-Party campaign as part of the rectification process to check this trend. In a few cases, disciplinary action has been taken. No one should be spared if they violate elementary norms in this manner.

As a result of the rectification campaign, the consciousness has spread in the Party that nobody should be spared for violation of Party norms by indulging in factionalism and groupism. The steps taken by the Central Committee to check factional activities in a major state like Kerala and the action taken against some leading comrades should serve as a warning and illustration of the Party's determination to root out this evil.

Branch and Committee Functioning

Even in the stronger states, a majority of the branches are still unable to work on their own initiative in all respects. According to the Kerala State Conference report, only 30 per cent comes under the category of working on their own initiative. In Tamil Nadu, 25 to 30 per cent of the branches are inactive. In West Bengal too, much more needs to be done for the branches to work on their own initiative. In the weaker states, a major problem continues to be branches which are inactive. The method of meeting with branch secretaries by the local or district committees atleast once in 2 months should be implemented so that the branch secretaries can be assisted with reporting and check up of the work. The state committees should take up seriously review of branch functioning annually as suggested in the 14th Congress.

The strengthening of the district committee functioning in the weaker states and streamlining the work of the intermediate committees in the stronger states must be taken up to tone up the organization. There should be periodic reviews of their work and responsibilities of individual members.

Wholetimers

As part of the evolution of a proper cadre policy, there has to be a policy of monitoring wholetimers and their requirements. Attention has to be paid to their political development. Special efforts have to be made to recruit women wholetimers. After the rectification campaign discussions, some of the state committees have begun upgrading and rationalizing the wages for wholetimers to meet their minimum needs and provide a uniform standard all over the state. Other weak states have also to plan and raise resources for payment of adequate wages to the wholetimers.

According to reports available, there are 3101 wholetimers in West Bengal; 5724 in Kerala; 750 in Tamil Nadu; 942 in Andhra Pradesh and 367 in Tripura. In these five states alone, the number is over ten thousand. In the rest of the country and the Centre there will be another 1500 approximately. These twelve thousand wholetime cadres need to be properly nurtured and developed.

The Central Committee gave a call for a Rs. 30-lakh fund in 1997, a third of which is allotted for looking after the needs of old comrades who retire, assisting weaker states with assistance for wholetimers and so on. The PB should now draw up a plan of action for this purpose.

As suggested in the rectification campaign, periodic meetings of the wholetimers should be conducted to review their work and to hear their suggestions and opinions. Such meetings are being held in some districts like Midnapore and Bardhaman in West Bengal and this practice should be taken up all over.

Party and Mass Organizations

Since the Salkia Plenum, in the last two decades, we have been able to develop and expand our mass organizations considerably.

This is reflected in the growth of the membership of the various class and mass organizations working among the working class, peasantry, agricultural workers, women, youth and students. However, the uneven development of the mass organizations continues. Here we wish to deal with the long-standing problem about a proper understanding of the relationship between the Party and the mass organizations. The main defect is in considering the mass organizations as adjuncts or subsidiary organizations of the Party. This prevents the independent functioning of mass organizations and their appeal to the wider sections. Particularly, in the weaker areas, such an approach restricts the mass organizations only to the different sections and they do not become of a broadbased character.

The defective understanding of the relationship of the Party and the mass organizations also manifests commonly in the work of the Party functionaries at different levels of the mass organizations. As pointed out in the 1981 CC resolution on mass organizations, the platform of these organizations mechanically repeat Party slogans and methods of work instead of addressing to the broader sections including those of the most backward consciousness. The overall assessment of the relationship between the Party and mass organizations shows that there is hardly any distinction between the Party and mass organizations at the district and lower levels in most states. The role of the sub-committees and fraction committees of the Party connected to the mass fronts is also not properly understood or implemented. The sub-committees to look after certain mass fronts set up by the state committees or district committees are for overall supervision to see if Party policy, in specific mass front, is being taken up and implemented. It is not meant to discuss day-to-day matters of the concerned mass organizations.

The fraction committees are supposed to ensure that the Party policy made by the relevant Party committees are implemented in the mass front. They should discuss how to conduct political-ideological work among the masses who are under the influence of the mass organizations; distribution and sale of Party literature and grouping of sympathizers and recruitment into the Party.

These proposals must be submitted to the concerned general Party committees. The fraction committee should assist the Party committees to implement the decisions taken in this regard.

Instead of doing this, the fraction committees, if they function, generally discuss matters connected with the day-to-day functioning of the mass organization which should be strictly the work of the elected executives or office-bearers of that mass organization. The fraction committees and fraction should not substitute for the work of the mass organization committees.

The practice of finalizing complete list of all members of the mass organization committee and the office-bearers by the general Party committee is also usurping the functioning of the mass organizations. The Party committees should only decide about the key positions in the mass organization from the point of view of deployment of its cadres.

In some places, the violation of the understanding of the mass organization is seen when the Party secretary or Party leaders, who are not in the leadership of the mass organization, attend mass organization committee meetings and give them directives. For the Party, there are other methods to give guidance to Party members by calling their fractions or holding meetings of the leading Party functionaries.

The failure to develop the independent role of the mass organization and understand the paramount necessity to attract broadest masses under its banner and for united struggles, is one of the major reasons why the Party is unable to approach larger sections of the people and continue to remain a small and restricted force in the weaker states. Attention has to be paid to breaking the barriers which divide the people and forging broader unity.

The other deviation which is prevalent in this regard is the failure of consolidating the work in the mass organization and their growing influence to further build and develop the Party. After many years of work in the mass organizations, including the trade unions, it is found that the Party committees, sub-committees and fraction committees do not pay attention to building the Party by getting sympathizers, recruiting them in the

Party and equipping them politically and ideologically. This leads to frittering away the work done to attract new sections through the mass organizations. It also betrays a reformist style of work where reliance on some individual leaders of mass organizations does not lead to development of the Party. The other defect noted in the Salkia Plenum continues. Individual leaders of the mass organizations belonging to the Party who command influence among the masses do not fulfill their responsibility as Party cadres and function independent of the Party's basic policies and approach. This also prevents building the Party through the mass organizations.

For rectifying this state of affairs, it is necessary to strictly follow the guidelines which have been set out in successive Party documents which may be summed up as follows:

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

Since the 1981 CC resolution on mass organizations was adopted, we have been reiterating the necessity to implement the correct understanding given in this document. This need has been

repeated in the last three Party Congresses after assessing that by and large, it remains unimplemented.

The PB and the CC cannot assume that this lag exists in the state committees and lower units only. At the central level itself, there has been no concerted effort and continuous intervention to rectify the deeply entrenched wrong outlook and practices in the Party. The fact that the PB has not initiated the periodic reviews in the mass front and placed them in the CC is an indication of this lack of effort from above. The PB could not also take up for discussion the trade union front review prepared by the trade union sub-committee. Rectifying this weakness at the PB and CC level will help the process of correction below.

In the next section, there are reports of the various mass fronts. They have given an overall picture of the advance in work, the shortcomings and some of the problems related with the Party and mass front concerned. The general point which needs highlighting for all the mass fronts is the need for more concrete study of the changes which are taking place in the area and the classes or masses amongst whom the front is working and formulating new slogans or appropriate policies.

Parliamentary Work

In the last three and a half years, our parliamentary group had to function in three different situations. First was the period of Narasimha Rao's Government, followed by the UF Government and then the third period when the BJP-led Government came to power. While we had to be on the forefront to expose and oppose the Congress Government's policies in the first phase, in the second phase, we had to extend overall support to the United Front Government and coordinate with the UF partners while at the same time demarcate and express opposition on certain policy issues. Currently, our group both in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha is actively opposing the BJP Government on many issues and has been successful in coordinating with other non-BJP parties to block some of the retrograde legislative measures.

The importance of the Party's work in Parliament has heightened in the recent period especially when the period of coalition governments have come in. We have to be much more

active in intervening on a range of issues, political and legislative, which come up in Parliament. There is still a lack of coordination between the work that is done by our parliamentary group and the whole range of mass issues and problems which have to be highlighted through the parliamentary forum.

With the continuing push for liberalization and privatization, it is a major responsibility of our group in Parliament to fight back this offensive against the working people in all its aspects. In the recent years, we had to oppose the successive Union budgets and other legislation facilitating deregulation and privatization. Our parliamentary group has to show more alertness and register their firm opposition to all such moves along with other Left parties. In this period, on many issues, teams of MPs have been sent to assist our work outside Parliament. During the floods in AP in 1996, the firing on workers at Hejala in Bangalore and the death of four persons in 1997, the police firing and killing of two activists in Talasseri in Maharashtra in 1997, the police firing in Sitamarhi which killed one of our women comrades, to investigate the temple construction work at Ayodhya in 1998, the Gujarat cyclone and the question of identification of "Bangladeshi" citizens in Mumbai—on these events MPs teams went to these places.

To ensure more efficient functioning in Parliament, it is necessary to revamp the parliamentary office and the personnel. This should be immediately undertaken. The parliamentary sub-committee must organize its work more effectively with the assistance of the Party centre.

Conclusion and Immediate Tasks

The struggle to build a mass revolutionary party which can spearhead the building of a Left and democratic alternative requires much more serious attention to be paid to strengthening the Party organization and rectifying the weaknesses that exist. As we conduct more and more mass struggles and movements, it is necessary to have an organization which is able to simultaneously conduct the ideological work necessary to consolidate this influence and counter the ideologies of the bourgeois-landlord classes. In the recent period, we have undertaken the rectification campaign to overcome the weaknesses and alien influences which are creeping into the organization. This rectification

campaign should continue from top to bottom. Building powerful mass organizations which can reach out to the widest sections of the people must be given priority.

In the coming period we should address ourselves to the following immediate tasks:

1. Continue the rectification campaign with special emphasis on educating and remoulding the outlook of the cadres at all levels so that Communist values are inculcated; parliamentarism and reformist outlook countered and progressive social values adhered to;
2. Streamline the Party organization with special reference to (a) improving the quality of Party membership so that minimum political-organizational standards are maintained; (b) activizing Party branches and training branch secretaries; (c) ensuring all Party members work in mass organizations; (d) ensuring collective functioning of intermediate, district and state committees;
3. Wage a firm struggle against factionalism, individualism, bureaucratism and all other violations of democratic centralism. Ensure that Party members and committees observe the norms of democratic centralism.
4. To expand the Party's ideological and agit-prop work; improve the content and circulation of the Party's papers both at the Centre and the states; set-up a central publishing house to cater to the needs for a wide range of literature.
5. Ensure systematic Party education with a syllabus keeping in mind the consciousness of the ordinary Party members and see that all Party members get education.
6. Step up the ideological work with particular emphasis on countering the pernicious ideas put out by the RSS combine; conduct anti-caste movements; take up social issues to ensure a democratic atmosphere.
7. Correct the wrong understanding on mass organizations at all levels in the Party beginning from the top; ensure that mass organizations are developed as independent broad-based democratic functioning organizations; ensure correct role of Party fraction committees and sub-committees in this regard.

REPORT OF MASS FRONTS

TRADE UNION FRONT

Reviewing the work of the Trade Union Front since the last Party Congress up to now, an evaluation of certain aspects require attention. The period under review has showed some general improvement in our work in the Trade Union Front, though there are many things that require substantial rectification.

Regarding working class struggles during the period, there have been intense countrywide and industrywise actions, beginning from the conclusion of the 15th Party Congress, till the UF Government came to power. There was a lull in the resistance movement against economic policies during the UF Government period. Now, after BJP coalition assumed charge of the Central Government, an upsurge in working class movements and struggles of various sections of industrial, white collar, unorganized sector workers and employees is taking place.

During this period, prior to UF assuming power, a noteworthy development was, the alternative policies jointly evolved in a massive convention of the National Platform of Mass Organizations (15-7-95) to meet the economic policy offensive backed up by a nationwide programme of mass action. It is equally and more important to note that the successful united bandh in West Bengal on 3rd July, 1998, with simultaneous mass demonstrations in most industrial centres in the country on that very day, was not for any economic demands, but exclusively directed against BJP-led Government's economic policy and consequential measures as defined in their first Central budget.

In the new dangerous situation created in the country, with BJP-led Government in power, the big August 12th Convention of the NPMO in Delhi, giving a call for statewide NPMO demonstrations in state capitals, to culminate in a nationwide general strike on 11th December, assumes major importance. This whole extensive countrywide campaign and general strike is directed against the danger of communalism, economic policies and extraordinary price rise. This provides an effective weapon to

involve workers, middle class employees, peasants, agricultural workers, youth, students and women in a big way and will constitute a major political intervention in the present situation in the country.

During the period under review, in face of the economic policy offensive against public sector, the struggles of the public sector employees was centered around fighting privatization and sickness, closure and defence of public sector. Several industry-wise movements were planned unitedly by the trade unions in IISCO, NTC, IFPL, HSCL, FCI, Scooters India etc. Its culmination into a nationwide one-day strike on 2nd April, 1996, had to be deferred due to the fall of the then Central Government. It is significant to note that the broken thread is picked up again, as could be seen from the successful massive joint convention of the public sector employees' union on 11th August in Delhi, from which a call has been given for a consecutive 2 days' nationwide strike in public sector on 11th and 12th December, 1998.

It must be realized that, if these campaigns and general strikes are meticulously carried out, it will not only have a favourable impact on the present political-economic situation in the country but inspire newer sections of masses to be drawn into future mass actions.

Advance of United Movements

Considerable progress was made in building united movements of the working class since the last Congress. Most of the nationwide or industrywise, or public sector employees struggles that took place during this period have been united actions. In fact, united actions, particularly industrywise, or factorywise has almost become order of the day in the consciousness of all sections of the workers and middle class employees including that of BMS and INTUC.

Of particular importance is the distinguishing experience of three united strikes (two in the coal industry and one general). In the three strikes, CITU gave the call for strike over the head of obstructive leaderships of all reformist Unions and drew the workers behind them into massive action. One was the strike in

coal industry by CITU, against the retrograde agreement signed by all reformist unions, behind the backs of the CITU, the other was also in the coal industry, where CITU went ahead with the joint call for strike, despite all other unions backing out from the united call. The third was the independent strike call given by the CITU against the government sponsored Pension Scheme, even while the reformist leaderships dissociated from the strike. It will be pertinent to note that on all these three occasions, the CITU refused to tail the other constituents of the TU united front, in the name of unity, but relied on the fighting mood and class sense of the workers belonging to reformist unions and succeeded in drawing them in a big way into joint action.

Consolidation of Trade Union Unity

Even before the Chandigarh Party Congress, breaking the restrictions involved in the National Campaign Committee, the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Union consisting of 7 national trade union centres and 55 industrywise federations including Central Government, State Government, Bank, Insurance Employees etc., involving them all in the decision making process, had taken shape. So also the NPMO had taken shape. During the period after Chandigarh Party Congress, newer forms of consolidation is taking place. For the first time in the Banking industry a forum uniting the entire employees unions and all officers' associations has taken shape and is leading the united movement. Similar formation has taken shape in the Insurance industry. Added to this is the new practice, of leaders of five central TU organisations (AITUC, CITU, HMS, BMS, INTUC) jointly meeting periodically and broadly exchanging views on the developments facing the working class or the nation and on policy matters. These have the potentials for building wider nationwide trade union unity particularly with reference to policy issues and alternatives.

Confederation of Trade Unions

The CITU has been consistently pursuing the concept of Confederation of Trade Unions. Various developments in the

trade union movement, as stated above, are favourable to advance the cause of the slogan of confederation. Occasional dialogues are held with the 5 major central TUs, viz, CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS and BMS. In the present-day conditions and experience of all segments of Indian working class, this idea tallies with their needs and is comprehensible and if the working class is roused on this need, it will have a favourable weight and impact on all the organized trade unions and will enable to make it a reality.

But the biggest weakness in our work in the TUs, despite united struggles of the workers at various levels, is that the CITU unions are not extensively popularizing this slogan among the rank and file workers and employees belonging to all unions irrespective of affiliations, as part of their day-to-day activities, constantly linking it up with their struggles, campaigns, impact of government policy offensive etc. though the need for it was discussed in CITU Secretariat, Working Committee and General Council. A conscious-determined effort on the part of comrades working in the trade unions, to unleash this popularization, will alone result in a breakthrough.

Change in Correlation of Forces in TU Movement

At the Chandigarh Party Congress, the completed figure of membership of CITU was for the year 1992, which was 23,57,766. At the time of the Chandigarh Congress, the target by May 1955, was to reach 30 lakhs. Only the complete figure for the year ending 1955, is available which stood at 27,89,587, of which women membership was 3,58,990 which constituted 12.86% of the total. The work of unionizing women is moving very slowly. The long-standing pattern of yawning gap between the membership of 4 states (West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh) constituting the major chunk (22 lakhs), and the rest of the country (around 5 lakhs) continues. In addition to CITU, our comrades are working in big independent trade unions of different industries and services in which millions of workers and employees are employed.

Despite our taking initiative and extensive participation in united actions, TU membership lags much behind our general influence.

It is glaringly seen by the phenomenon that while CITU candidates win the elections in many co-operatives and even in ballot for recognition, those votes are not reflected in union membership. It will be pertinent to note that the phenomenon of workers shifting from union to union does take place. But shift is between one reformist union to another, but not in favour of CITU, barring exceptional cases.

Apart from many other reasons like large-scale closure, retrenchment and retirement, the major reason is the failure of the Party committees at various levels to ensure through our comrades working in the unions, democratic functioning of the unions. In large part of the TU movement in which our comrades work, the CC resolutions on 'Party and Mass Organizations' is not implemented, with the result that the deviation of treating the unions as adjuncts of the Party or the individual functioning by our TU leaders avoiding guidance from the Party continues, restricts the inflow of vast sections of new workers into the union. To bring about a breakthrough in this respect, the PB and CC must periodically take up for review the implementation of this resolution, consciously see to it that Party state committees, take up this resolution on 'Party and Mass Organizations' on its agenda, for concretization in each state and ensure follow up of its implementation through periodic check-up and review in the state committees.

Politicalization

The Party still lags behind on the central task on the TU front, of politicalization and raising the class consciousness of the working class.

The detailed guidelines are given in the CC resolution on 'Tasks on TU Front', as to how to undertake this task. Despite this, and re-assertions in the Party Congresses and PB, CC resolutions, there is no breakthrough in this sphere on the TU front. Even reviews of major strike struggles or movements, meant to enrich entire Party with the experience and trickle it down to the workers, are not undertaken. During big strike struggles, when the fighting workers will be eager to learn, Party committees do not

undertake class political propaganda from its own independent platform, to educate the workers when they are in a ferment. Even the scope for politicalization permissible within the framework of the mass organizations, is not fully utilized. In fact, the Party committees do not make serious efforts to recruit members from the workers. This is reflected in the slow growth of Party membership on the trade union front.

The recent general elections in which not only unorganized workers but even sections of organized workers, even from within the CITU, even in our advanced state like West Bengal, voted for the BJP is a grim reminder to the Party and comrades working in the trade union front, that this failure to politicalize the workers can be allowed to be continued at our own peril. Deep-rooted economism among the Party comrades working in this front which is the main stumbling block to politicalization of our class, must be consciously fought.

There should be a proper assessment of how much impact the Hindutva ideological offensive has had on the working class. Communal feelings are being spread to divide the workers. The trade unions have to pay special attention to combat these influences. The phenomenon of caste-based unions must also be properly tackled by taking up the specific issues of socially oppressed sections. Party's political-ideological work among the middle class employees, who fall easy prey to communal ideology, as seen during the last general elections, must be consciously undertaken and intensified.

Worker-Peasant Alliance

The TU task document has stressed the need and concrete guidance for TUs taking initiative in building such alliance at mass organizational level. The Mumbai Conference of the CITU had dealt with this in detail. There is no advance in this respect. The respective Party committees must consciously take it up on their agenda and pursue the same with Party comrades working in TUs.

Though CITU activities among the unorganized sector workers have shown some improvement and statewise struggles have been

conducted for higher minimum wage and improved living conditions the work done appears to be only symbolic compared to the size of the vast section of the working class in our country in the unorganized sector.

Our work among the working women has shown some improvement but it is mainly reflected in the *anganwadi* sector. In some states, this work also suffers due to some state level problem. Tamil Nadu and Andhra have made systematic efforts to improve the activity and this needs to be strengthened. Some state committees have not taken this task seriously. The CITU's decision to form women's sub-committees in unions is not implemented by several unions. This question needs more attention if more and more women are to be brought in the TU arena.

A priority work, which has assumed importance in the struggle against liberalization, is organizing the unemployed by taking up the issue of unemployment by the trade union movement. The initiative taken at an earlier stage has, of late, been given up.

Special TU cadres meetings of the Hindi belt were held 2-3 times to discuss about the problems of Hindi belt. Though this had only marginal effect this has to be continued further intensively but, without the state committees of the Party taking active steps to streamline the work of the CITU state committees and ensuring proper functioning of the TU sub-committees of the state, the required improvement cannot be achieved.

CITU Centre

The functioning of the CITU centre has improved to some extent, but still it is far away from fully undertaking its political-organizational collective responsibilities as planned earlier. To facilitate this process, the PB had one round of discussions with the Party comrades functioning the centre, on the eve of the Chandigarh Party Congress. It was adjourned with an assurance that the PB will meet them again and conclude the discussions. Since it has not been done so far, PB has to resume the discussions and sort out the problems of effective functioning of the CITU centre.

Globalization and Development of International Contacts

With the increasing globalization and increasing international struggle of the working class against globalized capitalist offensive the need for expanding CITU's relations with international Trade Union movement has assumed importance. These relations have increased considerably since the last Party Congress. It requires further expansion.

Trade Union Sub-Committee and Fractions

The new TU sub-committee constituted after the last Party Congress held 18 meetings during this period and the sittings were mostly for 2 days. Various issues which cropped up in the TU front were discussed and decisions taken. The updating of TU document of 1983 was discussed thoroughly by the sub-committee and a draft was finalized and submitted to the PB. Also the sub-committee has discussed the implementation of the resolution "On Party and Mass Organizations". The experience in different states was taken stock of and a detailed draft has been approved by the committee and submitted to the PB suggesting that it should be discussed in CC and in the state committees. But these documents have not been discussed and adopted by the PB and CC for discussion. Discussing and finalizing these two documents is necessary for our trade union work to make a breakthrough.

The drawbacks pointed out by the TU Document of 1983, the lack of democratic functioning of the trade unions; addressing the total workers of the industry while formulating the demands of the workers and the importance of fraction work in the massive trade unions which are still under the leadership of various political parties etc. are still valid. All these cannot be corrected unless discussions are undertaken by the Party about the implementation of our trade union tasks.

The Central sector fraction functioning has improved very much and they were able to lead the unions for massive actions

but decisions taken in certain sectors are still to be implemented. The functioning of the TU sub-committees is still to be streamlined in certain states and it is not in existence, too, in some states. Therefore, in all these issues, Party's intervention is required.

The TU sub-committee work needs further improvement for reviewing the all-India actions of the working class and the lessons drawn are to be submitted for CC's consideration. Industrywise fraction reports which are made available to the sub-committee could not be discussed properly by the TU sub-committee.

The Central trade union fraction meeting could only be held thrice which is not sufficient to integrate the work among different sectors. There should be two meetings in a year of the Central fraction.

Conclusion

The situation prevailing in the country demands serious ideological work among the working class in order to meet the ever-increasing ideological propaganda of the bourgeoisie that capitalism is the only sustainable system for human progress. There is no other way out. This message is driven into the minds of workers and the people through intensive ideological propaganda through print media and electronic media. Consciously, they are attempting to develop religious obscurantism among the workers intensively to instill in their consciousness that all the problems they face in their daily life is because of fate and it cannot be changed. Therefore, without confronting this ideology by bringing forth the facts of life under capitalism it cannot be fought against and a new social order-socialist system cannot be brought about. This confidence has to be created among the workers. This is a Herculean job, however this has to be addressed by the Party and all comrades working on the TU front.

KISAN FRONT

Major Activities and Emerging Future Tasks

Attempts have been made to implement the directions of the 15th Party Congress but it has to be noted that most of the desired results are yet to be achieved.

28th All-India Conference

The 28th all-India Conference of the All-India Kisan Sabha held at Cuttack from 19th to 22nd November, 1995 made a detailed evaluation of the new agricultural policies. It declared that reversal of land reform measures, reduction in investment in irrigation, power, science and technology, reduction in subsidies to fertilizers, water, electricity, shift in priority from foodgrains self-sufficiency to export-oriented crops, disbandment of public distribution system, reduction of credit facilities, the attempt to change the patent laws, making it adverse to the interest of agriculture and industry which form part of the new agricultural policies would increase poverty, unemployment, marginalization and pauperization of the peasantry. It would result in shortage of foodgrains, infiltration of multinational companies in the rural countryside etc. The conference directed the units to further expand and intensify campaigns and struggles on all issues that affect the peasantry.

Unified Understanding

The discussions in the 28th All-India Conference, the CKC, the AIKC, the PKCs and the lower level committees show that there is a more unified understanding on the concept of peasant unity centered around agricultural workers and poor peasants and also about the issues to be taken up. This does not mean that there are no reservations or doubts amongst certain comrades and units and efforts for reorientation on the basis of the new understanding should continue.

All-India Seminars

During this period, two all-India seminars were organized in New Delhi under the auspices of Kisan Sabha and All-India

Agricultural Workers' Union, one in April 1997 and another in July 1998 to study the impact of new agricultural policy and new economic policy on agriculture. In these two-day seminars, experts on various aspects of agricultural sector and the members of the AIKC and General Council of the All-India Agricultural Workers' Union participated and a better understanding of changes in the agrarian sphere has emerged which has to be conveyed to every rank and file activists of the kisan and agricultural workers fronts.

Land Struggle

During this period, Kisan Sabha activists occupied government land, common land, or ceiling surplus land and forest land without green cover in many states. The extent of the land involved varies from state to state. The experience of the land struggle has to be properly reviewed and lessons drawn. This is necessary to sustain and expand the land struggle. All issues connected with the land such as occupation of ceiling surplus land, government land, forest land without green cover, common land, waste land, pattas for occupiers, preparation of land records, reduction in rent etc. can be taken up depending on the severity of the issue in different states. The peasant suicides in Andhra Pradesh have also highlighted the importance of land reforms. Many state committees have taken up some of these issues. In Andhra Pradesh, our unit has taken up the issues related to tenancy. The Kerala unit of the Kisan Sabha had organized a march to Parliament to highlight the issue of pattas for long-term occupiers. Efforts in taking up these issues and organizing movements on these should continue.

Struggle Against GATT, MNCs and Price Fluctuations

The impact of the new agricultural policies can be felt in many spheres. The prices of many cash crops are fluctuating due to the withdrawal of protective measures and the impact of world prices because of opening up and globalization. The MNCs are making use of the provisions of GATT agreement and patent laws existing in USA and European countries to restrict the export of many

crops from India. The cropping pattern is also shifting endangering food security and adverse employment effects. State units took up some of these issues and organized agitations and struggles. Many state committees conducted united action with other peasant organizations. The realization about the dangers of GATT, WTO, IMF, World Bank regime of so-called "free trade" is slowly growing and this will facilitate to build broader unity among the peasantry. The anti-imperialist traditions of the peasant movement should be reawakened to meet the growing challenges from WTO, IMF, World Bank, MNCs and imperialist countries. Kisan Sabha should concretize the slogans and strive for united actions.

Peasant Suicides

The indebtedness among the peasantry is increasing due to the adverse effects of the policies and also due to the lack of institutional credit facilities and peasants are forced to take loan from money-lenders, traders, landlords etc. on exorbitant rates of interest. The overwhelming majority of the peasantry are exploited by making use of the steep fluctuation in prices, the lack of proper price supporting system, lack of credit facilities, growing indebtedness etc. These increasing exploitations and losses due to pests and natural calamities are ruining middle and poor peasants in many parts of the country. This situation has forced many peasants to commit suicide. In Andhra Pradesh, Kisan Sabha unit along with other peasant organizations took up the issue of suicides and organized rallies, demonstrations Andhra bandh and march to Parliament. The units of Karnataka, Punjab and Maharashtra also took these issues and organized rallies, demonstrations, conventions etc.

Various Other Issues

The state units of the Kisan Sabha took up various issues such as expansion of irrigation facilities, power facilities, uninterrupted supply of water and power, credit facilities, storage and cooling facilities, comprehensive crop insurance scheme, remunerative price for agricultural produce etc. The struggle in

Rajasthan for uninterrupted supply of electricity attracted wider support. Many states took up the issues of spurious pesticides and fertilizers. But it cannot be claimed that all that was possible had been done. There is weakness in building movements and organizing activities continuously.

Some state committees and lower level committees do not give importance of taking up the day-to-day issues affecting peasants and organizing movements. Even the small gains peasants achieve by taking up the various day-to-day issues would give confidence to them and prepare them for bigger struggles to achieve more radical demands. The weakness in taking up issues connected with government schemes, for its proper implementation, for the benefit of the common peasants against corruption, nepotism etc. is continuing.

Fight Against Communalism and Casteism

The communal and casteist forces are making use of the pre-capitalist ideological influences and the growing discontent among the peasantry for their expansion and growth. The importance of the fight against communalism and casteism should be borne in mind and activities should be planned. These forces are dividing the peasantry and weakening its striking force. Expansion of class struggles, organizing continuous propaganda work can check these divisive and diversionary tendencies and help in building unity among peasants. Much work has to be organized.

Social Issues

Most of the state committees discussed and decided to take up all social issues but the weakness in taking up social issues, fight against obscurantism and caste oppression is continuing. Taking into consideration the situation existing in different parts, we should try to organize movements.

ORGANIZATIONAL TASKS

Unevenness in Growth

The uneven growth is continuing and the weaknesses noted in earlier Party Congresses are still persisting. The state Party

committees should make concrete plans for the expansion of the movement and should also depute capable cadres at various levels. Periodical review of the work also should be organized.

The fall in membership this year (1997-98) is due to parliamentary elections during the membership campaign period.

All-India Centre

There is a slight improvement in the functioning of the All-India Centre. The All-India Centre has made more visits to the states and gave guidance to states on certain important issues. The All-India seminars organized by the Centre also helped in understanding the magnitude of the problems and possible solutions. Much more have to be done for strengthening the Centre and reorganizing the work of the Centre and working it as an effective instrument for developing a powerful countrywide peasant movement. The tasks such as co-ordinating the movements on common issues, studying all-India issues, helping different states to study problems, education of cadres, planning united actions with other peasant organizations have to be further concretized.

State and District Centres

An attempt has been made to strengthen the state and district centres in certain states where the kisan movement is weak. The decision to deploy at least two or three comrades mainly concentrating on Kisan Sabha work at state centres have been implemented in some states and these states have shown considerable progress in Kisan Sabha activities. No substantial change has been made in the organizational set-up of Uttar Pradesh. The state centre of the Bihar also have to be further strengthened in order to sustain and expand the movements we have started. At least two or three comrades should concentrate mainly on Kisan Sabha work from state centre in states where our movement is weak. This is necessary in districts also. The committees at all levels can be activized only by ensuring sufficient number of cadres working both at the state and district levels.

Democratic Functioning

The democratic functioning of the organization is ignored in many places. No concerted attempt is there in many states to involve the members in the formulation of slogans or in the planning of agitations or struggles. Some of the leaders are acting in a bureaucratic manner or as a readymade prescription givers like a mobile physician. The leadership of the Party is mechanically imposed and Party committees are taking decisions and Kisan Sabha units are asked to carry out those decisions. Non-Party people are not encouraged to join the mass organization and they are not given responsible positions. The peasantry should feel that the Kisan Sabha is an independent mass organization and anybody who agrees with the policies and principles and constitution can join. The CPI(M) members and leaders are active in Kisan Sabha but that should not restrict democratic discussion or decision-taking in Kisan Sabha as an independent democratic mass organization. All these defects and shortcomings should be remedied.

United Action with Other Peasant Organizations

There is slight improvement in organizing united action with other peasant organizations. In many states, Kisan Sabha organized agitations and struggles with other peasant organizations. In Karnataka, Rytu Sangha led by Nanjunda Swamy joined us in campaigns and struggles. In Andhra Pradesh, a broader United Front was formed even with Karshaka Congress on the issue of peasant suicides. In Kerala, all the peasant organizations in which components of the political parties in the LDF are actively working joined together and planned continuous agitations and struggles. In some other states also, such united activities are planned. At the all-India level, Kisan Sabha central leadership have had discussions with Kisan Sabha (Ajoy Bhawan) and Kisan Sabhas associated with RSP and Forward Bloc. It was decided to take up certain all-India issues and to organize all-India agitations and struggles. This has to be pursued.

The Kisan Sabha is active in the activities organized by the Platform of Mass Organizations. The joint activities helped in strengthening the unity with other sections of the people. These efforts should be carried forward.

AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' FRONT

Organization

The political-organizational report of the 15th Congress noted that the activities of the Agricultural Workers' Union is expanding to newer areas. This trend is continuing. The Fourth All-India Conference of the Union was held at Khammam from 2 to 4 November, 1996, whose success is reflected in the growth of membership by 1.5 lakh immediately after it. Three central functionaries have begun working from the all-India centre since April 1992 and there is more collective functioning at the centre. Central functionaries now attend state committee meetings in most of the states and even help at the district and local level committees in weaker states. The centre organized a school at Chandigarh for the cadres of North India. The AIAWU centre is publishing a bulletin that deals with issues and activities. These do not mean that there are no deficiencies or shortcomings. The centre has to be further strengthened to take up the expanding tasks.

Most of the state committees regularly hold their state committee meetings. But the functioning at the district and lower levels of organization is not satisfactory. The situation is worse at taluk and village level. More attention should be given to the regular functioning of the lower level committees as they are keeping direct contact with agricultural workers. The state units of Rajasthan and Karnataka have failed to hold their state conferences in time. In many places, AIAWU is facing lack of capable cadres. State Party should see that enough cadres are deployed to this front at various levels of organization.

The AIAWU membership has risen from 20,91,346 in 1994-95 to 21,92,799 in 1995-96 and 23,07,976 in 1996-97. The membership for 1997-98 is 19,92,703. This is largely due to the fall in the membership in Andhra Pradesh. The membership in Kerala, Tripura, Orissa, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh also declined. The increase in membership in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan is marginal. The situation emerging in the country shows that there is ample scope for expanding the movement.

Party should pay more attention for expanding the movement into new areas and sections.

Wage Struggle

The 4th all-India Conference of AIAWU held at Khammam discussed the wage issue in detail and came to the conclusion that the union's earlier decision to launch a militant wage movement in 25,000 villages in India should be implemented systematically.

In keeping with this decision, a call was given to unleash wage struggles. The most systematic implementation of this was in Andhra Pradesh where surveys and village studies were conducted a month before the start of the season. On the basis of these studies, group meetings, general body meetings and widespread propaganda were undertaken at the village level. This culminated in the formation of village level action committees.

These committees then undertook further propaganda, procession and public meetings, followed up by representations to local government officials and consultations with older farmers. If these failed, then strikes were resorted to. During the plantation season of 1995, 810 villages in seven districts resorted the strikes and 1689 villages succeeded in getting a wage increase. In 1996, strikes took place in 700 villages and wages were enhanced in 1500 villages, with 82,717 people participating in 17 district level conventions. Higher wages were secured in 1299 villages. In the year 1998, the activities spread from 6,000 to 8,000 villages. The campaign was conducted in all districts. About 70,000 agricultural labourers on 10th June participated in picketing, ending in the police crackdown on agricultural workers' picketing in Hyderabad on 19th June, 1998.

In other states too, the union was able to expand wage struggle to a limited extent. In Bihar, the union was able to organize wage struggles in 80 villages in 10 districts. In Tamil Nadu, strikes were organized in over 200 villages in 1997. In Karnataka, in some 20 villages, landlords were forced to enhance wages. In UP, over 100 villages were able to secure higher wages. Wage struggle was also undertaken in Tripura, Haryana, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and MP. In most of the places, where the union led wage struggle, there

the wages were increased. Due to lack of proper planning at different levels, the wage struggle is not picking up as we expected.

Land Struggle

The front has undertaken a number of land struggles independently and with AIKS in UP, Bihar, Karnataka, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and MP. The Party district units must give consistent support to such struggles so that they do not peter out after initial enthusiasm.

Central Legislation

The AIAWU has been in the forefront of organizing the struggle for a Comprehensive Central Legislation for agricultural labour on the pattern of the Kerala Agricultural Labour Act of 1974. It has undertaken independent actions as well as jointly with like-minded agricultural labour organizations representing a minimum of five million agricultural labourers. Despite this and despite the promises given by successive governments, the legislation is stalled even now by the landlord lobby in Parliament. On August 7, 1995, demonstrations were held all over the country to press this demand. The issue was raised by our union members in the election campaign that followed. When the United Front Government came to power, this demand was given a place in the Common Minimum Programme. Despite number of meetings with different ministers, the legislation did not materialize. Seeing the lack of political will in the UF Government as well, a call was given on 20 November to hold dharnas and demonstrations which was responded to with enthusiasm in most of the states. This independent action was followed up by joint mass picketing in Parliament in March, 1997 involving nearly 10,000 agricultural workers. This programme was a success. On the same day, 25,000 agricultural workers courted arrest in Kerala. Now, the BJP is totally opposed to the Bill. The campaign and struggle for Comprehensive Central Legislation must be intensified.

Work Among the SC and ST

The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population consists over 50 per cent of the total agricultural labour population. Now, a new awakening among this section can be seen throughout the country. The caste leaders are trying to divert these sections away the democratic movement for their narrow electoral gains. A considerable part of the union membership is from SC and ST. Agricultural Workers' Union should take up the various issues affecting these sections and make concrete plans for expanding the movement among them.

Other Struggles

In Kerala, the union took over the issue of reclamation of paddy fields and converting them to cash crops growing ground land. As a result of the struggle, the state government appointed an expert committee to go into the issue of marketing paddy cultivation more remunerative.

As a result of the new economic policy and the changed priorities in agriculture, the working days of the agricultural labourers are in a declining trend, naturally, this leads to the migration of nearly 10 million agricultural labourers from state to state for their livelihood. Moreover, the high increase in the rural inflation has further worsened the living conditions of agricultural workers. In most of the states, there is no mechanism to ensure the payment of minimum wages to agricultural labourers.

All these issues need urgent attention. Strengthening movements and activities among this section is a major task before the Party. Agricultural workers form a major component of the rural working class and it is necessary to organize them who are not even aware of their own rights and their role in the society for the expansion of the democratic movement.

Future Programme

(a) *On Central Legislation:* Struggle for a comprehensive central legislation and other pressing demands should be organized.

(b) *Wage Movement* : Wage movement should be planned at all levels. A massive campaign should be organized to expand the wage struggle.

(c) *Struggle Against Gender Discrimination*: The exploitation of women agricultural labourers is increasing because of the changed economic situation. A good number of male workers are also migrating to urban areas. We should give more attention to their problems and rallying them against the new policies of the government.

(d) *Land Movement*: Land struggle should be expanded to newer areas. Large-scale campaign work also should be organized.

(e) *Social Issues*: The weakness in taking up the social issues such as caste oppression and oppression of women continues. The union should take up these issues. The union should also plan to rally other democratic sections of people on these social issues.

Unity of Agricultural Workers and Peasants

Conflicts and contradictions between agricultural workers and certain sections among the peasantry and landlords are intensifying due to the growth of capitalism. In rural areas, the impact of the monopolists, multinationals, and the Central and state government policies operate in a camouflaged manner and both the agricultural labourers and employer peasants treat each other as enemies and miss the former forces as common enemy. The interests of agricultural labourers and the peasantry can be protected only by fighting these forces and their policies. Two other wrong trends can also be seen in the approach of certain comrades and units. One is that the agricultural workers should not demand and press for same wages from middle peasants as they demand from richer sections and landlords; the other is to treat the middle and rich peasants as their main enemy and miss the element of unity between agricultural workers and other peasants. There is no question of diluting the demands of agricultural workers. Agricultural labourers are still a minority in rural countryside and the number of employers is generally larger and they are stratified. The method of struggle of agricultural labourers is different from that of industrial workers because the

campaign of industrial workers is not for winning employers to their side. While agricultural workers must remain firm on their demands, they must try to win over a good section of employer peasants, middle peasants and rich peasants by way of reason, campaigns and appeals to isolate the enemies and stand in the forefront of united actions planned against the common enemies of agricultural workers and peasants. Party should make concerted efforts in organizing united actions of kisan front and agricultural workers front on common demands.

Agrarian Sub-Committee

In some states, agrarian sub-committees are not functioning properly and there is no coordination between Kisan Sabha and Agricultural Workers' Union. In the context of growing conflicts and contradictions due to the growth of capitalist production relations, it is all the more necessary to strengthen the unity between agricultural workers and peasants. Party should pay more attention to the regular functioning of the sub-committees and fractions at different levels. The Party leaders who are working in this front should also give attention to Party building among the Kisan Sabha activities through the involvement of Party committees. Conscious efforts must be made to raise the consciousness of peasants and agricultural workers.

The Need for Strengthening Kisan Organization and Agricultural Workers' Front

Party documents have continuously emphasized the importance of giving proper attention to building Agricultural Workers' Union and Kisan organizations. The 'Review of the work of the Kisan Front and future tasks' adopted by the Central Committee in April, 1993 states:

"The weakness of the agricultural workers movement and the Kisan Sabha, in spite of the favourable conditions constitutes one of the important weaknesses of the democratic movement in the country. This weakness has to be overcome and that alone can create a favourable situation for the growth of the Party in the weaker states. The Party in the weaker states should realize this

and they should chalk out concrete plans for the expansion of the agricultural workers and kisan movement. In stronger states also, there are scope for further expansion of the agricultural workers and Kisan movement so that all sections of the peasantry who constitute the people's democratic front are brought under our movement."

We have not been able to make any substantial change in the situation. The communal forces, the caste forces, the bourgeois-landlord political parties, the landlord-led peasant organizations still continue to keep the overwhelming majority of the peasants under their influence in places where our movement is weak. The reactionary and conservative political forces have built their fortresses in these areas. The entire Party should realize the importance of expanding our influence through concrete plans for identifying the issues and for deployment of cadres. The CC document noted above points out the need for activating the Party members in mass organizations. It states:

"The other weakness is that many of the Party members are not working actively in any of the mass organizations. Our Party constitution enjoins upon every Party member '*to devotedly serve the masses and consistently strengthen their bonds with them, to learn from the masses and report their opinions and demands to the Party, to work in a mass organization, unless exempted under the guidance of the Party*'.

"How do we implement the provisions of the Party constitution? All Party committees must be asked to review the work of the Party members on this basis. The above mentioned provision of the Party constitution should be strictly implemented. Every Party member should be asked to work in a mass organization—the bulk of them in the rural areas should work either in Agricultural Workers' Union or Kisan Sabha. As for Party units in rural areas their main work should be work in Agricultural Workers' Union and Kisan Sabha. This should be applied not only to the members of the Party branches but also to all higher committees of the Party in the rural areas; all of them should join and actively work in the Agricultural Workers' Union or Kisan Sabha. If any exemptions are to be sanctioned, it should be done

by the next higher committees. Their work should be assessed on the basis of their work in the mass front. These organizational measures are necessary for improvement of the work among the peasantry."

Serious efforts should be made for implementing these directions. A reorientation campaign should be organized throughout the Party in activizing the Party members in mass organization work, particularly, the agricultural workers' front and Kisan front. Each Party committee should review the activities of Kisan front and agricultural workers' front every year and assess the progress on expansion.

WOMEN'S FRONT

Work of the Mass Organization

In the period under review, the adverse social and economic impact of liberalization has led to a further decline in women's status. Politically, this period has also seen a concerted bid by the communal forces to intervene among women. The RSS front organizations have never even on a single occasion taken up any of the important issues facing women. But cynically manipulating religious sentiments they have been extremely active among different sections of women through religion-based programmes like bhajan mandalis, religious lectures, social functions in local mandirs, public rituals around festivals. These programmes which are easily sustained have social and familial sanction and have been strengthening the feeling of Hindu identity among women which has covertly increased communal feelings. This is their method, more so in the states ruled by the BJP of diverting the increasing discontent of women against price rise and growing atrocities. The recent national conference of the women's organization focused on these developments which pose the greatest threat to the very existence of women's struggles for equality.

There have been increased struggles of women in defence of their rights in different spheres. In this period, many women activists had to face repression. Several were martyred. In spite of

the difficulties, work among women has registered a substantial improvement in terms of issues taken up and the efforts made to reach wider section of women. These issues have centered on:

(1) *Social issues* such as initiatives in struggles against the increasing violence against women, domestic violence, increased dowry demand and violence based on class or caste factors. More than 50,000 individual cases of violence would have been taken up by the women's organization in one year. Successful legal interventions have led to landmark judgements in many cases in favour of the victims.

Four conventions in Rajasthan, UP and Tamil Nadu on the issues of caste-based discrimination against dalit women have been held highlighting the continuing scourge of untouchability. Discrimination in access to village water supplies to dalit women and the total lack of any latrine facilities for them have been some of the campaign issues. In a legal intervention, an unprecedented amount of Rs. 22.5 lakh against caste violence was awarded to a village in Tamil Nadu because of the intervention of the women's organization. Attempts have also been made to increase work among tribal women. Four tribal women's conventions in Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan and Bengal have been held although the follow-up needs to be strengthened. Work among minority community women has definitely improved after the conscious efforts of the mass organization to work among these sections. Muslim women activists have had to face the ire of Muslim fundamentalists who want to isolate them from the community.

(2) *Struggles against the impact of liberalization* with special emphasis on the issues of intervention of the women's organization in raising issues concerning agricultural women workers and women in the unorganized sector. Seven state level conventions of women agricultural workers have been held through which their demands have been highlighted and the women's organization directly involved in campaigns and struggles on their demands. This has increased their participation in wage struggles led by the union. In many of the states, women have played the most militant role in these wage struggles. The women's organization has also actively supported struggles of working women in factories and

offices and helped their organization in many of the weaker states. In particular the joint efforts of the women's organization and the trade unions in organizing *anganwadi* workers has helped strengthen their union. The issue of more employment opportunities and government aid for cooperatives and small ventures is one of the most crucial demands being made by women. The problem of women's unemployment is particularly grave because factors like increased alcoholism, desertions and unavoidable male migration have led to an increase in families dependent on women's earnings for survival. These aspects need to be particularly highlighted by the women's organization while intensifying their work among working women in rural and urban areas.

In the recent period, after the advent of the BJP Government, women's anger is growing mainly because of the price rise burden which has made it impossible to manage family budgets. The women's organization has to go beyond its own ranks, to the mass of women to mobilize them against government policies which have led to price rise.

In the effort to project alternative policies, the record of Left-led Governments have been used particularly the issuing of joint pattas in land in Bengal and the model provided by the panchayat system and representation of women including those from the weaker sections, the model provided in the public distribution system in both Kerala and Bengal and the people's planning process in Kerala, the attention to the needs to tribal communities in Tripura. There are many more such examples which are being popularized. Popular booklets on these achievements are very necessary.

(3) *Direct political mobilizations* such as participation in election work. The panchayat elections in several states have seen an increasing number of women candidates on the Party ticket. Elected women on the Party ticket in the local bodies are in the main doing good work overcoming many hurdles including in many cases those from within their own families and local Party units. In every state there have been an increasing number of

women workers in electoral work which have been positively reviewed by most Party committees. In particular the house to house campaigns by women's squads have been effective. In Party mobilizations also the number of women participants have increased substantially.

At another level the role of the Party and the women's organization during the debate and struggle for extension of reservations to the Parliament and state assemblies has also been positive. An important intervention of the mass organization was in working towards united actions with women's groups on this issue. The issue of caste-based and religious-based reservation within the women's quota has caused considerable confusion and even divisions among women on caste lines. In this situation, the women's organization played a commendable role in its explanatory campaign as well as its initiative in uniting different sections of women. However, the struggle has undoubtedly suffered a setback and it will require much bigger mobilizations to force the government to pass the bill. The reality is that except for the Left, none of the bourgeois parties want the bill to be even introduced leave alone passed. The most naked form of feudal and patriarchal approaches were witnessed in the behaviour of many of these parties like the Samajwadi Party and the RJD. The hypocrisy of the Congress with its president backtracking from her earlier categorial support for the bill was as evident as the BJP's deliberate actions of sabotage.

The increased activity on diverse issues has helped advance the struggle for women's rights and enhanced the prestige and influence of the Left radical trend in the women's movement.

Organization

As far as organizational issues are concerned, the recent national conference of the women's organization made a self-critical review of the state of the organization. It is noteworthy that efforts to develop an all India perspective and movements have increased and in particular the weaker states have made noteworthy efforts to increase their work among the mass of women. However, the uneven character of the organization remains with West Bengal still accounting for over sixty per cent

of the mass membership. One of the weaknesses highlighted was the absence of a live contact with the mass of the membership and involving them in the activities as well as the decision-making processes in the organization. Regarding associating them in the decision-making process, a beginning has been attempted by sending the Bangalore conference draft report to the delegates, sufficiently in advance, to enable them to discuss before coming to the conference. This resulted in effective and meaningful participation of the delegates in the conference discussions.

The dearth of activists in relation to the growing membership and more particularly wholetimers has to be overcome and proper cadre policy adopted. Lack of finances may be a factor in the weaker states. The mass organization centre has helped to lessen this problem to some extent through financial aid, which has enabled at least 12 women wholetimers in different states to function. But there is no reason why the stronger states should not overcome the big organizational gap as far as wholetimer recruitment policies are concerned. There are far too few wholetimers in these states. The tremendous scope for expansion of work among different sections of women through the independent activities of the mass organization should not be underestimated.

Giving responsibility to younger cadre is essential, overcoming the resistance there is at different levels of the organization. There has been some improvement in educational programmes including residential schools in some states for women activists. These efforts have to continue.

The research centre has begun its work and its first project on impact of women because of the growth of aquaculture farms is completed. Several publications of the organization have been planned. There have been efforts to overcome the earlier weakness of not bringing out publications regularly. Both the English and Hindi quarterlies have resumed publication.

Centre Functioning

Unlike in the past, a team of comrades drawn from certain states remain at the Centre for five or six days every month, collectively review the work and plan future work. Further improvement of

Centre work requires that these comrades prolong their stay in the Centre and at least one or two from among them remain whole time at the Centre in addition to the General Secretary which will make further substantial improvement.

Relations of Mass Organization with Party and Related Issues

An important improvement in this period has been in the functioning of the All-India fraction committee which has been able to assist in the formulation of policies and direction of the mass organization. Since its formation in 1996 seven fraction committee meetings have been held. It is essential to continue the regular functioning of the fraction committee without substituting the democratic functioning of the mass organization committees. The mistake of substituting the latter by the former has to be consciously avoided. This applies even more to the states. Compared to the time of the last Party Congress, there has been a general improvement in the functioning of fraction committees even at the state committee level. However, there have been examples where fraction committees have not been consulted by the concerned Party committees in deciding personnel for the women's front. This has caused problems for the organization. There is also the wrong practice in many states of Party committees at different levels proposing not just the names of main office-bearers to the fraction committee but of the entire panel and even of the Central Executive Committee. Democratic functioning of mass organizations is severely eroded by such practices. Party should discuss these issues and suggest the necessary changes.

An erroneous understanding has been there in some Party committees that women's organization being a multi-class organization should not have anything to do with class issues. The Central Party leadership had to make an important intervention to clarify the issue in the women's fraction committee which was circulated to the Party state committees. Detailing the important tasks of the women's organization in taking up all issues of social discrimination as well as issues concerning inequalities generated by the path of capitalist development, the note stated "In 1981 the erroneous idea that the women's organization must be exclusively

class based and that it must be a toiling women's organization came up. The Central Committee intervened and restored the multi-class character of the organization. Now just the opposite erroneous idea has come up. That is in the name of the multi-class nature of the organization it is sought to be detached from class related issues pertaining to working women. We have to fight against both these deviations and restore the Party perception".

It is an indication of the wrong approach to the women's organization that in spite of this intervention the wrong perception remains at many levels. Although it was decided that there should be a proper coordination between the women's organization and the class based and mass based organizations working among the rural poor on the basis of the above given understanding of the Party, this has not been done except in certain areas. This is a continuing weakness which needs to be addressed.

However, the functioning of women's sub-committees in various mass organizations should be taken up by the Party. Although women's membership exists in all these organizations, their role in organization committees is only token. There should be a policy decision to ensure increased promotion of women in responsible position in these organizations which will be helped by better coordination with the women's organizations. At the level of struggle, specific problems of women within the section being organized must be given more attention.

The women's front has been stressing the need for a document elaborating the main tasks of the Party on the women's front. This should be taken up by the CC. The roots of social oppression and inequalities of women in society should be dealt with in the Party syllabus. Feudal approach within the Party which was pinpointed in the rectification document, still remain. Campaigns within the Party have to be strengthened.

Party's Work Among Women

It is clear that in vast areas of the country the absence of any movements for social reform has been of great disadvantage to women's struggles for equality. The Hindi heartland in particular is dominated by political forces representing the most retrograde and feudal thinking as far as women are concerned. Even in states

where we are strong, alien cultures and practices inimical to democratic progress are slowly creeping in. The growth of communal forces will strengthen obscurantist ideas and practices towards women. Therefore, wider mobilizations to get rid of social evils are essential. The Party will have to take the initiative on such a social reform movement in the particular context of each state.

There is a gap between the increasing activities of the mass organizations and the influence of the Party among women. Undoubtedly because of the positive role that the Party has directly played on many issues concerning women such as the women's reservation bill or taking the initiative in struggles against violence against women as in Tamil Nadu, the image of the Party among women has been enhanced. Yet it has been seen that in many of the states outside Bengal, Kerala or Tripura, sections of the membership of the mass organization are voting for those very parties responsible for their terrible plight. The question of how to convert consciousness about their rights to a deeper political awareness among them has to be discussed at different levels in the Party along with fraction committees.

One of the continuing weaknesses is the very low percentage of women who have been encouraged in this period to join the Party. Although some states have registered an advance such as Tripura which has 14 per cent women members or Tamil Nadu or Andhra Pradesh where it has increased from around four per cent to eight per cent, it is a regrettable fact that in most of the states the percentage of women Party members is below ten per cent. For example, in West Bengal where the mass organization membership has registered a big increase and Party membership has also further advanced, the women's Party membership is under 7 per cent. The ratio between the mass organization membership and Party membership among women all over the country has deteriorated. The prevalence of feudal approaches to women's recruitment in the Party is the major reason. The main problem is that Party committees at different levels give no attention to the political potential of women workers in spite of their meeting the conditions of Party membership recruitment. At the recommendation time, the concerned committees seldom

propose women's names even if there are deserving women who would like to join the Party. One example is the poor recruitment into the Party of elected women in the panchayats or local bodies. There is every possibility and scope for a substantial increase in the number of women Party members in all the major states if the Party committees pay more attention.

This is also linked to the number of women in Party committees. Because of the emphasis in the rectification campaign to highlight the weakness of the Party in promoting women cadre, some improvement may be there in some Party committees. There are examples of some states making a sincere effort to improve the representation of women in committees, but by and large it is still a trend of tokenism. This also results in hardly any discussion on issues concerning women in Party committees which narrows down the intervention of the Party on many social issues.

In the context of the Party taking the lead in demanding one-third reservations for women in elected bodies, it is incumbent on Party committees to display greater commitment in improving the situation within the Party both as far as membership recruitments is concerned as well as promoting women cadre to Party committees at different levels. The Party at different levels should actively encourage women to become wholetime workers of the Party giving them all the support required. In this task women leaders in the Party at different levels also have an important role to play in identifying and encouraging such cadre.

Current Tasks

Almost all bourgeois parties have activated the women's wings of their parties which is an indication of their recognition of the increasing awareness among women and their more active role in struggles of different sections. Planned efforts are made to mobilize women on sectarian caste or community lines. Several caste-based women's organizations have been set up which disrupt the unity of women against feudal bondage and capitalist exploitation. At the same time, sections of NGOs many of whom are heavily funded by foreign agencies are playing a dubious role driven by the agendas of their donors. Although some NGOs are doing good work and with whom the mass organization have had

joint actions, the propaganda of most of these organizations having Left orientation. The economic problems of many activists is used to lure them with high salaries. The only way to counter these forces is by increasing our own political work at the grassroots level raising issues of concern to women. It is also necessary to monitor all government schemes in the area and ensure that benefits go to the needy. Too often this work is left to NGOs.

Above all is the offensive of communal forces led by the RSS backed organizations. In order to counter these forces the organization has to step up the independent activity of the organization on diverse issues and increase its intervention among the mass of women as a priority task. This includes the unleashing of militant struggles of women on issues directly affecting their lives. The organization must also give serious attention to the ideological struggle including against the forces of division and communalism among women and fight back the offensive of obscurantist forces on the one hand and those advocating the culture spawned by liberalization on the other. Efforts on the mass organization at the Central and state level should be continued for joint actions against the communal forces with other women's organizations.

Broadbased mobilization against social discrimination including united struggles must be combined with taking up class based issues of working women in the rural and urban areas. Particular attention should be paid to the organization and struggles of women of the oppressed castes and communities. Special efforts should also be made to attract young people to the organization particularly in the background of the illusions and aspirations created among a substantial section of educated young middle class women by the process of liberalization.

The period ahead will see a big political clash between different political forces increasing their intervention among women. Communist work among women has to be geared to meet this challenge and to mobilize women as part of the Left and democratic alternative through struggles on their own demands as well as political mobilizations of women on wider issues facing the country.

YOUTH FRONT

Since the 15th Party Congress, the DYFI could sustain its track of steady growth though the record is not uniform in all states. Its membership was 92,90,805 in 1994 and it has enrolled 1,02,74,260 in 1997. The increase in membership continues even though membership fee has been doubled in 1995. Last year for the first time, it has crossed the one-crore mark. In spite of it having emerged as one of the largest mass organizations even outside our traditional base of West Bengal, Kerala, and Tripura, due to lack of proper understanding about the perspective and utility of the youth organization it could not be expanded in many areas.

Changes and Challenges

Fast changes in economic and political situation on the one hand and lack of appreciation for the changes, and failure to adopt new approaches in many areas on the other, have caused some states dearly. The biggest task in the Youth Front during this period was to reorient the youth movement. Efforts were taken by the mass organization to activate lower level committees. State committees of the mass organization which realized the significance of diversified grass-root level activities and carried out their area specific and issue specific programmes have successfully increased their strength. Those who tried to continue with the old style of functioning with token programmes and limited interventions by the youth organization have even failed to keep its old base intact.

During this period, the work in the Youth Front was carried on in a difficult and challenging situation. On the one hand, ideological challenges coupled with erosion of values and odds unleashed by the unfolding of a series of political events on the other, have posed serious questions before the youth organization. The multi-prong strategies by our enemies to vitiate the minds of the young people and encourage divisive trends in the society have thrown up serious challenges before the movement. Rapid changes in the economic front, onslaughts of western media culture and values, series of corruptions and scandals, failure of the political system to deliver any good to the people with many other factors, all aimed to create

a self-seeking selfish generation devoid of social or political commitments. Short-sightedness of the entire system and lack of vision and absence of any perspective about the future have landed younger generation to state of mad rush for immediate gains.

In spite of this, the mass organization continued to swim against the tide and did not stop even temporarily. In such a challenging situation, the organization not only kept its base intact, it continues to maintain its gradual rate of growth. As far as the question of expansion of the organization together with the removal of unevenness are concerned, a well-concerted effort in cooperation with all other fraternal mass organizations and activating entire support base is required. Besides political issues, the mass organization has to take up social, cultural and other issues and activities to make its presence felt.

Some Important Issues

Lack of proper understanding about the utility of mass organization and its character is a major problem in the states where the Party is weak. Even after two decades of Salkia Plenum and 17 years of resolution on mass organization things remain the same if not worsened. In most places if not at state level at least in the district level DYFI is considered as Party's volunteer force. Instead of giving it a mass character by ensuring its democratic functioning and taking up popular local issues and organizing multifarious activities involving mass of youth, some remain satisfied with a handful of dedicated cadres only to be used as and when necessary by the Party. In some cases even mass membership drive, sports or cultural events are also considered as a dilution of its character. There is also another type of other problem. In the absence of a balanced approach, Party cadres engaged in the youth movement sometime encroach on other spheres. The Party committees should intervene to see that cadres are properly integrated with the Party's work. In many cases, Youth Front's priorities to get cadres deployed are being ignored or delayed by the Party Committees. As a result, in many places renewal of leadership as a continuous process suffers. It is the responsibility of the respective Party committees to deploy promising cadres in the priority to ensure regular

committee functioning and oversee that right from enrolment of membership a democratic process is initiated for their training, committee functioning, conference at regular intervals, proper maintenance of accounts and after all building up mass movements ensuring participation of larger number of youths. For the initiation of the cadres in the Party, a strict check up and evaluation of their performance in the mass organization should be undertaken.

This can be effectively done by the Party with the assistance of sub-committees. Many state committees do not constitute sub-committees. In some states even if it is formed it does not function regularly and properly. This weakness not only reflects the lack of proper guidance by the Party it also severely affect, the growth of the youth movement and work of the Party building in the Youth Front. This weakness requires immediate attention. Without building a uniform understanding about utility of the Youth Front, necessity of Party guidance, importance of Party-building among the younger generation mobilizing greater number of young people around the Party and recruiting them, the required result is not going to be achieved. Where the Youth Front makes progress and acquires influence among the people, the Party leadership should work out the priorities on how to develop this front and strengthen the overall democratic movement. Failure to do this often leads to erroneous trends developing among the leading cadres in the mass organization.

Anti-Unemployment

Employment situation has worsened during this period as a result of economic liberalization, privatization and globalization. Many new dimensions in the unemployment problem have been added. Regional disparity, rural and urban gaps have increased in the job market. Recession and slow down in the economy have further squeezed the opportunities, government's decision to extend the retirement age by two years and resulted ban on recruitment for the two years have closed the avenues for new entrants. In spite of this, the issue of unemployment has been receded to the back by entire socio-economic and political mechanism. Acute unemployment is used by the BJP and separatists to lead the youth in diversionary channels.

It is precisely in such a situation as available today that highlighting the issue of unemployment, undertaking intense agitation on the acute sufferings of the unemployed, popularizing and organizing campaigns on the immediate and basic demands of the unemployed, exposure campaign of the link between unemployment and globalization policies, exposure of the capitalist system as the continued source of unemployment etc. assumes utmost importance in the day-to-day activities of the youth organization. This must be carried on in cooperation with other mass organizations, particularly with the trade union and Kisan and agricultural workers organizations. Due to acute unemployment the younger generation is being forced to undertake jobs in unorganized and informal sectors. The question of unemployment and the task of organizing the massive workfoce in the unorganized and informal sector have to be addressed by the organized movements as a whole.

In 1996, immediately after the UF Government came to power, the organization mobilizing other like-minded youth and student organizations had organized a National Convention and prepared a youth charter. While welcoming the formation of the UF Government and needs to combat communalism, the mass organization placed a charter before the government and all, the constituent parties to take certain initiatives in education and employment field. The movement could not be built up due to absence of priority for those questions by different parties.

Some of the Important Activities

With a view to exchanging experiences gained in different states and at the centre of the mass organization, organized a South India workshop in 1996. Several state level educational training camps were organized in almost all states during this period. A number of seminars, symposia and study circles were organized by the mass organization on specific topics.

National Youth Policy

During this period, the youth leadership undertook a serious exercise in formulating suggestions for a comprehensive youth

policy and a plan of action. The UF Government had prepared a draft policy in consultation with youth organizations, NGOs and state governments. The dangerous development is that the BJP-led coalition which came to power has not only shelved the proposal but is pushing forward a new scheme called National Reconstruction Corps (NRC) which is nothing short of putting an official stamp on an RSS programme. Our comrades working in the Youth Front must take necessary steps to see that the mass organizations mount a powerful campaign to expose the real nature of NRC.

The youth centre has launched a new Hindi journal (*Naujawan*) recently.

Weaker States and Weaker Sections

As part of the youth centre's assistance to the weaker states, both the number and the amount of subsidies have been increased for the wholetimers engaged in Youth Front. Even more wholetimers can be deputed to the work among the SCs, STs and minorities apart from those already engaged in the state youth centres. There is weakness in identifying and recruiting wholetimers from among the possible young cadres. Even reluctance in paying wages in addition to the youth central subsidy made available to the weaker states is being witnessed. To improve mass organization activities in weaker states, they could not make much headway in spite of the efforts, mainly due to absence of any planning in the Party or even sense of priority in respect of districts or areas. Some improvements have been made in developing young cadres from among the SCs, STs and minorities. However, this experience also varies from state to state. Many states have failed to utilize the opportunities to expand the mass organization among this section. Well-planned and organized efforts with well-conceived programmes still can help making inroads in newer areas and among newer sections hitherto unexplored.

Problems of All-India Centre

There is a serious problem in the availability of comrades for all-India centre's work. Despite repeated effort to increase it, it

has progressively decreased over the years. This problem reflects the situation at the states and even in districts. Unless addressed immediately, it will pose serious problem in the coming days. Some of the problems related to this are as follows:

- (i) Due to uneven development and serious weakness in and around Delhi, very few comrades from stronger states are willing to come to the centre.
- (ii) For the past few years, flow of able-leading comrades from the student front to the Youth Front is on the decline.
- (iii) Non-availability of leading comrades to work from the state and district centres is being witnessed. Naturally the question of deputing cadres at the centre becomes secondary.
- (iv) Absence of any cadre policy and long-term planning or even adequate prior thinking, has led to ad hocism in many states while electing leaders.
- (v) In some cases personal choice or loyalty becomes the key factor in deputing cadres rather than assessing efficiency, acceptability and leadership quality.
- (vi) Sometime delay in taking decision and refusal in parting with the cadres from one front to the other not only frustrates the promising cadres it also denies party of the service of able cadres.

It should be realized that by deputing able cadres in the Youth Front, Party can be benefited by having more cadres from the front in quick succession. On many occasions, the district, state and even centre of the youth organization have suffered due to delayed decision in deputing cadres in the Youth Front. Building a regular team to strengthen the all-India centre must be taken up as a priority task.

STUDENT FRONT

During the period after the 15th Party Congress, work in the student front improved in many aspects. At the same time, a lot of shortcomings still prevail which need special attention. Many comrades have been murdered in this period in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir and Tripura by the communal

authoritarian and divisive forces while upholding the cause of the democratic movement.

The Silver Jubilee Year

1995 was the silver jubilee year of the student organization. As part of this observation, five programmes at the all-India level were organized. The inauguration of the programme was held at Delhi in July 1995. A seminar against commercialization of education was successfully organized at Bangalore and one against communalism at Mumbai. An anti-imperialist seminar was held at Calcutta. The celebration programme culminated with a student rally at Cochin in January 1996. Apart from this, at the state and lower levels, independent programmes were organized. The main thrust of these campaigns was to counterpose the vast propaganda against and ideological onslaught on the organized democratic student movement from rightist political institutions. The silver jubilee celebration programmes were generally successful.

On Campaigns and Agitations

In the background of the imperialist onslaught on Indian economy, an all-India student strike was organized against the commercialization of education on 29th November 1995. Twenty-seven regional and all-India level organizational and University Students' Unions joined hands to support the strike. It was total in West Bengal, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Sikkim, Tripura and Andhra Pradesh and successful in Bihar, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Orissa, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh. An estimated 25 million students positively responded according to the student front's review. The strike had a reflection all over the country and helped mobilize people's opinion against the impact of liberalization policies on education under the then Narasimha Rao Government.

The Second All-India University Students' Convention was held in August 1995 at Allahabad University. A Central University Students' Convention was held in Delhi in March 1997. The first ever North-East Students' Convention was held at Guwahati in June 1997 which gave a call to observe North-East Day.

Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Campaign in Oct.-Nov. 1997 (on the occasion of 30th Anniversary of Che Guevera's Martyrdom), campaigns against ragging and atrocities on women in November 1997, campaign on 50th Years of Independence, observation of Tripura Solidarity Day on 17th April, 1997, campaign against communalism and for educational and employment rights in September 1998 were some of the programmes undertaken during this period. The student front leaders joined the 14th World Festival of Students and Youth at Havana, Cuba, held on 28th July to 5th August, 1997.

In the last academic year, a number of agitations and other activities were organized in different states like Rajasthan, Karnataka, MP, HP, Delhi, Haryana, UP etc.

On Political and Educational Situations

The reverses to socialism, the onslaught of imperialism on India's economy through the implementation of the new economic policies of the successive governments including the United Front, the mushrooming growth of communal reactionary forces and the widespread caste polarization etc.; all contributed to create a complex political situation. All these have their own adverse impact on the student community. An atmosphere of apoliticization and de-ideologization sought to overwhelm the younger generation, accompanied by a widespread offensive of decadent imperialist culture, facilitated through satellite television, western literature and fashion shows. Organized violence, the acts of ragging, sexual harassment and activities of anti-social elements were increasing. It was a difficult time and the mass organization could advance only by intensifying a political and ideological struggle against all these tendencies.

The political and ideological intervention of the student front on educational and other matters were not sufficient to keep pace with the requirements. This, in turn, affected the ability of the student organization to attract new sections of the student community. The successful launching of the offensive against new education policy during Rajiv Gandhi regime had helped the student organization to strengthen its influence on newer sections.

In the background of the government's abdication of its responsibility in the education sector and the severe resource crunch, opinion in favour of self-financing system and payment seat system even among progressive sectors are getting strengthened. This new development in the education sector has to be seriously examined.

All-India Centre

After the reorganization of the leadership in 1994, the centre functioning improved to an extent. This further developed after the All-India Conference held in February 1997. The centre was reconstituted with 5 comrades, two from Bengal, two from Kerala and one from Delhi. One comrade from West Bengal is a Lok Sabha member and was, therefore, unable to fully associate with the centre functioning.

Though numberwise there was an increase, this was not reflected in the overall development of centre functioning, the main reason being the lack of coordination. More attention in nursing and assisting the state level movements especially the weaker ones is necessary from the centre. There has to be a prompt response to the various international and national developments.

The serious weakness in the centre functioning reflected in its inability in publishing its organ '*Student Struggle*' regularly. Only one issue of '*Student Struggle*' was published in 1997 and two issues in 1996 against the target of six issues per year. One bulletin was published during the 1996 general election. One Hindi version of student struggle '*Chhatra Sangram*' was published in 1997 though it could not continue. This is a serious weakness which needs to be rectified.

At the all-India Party centre the sub-committees' functioning should be more regular and guidance to the student front must be strengthened according to the requirements of the movement. In many states, sub-committee functioning is not regular and effective. The central functionaries are unaware about the deliberations and priority fixations in the state sub-committees, especially in the weaker states.

No comprehensive cadre policy is there in many states. Even state-centre functionaries are not made wholetimers and no proper financial assistance has been ensured. All this requires an urgent review of the Party building process in the student front.

Membership

Another serious matter of concern is the overall decline in membership of 1997 by around 2,50,000 compared to the last year. This is the second time—first being in 1993—that the membership went down.

Generally in weaker states, the tendency of fluctuation in membership is very apparent. But in this year membership decline is irrespective of the fact that whether they are weak or strong. West Bengal (reduced first time) constitutes the largest number of reduction i.e., 1,40,000, then Kerala by 20,000, Andhra 10,000, Tripura 10,000, Karnataka 15,000, UP 9,000, MP 12,000 etc.

The general election campaign and Party conferences affected the membership work. But basically the organizational lapses are the main reason for the stagnation and decline of the movement, especially the shortcomings in the campus unit level functioning.

The lack of regularity in conducting the all-India level and lower conferences have affected the systematic organization building process. The last two all-India conferences were held each after gaps of four years. In Madhya Pradesh, state conferences were held after a gap of six years. The regular functioning at different levels, especially at the campus level is most important for the student front. More care should be given to this aspect by the Party committees.

Political Education

A central Party school was organized in 1995 for Hindi states. There was no all-India Party school since 1986 for student front comrades. This is a serious lag that has to be overcome. At the state level, schools have been conducted in a regular manner in almost all states.

Hindi States

The Hindi belt states comprise 70% of the total student population of the country. The democratic movement is also weak in this area. Except Himachal Pradesh all other states in this region are suffering a chronic stagnation and even downslide. All-India centre did not do any comprehensive planning in building the student movement in this strategic area. The respective state committees also do not have much planning in this regard. Actually the student front has become weaker in this area. This has to be taken up as a priority work.

Currently, the student organization does not have any units in Gujarat, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir and Andaman & Nicobar, Mizoram.

United Action

As a continuance of united actions, an All-India Platform of Democratic and Secular Student Organizations (AIPDSSO) was founded on 29th November 1996 at New Delhi. The SFI is the coordinator of this platform in which 12 regional and all-India student organizations are members. Though it was a good beginning, it could not advance due to lack of initiatives. Serious steps must be taken to revive this united platform.

The progress and expansion of student front cannot be sustained unless there is strengthening of Party building within the student ranks. This demands more attention from the central sub-committee and state Party committees. The PB and CC will have to undertake a review of the work on the student front without delay.

**Party Membership for the
years 1994 and 1998**

State	1994	1998
Andhra Pradesh	30,791	38,958
Andaman & Nicobar	160	148
Assam	9,901	10,443
Bihar	16,338	20,529
Delhi	1,150	1,450
Goa	32	248
Gujarat	1,500	2,576
Haryana	1,340	1,264
Himachal Pradesh	785	892
Jammu & Kashmir	212	515
Karnataka	5,180	6,106
Kerala	2,28,165	2,68,183
Madhya Pradesh	2,018	3,053
Maharashtra	6,984	7,575
Manipur	230	266
Orissa	3,056	2,911
Punjab	10,387	12,307
Rajasthan	3,044	2,934
Tamil Nadu	63,438	73,051
Tripura	26,105	32,664
Uttar Pradesh	7,000	6,804
West Bengal	2,13,195	2,24,468
Sikkim	74	210
CC Staff	86	90
Total	6,31,171	7,17,645

**Circulation of People's Democracy
and Lok Lehar**

State	<i>People's Democracy</i>		<i>Lok Lehar</i>	
	Jan '95	Aug '98	Jan '95	Aug '98
Andhra Pradesh	492	464	3	3
Assam	700	650	20	11
Andaman & Nicobar	10	—	—	—
Arunachal Pradesh	—	1	—	—
Bihar	397	334	1742	1643
Chandigarh	83	64	90	77
Delhi	313	373	573	873
Goa	7	6	—	—
Gujarat	37	24	222	79
Himachal Pradesh	45	51	232	293
Haryana	30	16	526	533
Jammu & Kashmir	35	24	24	39
Karnataka	471	376	14	27
Kerala	629	458	1	2
Madhya Pradesh	156	91	1341	1101
Maharashtra	464	432	410	397
Manipur	2	1	1	—
Meghalaya	21	18	—	—
Orissa	252	351	57	26
Punjab	176	132	121	123
Pondicherry	25	16	—	—
Rajasthan	41	32	672	644
Tamil Nadu	1359	1374	—	—
Tripura	641	567	9	5
Uttar Pradesh	232	164	1842	1347
West Bengal	7455	6530	5266	3492
Foreign	73	58	3	1
Total	14,146	12,607	13,179	10,717

Membership of TU Front

State	1992	1995
Andaman & Nicobar	1,454	1,768
Andhra Pradesh	1,25,642	1,48,990
Assam	32,207	40,269
Bihar	30,920	82,311
Delhi	43,716	52,039
Goa	3,216	3,529
Gujarat	16,738	17,185
Haryana	16,825	18,370
Himachal Pradesh	4,726	4,996
Jammu & Kashmir	504	602
Karnataka	63,170	82,311
Kerala	5,99,969	7,31,096
Madhya Pradesh	21,631	29,726
Maharashtra	37,705	39,662
Orissa	30,916	26,985
Punjab	64,915	63,361
Rajasthan	28,288	32,463
Tamil Nadu	1,50,314	2,28,869
Tripura	22,041	41,667
Uttar Pradesh	32,576	28,315
West Bengal	10,30,293	11,14,767
Total	23,57,766	27,89,587

Membership of Kisan Front

State	1993-94	1996-97
Assam	1,44,538	1,44,745
Andhra Pradesh	2,11,465	2,25,234
Bihar	2,00,000	2,10,100
Gujarat	13,000	6,000
Haryana	14,500	11,5,000
Himachal Pradesh	5,200	7,000
Jammu & Kashmir	4,500	5,000
Karnataka	52,000	92,500
Kerala	10,05,760	13,25,322
Manipur	5,740	5,140
Madhya Pradesh	19,000	37,400
Maharashtra	60,800	92,273
Orissa	22,000	23,700
Punjab	80,000	90,000
Rajasthan	32,632	38,444
Sikkim	500	2,000
Tripura	1,01,000,000	2,12,000 1,62,000
Tamil Nadu	2,80,000	3,10,000
Uttar Pradesh	89,055	1,00,000
West Bengal	89,54,653	1,14,29,719
Total	1,31,27,743	1,46,17,703

**Membership of Agricultural Workers'
Union Front**

State	1994	1996-97
Andhra Pradesh	5,10,785	5,15,000
Bihar	60,000	76,453
Haryana	5,900	10,500
Karnataka	10,334	13,500
Kerala	11,82,170	12,74,044
Madhya Pradesh	—	4,650
Maharashtra	47,240	42,520
Orissa	6,630	9,164
Punjab	60,268	45,350
Rajasthan	8,796	11,410
Tamil Nadu	1,35,318	1,55,385
Tripura	65,100	88,000
Uttar Pradesh	50,000	62,000
Total	21,42,541	23,07,976

Membership of Youth Front

State	1994	1997
Andhra Pradesh	4,63,397	3,64,403
Assam	52,685	96,982
Bihar	72,112	52,862
Delhi	15,331	13,064
Gujarat	6,000	11,040
Haryana	10,700	16,294
Himachal Pradesh	2,662	4,153
Jammu & Kashmir	4,450	—
Karnataka	26,194	43,046
Kerala	29,35,808	35,30,535
Madhya Pradesh	10,200	9,820
Maharashtra	1,22,480	73,042
Orissa	29,062	22,500
Punjab	65,734	54,322
Rajasthan	32,000	31,049
Tamil Nadu	4,75,029	4,97,920
Tripura (DYFI+TYF)	2,55,344	1,70,000
Uttar Pradesh	25,200	36,520
West Bengal	46,73,717	52,46,700
Dadra Nagar Haveli	1,500	—
Total	92,79,605	1,02,74,260

Membership of Student Front

State	1993	1997
Andhra Pradesh	1,48,330	2,97,528
Assam	38,322	20,315
Bihar	51,396	24,385
Delhi	1,500	1,585
Gujarat	14,305	—
Haryana	800	3,491
Himachal Pradesh	25,002	19,870
Karnataka	51,615	57,268
Kerala	5,93,395	6,32,270
Madhya Pradesh	14,000	7,500
Maharashtra	46,692	36,599
Manipur	4,000	—
Orissa	12,759	16,627
Punjab	10,664	9,100
Rajasthan	5,255	17,844
Tamil Nadu	55,266	81,396
Tripura	56,807	55,416
TSU (Tripura)	9,000	—
Uttar Pradesh	7,601	11,394
West Bengal	9,24,406	9,20,044
Total	21,49,679	22,12,632

Membership of Women's Front

State	1994	1997
Andaman & Nicobar	700	—
Andhra Pradesh	2,62,000	2,43,000
Assam	30,154	53,631
Bihar	25,650	25,500
Delhi	24,234	40,780
Gujarat	7,000	8,520
Haryana	5,740	14,070
Himachal Pradesh	2,500	3,440
Karnataka	4,420	14,068
Kerala	7,64,340	11,00,000
Maharashtra	23,022	36,123
Madhya Pradesh	3,000	8,115
Orissa	7,576	7,340
Punjab	19,535	29,000
Rajasthan	7,213	12,900
Tamil Nadu	1,63,694	2,88,597
Tripura	1,71,460	1,85,566
Uttar Pradesh	15,050	25,000
West Bengal	25,83,500	31,16,367
Total	41,20,788	52,12,017

Resolution on Martyrs Adopted in The 16th Congress of The Communist Party of India (Marxist) Held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998*

The Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) salutes the memory of the martyrs who died in the cause of the working class and the democratic movement in the past three and a half years, while defending national unity. The entire Party and the Communist movement will cherish the memory of these comrades.

The Congress pays respectful homage to the 284 martyrs belonging to the Party and the mass organizations in West Bengal who sacrificed their lives in the class struggle and for the cause of the Party and the democratic movement.

The Congress pays respectful tribute to the 180 heroic martyrs of the Party and the democratic movement in Tripura who were killed by the extremist groups or the Congress(I)-TUJS men, while upholding the Party's line of defending tribal-non-tribal unity.

The Congress pays respectful homage to the memory of the 36 comrades of Bihar who were killed by landlord goondas, anti-social elements or by police firing.

The Congress pays tribute to the memory of the 14 martyrs of Kerala who were killed by the RSS, Congress(I) and other anti-social elements.

The Congress pays respectful homage to the memory of the 20 comrades in Andhra Pradesh who were killed at the hands of the naxalites, landlord goondas and other anti-social elements.

The Congress pays homage to the memory of the seven comrades who were killed in Assam by Bodo militants, ULFA and other extremist gangs.

Resolution on Martyrs Adopted 605

The Congress pays homage to the memory of the four comrades of Maharashtra—two of whom were killed in police firing and two by the BJP-Shiv Sena hoodlums.

The Congress pays homage to the memory of the five comrades who were killed by class enemies and anti-social elements in Tamil Nadu.

The Congress pays tribute to the three comrades killed in police firing at Hejjala in Karnataka while participating in a workers' struggle.

The Congress pays tribute to the memory of the seven comrades of Uttar Pradesh who were killed by landlord goondas and extremists.

The Sixteenth Congress dips the Red Flag in tribute to these heroic martyrs. The Party is proud of their steadfast devotion and supreme sacrifice. The Congress pledges to uphold the high ideal for which they sacrificed their lives. The Congress conveys its heartfelt sympathy to the families of these comrades.

Condolence Resolutions Adopted in The 16th Congress of The CPI(M) Held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998*

1. ON COMRADE EMS NAMBOODIRIPAD

The 16th Congress of the CPI(M) pays respectful homage to the memory of Comrade EMS Namboodiripad, foremost leader of the Communist movement in India, brilliant Marxist theoretician and outstanding practitioner of Marxism-Leninism in Indian conditions. He died on March 19, 1998 at the age of 89. He served as the General Secretary of the Party from 1977 to 1992, when he stepped down due to ill-health.

EMS Namboodiripad, or "EMS" as he was universally known, was born into an affluent landlord family but gave up the privileges of high-caste birth and from an early age fought against the gross inequities of a feudal caste system. He started public life while still a school student by joining the social reform movement and was soon active in the anti-imperialist struggle. He was a founder-member of the Congress Socialist Party and soon after joined the Communist Party of India. He was one of the four comrades who founded the Communist Party in Kerala and built it into one of the most powerful contingents of the revolutionary movement in India. He was one of the key proponents of *Aikya Kerala* which led to the formation of Kerala as a unified linguistic state. In 1957, he headed the first elected Communist government which ushered in pathbreaking reforms that changed the face of Kerala.

EMS made invaluable theoretical and practical contributions to the development of the Communist movement in the country and to the growth of the CPI(M). His contribution to the building of

the Party in the different periods is memorable. In the difficult years of inner-Party struggle leading to the split in the Party, he took consistent positions against Right revisionism and Left sectarianism.

EMS joined the leading group from the united Party which formed the CPI(M) and was elected to the Central Committee and the Polit Bureau of the Party at the Seventh Congress of the Party in 1964, and he continued to serve in these positions till his death. As General Secretary of the CPI(M), under his leadership, the Party and the Left played a key role in the battle against communalism.

During the 70 years of his public life, EMS made great sacrifices, spending many years in prison and leading the Party from underground for long periods. His dedicated work, his devotion to the revolutionary cause, his deep study of Marxism and his consistent efforts to apply Marxism to Indian conditions, made him the outstanding leader of the proletarian revolutionary movement. His rare simplicity and honesty made him one of the most beloved leaders of the masses of India. Through his innumerable writings in the form of books, articles and Party documents, his contributions to the ideological, political and organizational consolidation of the Communist movement stand out as a great monument to his memory. He was a leader who was constantly in dialogue with the people.

The life and work of Comrade EMS Namboodiripad will forever inspire all those who are dedicated to socialism and a just, equal and humane world.

2. ON COMRADE SUNIL MAITRA

The 16th Congress of the Party records its profound grief at the passing away of Comrade Sunil Maitra, member of the Central Committee and Polit Bureau and editor of *People's Democracy*.

Comrade Sunil Maitra was an outstanding Communist, trade union leader, parliamentarian and writer. He joined the freedom struggle as a student in 1942 and became a member of the Communist Party soon after. He was instrumental in building the trade union movement among insurance employees, and was one

of the foremost leaders of the All India Insurance Employees' Association (AIIEA). He was an effective Party organizer and worked in the Calcutta district, before being made a member of the Central Committee, Central Secretariat and then Polit Bureau.

He was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1980 and made a lasting mark as a diligent and fiery parliamentarian. A voracious reader, Comrade Sunil Maitra's deep grasp of Marxism and his practical experience enabled him to combine his theoretical studies with analysis of current events and history. This ensured his effective contribution as editor of *People's Democracy*. The 16th Congress of the CPI(M) conveys its heartfelt condolences to his wife, Comrade Nilima Maitra, and members of his family.

3. ON COMRADE A. NALLASIVAN

The 16th Congress of the CPI(M) mourns the passing away of Comrade A. Nallasivan, member of the Central Committee, former member of the Polit Bureau and one of the outstanding leaders of the Party in Tamil Nadu.

Comrade Nallasivan came to the Communist movement through the freedom struggle and worked among students, and later the working class of Tirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu. An efficient and dedicated trade union activist and leader, he became one of the prominent builders of the Party in the state. He was elected the Secretary of the State Committee in 1982. He was elected to the Central Committee of the Party at the 10th Congress in 1978 and became a Polit Bureau member at the 13th Congress. He stepped down from the PB at the 15th Congress due to ill-health.

Known for his simplicity, integrity and devotion to Communist principles, Comrade Nallasivan left an indelible impact on the Communist movement in Tamil Nadu. The 16th Congress of the CPI(M) pays homage to his memory and conveys its heartfelt condolences to his family.

4. ON COMRADE GODAVARI PARULEKAR

The 16th Congress of the CPI(M) expresses its deep sorrow at the passing away of Comrade Godavari Parulekar, prominent leader of the Party and the Kisan Sabha. She died at the age of 89 after a prolonged illness.

The first woman law graduate in Maharashtra, Comrade Godavari was to become an exemplary Communist who participated with distinction in the various political and social movements for over six decades. She joined the freedom struggle, became active in the social reform movement and subsequently joined the Communist Party. Comrade Godavari will always be remembered for her inspiring leadership of the Worli adivasi movement against feudal oppression. Her pioneering work among the adivasis made her a legendary figure. She also played a prominent role in developing the Kisan movement in the state and was all-India President of the Kisan Sabha. She was a member of the Central Committee of the Party from 1964 till 1992 when she retired due to ill-health. The 16th Congress offers respectful homage to her memory.

5. ON COMRADE CHADAYAN GOVINDAN

The 16th Congress of the CPI(M) mourns the passing away of Comrade Chadayan Govindan, member of the Central Committee and Secretary of the Kerala State Committee of the Party.

Comrade Chadayan Govindan was born in a handloom worker's family and took up weaving for a livelihood at a young age. He was attracted to the Communist movement during the Second World War period, and became a militant activist in workers' struggles in the late 1940s. He was elected to the State Committee in 1977; he became the Secretary of the Kannur district committee of the Party. He became a member of the State Secretariat in 1986. He was elected to the Central Committee in 1995 and became the Secretary of the Kerala State Committee in 1996.

An excellent Party organizer, Comrade Chadayan Govindan always stood for the unity of the Party based on principled positions and was fearless and frank in expressing his views in

the interests of the Party. His simple life-style and dedication to Communist values endeared him to the people of his state. The 16th Congress pays homage to this exemplary Communist revolutionary and conveys its heartfelt condolence to his wife and family members.

6. ON COMRADE P. RAMACHANDRA RAO

The 16th Congress of the CPI(M) expresses deep sorrow at the sudden demise of Comrade P. Ramachandra Rao, member of the Central Committee and Secretary of the Karnataka State Committee of the Party.

Comrade Ramachandra Rao began his career as a school teacher but soon became active among the unorganized workers. He rose to become an established trade union leader and later played a key role as a Kisan Sabha organizer. He became a member of the State Committee of the united Party in 1960 and after 1964 made a big contribution to the growth of the CPI(M) in the state. He was the Karnataka State Secretary of the Party till the time of his death, and elected to the Central Committee of the Party at the 12th Congress in 1985.

The 16th Congress pays homage to the memory of this dedicated Communist and conveys its heartfelt condolence to his wife, daughters and all family members.

7. ON COMRADES OF LEFT PARTIES

The 16th Congress records its grief at the passing away of CPI leaders, Comrades M. Farooqi, Giri Prasad and S. G. Sardesai.

The 16th Congress pays homage to the memory of Comrade Chitta Basu, General Secretary of All-India Forward Bloc, and Comrade Tridib Chaudhury, General Secretary of the Revolutionary Socialist Party.

8. ON LEADING COMRADES

The 16th Congress of the CPI(M) places on record its profound grief over the death of several members of different state committees and leading functionaries of the Party. The comrades who have died since the 15th Congress include:

Comrade Imbichi Bawa, member of the State Committee of Kerala and veteran Communist leader.

Comrade M. K. Krishnan, member of the State Committee of Kerala and General Secretary of the All-India Agricultural Workers' Union (AIAWU).

Comrade Sudhir Mukherjee, member of the Madhya Pradesh State Committee and veteran Communist leader of the state.

Comrade Mansoor Habibullah, freedom fighter and member of the West Bengal State Committee.

Comrade Satyabrata Sen, member of the West Bengal State Committee and prominent economist.

Comrade Shiv Verma, prominent freedom fighter and associate of Bhagat Singh.

Comrade Akbar Hussain Babar, member of the State Committee of Uttar Pradesh.

Comrade Ved Gupta, member of the State Secretariat of Delhi.

Comrade Prabir Sengupta, member of the West Bengal State Committee.

Comrade Bodepudi Venkateswara Rao, member of the Andhra Pradesh State Secretariat.

Comrade P. S. Dhanuskodi, member of the Tamil Nadu State Committee.

Comrade Yamuna Prasad Shastri, member of the Madhya Pradesh State Secretariat.

Comrade N. Vasudevan, Secretary of the Andaman & Nicobar State Committee of the Party.

Comrade Bimal Sinha, member of the Tripura State Committee, Minister in the Left Front Government murdered by an extremist gang.

Comrade Amritendu Mukherjee, veteran Communist leader and member of the West Bengal State Committee.

Comrade Ajit Sarkar, member of the Bihar State Committee and militant leader of the rural poor killed by agents of landlords.

Comrade Palash Paramanick, member of the West Bengal State Committee and Kisan leader.

Comrade M. Sellamuthu, member of the Tamil Nadu State Committee and agricultural workers' leader.

Comrade K. L. Malebade, member of the Maharashtra State Secretariat and Vice-President of CITU State Council.

Comrade Amiya Das, member of the Orissa State Committee and trade union leader killed by anti-social elements.

Comrade Krishna Das Palta, veteran freedom fighter.

Comrade B. L. Banerjee, member of the State Secretariat of Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Comrade Savayasachi, member of the Uttar Pradesh State Secretariat and noted writer.

Comrade B. P. Kashyap, member of the Maharashtra State Committee.

Comrade Raj Kishore, member of the Uttar Pradesh State Secretariat.

Comrade Baren Bose, member of the West Bengal State Committee.

9. ON COMRADES OF FRATERNAL PARTIES

Comrade Deng Xiaoping

The 16th Congress of the CPI(M) pays homage to the memory of Comrade Deng Xiaoping, one of the most outstanding leaders of the Communist Party of China and of the Chinese Revolution.

Comrade Deng played a very important role in developing the Communist movement and leading the protracted war of liberation in China. He made an immense contribution in the building of modern China during the difficult period after the revolution. His vision of developing China as a developed modern state on the basis of socialism resulted in his becoming the main architect of the new path followed by China in the post-Cultural Revolution period. He will be remembered for his theoretical contribution in defining the path of China's advance as one of building socialism

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with Chinese characteristics. The 16th Congress pays its revolutionary homage to the memory of this outstanding leader of the Communist movement and of the Chinese people.

The 16th Congress of the CPI(M) also pays homage to the memory of:

Comrade Nguyen Van Linh, former General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam and an outstanding leader of the Vietnamese Communist Party.

Comrade Georges Marchais, leader of the French working class and former General Secretary of the Communist Party of France.

Comrade Peng Zhen, veteran leader of the Communist Party of China.

Comrade Cheddi Jagan, leader of the Progressive People's Party and President of Guyana.

Other Resolutions Adopted in The 16th Congress of The CPI(M) Held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998*

(A) ON RISING PRICES

The Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) takes serious note of and deplores the alarming escalation of prices over the past few months, particularly since the BJP's accession to power at the Centre. While about a year ago in August 1997, the rate of inflation on the basis of wholesale prices was around 3.4 per cent and even in March 1998, it was no more than about five per cent, by now in a matter of six months or so, the rate has gone beyond 8.7 per cent and is rapidly approaching a double digit figure. Regarding retail prices, there has already been a double digit figure increase. Inflation has seriously eroded the purchasing power of the ordinary people, more so as the price rise is massive in the case of common items of consumption such as foodgrains, edible oils, potatoes, onions, khandseri, gur, tea, spices, cooking fuel, etc. With the proposed delicensing of sugar, there is every likelihood of sugar prices sky-rocketing too.

Despite eleven successive years of good rain, agricultural production has declined and since 1991, the rate of growth of food production has failed to keep pace with the rate of population growth, thus reducing per capita availability of foodgrains. This has been largely because of the steep decline in both public and private investments in agricultural infrastructure and the withdrawal of subsidies. Last year's foodgrain production registered a steep decline of around seven million tonnes, from

199 million tonnes to 192 million tonnes, thus accentuating the pressure on prices for essential commodities.

In spite of this alarming rise in prices, there has been virtually no action or intervention on the part of the Union Government on the ground that prices should be allowed to find their own level by way of free interaction of the forces of demand and supply at the market place, in line with Fund-Bank prescriptions. The benefit of higher agricultural prices is not accruing to the farmers, most of whom deliver their output at give-away prices at the farm-gate immediately after harvesting, while unscrupulous hoarders and traders are taking full advantage of the inter-seasonal price differences and lack of infrastructure support for agricultural producers at the grass-roots level.

While our Party and other parties in the Left had been demanding strengthening of the Public Distribution System, there has been a systematic attempt on the part of the BJP Government at the Centre to dismantle the Public Distribution System.

The 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) strongly condemns the Union Government for its indifferent and callous attitude towards the sufferings of the masses, particularly workers, a large number of whom are in the unorganized sector, peasants, salaried employees and women, who are struggling to maintain their meagre purchasing power against the onslaught of accelerating prices, and demands the supply of 14 essential commodities at fair and reasonable prices to the common people. The Congress urges the people to fight back this fierce and sustained attack on their level of living, and the anti-people economic policies being implemented by the Union Government with all their strength, by organizing themselves in struggles, wherever they are, at villages, towns, thanas, tehsils, districts and state capital, and through their own class and mass organizations, all over the country.

(B) ON ATTACKS ON CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

The 16th Congress of the CPI(M) expresses its outrage and strong condemnation of the systematic violence unleashed

against the Christian community by the RSS and its wings, notably the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, throughout the country in recent months. Ever since the BJP-led Government took over power at the Centre, there has been a steep rise in the attacks on Christians particularly in BJP-ruled states. The pattern of violence shows that the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal and Shiv Sena cadres are carrying out a well-chalked out plan to harass, intimidate and terrorize the minority Christian community in India who number around 23 million, forming barely 2.6 per cent of the Indian population.

The attacks comprise direct violence against the religious community of priests and nuns; violent disruption of prayer meetings; and attacks on Christian institutions including demolition of churches, desecration of graveyards and intimidation of students and teachers in missionary schools.

The highest number of attacks have taken place in Gujarat where the VHP has the most widespread network. In Gujarat, VHP activists have burnt copies of the Bible, demolished churches, desecrated Christian cemeteries, brutally attacked prayer meetings and vandalized missionary institutions. Similar attacks have also taken place in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Punjab in the last few months. In the north-east and Bihar, the RSS cadres have been carrying out a campaign against the church for many years and have stepped this up further. The recent rape of nuns in Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh is the most horrific instance of the atmosphere of hatred which is resulting in such atrocities. The subsequent justification by the VHP of the rape and other incidents of violence proves that far from being isolated cases, the violence is a manifestation of the fascistic Hindutva ideology that has become brazenly aggressive with the acquisition of state power.

The National Commission of Minorities, after investigation, held the BJP Government in Gujarat guilty of creating an atmosphere of insecurity for minorities. Despite the spate of attacks across the country, the Central Government has issued no official statement condemning this violence nor taken any action to ensure the security of the Christian community. The representatives of the community have said that it is for the first time since Independence that Christians in India feel threatened.

The attacks on Christians stems from the very essence of Hindutva ideology which claims that India is the land of a monolithic Hindu community in which members of the other faiths are "alien" and deserve no status. The same hate that led to the demolition of the Babri Masjid and violence against the Muslim minority is being manifested in the attacks against the Christians. This hate and violence is an intrinsic part of the RSS-BJP-VHP's strategy to pave the way to their Hindu rashtra.

The 16th Congress of the CPI(M) calls upon all Party units and members to go among the people and expose the diabolical game plan of the Hindutva forces. The CPI(M) should be in the forefront of the battle to safeguard the rights and ensure the security of the minorities in India. The Party calls upon all sections of the Indian people who are concerned with democracy and communal harmony to raise their voice and counter the violent offensive against the Christian community.

(C) ON THE SITUATION IN TRIPURA

The Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) expresses its deep concern at the growing violent activities of the extremist groups in Tripura which have led to the loss of innocent lives, injuries to many people and disturbance of normal life. The Congress strongly condemns the NLFT and the ATTF, the two main outlawed extremist groups which are indulging in mindless killings, kidnappings, demands for ransom and large-scale extortion of money utilizing the areas across the border for shelter.

The killing of non-tribal people in planned attacks is calculated to foment inter-ethnic tensions and to provoke communal violence. There is a heinous design to disrupt the tribal—non-tribal unity which has been built up over decades of efforts by the Left and democratic forces.

The intensification of the attacks by the extremist groups in the last three months is taking place in the background of the decision of the BJP-led Government to withdraw a substantial number of armed forces deployed in the state. Emboldened by this step extremists have stepped up their hit and run tactics.

The Congress deplores the motivated inaction and non-compliance by the Vajpayee Government of the repeated requests of the Left Front Government to restore the strength of the armed forces in the state immediately and to deploy additional forces.

The problem in Tripura should not be seen as merely a law and order question created by some hardcore armed extremist groups. Behind these groups are imperialist agencies and the ISI which is aiding and equipping them from across the borders. The struggle in Tripura is not a domestic political conflict but a struggle to defend national unity in a strategic area of the country. It is unfortunate that the Congress(I)-TUJS-TNV opposition in the state is adopting a partisan and harmful stand in not co-operating with the state government, and encouraging violent activities in the state with the hope of destabilizing the Left Front Government.

The 16th Congress records its appreciation of the high-level of consciousness displayed by the people of Tripura both tribal and non-tribal, who have refused to get provoked by the heinous conspiracy and continue to maintain harmonious relations.

The Congress expresses its full solidarity with the CPI(M) state unit and its cadres who are valiantly facing the armed attacks and upholding national unity and preserving amity among the people. The Left Front Government is sincerely trying to politically tackle the problem of extremism by offering to negotiate and rehabilitate those who lay down their arms, while firmly combating the violent activities.

The 16th Congress calls upon all its Party units and democratic forces to effectively campaign in defence of the democratic movement in Tripura and mobilize public opinion to compel the Central Government to render adequate assistance to the state.

(D) ON SOLIDARITY WITH COMING COUNTRYWIDE STRIKE ACTION

The Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) welcomes the decision of the All India Convention of the National Platform of Mass Organizations to organize a nationwide campaign and strike against economic policies of the

BJP-led Government which has hit hard national economic development and the standard of living of the toiling masses.

The BJP Government has been implementing with more vigour the structural adjustment programmes authored by the World Bank and the IMF. The transnational corporations and big business houses in India have been given liberal concessions to loot the Indian people and make large profits. The offensive of disinvestment to the tune of 74 per cent and privatization of public undertakings is in full swing. The government has nonchalantly refused to give any financial assistance to sick public and private sector undertakings, which makes their revival impossible. Thus, the government has prepared a blue print for complete dismantling of the public sector network in the country.

The steep rise in prices of essential commodities arising out of budgetary proposals and government's tacit support to black marketeers has put crushing burdens on the common people. The population below the poverty line has grown phenomenally.

The peasantry is suffering due to absence of land reforms and non-distribution of surplus lands. The opening up of the agricultural commodity market to MNCs has adversely affected the peasantry. A large number of peasants have been forced to commit suicide in many parts of the country. The wages of agricultural workers are extremely low and the long awaited Agricultural Workers' Bill has been abandoned. The Bill on reservation of one-third seats for women in Parliament and state assemblies was sabotaged by the BJP while the number of working women are growing day by day. The elitist educational policies have made education a luxury for the common people. The Bill to introduce free, compulsory, universal education up to 14 years of age brought out by the UPA Government is kept in cold storage by the BJP Government. There is an alarming rise of unemployment and drastically reduced job opportunities for the youth. Even the existing regular jobs are being converted into informal jobs. And above this, the danger of communalism has threatened the secular fabric of our society and the minorities are feeling insecure.

The NPMO has given a clarion call to the working class, kisan organizations, unions of agricultural workers, organizations of women, students and youths to mobilize millions in a phased programme of action including organization of a general strike on December 11, 1998.

The Sixteenth Congress of the CPI(M) calls upon the trade unions and all other mass organizations to make the call of general strike a massive success so that the BJP-led Government's retrograde policies are given a strong rebuff by the united strength of the toiling masses.

The Sixteenth Congress of the CPI(M) also welcomes the decision of the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU) to go in for two days' strike on December 10 and 11, 1998 in the public sector opposing the government's policy of privatization and closure of public sector units.

This Congress calls upon all Party units and members to extend all-out support to this massive action and rally the masses all over India so that the powerful voice of the toiling millions is raised all over India on December 11, 1998 through nationwide strike actions.

Report of The Central Control Commission of The CPI(M) Adopted in The 16th Congress of The CPI(M) Held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1985

The Central Control Commission (CCC) comprising of 3 members was elected by the 15th Party Congress, was functioning regularly. Meetings were conducted with an average period of once in three months.

From last Congress held at Chandigarh during April 1985, number of appeals to the CCC increased more than that of previous period. Up to September 1985, the CCC received 1176 cases. Out of these cases, 19 cases of expulsion upheld, 3 reversed, 1 suspension upheld, 1 struck, 1 withdrawn, 32 cases negotiated, 12 cases referred to State Committees. 32 cases were considered as they were not coming under the purview of CCC and 6 cases are pending disposal to be handled under the State committee).

There was an amendment in the Party constitution that the State and Central Control Committees can consider cases involving even dropping from Party membership.

The nature of the appeals and complaints covered with various kinds, such as (a) complaints of those related with Party membership in individual and group basis, (b) complaints of Party members involved in corruption of any sort at different (c) involving or organising groups within the Party, (d) cases of moral turpitude, (e) complaints of lower committees against the higher committee or higher leadership, (f) disregarding the principles of Party constitution and ignoring the decisions of Party committees, (g) other injustices done to Party members by Party committees, (h) disputes on property and matters relating to neglecting a section of workers and trade unions from time to time, etc.

Such complaints mentioned above and anonymous representations, appeals on behalf of other Party comrades could not be admitted by CCC as they did not come under the purview of the rules of the commissions.

However, selected cases were referred to the respective state committees. Normally, no state committees do report back to the commissions on such references, if any action is taken by them.

The Party members have wrong impressions that on any aggrieved matters, the CCC can be able to solve and render justice. It shows that many Party members do not understand not only Party constitution well but also the principles of democratic centralism and duties and discipline of Party members. Steps should be taken to remove such wrong impressions as well as proper education on Party constitution be given.

Of late, cases pertaining to complaints of local committees or higher committees are being received by the CCC. The Central Committee should consider bringing them under the purview of the CCC.

Some very belated appeals are received say even after 2 years or 3 years. The CC should give guidance whether such cases can be considered.

In between the 15th and 16th Party Congress, CCC has submitted two work reports to the CC. Copies of replies sent to the aggrieved PMs were sent to the CC for information.

The CCC had experienced same difficulties in carrying on the Secretariat work such as file maintaining, job of translating from regional language into English etc. also, same delay in sending reply to the applicant is taken place because of the HQ was functioning at New Delhi, while actual work were carried out at Calcutta. The CCC suggests that HQ or CCC may be fixed that where the chairperson is actually functioning.

Adequate arrangements of personnel and materials for dealing with the Secretariat and office work of the commissions be made.

SAMAR MUKHERJEE
Chairman
Central Control Commission

Work Report and Performance of Central Control Commission up to September 1998

States	Total	Expelled Removed		Suspended		Non- Renewal	With- drawn	Old Case	Referring State Comm.	Not coming under purview	Pending
		Upheld	Reversed	Upheld	Reversed						
Assam	4										
Bihar	1	.									
Haryana	2										
Kerala	57										
Maharashtra	8										
Madhya Pradesh	3										
Karnataka	3										
Tamil Nadu	7										
Tripura	1										
West Bengal	17										
Total	104	19	3	1	1	1	2	3	12	56	6

Report of The Credential Committee Adopted in The 16th Congress of The CPI(M) Held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998*

The Central Committee had decided that the number of delegates to attend the 16th Congress would total 746, to be divided into 683 delegates and 63 observers. In addition were nine guests—two women comrades and seven male comrades.

Two members of the Central Committee, Comrade Dasarath Deb and Comrade Vimal Ranadive could not attend the Congress due to illness; and one delegate, Chandrasekhara Kurup of Kerala and two observers (one from Manipur and the other from Andaman) were also absent. Thus, a total 680 delegates and 61 observers attended the Congress. The statewise breakdown is given below.

Other relevant classifications of the delegates and observers as revealed by the credential forms are also appended herewith in separate tables.

Amongst the delegates attending the Congress:

Naren Sen of West Bengal, at 89 years one month and eight days, was the oldest delegate; and S. Kannan of Tamil Nadu, at 28 years three months and 24 days, was the youngest.

Maitaram Samu of Manipur, at 73 years was the oldest observer; and Kushal Bharadwaj of Himachal Pradesh, at 28 years, nine months and 21 days, the youngest.

H. S. Surjeet and N. Prasada Rao of the Central Committee joined the Party in 1934; among observers. Sesha Reddy of Andhra Pradesh joined the Party in 1946.

Tejeswar Rao, delegate from Andhra Pradesh underwent the longest jail life of 13 years ten months and 15 days; and Bishnu

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, October 25, 1998.

The members of the Credential Committee were: Sukomal Sen, P. Madhu and Mahendra Singh.

Mahanta, observer from Orissa underwent a jail life of three years nine months and 26 days

P. K. Chandranandan, delegate from Kerala, had the longest underground life of 12 years six months; Maitaram Samu, observer from Manipur, a maximum underground life of seven years. The average age of delegates was 55 years, of observers 50 years.

TABLE I
Total Number of Delegates & Observers

Total Delegates	:	683	Total Observers	:	63		
Delegates Present	:	680	Observers Present	:	61		
Male Delegates	:	634	Male Observers	:	52		
Female Delegates	:	46	Female Observers	:	9		
Statewise							
		Delegates		Observers			
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Andaman & Nicobar		2	0	2	0	0	0
Andhra Pradesh	32	3	35	4	0	0	4
Assam	15	1	16	2	0	0	2
Bihar	19	1	20	2	2	0	4
Delhi	4	1	5	2	0	0	2
Goa	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
Gujarat	3	0	3	3	0	0	3
Haryana	5	0	5	1	1	0	2
Himachal Pradesh	5	0	5	2	0	0	2
Jammu & Kashmir	5	0	5	1	0	0	1
Karnataka	7	1	8	2	0	0	2
Kerala	157	12	169	2	0	0	2
Madhya Pradesh	6	0	6	2	1	0	3
Maharashtra	10	1	11	2	1	0	3
Manipur	2	0	2	1	0	0	1
Orissa	7	0	7	1	0	0	1
Punjab	20	0	20	2	1	0	3
Rajasthan	6	1	7	2	0	0	2
Sikkim	1	0	1	1	0	0	1
Tamil Nadu	43	4	47	2	0	0	2
Tripura	23	2	25	2	0	0	2
Uttar Pradesh	11	1	12	2	1	0	3
West Bengal	163	12	175	3	0	0	3
C C Units	24	2	26	9	1	0	10
C C Members (Units in)	60	4	64	0	0	0	0
United Kingdom	2	0	2	1	0	0	1
Canada	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total		634	46	680	52	9	61

TABLE II
Age Distribution

	Delegates	Observers
Up to 30 Years	1	1
31—40 Years	57	15
41—50 Years	219	17
51—60 Years	190	12
61—70 Years	140	15
71—80 Years	59	1
Above 80 Years	13	0

TABLE III
Class Origin

	Delegates	Observers
Not Mentioned	2	1
Working class	86	8
Agricultural Labour	30	2
Poor Peasant	89	6
Middle Peasant	146	15
Rich Peasant	29	1
Landlord	28	2
Bourgeois	2	0
Middle Class	260	26
Petty Bourgeois (Other than salaried or professional strata)	8	0

TABLE IV
Educational Qualification

	Delegates	Observers
Not Mentioned	1	0
No Formal Schooling	3	1
Up to Primary School (Class V)	20	1
Up to Elementary Stage (Class VIII)	42	1
Class X/Matric	117	9
Intermediate/Pre-Deg/HS/ITI DIP	109	8
Graduate	233	20
Post-Graduate	155	21

TABLE V
Date of Joining Party

	Delegates	Observers
Not Mentioned	2	0
Before 1942	28	0
1942-1946	33	1
1947-1963	167	8
1964-1969	133	10
1970-1976	181	12
1977-1982	102	13
After 1982	34	17

TABLE VI
Party Membership Status

	Delegates	Observers
Not Mentioned	8	2
Central Committee	64	0
State Committee	359	39
District Committee	197	4
Zonal Committee	5	0
Local Committee	1	2
Branch	46	14

TABLE VII
Mass Organisation Status

	Delegates	Observers
Not Mentioned	77	5
All-India Office-Bearer	105	13
All-India Committee Member	173	16
State Level Office-Bearer	99	11
State Level Committee Member	96	6
District Level Office-Bearer	67	0
District Level Committee Member	34	1
Others	29	9

TABLE VIII
Front Through Which Entered into the Party

	Delegates	Observers
Not Mentioned	3	0
Trade Union Front	118	15
Kisan Front	95	5
Agricultural Labour Front	20	0
Youth Front	72	7
Student Front	294	22
Women's Front	16	5
Cultural Front	11	1
Others	51	6

TABLE IX
Working Front

	Delegates	Observers
Not Mentioned	8	1
Party Organization	256	16
Trade Union	136	11
Kisan Sabha	125	5
Agricultural Labour	41	0
Middle Class Employees	14	4
Students' Front	10	5
Youth Front	24	3
Women's Front	33	7
Cultural Front	8	1
Others	25	8

TABLE X
Present Profession

	Delegates	Observers
Not Mentioned	3	0
Whole-Timer	593	38
Worker	11	0
Agricultural Labour	2	0
Poor Peasant	2	0
Middle Peasant	8	0
Rich Peasant	0	0
Office Employee	8	5
School Teacher	10	1
College Teacher	11	4
Lawyer	7	4
Medical Practitioner	2	1
Engineer/Technician	3	0
Trader/Shop-Keeper	0	1
Others	20	7

TABLE XI
Monthly Income

	Delegates	Observers
No Income/Income Not Mentioned	28	3
Up to Rs. 500/-	18	3
Rs. 501—Rs. 1,000	80	9
Rs. 1,001—Rs. 2,000	229	15
Rs. 2,001—Rs. 3,000	121	10
Rs. 3,001—Rs. 5,000	107	7
Rs. 5,001—Rs. 10,000	66	7
Above Rs. 10,000/-	31	7
 Average Income	Rs. 3,421.00	Rs. 5,117.98
Highest Income	Rs. 80,000.00	Rs. 56,000.00
Lowest Income	Rs. 300.00	Rs. 250.00

TABLE XII
Marital Status

	Delegates	Observers
Married	619	58
Unmarried	58	3
Not Mentioned	3	0

TABLE XIII
Elected Representative

	Delegates	Observers
MP	32	1
MLA	47	0
Minister	30	0
Corporation/Municipality	10	0
Zilla Parishad	22	0
Panchayat	8	0
Others	20	1

TABLE XIV
Party Congress Attended

	Delegates	Observers
Not Mentioned	7	0
1 Time	113	33
2 Times	101	11
3 Times	94	8
4 Times	78	3
5 Times	88	3
6 Times	56	1
7 Times	43	0
8 Times	32	1
9 Times	22	1
10 Times	13	0
11 Times	4	0
12 Times	7	0
13 Times	8	0
14 Times	6	0
15 Times	7	0
16 Times	1	0

Comrade L. B. Gangadhara Rao, P. B. Member (Delegate) attended all the 16 Congresses.

TABLE XV
Jail Life

	Delegates	Observers
No Experience	223	34
Less than 2 Months	165	14
2— 6 Months	80	4
6—12 Months	32	4
1— 2 Years	67	3
2— 5 Years	76	2
5—10 Years	33	0
Above 10 Years	4	0

TABLE XVI
Underground Life

	Delegates	Observers
No Experience	375	49
Less than 2 Months	30	4
2— 6 Months	50	0
6—12 Months	44	2
1— 2 Years	79	2
2— 5 Years	68	3
5—10 Years	31	1
Above 10 Years	3	0

Names of The Fraternal Parties And Their Representatives Who Came From Abroad And Participated in The 16th Congress of The CPI(M) Held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998*

It was decided by the Central Committee to invite delegations from 25 fraternal parties of which 22 attended. Three parties stated their inability to accept the invitation due to pressing domestic engagements. They were the Communist Party of Brazil, which was currently contesting the Presidential elections, the South African Communist Party and the Communist Party of Chile.

1. Communist Party of Australia:

Dr. Con Costa, Member, Central Committee.

2. Workers' Party of Bangladesh:

H A Khan Rano, Member, Polit Bureau.

Nurul Hasan, Member, Polit Bureau.

Fazle Hossain Badsha, Member, Polit Bureau.

Abdus Sattar, Member, Central Committee.

3. Communist Party of Britain:

Kenny Coyel, International Secretary.

4. Communist Party of Canada:

Nazir Rizvi, Member, Central Committee and International Relations Commission.

5. Communist Party of China:

Liu Jingqin, Vice-Minister, Member, International Department and Central Committee Member.

Fei Yonest, Deputy Director General and Member, International Department.

Ji Ping, Third Secretary, Member, International Department, and Central Committee.

Ms Wang Fengying, Counsellor, Chinese Embassy.

6. **Communist Party of Cuba:**
Jeorge Lezcano Perez, Member, Central Committee and *Chairman*, External Affairs Committee, National Assembly,
Abelardo Cueto, Officer-in-charge, Asia International Department.
7. **AKEL of Cyprus:**
Venizelos Zannettou, Member, Polit Bureau and Secretariat.
8. **Communist Party of France:**
Alain Zoughebi, Member, Central Committee, *Head*, International Department,
Max Zins, Member, International Department.
9. **PDS of Germany:**
Dr Andrej Reder, Member, Working Group for Peace and International Policy of PDS.
10. **Communist Party of Greece:**
Athanasios Papa Rigas, Member, Ideological Committee.
11. **Communist Refoundation of Italy:**
Ricchardo Luccio, Vice-Chairperson, Control Commission.
12. **Communist Party of Japan:**
Kimitoshi Morihara, Vice-Head of International Department,
General Kamoi, Member, International Department.
13. **Workers' Party of Korea:**
Choe Tae Pok, Secretary, Central Committee,
Pak Kyong Son, Section Chief, International Department,
Kim Sang Chun, Deputy Section Chief.
Ri Gong Ryul, Desk Officer, International Department.
14. **Lao Revolutionary People's Party:**
Kideng Thammabong, Ambasador,
Bounnhang, Keosavang, Third Secretary, Laotian Embassy.
15. **Communist Party of Nepal (ML):**
Sahana Pradhan, Chairperson,
Hirannalal Shreshtha, Member, Polit Bureau, Chief Department of Organization,
Sitanandan Rai, Member, Polit Bureau and Minister-in-charge of Law and Justice.

16. Communist Party of Nepal (UML):

Madhav Nepal, General Secretary, Member, Standing Committee.

J N Khanal, Chief, International Department,
Bhim Rawal, Member, Central Committee,

J P Tiwari, Alternate Member, Central Committee,
Pushpa Kandel, Member, Central Audit Committee.

17. Pakistan Communist Mazdoor Kisan Party:

Imbadullah Kazi, Deputy Secretary General.

Mansoor Saeed.

18. Communist Party of Portugal:

Victor Dias, Member, Political Committee of Central Committee.

19. Communist Party of Russian Federation:

Nikolai Vindiukob, Member, Presidium and Member Russian Duma.

20. Communist Party of Spain:

Antony Lucchetti, Member, Executive Committee.

21. Communist Party of Sri Lanka:

Raja Collure, General Secretary.

22. Communist Party of Vietnam:

Nguyen Van Son, Member, Central Committee, Chairman, Commission for External Affairs,

Nguyen Van Long, Deputy Director, General Commission, External Affairs,

Nguyen Hoanh Son, Counsellor,

Fham Xuan Dong, Expert Commission for External Affairs

Greetings of CPI to The 16th Congress of The CPI(M) Held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998*

The General Secretary of the CPI, A B Bardhan addressed the inaugural session of the 16th Party Congress on October 5. The complete text of the speech follows:

Allow me first, on behalf of the National Council of our party, to greet and congratulate you on the important occasion of your 16th Party Congress.

Only three weeks back the 17th Congress of our party had convened at Chennai, where we had the pleasure of receiving Comrade Surjeet, and listening to his thoughtful address at our inaugural session. In analyzing the present situation, in noting its grave implication for our country's future, in suggesting the tactics by which this could and should be changed, we were happy to note that our two parties share common views on most question.

Comrades,

After the fall of the Soviet Union, bourgeois propagandists had been talking about the "end of history", that only a "free market" holds forth salvation for mankind, and so forth. Within a few years, it has become evident that capitalism has no solution to the problems of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and disease. "Neoliberalism"—prescriptions imposed on developing countries by the IMF, World Bank, by US and other G-7 countries operating through the WTO, TNCs and international finance capital rampaging all over the world in the name of globalization and free market, has only aggravated these problems. Disparities have grown, till only a handful of people monopolize most of the

resources of the world. Models that were claimed as miracles have collapsed. The attempt to restore capitalism in former socialist countries has brought in ruination and disaster.

Under the impact of these policies, the rich-poor gap has widened to an unbelievable extent. For example, as revealed in the 1998 UNDP Report, the wealth of 32 of the world's richest persons exceeds the GDP of South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives) plus Iran and Afghanistan. This is shocking, scandalous, intolerable, unacceptable to civilized humanity. We have repeatedly point out that the capitalist path of development followed since Independence, despite its vaunted achievements has not been able to tackle the basic problems of our people, or ensure growth with justice. The last decade, when the policy of liberalization, privatization and globalization has been aggressively pursued in our country in the name of economic reforms, by successive governments, has seen further aggravation of the problems of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and disease. We are today ranked 139th among 175 countries, in the Human Development Index.

And yet, after attending the World Economic Development Congress in Washington during the last week of September, BJP ministers boasted that they had dispelled all doubts about their government's commitment to liberalization. They had, in fact, imparted to it, a turbo-changed momentum, and added significant initiatives of their own, to the ongoing reform process. This was said, also to remove all apprehensions in the minds of US monopolists about the so-called 'Swadeshi Programme' of the BJP, which it had been mouthing with typical double-speak.

For quite sometime, the IMF and World Bank had been singing about the miracles wrought by their Structural Adjustment Programme, about the glories of the 'Asian Tigers', about the benefits flowing from the 'Free Market', and that modern capitalism is now rid of crisis phenomenon. Just a year ago, the IMF forecast complacently that the global economy would expand by 4.3 per cent in 1998. The capitalist apple-cart has, however, been rudely upset. One can no longer pretend that is a

mere 'slow down' just deepening into a 'recession'. The "World Economic Outlook" published by the IMF itself has painted a gloomy and dismal picture. It is a full-blown crisis, starting from Asia, spreading to Japan, Russia, and now Latin America. Bankruptcies, closures and financial turmoil are costing millions of jobs, and anything from dollar 600 to dollar 800 billion in world output. When the crisis overtakes the US, it will have unforeseeable consequences for all. As usual, the capitalists, the bankers and financiers, the developed capitalist countries will try to find a way-out, at the cost of the working people and the developing countries.

The socialist countries are showing tremendous resilience and steadiness in the face of all this, but they too cannot remain unaffected by the financial turbulence and global economic crisis.

Workers, farmers, unemployed and youth are fighting back with massive demonstrations and strikes. There is a mass outburst against the policies which are responsible for this situation. What we are witnessing is an intensification of class struggle on a global scale. Communists, Left and progressive forces are registering big advances in several countries in this situation.

The international Communist and workers' movement has only recently observed the 150th Anniversary of the Communist Manifesto. Social developments are proving the scientific validity of the principles formulated in the manifesto. The call for not only analyzing and interpreting the situation but changing it, remains more than ever relevant. Marxism-Leninism is our guide to action, and this has to be applied to the specific conditions of our country, which has several unique features. We are firm in our belief that only an alternative path of development put forward by the Left in the present situation, and the road towards a socialist future can see a solution to our problems.

Along with the deteriorating economic situation, the unprecedented and unbearable price rise, steady job losses, etc., the most critical period in the life of the country is underlined by the fact that today, a BJP-led coalition is in power at the Centre.

This is causing deep concern to all those who believe in the secular-democratic foundations of our Republic. They realize the danger posed by this communal rightist reactionary government to the future of our country, to our national unity and integrity, to the bonds of brotherhood and amity that unite our people, to the rich pluralist culture that characterizes our ancient land. They note with concern the attacks on the minority communities by members of the BJP-Sangh Parivar. They see the threat to the parliamentary system posed by the BJP. Communalism everywhere is a divisive force. One brand of communalism fuels another. In India, it will pave the way for an anti-democratic-fascist order.

The grave situation arising from the nuclear tests carried out by this government, the mess-up of our traditional foreign policy of peace, friendship, and neighbourliness, the unacceptable internationalizing of the Kashmir issue, the economic decline and sky-rocketing prices, which this government is unable to check or reverse—all these and several other issues call for serious discussion. Movements against nuclear weaponization, against price rise and the BJP's economic policies are bursting out. They have to be intensified, both by the mass organizations and the Left and democratic parties. The call of the National Platform of Mass Organizations for a sustained programme of struggle on these issues is significant.

The communal and casteist forces have, however, come to occupy a large space in Indian politics today, whether they remain in power or are out of it. At the inaugural session of our 17th Congress, Comrade Surjeet had expressed our common concern at this situation as follows:

"The basic question we have to ponder and find answers to is this. After the great sacrifices Communists made for the attainment of independence, after all our hard work, struggles and activities over half a century, why is it that we do not provide the alternative in India today? How is it that it is the BJP which has taken advantage of the decline of the Congress Party and the mass discontent across the land? How is it that the forces of regionalism and communalism have been so active?"

Speaking before him I had said:

"The decline of the Congress during the last decade due to people's dissatisfaction and disillusionment with its policies of liberalization and its other sins of commission and omission, has been cynically exploited by the BJP, by taking recourse to communal and demagogic propaganda.

We in the Communist and Left movement have to frankly ask ourselves the question: Why are we not able to fill the vacuum, especially in the central Hindi region and western India?"

I repeat that it is a matter of common concern to all Communists and the Left in India. We have to engage ourselves in a battle for people's minds, where feudal, traditional and conservative ideas continue to influence the thought and practice of millions. It calls for an ideological, political, social and cultural struggle against the communal and casteist forces, on the basis of concrete facts and the experience of the masses.

Comrades!

In our 17th Congress, we noted the relevance and important role of the Left in national politics, despite the above mentioned weaknesses. Therefore, we stress the need to further strengthen and consolidate the unity of the Left, and the unity of the trade unions and the other mass organizations led by the Left parties. In our view, the most important task before Communist and Left parties will be the unleashing of broadbased mass struggles and mass movements. Burning class and mass issues will be the basis of such struggles.

Left unity has to be based on sharing a commonality of views, on national political, economic and social issues. Differences, if any, have to be discussed mutually, in a respectful and comradely spirit. There is the long experience of the Left Front in West Bengal, to go by in this respect.

But we know that the Left by itself cannot decisively run after the situation. We have to move towards building a Left and democratic alternative as a strategic task. In the present period, where we have to battle against the communal reactionary forces which have scaled the heights of power, we will have to rally

together secular, democratic forces along with the Left, in a renewed third front. This will be a process, depending on fresh alignments as they occur in the course of developments, and not a one-time decision as to which party is admissible within such a front, and which is not.

The recent spontaneous and simultaneous move by all opposition parties, and even some important partners of the BJP-led Government, against use of Article 356 shows how the BJP can be isolated and obliged to beat a retreat. This was neither an endorsement of the Bihar Government nor a heralding signal of a Third Front. The latter will require many more things as pre-conditions for its emergence. It shows the strength of a united move, and the Achilles' heel of the BJP.

The question about the attitude towards the Congress in the existing situation is a very important issue. The conclusion of our 17th Congress is that, "The declaration adopted at the Pachmari Camp shows that while there was some shift in stressing the urgency of poverty alleviation measures, about the need of adequate subsidies for agriculture and rural development, in emphasizing the importance of the public sector, no serious review was undertaken about the content and direction and the resultant impact of the earlier policies including the breeding of widespread corruption at high places and criminalization of politics. After many years, reference was made to the Avadi Resolution regarding the socialist pattern, but in the absence of concrete steps, this can only be a rhetorical statement".

Without such a serious review of its economic policy, the Congress claims of fighting the communal reactionary BJP and its policies in various spheres, cannot carry conviction. In this situation, there can be no question of entering into a general alliance or front with the Congress. If the present BJP Government falls or is pulled down because of its inherent instability, the Communist Party of India will take a positive attitude to an alternate government, in the formation of which the Congress will have to play a role. The Communist Party of India will offer issue-based support to such a government from outside.

Comrades,

We think that at the core of our tactics in the coming difficult period, is the issue of Communist unity. Therefore, while speaking at inaugural session of our Congress, I had this to say: "We believe that there has to be closer coordination and working together at all levels of the CPI and the CPI(M) and the mass organizations led by them than heretofore, for strengthening Left unity, and for forming a renewed Front of secular-democratic and Left parties, in the present situation when realignments are fast taking place. Such coordination will also be necessary for responding to immediate contingencies that may arise for defeating and replacing the BJP and other communal forces by a secular-democratic alternative. This is an objective need and not just a subjective wish.

"In the prevailing atmosphere of political instability and looming dangers, not only our party ranks but also the mass of people are looking forward to what our Party Congress at Chennai, and the CPI(M) Congress at Calcutta, are going to decide. There is a feeling of hope that these will indicate the direction in which our fighting people should move in the coming days."

We were especially heartened to hear Comrade Surjeet echo these sentiments at the conclusion of his speech. Here is what he said: "In this respect, a big responsibility rests on the shoulders of our two parties. During the last few years there has been more and more co-operation and coordination, but much more is needed to be done. I am sure that the debates in both our Congresses will help in coming to a common understanding on most of the burning issues the country is facing today.

"Only if we do this, can there be any question of overcoming the very serious situation that India faces. Changing the correlation of class forces provides the real answer. For this, we must take as the highest priority the strengthening of Left unity and also the unity of Left and democratic forces. This can be done by unleashing mass struggles and mass movements to oppose these ruling class policies and the rightward shift that has occurred.

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"Soon, in three weeks time, our Party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), will be holding its Congress at Calcutta, where we also will be deliberating on this complicated situation and these issues. Let us rededicate ourselves to our great cause, the path charted by the great founders of Marxism-Leninism, and to our unmet historic tasks. Let us work better and more unitedly to change the situation in India. I assure you that we will make the utmost contribution in this direction."

We fully endorse these views. We know much remains to be discussed and done. But we look to your 16th Congress as a historic event.

May I wish the 16th Congress all success, and thank you for the opportunity you have provided to address the delegates assembled here.

Greetings and Messages of Fraternal Parties to The 16th Congress of The CPI(M), Read Out by Their Representatives in The Congress*

GREETINGS FROM COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

Firstly, our warm thanks for your invitation to the Communist Party of Australia to be represented at your 16th Congress.

Secondly, we extend our congratulations for the great work and leadership that your Party has given the Indian people, and for that matter, to parties in other countries.

Your analysis of many issues of historic importance to our world movement has been proved correct.

Your example in applying Marxism-Leninism to the circumstances of India is also of great significance. Our theory is of only academic interest unless it is applied to the concrete conditions in which our parties work and is continually enriched by the experiences of the struggles of the people and new scientific discoveries.

We would single out, in particular, the success of the Left Front Governments led by the CPI(M) which, in the case of West Bengal, have been repeatedly re-elected by the people of that State. The Governments of Tripura and Kerala are also implementing progressive reforms involving the people more and more and can be expected to be re-elected in the future.

The fact that these governments have been maintained in the face of virulent attack from the forces of reaction and discrimination by successive Central Governments, indicates their deep

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, dated 25.10.1998, 1.11.1998 and 8.11.1998.

roots among the masses of the Indian working people, the peasantry and intellectual circles.

We think that your experience in government holds many lessons in adopting realistic policies and in the application of democratic practices, involving and encouraging the people to take part in governmental processes. The participation of the people is the real essence of democracy. Your Party's support for the panchayat movement and the People's Plan Movement are examples of your work to give flesh and blood to democracy in the real meaning of the word.

In addition, the many actions by the working people and peasants for their many demands is another aspect of the leadership given to the Indian people in the long struggle against the attacks on conditions and rights, against communalism and for the independence and freedom of the Indian nation from incessant imperialist manoeuvres.

We are aware of the differences that exist among Indian Communists but patient work has led to the formation of the Left Front cooperation among the Left parties and their joint participation in many activities and in elections. We warmly welcome this situation.

The Australian working class and people face the same consequences of neo-liberalist policies as in many other countries. Unemployment is over eight per cent, living standards are going down, poverty and homelessness are increasing, the rights of trade unions are under attack, social welfare services are being savagely cut and publicly owned enterprises and even government departments are being privatized. Attempts are being made to introduce a Goods and Services Tax which would substantially alter the taxation system, cutting taxes paid by corporations while increasing taxes paid by the working people.

Politically, we have to contend with the substantial influence of social democracy. There is the emergence of a right-wing movement with the basically racist One National Party coming into prominence and a substantial extreme right-wing in the traditional parties of capitalism.

However, the political situation is changing. There is widespread disillusionment with the major political parties. The possibility of building a progressive alternative political force capable of implementing policies based on the interests of the working people is emerging.

The working class and people's struggle is increasing with the recent outstanding struggle by maritime workers being a great example. In this struggle, there were widespread solidarity actions by other trade unions and many community organizations. Many messages of solidarity came from international trade union organizations. "Workers of the world unite" became a reality. We thank Indian workers for their support in this dispute.

We are all acting in the background of a worldwide economic, political, social and ideological crisis of capitalism, and mass actions by the people in many countries.

The situation is one which must give all Communists great optimism. Together with the people, great gains can be made towards winning through to the socialist alternative which has become an historic necessity for the people of all countries.

MESSAGE FROM WORKERS' PARTY OF BANGLADESH

First of all, I, on behalf of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Bangladesh, express thanks to the leadership of the CPI(M) for inviting our party to this 16th Congress of your Party. It is a privilege to learn from your rich and valuable experiences. It is also an opportunity to share experiences and exchange views with many other working class parties of the world.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) is not only one of the largest parties of the world but also it has a rich heritage which produced many great leaders, theoreticians and fighters. The CPI(M) is now an important factor in Indian politics. We had a long-standing relation with CPI(M). In fact, we have a common history and heritage as the Workers' Party of Bangladesh is part

and continuation of the Communist movement that emerged in undivided India under British rule. We remember with gratitude the support, help and assistance rendered to our party and our people by your Party in 1971 during our War of Independence.

Comrades, this Congress takes place at a crucial time of history. Imperialism has become more aggressive than ever before militarily, politically and economically. And most of the third world countries have succumbed to the pressure of imperialism which has aggravated the sufferings of the toiling masses. Socialism has suffered a serious setback, which, we think, to be a temporary phenomenon. The pen pushers of the bourgeoisie have intensified the attack on Socialism and Marxism.

However, this is only one aspect of the world situation. On the other hand, we see that capitalism is in deep crisis. Along with the high technological development, there exists so high a rate of unemployment even in the capitalist global centre which demonstrate the irrationality of the system. The sudden collapse of the so-called Asian tigers, once heralded by the bourgeois economists as the model of development, economic crisis in a highly developed country like Japan, economic turmoil in Russia—all these manifest the bankruptcy of the system. Side by side, we see the rise of Communist forces in Russia. In South Africa and in Nepal, Communists are the decisive factor. This very city Calcutta is the capital of the West Bengal State of India where the Left Front, headed by the CPI(M), has been ruling for the last 21 years. There are CPI(M)-led Governments in Kerala and Tripura.

This situation demands further and stronger unity of the working class parties of the world. The broadest possible anti-imperialist front on the international level is also urgently needed.

In our region, i.e., the region where Bangladesh and India are situated, there are three common problems and dangers.

1. The new onslaught of imperialism;
2. The rise of communal and religious fundamentalist forces and ideas;
3. The nuclear proliferation which has created tension and a sense of insecurity in our region.

We think, the working class parties and also progressive, secular, anti-imperialist, peace-loving forces of our region need to have closer contact and coordinated action to face these dangers, and also to try to tackle common problems like water management, flood control and so on.

Comrades, we are proud to see that our class brothers and sisters under the leadership of the CPI(M) are marching forward to earn more and more victories which give us fresh encouragement. I am confident that the people of India under the leadership of Communist Party of India (Marxist) will score many more victories.

GREETINGS FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF BRITAIN

On behalf of the Communist Party of Britain, I am honoured to be present at your 16th Congress and bring warm revolutionary greetings from our Party.

Here in this great city of Calcutta and throughout this vast country, there are the constant reminders of British colonialism and imperialism.

I hope the presence of our Party here is also a reminder of the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist ties that brought together British Communists and Indian Communists in a common struggle against our common enemy. We are proud that our Party alone among British parties supported the Indian freedom struggle from our birth.

Today, imperialism has changed its methods but not its goals. Colonial rule may be finished but developing countries face the imposed rule of the transnational corporations through the mechanisms of the World Bank and the IMF.

In our own country, the economic restructuring of the main European capitalist countries within the framework of the European Union is being used to enforce cuts in public spending and to complete the privatization process initiated by the Thatcher Government back in 1979.

Our Party is entirely opposed to the European Union, which is based on neo-liberal economic policies, racist immigration regulations and the undermining of nationally elected Parliaments by an undemocratic superstate.

Instead, our Party favours an Alternative Economic and Political Strategy aimed at challenging the power of the monopolies and deepening and extending democratic rights.

This strategy is a major component of our programme *The British Road to Socialism* which outlines our views on the future socialist transformation of our country.

Dear Comrades, the international situation is increasingly complex, full of new dangers as well as opportunities for advance. In these circumstances, regular contacts and exchanges of views between Communist and other Left parties becomes a greater necessity.

We thank you for your hospitality and wish your 16th Congress all success.

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CANADA

On behalf of the Central Committee and members of the Communist Party of Canada, I wish to express our gratitude for having the opportunity to observe this historic 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and to express our confidence that this Congress will mark a significant advance for the work of your Party.

We are equally confident that the leadership and delegates to your Congress will ensure that the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and its Left allies continue to play the leading role in defending the interests of the working class and all oppressed peoples in India, in promoting regional and world peace, in preserving India's national sovereignty, and in advancing the struggle for socialism.

Our Party has been following with great attention the political developments in India and the South Asian region as a whole.

The electoral victory of reactionary and Communalist forces in India, together with the strengthened positions of extremist, fundamentalist forces in Pakistan, Afghanistan and elsewhere, have increased tensions—including nuclear tensions—throughout the region and now pose a serious danger to global peace and security. It has raised to the fore, once again, the need to end the current US monopoly of the nuclear option, and to press for comprehensive nuclear disarmament.

We are well aware of your Party's principled efforts to combat national chauvinism and communalism, to fight for democratic and social advances for the workers and oppressed, and to consistently champion the cause of peace. We do not underestimate for a moment the great challenges and demands the current situation has placed on your Party, and on all the genuine Communist, Left and democratic forces in the country.

In Canada, as in India, the working class and progressive forces must contend with adverse international and domestic conditions stemming from the neo-liberal onslaught of international capital. While monopoly interests and their imperialist states are carrying out a similar general political economic agenda against all peoples, their reactionary policies are exacting the greatest punishment on the peoples of so-called "developing" or "Third World" countries, such as India.

At the same time, however, these very policies are accentuating the inherent contradictions in operation within the global capitalist economy, giving rise to deepening financial and political instability, and every sharper cyclical and structural economic crisis. The current crisis is spreading like a wild prairie fire across Asia, Russia and Eastern Europe to Africa, Latin America, and now even within the highly developed capitalist economies in Europe, Japan and North America.

Recent events prove once again that despite its tenacity, and notwithstanding its temporary victories over socialism during the last decade, so-called "globalization"—and indeed capitalism *as a system*—cannot extricate itself from its built-in contradictions, and cannot solve the fundamental problems and tasks confronting humanity today and into the future.

In Canada, the deepening crisis is reflected in increased pressures on the national currency, sharp declines in export commodity prices, stepped up erosion of living standards, and increased poverty, food banks, and homeless shelters. The spreading malaise has been exacerbated by neo-liberal government policies at both federal and provincial levels, which have cut back basic health care, education and municipal services, increased user fees, and undermined unemployment insurance and public pension programme.

The socio-economic crisis has been further aggravated by a profound political crisis centred on the future of confederation and the possibility that Quebec may separate from the rest of Canada. In October 1995, the petty bourgeois nationalist government in Quebec organized a province-wide referendum and came within two per cent of achieving majority support for separation.

Since then, the festering crisis of confederation has continued to deepen. Chauvinism, narrow nationalism, and linguistic and cultural intolerance are dividing the working class and weakening the overall fight back against the capitalist offensive. Our Party takes a principled position in defence of Quebec's right to self-determination, up to and including separation, while pointing out that political independence would not be in the interests of the working class in Quebec, and would, in fact, play into the hands of US imperialism.

At the same time, Canadian Communists oppose the constitutional status quo, which is based on the national oppression of both Quebec and the aboriginal peoples, and calls, instead, for an equal and voluntary partnership of Quebec, the First Nations (aboriginal peoples), and English-speaking Canada in a new, democratic constitution.

Comrades, working and oppressed peoples are not remaining passive in the face of this offensive from capital, and the impact of the deepening crisis. In Canada and elsewhere around the world, they are building their ranks and strengthening their resolve to fight back.

The deepening crisis, and the gathering storm of class and democratic fightback, present a critical challenge to the

Communists in all countries to lead with practical deeds as well as to advance initiatives and strategic alternatives which address both the immediate needs and the long-term interests of the people for socialism.

In this respect, we are encouraged by the growing cooperation and united action by Communist and workers parties, both on a regional and global scale. We are pleased to report, for instance, that more than 65 parties have now endorsed the joint statement opposing the MAI or Multilateral Agreement on Investment, which international finance capital and the leading imperialist powers are attempting to foist on the world in order to regulate global economic activity in their interests.

Our Party is committed to further efforts to strengthen this unity in action amongst Communist and all genuine revolutionary forces around the world. We are fully aware that this is a complicated process which will require patience and hard work by all parties. In particular, we wish to acknowledge and appreciate the role which your Party continues to play in developing this process.

We know of the many important questions before you, so I will complete this greeting by again extending our best wishes for a successful Congress, and our hope that the traditional close friendship and internationalist ties between our two parties will continue to flourish.

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA

On the occasion of the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China wishes to extend warm congratulations to the Congress and, through the Congress, to all party members of the CPI(M), and extend our cordial greetings and good wishes to the Indian people.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) is an influential political party in India and the world at large. For a long time,

adhering to Marxism and the orientation of socialism, the CPI(M) has been exploring through its practice and struggle the road to development that conforms to the native reality of India. It has made great contributions to and gained gratifying results in the promotion of social progress, economic growth and the enhancement of people's living standards in India. We give our appreciation for it.

The Chinese and Indian people enjoy traditional friendship. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has made positive efforts in safeguarding the friendly ties between China and India, in promoting the development of the bilateral relations, and in maintaining regional and world peace and stability. We are ready to further develop the friendly ties between our two parties on the basis of the four principles of independence, complete equality, mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and further enhance understanding and friendship between our two countries and the two peoples.

May the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) be a great success.

GREETINGS FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CUBA

On the occasion of this important Congress, it is a great honour for me to be the bearer of the fraternal greetings and the message of solidarity sent by the Communist Party of Cuba, its members and heroic people to our brethren of the CPI(M).

Since the time of the struggle against colonialism, and later on, during the struggle for the building of our nation, the Marxist Communists of India have always been, through words and deeds, in favour of independence, national unity and the oppressed. The leaders and members of the CPI(M) have been and will always be men of action and ideas, and when we make this assertion, it comes to our mind the valuable contribution of an unforgettable Comrade E M S Namboodiripad.

Our delegation has the privilege to assert that the comrades of the CPI(M) have historically maintained a stand of constant

fighting spirit and solidarity towards the Cuban Revolution and its people. At the time when the U.S. blockade against Cuba was more intense than ever, the Cuban people always received the support and the encouragement of the Marxist Communists of India.

All Cubans will be eternally grateful for the thousands of tons of rice donated to our people, which were collected through the common will and the mobilization work carried out by the Left organizations and progressive and democratic forces.

In this context, we are pleased to say that the relations between the Communist Party of Cuba and the CPI(M) have been strengthened and continue to develop in the exercise of solidarity and common principles.

It is common knowledge that, when U.S.S.R. and the Socialist camp in Europe disappeared some years ago, those who lack courage and do not believe in peoples' values began to calculate the lifetime left for the Cuban Revolution; and the most reactionary ones set a deadline for us of just several weeks of survival.

In their political short-sightedness, the U.S. imperialism and its underlings—the terrorist Mafia, represented by the Cuban-American National Foundation—hastened to make plans to restore capitalism in Cuba and destroy the work of the Revolution. Without hiding their fascist nature, some of them even declared that, upon their return to our country, they would grant a three-day licence to kill all Cuban revolutionaries and patriots.

The objective reality put things in their right place. To the astonishment of the cowards and much to the sorrow of the U.S. Government and its allies, the Cuban Revolution neither collapsed nor betrayed its principles or the faith bestowed on it by millions of men and women all-over the world.

A decade has elapsed since the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and the European Socialist camp, but the Cuban Revolution lives, resist, works and attains economic and social progress; and in a few months time, we will celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the victory achieved on the 1st January, 1959.

In spite of the Helms-Burton Act and of the economic, bacteriological and ideological warfare as well as the terrorist forms it adopts against our country on many occasions, the Cuban economy grows, the main achievements of the Revolution are kept intact, the unity of our people is stronger and the banners of Socialism are kept aloft.

The year 1997 witnessed a growth in the GDP, work productivity, investments and exports as well as in the population's income and monthly average salary.

The Helms-Burton Act has not been able to hinder the growth of foreign capital investments in our country. We have more than 300 joint ventures whose capital totals over two billion dollars.

In Cuba, there are 63,000 doctors, one for every 174 people, which is the highest index in the world. Infant mortality rate is 7.2 for every 1,000 live births. Maternal mortality rate is 2.1 for every 10,000 births. Life expectancy is 75 years. Through vaccination, 98 per cent of the Cuban children under two years of age are protected against ten transmissible diseases. The health budget passed by the Cuban Parliament for 1998 grew by 6.3 per cent.

Our country has the world's highest ratio of teachers per inhabitant: one teacher for every 42 people. Illiteracy has been eradicated. The average educational level of our people is 8th grade. Nowadays, 97 per cent of our children of 5 years age and 99.7 per cent of those between 6 and 11 years of age go to school. Over 600,000 students have graduated from our universities.

The tighter the US economic war against Cuba, through its iron-like blockade which has already cost us more than 60 billion dollars, the higher the Cuban integration to the world and the solidarity bestowed on our people.

Today, we have diplomatic relations with 164 nations and trade relations with more than 130 countries. Our country's integration to Latin America and the Caribbean is increasingly more extensive and wider. Cuba is a founding member of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). Upon the proposal of the CARICOM States, it has been accepted as an observer in the negotiations between the ACP countries and the European Union, and has recently joined the CARIFORUM as a full-fledged member.

Comrades:

All these successes have been achieved thanks to the heroic spirit of resistance of our people and the solidarity of the peoples of the world towards us. To the Cuban people, this is not only a battle for its survival, it is much more than that, it is a battle to take part in the struggle for a better world, to take part in that struggle together with the world.

The world is heading towards an irreversible process of globalization. However, our struggle is not aimed against this process, but against the neo-liberal globalization which they try to impose on us, which affects us all, plunders our national resources, destroys the environment, makes us poorer and kills our culture, our independence and our sovereignty.

For these reasons, ours is and shall be a struggle for humane, just and solitary globalization. Ours is and shall be a struggle for the only globalization that could save mankind and preserve the human species. Ours is and shall be a struggle for a Socialist globalization.

In this context, the struggle to strengthen the Non-Aligned Movement is increasingly significant. Today, more than ever, we, the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, are a powerful force. Together, we are the majority in the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and many other international bodies.

Together, we are the only force that can democratize the United Nations and impose a global and efficient viewpoint in the struggle against terrorism and drug-trafficking.

There are plenty of reasons for us to join forces in order to strengthen the Non-Aligned Movement: the struggle against poverty, unemployment, diseases, illiteracy and our country's foreign debt; the struggle for the protection of our environment, the development of trade relations and the South-South technological exchange; the struggle to build a united movement which will allow us to face the ominous consequences of the unipolar system prevailing in the world nowadays.

Dear Comrades of the CPI(M), in this struggle, you and all the progressive forces of the world will always have the support of the Cuban Communists and the people of Cuba.

To this bleak situation, we have to add another factor that accelerates these evils: the deep financial and economic crisis which is affecting the world today. It began in Mexico, spread to the Asian countries and has continued to worsen.

National economies as powerful as that of Japan have not been able to avoid the effects of this crisis. Events in Russia are fuelling a process which may have an irreversible and catastrophic impact on all countries and on the whole world system. These reasons are more than enough for us to be on the alert, to be united, to go together in search of alternative ideas that will enable us to face successfully the struggle against neo-liberal globalization and to build the world of solidarity and justice demanded by our peoples.

Being firm on our principles and fully committed to our unyielding struggle, we, the Cuban Communists, have come here to tell you that, regardless of the difficult trials to be overcome, we will never betray the confidence that you and all the revolutionary peoples of the world have bestowed on us.

We would like to extend our best wishes for the success of this Congress.

Long Live the Friendship between the Communist Party of Cuba and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) !

Long Live the Friendship between our two peoples !

Socialism or Death !

Homeland or Death !

We shall overcome !

GREETINGS FROM PROGRESSIVE PARTY OF WORKING PEOPLE OF CYPRUS

Allow me, first of all, to extend to your and through you, to all Communists of India the warm fraternal greetings of the Central Committee of AKEL, the Progressive Party of the Working People of Cyprus and to wish your Congress a great success in its deliberations.

Cyprus and India are thousands of miles apart. Cyprus is a small island with a population of less than a million, while India is a sub-continent with a population of hundreds of millions. Yet our peoples are very near to each other because of our cultural

heritage of thousands of years of civilization. Both our peoples have experienced foreign aggressions and hard struggles for freedom, including the struggles against British colonialism and our common efforts in the Non-Aligned Movement.

Our Parties have long fraternal bonds based on the lofty ideals of Socialism-Communism for a new world free from any sort of oppression, exploitation and poverty, for a world of peace, freedom, prosperity and fraternity of all peoples.

Dear Friends,

We are confident that your Congress will mark a new milestone in the long history of your Party. It will enhance its organisational strength and through its resolutions, will strengthen the struggle for the solution of the domestic problems of your people. At the same time, we are sure it will strengthen the unity of the progressive forces on a national as well as an international level. This will contribute to the effectiveness of the struggle of the world progressive forces against imperialism and reaction, which are on the offensive since the collapse of the Soviet Union. It will help to raise the effectiveness of their resistance to the efforts of imperialism, led by the USA, to consolidate a unipolar hegemony and economic political and cultural exploitation of all peoples on Earth.

Twenty-four years have passed since the treacherous coup d'état and Turkish invasion and occupation of 37 per cent of the territory of Cyprus. Today, Cyprus and its people are living through perhaps the most critical situation ever. It is AKEL's assessment that we have crossed the threshold of final division. The intransigence exhibited by the Turkish side is a manifestation of its expansionist policy, carried out with the tolerance—not encouragement—of the US and its allies. Its latest step in this direction was the open demand for confederation in defiance of all UN Resolutions on Cyprus and the High-Level Agreements.

Despite that, the people of Cyprus, with AKEL at its vanguard, continue to struggle for the withdrawal of the Turkish occupation troops and settlers from Turkey, for the peaceful reunification of the island and its people in a federal, independent, sovereign, territorially integral and fully demilitarised Cyprus, a bridge of

peace and not a springboard of aggression in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.

We take this opportunity to express our gratitude for your support to our Party and our people and to expect that you shall continue your support for the implementation of the UN Resolutions on Cyprus, defied by Turkey with the tolerance of the imperialist forces.

Once more, we wish you every success in your Congress.

MESSAGE FROM THE PARTY OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM (GERMANY)

It is, for the first time, that a representative of the Party of Democratic Socialism from Germany is attending a Party Congress of the CPI(M). But it is no secret that the roots of our relationship go as far back as to the year 1965 when contacts had been established with leading comrades of your Party here in Calcutta.

Today, the PDS is neither a Communist nor a social democratic party. It is a socialist party with a membership of about one lakh, which declares socialism as an indispensable goal. For us, socialism is a movement against exploitation of people by other people, it is a system of values in which liberty, equality and solidarity, human emancipation, social justice, preservation of nature and peace are inseparably united. Our party is committed to fundamental social changes in the capitalist society and has declared its allegiance to a consistent internationalism.

In the recent election campaign to the Bundestag (the German Lok Sabha), we have reaffirmed our demand that the social question must occupy top priority in German policy. It is our firm belief that growing social injustice and increasing poverty in our country can be overcome only by restricting the huge and ever-growing private wealth at least to some extent. The existing wealth is to be distributed from top to bottom to do justice to the weaker sections of population. We have to wage a broad-based struggle against the profit-oriented global capitalist market economy which is the main cause for mass unemployment, social

injustice and poverty in Germany. Instead of the proclaimed and very much praised social market economy as something like a supreme supervisor of the economy, we have been witnessing a drastic retreat and the abolition of social elements in these profit-dominated structures of capital. The PDS is today the only party in the German Bundestag, which is opposed to the exploitative character of the capitalist model of production and consumption.

Comrades!

Despite the open slanderous campaign of all the other parties represented in the Bundestag, the PDS has been returned to the Central Parliament with more than five per cent of the votes. For the first time since World War II, a fraction of a Left and socialist party will be able, we hope without any further discrimination, to work for the interests of the weaker and deprived sections of our people in East and West.

The recent elections convincingly confirmed the failure of the neo-liberal policy and the neo-colonial accession of the GDR to the FRG pursued by the conservative coalition. Social democracy has been given a chance to pursue a better policy. The PDS will support all initiatives of the new coalition directed towards social justice, towards a European Germany instead of a German Europe, towards durable peace in our region and the world over.

While supporting such steps, the PDS is convinced that the SPD-led coalition will need pressure from the Left to avoid a "business-as-usual policy" in the years to come.

Comrades,

The PDS has become today an inseparable part of the European Left and is an active supporter of coordination of actions of the Left forces against the neo-liberal policy of the ruling elites. Globalization of capital, in our view, must be met by a global struggle of labour for a just society in the world. This brief introduction of the PDS explains the invitation and our acceptance of this invitation to attend your Party Congress.

Let me convey to all of you, to the members of the CPI(M) and to all the other Left and democratic forces in India our firm solidarity greetings. We are convinced that your Party Congress will, after fruitful discussions, adopt the necessary decisions which

will enable the CPI(M) in conjunction with other Left and democratic forces to continue the struggle against the twin evils of communalism and liberalization. In this regard, we wish your Party Congress a complete success. There is no doubt, in our mind, that the anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and anti-fascist as well as democratic, humanistic and progressive national and cultural traditions of Bengal will even more stimulate these constructive discussions and decisions for the future work of your Party. With special expectation, we are eager to learn the experiences of your comrades in West Bengal, because we consider the experiment of the United Front Government for the last more than 21 years as a unique example of uninterrupted democratic governance of Left and other democratic forces to the benefit of the rural and urban poor within the framework of a capitalist society. An experience which, due to the anti-Communist hysteria for more than six and a half decades in Germany, seems to be impossible even today.

Dear Comrades,

Being aware of the past and recent history of your country, we have, with great concern, noticed the assessment in your current Political Resolution: "In the present situation, the struggle against the BJP-RSS combine and the communal forces assumes utmost importance." With great admiration, socialists in Germany had been following the consistent and long-standing struggle of the Indian Communists against the communal evil in your country. Exactly 50 years ago, the Second Party Congress of the CPI stated in this connection just here in Calcutta:

The working class and the Communist Party must take a firm stand against the communalists from both sides, the Hindu and Muslim communalists, fight riots and make the struggle for the rights of the minorities a part of its own struggle for political and economic emancipation. . . . "The working class must, therefore, actively work for the protection and of minority rights and fight against communal agencies like the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslim League and the RSS, and also communal policies of the Congress leaders."

Today as fifty years back, the struggle for maintenance of peace and against the imperialist designs of the international finance

capital and the gross interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, remains a vital task of all progressive forces in the world. Therefore, we share the views of all who consider universal disarmament measures, and first of all, in the field of weapons of mass destruction, the prohibition of arms exports as well as the demilitarisation of international relations, imperative to prevent devastating wars. The Party of Democratic Socialism is struggling for a peaceful, democratic and anti-militarist Germany from which, never again, can military adventures against other nations emanate.

Dear Comrades!

We should like to thank you for inviting us to your Party Congress and wish you further successes in your struggle for a bright future of the Indian people.

GREETINGS FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREECE (CPG)

Taking the opportunity of your 16th Congress, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Greece sends militant and warm comradely greetings to the delegates, the cadres and all members of your Party.

We believe that your decisions will help to further reinforce the struggle of the working and patriotic people of your country for democracy, equality and justice aiming at progress and prosperity for the people of India. We are confident that your decisions will help the growing struggle against the ruinous economic policies, the communal forces both politically and ideologically and strengthening the unity of Left, democratic and secular forces and developing resistance of the people to these challenges.

Taking the opportunity of your Congress, we express our feelings of solidarity with the anti-imperialist and anti-bourgeois landlord struggle of your Party in the past as well as today always based on the principles of Socialism and Marxism-Leninism.

It is with great pleasure and interest that we participate as guests in your Congress and we aim at further deveopment of our bilateral relations which will contribute to the closer co-operation

and co-ordination of the Communist Parties and the reinforcement of the anti-imperialist forces and their struggle in the world.

Dear Comrades,

The recent economic crisis of the capitalism underlines that the Marxist-Leninist theory, as a theory of socialist revolution, continues to be timely and vital. The working class and exploited and oppressed social strata can find answers, ideas and thoughts in this theory, which will help them to acquire a clear awareness of the nature of the capitalist society and the immutable law of its replacement by the socialist and Communist society.

The society of capitalism, even according to the most optimistic, subjective assessments by its warmest supporters, is going through a profound crisis with no way-out. The very foundations of capitalism are undermined. The working class, with its social allies, will prove, once more, to be the grave-diggers of capitalism, as stressed by Marx, overthrowing it and establishing socialism. A temporary defeat not only does not preclude but even prepares for victory, as long as its conclusions are correctly utilized.

Dear Comrades,

In our country, the working class, working people more generally and the large majority of our people undergo the aggression of a reactionary policy embracing all sectors of social life: wages and pensions, health care and education, the eight-hour working day and the five-day working week, the age of retirement and the rights of young people. The measures of the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU as well as the commitments coming from the GATT Agreements as regards agricultural products are not only stipulating provisions for the restructuring of product-growing but also for the dramatic reduction of people working in the agricultural sector.

Unemployment is growing and strikes, especially working women and young people. More and more, young workers make their acquaintance with the "flexible type of employment" of the European Union's White Book, for the satisfaction of the gluttonous desire of monopolistic capital to make profits. These

are the first of the large troops of "employables", something which the EU and the governments of its member-states want to impose. According to official data of the EU, more than two million Greeks today live under the poverty line.

The discontent amongst the people and the indignation provoked by this policy of monopolistic capital became intensely manifest especially in 1996 and 1997, a period during which big strikes and militant actions of farmers, ship-workers, construction workers, teachers, pensioners, small and medium entrepreneurs, high school and university students took place.

The Communist Party of Greece has expressed in a most categorical way its radical opposition to this policy and supports actively the righteous actions of the people. Recently, an opposition to this policy was expressed even more vigorously because of the authoritarian and terroristic way this struggle of the people has been met. More and more regularly the existence and the actions of parastate and paramilitary organizations is being revealed.

The growing role of a police-apparatus and a repressive mechanism goes hand in hand with the dangerous situation that has been created for peace and security of the people living in the Balkans and Mediterranean area coming from the imperialist interventions, especially the USA and NATO. Today, within the framework of the decisions taken for the new structure of the NATO, the USA, NATO and EU push forward a package-deal solution for the arrangement of conflicts which have arisen between the governments of Greece and Turkey in the Aegean Sea and Cyprus. This solution offends the sovereign rights and puts into question the borders of our country. On top of that, our country is called to participate in the Multinational Rapid Deployment Forces, which will be installed in the region, their essential objective being to face actions and reactions of the peoples against the policy of the imperialist forces and the governments supporting such a policy. In this way, NATO becomes the institutionalized international force of counter-revolution.

Our Party is categorically against this policy and against what imperialists are striving after. Our Party considers that guaranteeing the sovereign rights of our country, of the national

independence and of peace in the region is incompatible with the active interference and arbitration of the USA, NATO and the leading forces of the EU. Our Party supports the withdrawal of Greece from NATO and the EU.

Our Party has expressed as well its categorical opposition to the enlargement of NATO and EU by new members.

The CPG is in favour of dissolving NATO and the EU. It is the only Party in Greece voting against the Maastricht Treaty and being in favour of the detachment of our country from the EU. All other parties are also opposed to our persistent proposal to carry out a referendum on the Maastricht Treaty and its revision.

Our Party makes all possible efforts to create within the country a broad anti-imperialistic, anti-monopolistic, democratic front of the working class, working farmers, young people and others, a front that will organize the resistance and the counter-attack of the people's movement against the policy of monopolies and of imperialism, opening the road to a radical reversal of today's situation, towards the kind of power that expresses the real interests of the working class and working people more generally.

Our Party tries by all means to contribute to the co-ordination and the development of the movement of the peoples of our region, against the people-hostile policy of the governments and against the active interference and intervention of imperialist forces in the Balkans, the Black Sea and the South-Eastern Mediterranean.

Dear Comrades,

The Communist Party of Greece supports strongly the struggle of the people in every country for their right to decide themselves about their fortunes. We express our solidarity with the resistance shown by peoples and movements around the world against the reactionary plans of the IMF and the World Bank, instruments with which the imperialists, and first of all the USA, want to subjugate everything under the profits and interests of the multinational corporations. The people of every country will react more and more frequently against this evolution and will search for a different road to go, the greater the consequences that derive from the GATT Agreement for them, the more the growing profit-making of monopolistic capital, of intensifying the exploitation of working people will continue to be pushed forward. It is obvious

that all these forces and movements, which fight against the policy of imperialism will reinforce the anti-imperialist movement of the peoples. We would also like to express our solidarity with the common resolution of the CPI(M) and CPI, on the Convention on the Nuclear Weapons.

In our opinion, only Communists can be the heart and driving-power of this movement, the guarantee for stability of its goals. This makes necessary more co-ordination and more common action of Communist Parties as well as the need for a concrete discussion as regards working out a common strategy for today's struggle against monopolies and imperialism, against the policies being applied in whatever form they may appear: conservative, neo-liberal or social democratic.

This year our Party is celebrating its 80th Anniversary, faithful to its internationalist tradition, based on the principles of equal rights and respect for the opinions of other parties. It is in favour of a further development of bilateral and multilateral meetings with other Communist Parties for the exchange of experience and the co-ordination of our actions.

Within the framework of these concepts, we organized an International Meeting on May 22-24 in Athens on: *The Communist Parties under the Current Conditions*, in which your Party participated. In the above meeting, 56 Communist and Labour Parties took part from all-over the world. A fruitful discussion on the issues of co-ordination and common action took place. The discussion underlined the necessity of further development of such initiatives both at the regional and international level. We also took the decision to organize an international meeting next year on Globalization and MAI.

In this direction, our Party has done and will be doing as much as it can according to the possibilities of its forces.

With all these thoughts, allow us to wish every success to the proceedings of your Congress.

Greetings from the Japanese Communist Party

On the occasion of the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Japanese Communist Party Central Committee offers greetings of solidarity.

It is our understanding that your Party is struggling for a fundamental change in the economic policies that serve the interests of transnational corporations at the cost of a wide range of India's working people. In addition, your Party is fighting to defend democracy and the principle of secularism, indispensable to the maintenance of democracy.

The Japanese Communist Party earnestly hopes that your Congress will succeed in making a great contribution to the advance of the struggles of the Indian people. We also hope that the local progressive governments in West Bengal and other localities will see further advance, with the CPI(M) as the main force.

Today, the dangerous nature of the outrageous economic and military activities of US hegemonism is being revealed around the world, while its international isolation becomes increasingly conspicuous.

Japan has been changed to forward deployment bases for US strike forces under the Japan-US Security Treaty, and a new attempt is under way to set up a system to involve Japan in future US wars automatically. Under the circumstances, the JCP is vehemently opposing this blatant attempt to threaten the peace in Asia and the rest of the world.

The task of eliminating nuclear weapons has also become an urgent and important international issue. In the wake of the recent nuclear tests conducted by the Governments of India and Pakistan, the JCP lodged stern protests to both the governments for having posed a serious challenge to world peace, and demanded that both governments stop nuclear testing and renounce plans to possess nuclear weapons.

At the same time, JCP presidium chair, Tetsuzp Fuwa, sent letters to the heads of the five nuclear powers. In these letters, he pointed out the fact that the monopoly of nuclear weapons is institutionalised under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime, in which only particular countries are allowed to possess and develop nuclear weapons, while other countries are forbidden access to them. Mr. Fuwa indicated in the letters that this is the international background of the recent nuclear tests by the

Governments of India and Pakistan, and this nature of the NPT may have served to induce and encourage the two governments to resort to these dangerous attempts. Noting that the present situation requires an urgent shift in direction towards the abolition of nuclear weapons, Mr. Fuwa urged the five governments of the nuclear powers to act responsibly and to take such steps as starting international talks on the elimination of nuclear weapons, including an agenda on a concrete date for their elimination.

The Japanese Communist Party and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) released a joint communique in 1988 which stressed the importance of working together with the broader anti-nuclear peace forces for the elimination of nuclear weapons as a "vital task". We hope that your Party will strive to eradicate the danger of a nuclear arms race in the Indian sub-continent. The JCP believes that nothing is required more urgently now than serious efforts to pursue the common task of realizing the earliest elimination of nuclear weapons.

In Japan, public anger towards and criticism of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) politics has become widespread. LDP policies of subordination to the interests of the United States and the interests of big business concern in Japan have continued unabated throughout the post-war period. This public disaffection is severely shaking the foundations of the government. LDP Government's increase in the rate of the consumption tax as well as its increase in medical charges have had a severe negative impact on the lives of the majority of Japan's residents. In addition, its plan to use enormous amounts of taxpayers' money to rescue big banks has even led the long-time supporters of the LDP to express their distrust of government policies.

It is this political situation that has enabled the JCP to make significant advances in the 1996 General Election and the 1997 Tokyo Metropolis Assembly Election. The JCP made a further advance in the recent House of Councillors Election in 1998. The JCP won 15 contested seats. Including the seats not up for election, the JCP now has 23 seats in the House of Councillors, a record in party history. The JCP received 15 per cent of the total votes cast, equivalent to 58 per cent of the votes cast for the LDP,

the ruling party. In order to meet the growing expectation of the populace, the JCP is aiming to establish a democratic coalition government in the early stage of the 21st century. This coalition government will adopt a non-nuclear, non-aligned and neutral foreign policy based on the abrogation of the Japan-US Security Treaty and policies that give priority to the general welfare of the populace. In the present turbulent political situation in Japan under the failing LDP Government, we are making determined efforts to realize co-operation among opposition parties on urgent immediate tasks in order to put an end to the LDP politics as soon as possible.

We sincerely desire that cooperation between our two parties will develop further on various common tasks and we earnestly hope that the CPI(M) will make further advances in its own cause—Central Committee, Japanese Communist Party.

MESSAGE FROM THE WORKERS' PARTY OF KOREA

*Speech by Comrade Choe Tae Bok,
Head of the Korean Delegation:*

Authorised by the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, I should like, first of all, to warmly congratulate the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and convey revolutionary and militant greetings to the delegates and, through you, to all members of your Party from the members of the Workers' Party of Korea.

We, as the WPK delegation present in your Party's 16th Congress, have known well the active efforts of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) to defend the cause of independence, the cause of socialism, of the popular masses and advance them. We are impressed by them.

Over 30 years since its foundation, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has been faithful to its mission and duty as a vanguard detachment of the Indian working class and striven determinedly in the struggle against imperialism and colonialism and for national independence and freedom, peace and socialism.

Recently the socialism was frustrated in some countries, and anti-socialist machinations on the part of the imperialists and

reactionaries have been more desperate than ever before. In such a complicated situation, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has invariably adhered to the banner of anti-imperialism, independence and socialism, with faith in socialism cherishing in mind.

In particular, your Party made active endeavours to expand and strengthen itself and revolutionary rank, put into effect the unity and solidarity with Left-wing forces and achieve interests and well-being of the working masses as well as socio-economic progress and, in this course, it has grown up into a revolutionary political force enjoying support of the broad sections of the working people.

In the domain of foreign relations, too, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) extends full support and encouragement to those parties and people in their struggle to oppose the imperialists' aggression and intervention, domination and subjugation and to strive for the good of independence, sovereignty and the cause of socialism, and it has made much effort to heighten friendship and solidarity with the Communist and Workers' Parties and other progressive political parties and realize unity with anti-imperialist independent forces.

Your righteous activity and struggle are a great contribution to defending and advancing the cause of socialism against the imperialist's anti-socialist manoeuvres.

The Workers' Party of Korea regards it as a pride to have as friends the Communist Party of India (Marxist) fighting shoulder to shoulder with us on the same road of the common cause for socialism and expresses full support to and solidarity with your Party in the just struggle.

Comrades and Friends,

At present, all our members of the WPK and working people have come out as one to the effort to accomplish brilliantly to the end of the Juche-oriented revolutionary cause pioneered by the great leader Kim Il Sung, united with a single mind around the great leader Kim Jong Il.

As you are aware, the US imperialists and their stooge are clinging more desperately to the anti-Republic, anti-socialist

machinations designed to obstruct the way ahead of our people who advance, upholding the banner of the Juche idea and socialism.

However, our socialism is firmly defended and advances triumphantly just because there is the wise leadership of the great leader Kim Jong Il around whom the whole party, the whole army and the entire people are united single-mindedly.

At the first session of the 10th Supreme People's Assembly held some days ago, we, reflecting the unanimous will and aspiration of our people, have re-elected invariably the great leader Kim Jong Il as Chairman on the National Defence Commission, supreme office of the DPRK.

This is an expression of our people's unreserved support to and trust in the great leader Kim Jong Il; it is a historic event which demonstrates the steadfast will and determination of our Party and people to accomplish to the end the revolutionary cause of Juche under his guidance.

Having the great leader Kim Jong Il at the head of our Party, state and army, we, led by him, will defend the red flag of revolution to the end and bring the cause of socialism and communism into realization.

To realise national reunification is the behest of the respected Kim Il Sung and, accordingly, it is a sacred duty and obligation for our Party and people to realise it without fail in our generation.

Under the wise leadership of the great leader Kim Jong Il, our Party and people will surely reunify the country independently and peacefully through the implementation of the three charters for national reunification and the five-point policy of great national unity and thereby put into practice the behest of the respected leader Kim Il Sung for the country's reunification.

I take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and its entire members for the invariable support to and firm solidarity with our people in the effort for socialist construction and national reunification.

Although the imperialists and reactionaries are making a frenzied effort to oppose socialism, there is no alternative but to

go into bankruptcy. The revolutionary parties and people are turning out to a new struggle, overcoming temporary confusion.

As long as reactionary forces suppress independence of the popular masses, it is inevitable to fight against them, and it is the law of development of history that the cause of socialism emerges victorious through such a struggle.

It is an honourable obligation of the global revolutionary parties and Communists for the sake of history and people to fight in unity so as to gain victory of the cause of independence, the cause of socialism, of the popular masses, which is sacred one to materialize the ideal of mankind.

The Workers' Party of Korea will further strengthen as ever friendship and solidarity with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and other Communist and workers' parties and progressive political parties the world over and actively co-operate with them for the international socialist movement, thereby discharging its noble mission and responsibility it has before the world revolution.

Covinced that the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) will be an important occasion of epochal significance in carrying through its just cause and strengthening and developing your Party, I sincerely wish you greater successes, in your future work.

Long Live the Friendship and Solidarity between the Workers' Party of Korea and the Communist Party of India (Marxist)! Thank you all.

MESSAGE FROM LAO PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY*

On the occasion of the opening the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), on behalf of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, Lao working people, we would like to convey our warmest congratulations and best wishes to the Congress and, through it, to all members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the entire working people of India.

* Read out in the 16th Congress of the CPI(M), Vientiane, October 1, 1998

This 16th Congress is an event of great significance in political life and is also milestone of constant growth of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). We are confident that your current Congress will put forward policy guidelines and tasks aimed at increasing the role of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in the nationwide society and contributing to the strengthening of solidarity and unity of the working class and working peoples over the world for the cause of peace, national independence, democracy and social progress in the region and in the world.

May the close fraternal relations between the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Lao-India peoples be continuously developed.

We wish great success to 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

MESSAGE FROM THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY

On behalf of the Central Committee of the Portuguese Communist Party, we convey, through you, to all militants of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the fraternal and solidarity greetings of the Portuguese Communists.

We are aware that the CPI(M) is engaged in tough and complex social and political battles to defend the interests of the working class and of the most exploited masses of the Indian society, brutally struck by successive governments' neo-liberal policies, under the baton of the IMF and the World Bank; against the threats posed by the reactionary and communalist forces to the democratic and secular foundations of independent India; and on behalf of national unity, for the safeguarding and strengthening of India's non-aligned and peaceful orientation and of her relevant contribution to the cause of peace and social progress in the world. While reaffirming the PCP's solidarity, we sincerely wish that the CPI(M)'s action meets with great success and that the co-operation and unity of the Indian Communists, to build a democratic and Left alternative in India, are strengthened.

In Portugal, we are engaged in the struggle for defending the interests and yearnings of the working class and the Portuguese people and for a different course, a Left-wing course, in national

politics. We firmly oppose the Socialist Party government that, in essential questions, continues previous governments' right-wing policies, concentrating capital and wealth, dismantling the state entrepreneurial sector and public services, yielding to supranational guidelines and decisions which favour big powers and big transnational capital. In Europe, together with other Communist parties and progressive forces, we fight for another course, a progressive course for European integration. We fight against the strengthening and broadening of NATO and against Portugal's involvement in imperialism's aggressive strategy, namely, that of the USA.

We attach decisive importance to the development of mass struggle and the Portuguese Communists are in forefront of the struggles carried out by workers, farmers, students and all different non-monopolist classes. Simultaneously, we develop an intense activity in all democratic institutions, namely, in Parliament and in democratic local government where the PCP holds a strong position. The Left-wing alternative for which we strive and which can only be achieved with the Communists, requires an even stronger and more influential PCP, in the Portuguese society: the reason why we consider that dynamizing Party actions amidst the working class and people's masses is inseparable from giving constant attention to the strengthening, renewal and rejuvenation of the Party ranks.

In the present international situation, factors of dangerous instability are worsened by new imperialistic aggressive actions, namely, by the North-Americans, and the already undeniable crisis of the capitalist system, only a few years ago proclaimed by its heralds as a "definitive triumph". Its unsolvable contradictions ravage peoples and regions and threaten the entire world. Real economy is shattered; the workers' and peoples' social situation worsens day by day. The devastating economic, social and political consequences of the crisis of capitalism, a capitalism dominated by a reduced oligarchy merely looking for income and speculation, make their anti-democratic offensive and imperialism's aggressiveness even more dangerous. But equally, the world over, we are witnessing growing resistance and struggle

of the working masses and of peoples, for an alternative of progress, peace and democracy. There is a greater need for converging efforts of Communists, Left-wing and progressist forces in the whole world, against the imperialist "new order" and big capital's unbridled exploitation, for the workers' and peoples' vital interests, for justice and social progress, for democracy, national independence and peace.

Dear Comrades.

Please allow me, as you gather at your 16th Congress in Calcutta, to greet particularly, along with the Bengali Communists, the working people from West Bengal, whose struggle and continued choice of the CPI(M) and of its Left Front allies, is of a very high progressist international significance.

In wishing you great success, we confirm our solidarity and our commitment to further strengthen the fraternal friendship and cooperation relations linking the PCP and the CPI(M), and to contribute to develop and diversify the friendly relations between our two countries and between the Portuguese and the Indian peoples.

Long Live the Friendship between the PCP and the CPI(M)!

Long Live the CPI(M)!

**MESSAGE FROM THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION(*)**

Our sincere thanks for the invitation sent to us for taking part in the work of XVI Congress of your Party.

We express our regret that due to the complex political situation in Russia as also to the action programme being carried out by the CC of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation in the country, all the leaders cannot leave the country.

On behalf of the Central Committee of CPRF, we wish the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) all success.

* Read out in the 16th Congress of the CPI(M) by the Representative of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.

FROM CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION*

The Central Committee of CPRF extends a hearty welcome to you, the delegates of the 16th Congress of CPI(M) as well as all the members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

You have before you the task of summing up the results of your activities and defining your tactics and strategy for the coming years.

Russian Communists have been closely following the activities of your Party and they sincerely support your efforts for defending the interest of Indian people.

The CPRF and CPI(M) have always been enjoying a relationship of friendship and co-operation.

In future also, we shall consolidate the friendly ties between our two parties in the interest of our peoples.

We wish you great success and express our confidence that the decisions that will be taken by the Congress will facilitate your struggle for the rights of the working people and for the victory of the ideas of socialism.

G. Zhuganov

GREETINGS FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF
SRI LANKA (CPSL)

Speech by Raja Collure, General Secretary of the CPSL

It is indeed a great privilege for me to represent the Communist Party of Sri Lanka at the session of the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) held in this great city of Calcutta, the capital of West Bengal, which has been governed for over twenty-one years by the Left Front of West Bengal headed by the CPI(M).

The Communist Party of Sri Lanka is extremely pleased to participate in this momentous Congress and to convey its warmest fraternal greetings and best wishes.

* Read out in the 16th Congress of the CPI(M) by the Representative of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.

Comrades,

Your Congress is held at a time when the struggles of the democratic forces the world over for democracy and social justice is on the upsurge and the international Communist movement is in resurgence. It is also a period in which the co-ordination and joint action of the forces of labour at the international level has become imperative to defend their vital interests in the background of the rapid globalization of capital now proceeding. Also important is the fact that the socialist countries—China, Cuba, Democratic Korea, Laos and Vietnam—are withstanding the pressures and intrigues of imperialism and are steadily marching forward.

The CPSL highly appreciates the pivotal role played by the CPI(M) together with the other Left and democratic forces of India in the fight to preserve the secular character of their state and to safeguard and promote democratic rights and processes. We are also impressed with your strenuous activities to uphold the interests of the working people, above all, those of the workers and the peasants and to uplift their material well-being. Our party also holds your Party in high esteem for your efforts to unite the Left and democratic forces into a third force and to forge a broader alliance to secure the secular gains of your people.

The CPSL is presently preparing to hold its 16th National Congress in November, this year. This Congress will evaluate the People's Alliance government (of which the CPSL is a constituent party) with special reference to the promised constitutional reforms, solution of the ethnic problem and ending the ongoing civil war, deepening of social justice and attending to the most pressing problems confronting the people. It will also review the present strategy and the tactical line of the Party.

The CPSL looks forward for further co-operation between our two parties on matters of mutual interest, especially on those that relate to the SAARC region. It expresses its confidence that the existing bonds of friendship and solidarity will be further strengthened in the ensuing period.

The CPSL wishes your Congress all success.

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM

The delegation of the Communist Party of Vietnam is very happy to attend the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) held in Calcutta, the city of rich cultural and revolutionary traditions. This beautiful city had once initiated the immortal solidarity of the people and Communists of India in support of the Vietnamese people's revolutionary cause. With the heart-felt sentiment, on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the people of Vietnam, I would like to extend to you our warmest greetings.

I would like also to convey my fraternal and cordial greetings to foreign delegations and distinguished guests of the Congress. Dear Comrades and Friends,

During the past time, despite the complex changes in the international situation, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has overcome many difficulties and challenges, persisted in Marxism-Leninism and nobly epochal ideal, always stayed at the forefront in the struggles for democracy, people's livelihood and social progress in India. With the popular support over the past 20 years, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has continuously led the government of the Left Front in West Bengal and recently, together with the Left and Democratic Front, have been in power in Kerala and Tripura. The Party's forces have become stronger with every passing day, its prestige and influence in the people steadily heightened, its role and position in India's political arena firmly consolidated. The Communist Party and people of Vietnam are delighted at the great victories gained by your Party.

We believe that, with its experience and revolutionary tradition, the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) will map out correct policies and lines and continue to gain more and greater victories in the common struggle for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress.

Comrades and Friends,

Surmounting difficulties and challenges, the Communist Party of Vietnam, founded and trained by President Ho Chi Minh, has persisted in the goal of national independence and socialism. Over

the past 10 years, in implementation of the cause of renewal, initiated by the Party, our people have been gaining important achievements in developing socio-economy, maintaining political stability, improving the people's living conditions and heightening Vietnam's position in international arena. At present, in actively carrying out the resolutions of the 8th National Congress of the Party, our people continue to win victories in the renewal cause, resolutely boost up industrialization and modernization for the objective of making a prosperous people, a strong country and an equitable, civilized society.

We continue to carry out the foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, openness, diversification and multilateralization of international relations for peace, co-operation and development of each nation for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress in the world.

We shall never forget that the victories recorded by the Party and the Vietnamese people in the cause of struggle for national independence and socialism are closely linked with the solidarity and support accorded by the Communists, progressive forces and the people in the world, including those of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the people of India. Taking this opportunity, we would like to express again our sincere thanks for those valuable supports.

May the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) be crowned with splendid success.

May the solidarity, friendship and co-operation between our two parties and peoples of Vietnam and India be further developed with every passing day.

We wish you, comrades and friends, good health, happiness and success.

Messages Sent by The Fraternal Parties to The 16th Congress of The CPI(M) Held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998*

Message from the Communist Party of Brazil

On behalf of the militants and leadership of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), we congratulate the CPI(M) on its 16th Party Congress, that is, an event of major political and ideological significance for the affirmation and strengthening of the revolutionary and progressive movement in India.

Unfortunately, due to the general elections in our country last Sunday, we are not able to send a representative of PCdoB to take part in so expressive event, in which it will be discussed several themes on national and international important subjects.

We have the pleasure to send you our best wishes for success to the XVI Congress, we are sure it will make the role played by the CPI(M) still more important among the Indian society. We are totally convinced that the Congress resolutions will result in strengthening of the struggle against the neo-liberalism, by the national sovereignty and by the socialism.

We would like to take this opportunity to express one more time our desire to strengthen the internationalist ties between both of our parties.

Long Live the Congress of CPI(M)!

Long Live Socialism!

Long Live the Proletarian Internationalism!

Message from the Tudeh Party of Iran

On the occasion of the Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Central Committee of the Tudeh Party

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, November 1, 1998

These Fraternal Parties could not send their Delegations to attend the 16th Congress of the CPI(M) held in Calcutta.

of Iran extends militant greetings to all delegates and participants and through them to all Communists and progressive forces in India.

We would like to take this opportunity to further develop and strengthen the long-standing and fraternal relations between our two parties. These relations have developed during long years of struggle for democracy, peace and social justice in our two countries.

The Tudeh Party of Iran acknowledges the major contribution of the CPI(M) to the struggle for peace, progress and socialism in India. We are confident that the working people of India, guided by their revolutionary vanguard, will be able to overcome the present obstacles in the way of advancing India to peace, prosperity and socialism.

Your Congress is taking place at a very sensitive time internationally. Imperialism has embarked upon a dangerous drive to secure vast areas of the world for plunder and domination.

**The expansion of NATO into Eastern and Central Europe.

**The tragedies of the war in the Balkans where US-led world imperialism has declared war on the forces daring to resist the plans by Washington.

**The continued illegal blockade of socialist Cuba by US imperialism.

**The growing pressures arising from the complexities of the Middle East Peace Process and the intransigence of ultra right-wing and pro-imperialist forces in Israel.

**The situation in the Persian Gulf and the continuing US sanctions against Iraq.

**The control of Afghanistan by Taliban forces are just some manifestations of the "New World Disorder".

This drive by imperialism coincides with the current crisis of capitalism manifested in the virtual economic collapse of the "Asian tigers", Russia and Latin America and the onset of recession in Japan. These crises have exposed the falsehood of the proposition that capitalism can provide sustainable development. In our view, capitalism breeds inequality, oppression and war. The support of imperialist forces for dictatorships, corrupt and aggressive regimes across the world emanate from capitalism.

We regard the election of the BJP Government earlier this year as a setback for the Indian working class. The decision of the BJP Government to join the nuclear weapon states by conducting nuclear tests is contrary to the long-term interests of the Indian people and the prospects of peace in the region. Whatever the BJP arguments are, the fact is that as a result of these tests, India has become more vulnerable to imperialist pressures. We support your struggle for a peaceful, non-aligned and prosperous India.

Message from the Polisario Front

The leadership of the Polisario Front has received your kind invitation for the participation in the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which is scheduled to be held from October 5 to 11, 1998 at Calcutta. While it would have been a great pleasure for us to participate, we apologize for our inability to attend the programme due to the great attention given to the Referendum for Self-Determination of the Saharawi people, which will be organized early next year.

The Polisario Front and the Saharawi people would like to convey to the Communist Party of India (Marxist) their greetings, felicitations and best wishes for the success of the 16th Congress.

We highly appreciate the active participation of your party in the contemporary political life of India. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) is well-known for its consistent struggle to reinforce democracy, social progress and peace. Our fraternal contacts and cooperation have a long history and tradition. In the spirit of friendship and solidarity, we shall strive on our part to enrich and promote further our relations and cooperation to the benefit of our two peoples and countries.

As you know, the issue on the decolonization of Western Sahara has finally reached the moment of the truth, the UN Commission for Identification accomplished its work of the eligible voters, in conformity with the Houston Agreement between the Polisario Front and the Moroccan Government. The corps of eligible people for the vote is well-known right now, it is in favour of the independence of Western Sahara. But unfortunately the other part still does not honour its commitments by hindering the UN

Settlement Plan, according to the latest UN Secretary General Report of 11th September, 1998 on Western Sahara. Morocco still did not sign the Agreement of the Status of Forces, does not formalize the presence of the UNHCR to prepare the repatriation of refugees to Western Sahara, detaining the communication facilities of MINURSO in custody and putting restriction on the UN flights. The need for pressure by the international community and all the peace-loving forces and institutions is required more than ever, to oblige the Government of Morocco to apply its commitment in the UN Settlement Plan for Western Sahara.

We believe that a fair and transparent referendum is the only path for a lasting solution for the Western Sahara issue and we believe also that all the parties and neighbours will gain from the peace and stability in North Africa.

Finally, we repeat our warmest greetings to the 16th Congress of CPI(M).

Long Live the Communist Party of India (Marxist)!

Long Live the Polisario Front.

Message from the Communist Party of Syria

On the occasion of the convening of your 16th Congress, the Central Committee of the Syrian Communist Party sends you best comradely regards wishing your Congress full success in its struggle to fulfil the labour's interests.

We highly appreciate your stand of adherence to international solidarity, your struggle for independence, your efforts to build a strong India of complete sovereignty, your struggle for democratic freedoms and labour's interests. The experience of the Indian Communists in building fronts of national and Left forces is worthy of serious studies to all the Left forces all over the world.

The Syrian Communist Party completely supports the Syrian national attitude expressed by President Hafez Assad, "comprehensive and just peace cannot be realized without the complete withdrawal of the Israeli occupation from all the occupied Arab lands, including the Syrian Golan and South Lebanon, in

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addition to building the Arab Palestinian state of complete national sovereignty, Arabic Jerusalem as the capital."

The Syrian Communist Party really desires more strengthening and extending of the comradely relations with the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Long Live Marxism-Leninism!

Long Live Proletarian Internationalism!

The New Central Committee of The CPI(M) Elected by The 16th Congress Held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998*

The 16th Congress of the CPI(M), held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998, decided to have a 75-member Central Committee(CC), of which 67 were to be elected at the Party Congress itself, while the remaining 8 were to be coopted later. However, after Brinda Karat withdrew her name from the proposed panel of 67, the Party Congress unanimously voted for the remaining 66 names. Now, it was decided that of the remaining 9 vacancies, one woman member will be coopted from West Bengal, while one member will be from the trade union front.

Besides, Comrade Samar Mukherjee, elected as Chairman of the new Central Control Commission(CCC), will be, as per provisions of the Party Constitution, an ex-officio member of the Central Committee.

It was also decided that the Polit Bureau elected at the Chandigarh Party Congress (April 1995) will continue till December 1998, when the Central Committee will discuss work division and take appropriate decisions regarding election of the remaining members of the Polit Bureau.

Below we give the names of members of the new Central Committee. Of these, the first 12 are members of the Polit Bureau that was elected at Chandigarh, while the last 11 are new entrants to the Central Committee. Comrade Harkishan Singh Surjeet was re-elected General Secretary of the Party at the first meeting of the new Central Committee:

Harkishan Singh Surjeet
Jyoti Basu
E Balanandan

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, October 18, 1998.
Refer Document under Item No. 178 and Item No. 179 of this Volume.

Benoy Krishna Chowdhury
V S Achuthanandan
Prakash Karat
Sitaram Yechury
S Ramachandran Pillai
P Ramachandran
Sailen Dasgupta
E K Nayantar
R Umanath
M Hanumantha Rao
Kortala Satyanarayana
M V Narasimha Reddy
Hemen Das
Noorul Huda
Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi
Subodh Roy
Joginder Sharma
Mohd Yusuf Tarigami
T K Ramakrishnan
Susheela Gopalan
Prabhakar Sanzgiri
Ahilya Rangnekar
Mangat Ram Pasla
Balwant Singh
Hariram Chauhan
N Sankariah
Manik Sarkar
Ram Sumer Yadav
Buddhadeb Bhattacharya
Biman Basu
Mohd Amin
Anil Biswas
Biplab Dasgupta
M K Pandhe
Vimala Ranadive
Sukomal Sen
Hannan Mollah

M A Baby
Hari Singh Kang
Niren Ghosh
Benoy Konar
Chittabrata Majumdar
Paloly Mohd Kutty
Baidyanath Majumdar
N Varadarajan
B V Raghavulu
Uddhab Barman
Janardan Pati
Mohd Salim
Suneet Chopra
Shailendra Shailly
Inderjit Singh
Pinarayi Vijayan (Ke ala)
P K Gurudasan (Kerala)
P Karunakaran (Kerala)
P Ramiah (Andhra Pradesh)
K Varadarajan
Nirupam Sen (West Bengal)
Somnath Chatterjee (West Bengal)
Aghore Debbarma (Tripura)
Ashok Dhawale (Maharashtra)
Subodh Mehta (Gujarat)
Mohar Singh (Himachal Pradesh)

Central Control Commission of The CPI(M) Elected by The 16th Congress Held in Calcutta on October 5-11, 1998*

As per provisions of the Party Constitution, the 16th Party Congress elected a new Central Control Commission (CCC), this time of five members, including one vacancy. These are given below:

1. Samar Mukherjee (Chairman)
2. Sunil Basu Roy
3. D Janakiraman
4. C P Narayanan
5. One to be taken from Andhra Pradesh

Comrade Samar Mukherjee, as Chairman of the CCC, will be ex-officio member of the Central Committee of the CPI(M).

Homage to Comrade Dasaratha Deb*

**Statement Dated October 14, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) issued the following condolence resolution on the death of Comrade Dasaratha Deb on October 14, 1998:

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) expresses its profound grief at the passing away of Comrade Dasaratha Deb who died in the early hours of 14th October, 1998. He was 82 years old. Dasaratha Deb was one of the founders of the Communist movement in Tripura and an acknowledged leader of the tribal people in the movement for emancipation, who rose to become the Chief Minister of Tripura.

Dasaratha Deb was one of the young men, in 1945, who began the Janasiksha Samiti to spread education among the tribal people and make them conscious of their rights. It is from here that the struggle of the tribal people against the oppressive rule of the Raja of Tripura began. In 1948, the Ganamukthi Parishad was founded, with Dasaratha Deb as the President, which began the movement against the autocratic rule. Between 1948 and 1950, he led the armed struggle against the feudal system and the repression unleashed by the Raja's armed forces. It is this struggle which made Dasaratha Deb a legendary figure.

Dasaratha Deb and the entire leadership of the Ganamukthi Parishad joined the Communist Party in 1950. He contested the first Lok Sabha elections in 1952 and won with a big majority. He was elected to the Central Committee of the CPI in 1951. Since then he was in the leadership of the undivided Communist Party, and later, he was part of the leadership which formed the

CPI(M). He was elected to the first Central Committee of the CPI(M) founded at the 7th Congress in 1964. He continued in the Central Committee till the 16th Congress where he retired due to his bad health.

Dasaratha Deb tirelessly worked for decades to build up and consolidate the Communist Party in Tripura. When the first Left Front Government was formed in 1978, he became the Education Minister, and the Deputy Chief Minister in the second Left Front Government. He became the Chief Minister of the third Left Front Government in 1993 and served in that position till 1998. Dasaratha Deb was the Secretary of the Tripura State Committee between 1988 and 1993. He was elected to the Lok Sabha for four terms.

Dasaratha Deb had all the qualities of an outstanding Communist leader. He closely identified with the people and their aspirations. He was one of the architects who forged and cemented the unity of the tribal and non-tribal people. All sections of the people in Tripura had full confidence in his leadership. Throughout his life, he was completely loyal to the ideals of the Communist movement and the discipline of the Party. The tremendous affection and admiration of the people never affected his modest behaviour and his collective style of functioning. The CPI(M) and the Left movement have suffered a serious loss with his demise. His revolutionary life and example will always be cherished by all Communists and progressive people.

The Polit Bureau pays its respectful homage to the memory of Dasaratha Deb. It conveys its heartfelt condolences to his wife Mangaleswari Debbarma and his daughters and sons.

On Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill*

**Statement Dated October 24, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Vajpayee Government is planning to introduce the Insurance Regulatory Authority (IRA) Bill in the forthcoming winter session of Parliament with a view to opening up insurance to the private sector. It is reported that the Group of Ministers have recommended that the Indian companies, which will enter the insurance industry, can have 26 per cent foreign equity. This is a backdoor method to allow foreign capital into the insurance sector.

The BJP has, by this step, abandoned its own stand of not allowing foreign companies into the insurance sector. The CPI(M) is totally opposed to the privatization of the insurance sector. It had opposed the introduction of the IRA Bill in 1997. The further liberalization of the financial sector will spell ruin for the country. It is surprising that the BJP-led Government continues on this path even after the disastrous experience of the South-East Asian countries. There should be no further liberalization of the financial sector which will subject India to the mercy of the financial speculators.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon all political parties, trade unions and other concerned citizens to protest this move which will harm the basis of India's self-reliant development.

Condolence on The Demise of Nagarjun*

**Statement Dated November 7, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) deeply mourns the death of the renowned Hindi litterateur Vaidyanath Mishra, popularly known as Nagarjun. Being closely associated with the legendary peasant leader Sahajanand Saraswati and also with Rahul Sankritayan, Nagarjun participated in the freedom struggle and was jailed on several occasions. His commitment to the uplift of the exploited found a powerful voice in his literary work. Though he began his literary career in the Maithili language, his works in Hindi deeply resonated the aspirations of the exploited people. In his death, India has lost a powerful voice against the exploitative social order.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) conveys its heartfelt condolences to his sons and daughters.

CPI(M) Polit Bureau on Khanna Rail Crash*

Statement Dated November 26, 1998 Issued to Press

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expresses its deep grief on the loss of a large number of lives of passengers who were involved in the train accident near Khanna Railway Station in Punjab. It is reported that nearly 100 passengers have been killed and 250 injured in the accident involving the Frontier Mail and the Sealdah Express.

A high-level enquiry must be conducted to ascertain the cause of this tragedy. The growing incidence of railway accidents is causing a great deal of concern and maintenance of safety standards must be given top priority by the railways. The Central Government must make all efforts to assist the state authorities, so that immediate medical attention and relief can be provided to all those affected by the accident.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) conveys its heartfelt condolences to all those who have lost their family members and relatives in the accident.

On Assembly Election Results in Rajasthan, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh*

**Statement Dated November 29, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Results of the Rajasthan, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh assembly elections constitute a comprehensive rejection of the policies and performance of the Vajpayee Government at the Centre and the BJP State Governments. In Mizoram, the BJP did not figure as a factor in the elections.

The significance of the results cannot be underestimated as the BJP has been traditionally strong in the three states of Delhi, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The sharp erosion in the BJP support is also due to the disillusionment with the eight-month record of the BJP-led Government at the Centre. The people have given a strong verdict against the policies which have led to all-round price rise of all essential commodities such as onions, vegetables, edible oil, etc., which have imposed great suffering. The BJP's policies of sectarian intolerance as seen in the efforts to impose the Hindutva ideology in the educational system, the growing attacks on Christian minorities in different parts of the country and the chauvinism sought to be whipped up after the nuclear tests have all evoked popular disapproval. Both the anti-people economic policies and the crusade against secular values have caused the BJP's defeat heavily. It is for the allies of the BJP to consider whether their association with such a party serves the interests of the people and the country.

The Vajpayee Government has lost the political and moral legitimacy to rule after this disastrous performance.

On ‘Suicide Squad’ of VHP and Bajrang Dal Purported to Destroy Sufi Place of Worship Near Chikmagalur in Karnataka*

**Statement Dated December 1, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the decision of the Viswa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal to lead a ‘Suicide Squad’ to destroy the historic Sufi place of worship near Chikmagalur in Karnataka.

Since the mid-17th Century, this place of worship in the Baba Budangiri range of hills has been a revered place of worship for both the Hindus and the Muslims.

Coming close on the heels of attacks on Christians in Karnataka, this move by the Viswa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal is bound to vitiate the atmosphere and create tensions and strife.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) calls upon the Karnataka Government to take all necessary measures and prevent any such attack on this place of worship. The PB calls upon the BJP and its Saffron Brigade to learn from the drubbing it received in the recent elections and be warned that the people of India will not tolerate the spreading of communal poison for political interests.

Commu~~nic~~ue Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M) Following Its Meeting Held in New Delhi on December 1, 1998*

The comprehensive defeat of the BJP in the assembly elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi indicated the people's wholesale rejection of the policies pursued by the eight-month old Vajpayee Government at the Centre, and the BJP thus has "no moral right to continue to rule", the CPI(M) General Secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet asserted, while addressing a Press Conference on December 2, 1998 afternoon, following the Polit Bureau meeting of the Party held on December 1, 1998 to discuss the election results and its consequences.

In reply to a spate of questions on the alternative to the BJP-led Government, Surjeet said an alternative would emerge once the government collapsed. He also repeatedly made it clear that the CPI(M) or other opposition parties were not interested in toppling the Vajpayee Government but would work to provide an alternative once it collapsed.

He said: "There is no question of replacing the government through tricks—we will not engineer defections and resort to the methods used by the BJP to keep itself in power in Uttar Pradesh. But it is for their allies to see whether being with the BJP is a liability or an asset."

Elaborating on this, Surjeet pointed out that the misrule of the Vajpayee Government was having a very adverse effect on the fortunes of the allied parties as well. The allies have expressed their discontent earlier too, and this was likely to increase in view of the dismal electoral performance of the BJP in the November

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, December 6, 1998
This commu~~nic~~ue was released in a Press Conference held in New Delhi on December 2, 1998.

elections. For the allies, it was not just a question of national interest (i.e. leave the BJP fold because of the way it was damaging national unity) but also their own self-interest. "Even from their own narrow interest, the allies must see whether they can protect their own base," Surjeet said, indicating that a prolonged alliance with the BJP would erode their popular base rapidly. He cited the problems plaguing the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and said they reflected an eroding base. Similar problems would face others as well.

Asked to comment on the Congress(I)'s reluctance to form an alternative government, Surjeet repeated that his understanding was that the Congress did not want to topple the government through tricks, but if it collapses would take up the responsibility.

Third Alternative

Surjeet also refuted suggestions that the assembly election results had shown that the Third Front had collapsed and had no future, and that a two party system represented by a resurgent Congress(I) and a strong BJP was emerging. He emphasized that regardless of the setbacks to constituents of the third force in the last Lok Sabha elections, the concept and scope of the Third Alternative was very much alive and it was bound to become a big force in the country.

Regarding the immediate scenario, he said even before these elections the third front was, for the time being, almost non-existent because its key constituent, the Janata Dal, had been reduced to just six seats in the Lok Sabha elections earlier this year. Even these six members were not united on all issues. However, this cannot lead to the conclusion that the third alternative is itself defunct. In the states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi, the Congress(I) has always been a strongforce and naturally benefited from a strong anti-BJP wave. But the Congress did not farewell uniformly. In the by-elections in Bihar, the RJD and CPI(M) won the four seats while in West Bengal, the CPI(M) won all three by-polls. Apart from Purnea which the CPI(M) won, in one other seat in Bihar, the CPI(M) candidate stood second while the Congress(I) did very poorly.

As for the long term, Surjeet asserted that a two-party system would not come about in India for a long time to come. He said big

business was keen to have a two-party system in which they shifted their support from the Congress to the BJP periodically. "But we will not allow that to happen," he said, pointing out that parties representing regional aspirations and aspirations of the downtrodden sections would fight against the ruling class parties. He said a two-party system had taken root in developed capitalist countries like the US, UK and Canada but it was not possible in the complex situation in India. Therefore, a third alternative was bound to emerge and the CPI(M) will always support this alternative and work towards it.

Asked why was the CPI(M) ready to support the Congress to form a government even when the Congress(I) was a vocal votary of a two-party system and wanted to "finish" the forces of the third front, Surjeet shot back, "They have tried to finish us many times but did not succeed. We know how to fight and survive." He went on to explain that the support to the Congress(I) in the event of the collapse of the BJP Government must be seen in the context of the present situation. "The present reality is do I want the BJP to continue to rule and destroy national unity, or see that it is not allowed to do further damage?" he asked. It is in order to stop the BJP from wreaking havoc on the secular, democratic republic which was under threat from its Hindutva agenda that the CPI(M) was willing to consider another alternative, he explained. In reply to a question, he said the Congress was not a communal party though it had compromised with communalism in the past. He said the Congress too has learnt lessons, and in these elections a sizeable section of the minorities voted for the Congress in order to defeat the BJP.

Vote Against BJP Policies

Surjeet also underlined that the decisive defeat of the BJP in the assembly elections showed that the people had rejected the party's policies—both its economic agenda and its sectarian policies. The most explicit expression of the BJP's disastrous economic policies and pro-trader stance was the unprecedented price rise that led to its defeat. It was also a rejection of the BJP's attempts to impose its Hindutva ideology, which was manifested in the vicious attacks

on the Christian community throughout the country and the attempt to communalize the education system which was thwarted not just by the opposition parties but its own allies as well, Surjeet said. He said their attempt to arouse jingoistic feelings over the nuclear explosion also backfired and did not get the party any votes. He repeated the CPI(M)'s strong opposition to Pokhran II which had only served to isolate India in the world community, create tensions in the region and reverse the country's long held foreign policy.

Announcing the decisions of the Polit Bureau meeting, Surjeet said the CPI(M) vehemently opposed the decision to go ahead with the disinvestment of shares in profit-making PSUs, and would launch a public agitation to stop the privatization of the insurance sector.

The Party has called upon all its units to intensify the preparations and support the call of the National Platform of Mass Organizations to make the December 11 strike a grand success, and also extended support to the two-day strike of public sector workers on December 10 and 11, 1998.

Referring to the call of the Left parties to observe December 6 as a day of communal harmony, Surjeet said it was the date when the first stroke to destroy national unity had taken place with the demolition of the Babri Masjid six years ago. He said the saffron combine had not given up its agenda and was not only targetting the mosques in Mathura and Varanasi "but have reached Karnataka too" where they are trying to take over a Sufi shrine. These forces must be fought relentlessly in the coming days, he said.

The Polit Bureau Commuque issued on the occasion follows:

Decisive Defeat for BJP

The results of the Assembly elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi constitute a comprehensive defeat for the BJP. The people of these states have decisively rejected the policies and the performance of the Vajpayee Government at the Centre and at the two BJP-run State Governments. For the past eight months since the Vajpayee Government assumed office, the whole country has been groaning under the severe price hike of all essential commodities. The people have punished the BJP recognizing its

responsibility for the rampant price rise by its protection of big traders who have indulged in hoarding and profiteering.

The people have also registered their verdict against the sectarian policies of the BJP and its efforts to impose its Hindutva ideology in all spheres of society. The assault on the secular character of the education system, the attacks on the christian minorities and the jingoism sought to be whipped up after the nuclear tests in Pokhran have all met with disapproval.

The Vajpayee Government has been seriously damaged by this verdict in the states where it has been traditionally strong. It has lost the moral and political legitimacy to continue in office at the Centre. The parties allied to the BJP will have to seriously address this issue.

Wrong Economic Policies

A clear message to the Vajpayee Government is that its economic policies which pampers big business, multinational corporations and big traders are not acceptable. However, the Vajpayee Government has not learnt any lessons from this election debacle. The Government wishes to continue with the discredited policies of dismantling of the public sector, opening up all vital sectors to foreign capital and privatization.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly opposes the decision to go ahead with the disinvestment of shares in nine profitable public sector undertakings. Already shares of the Container Corporation of India has been sold at abysmally low prices to foreign financial institutions and banks. The Polit Bureau demands an immediate halt to such disinvestment which is fettering away the hard-earned public assets of the country.

Oppose Insurance Bill

In the current session of Parliament, the Vajpayee Government proposes to introduce a Bill to open up the insurance sector to private companies and to foreign capital. Making a volte face, the BJP is now proposing to allow up to 40 per cent foreign equity in private insurance companies. The vast resources which were made available to the country by the LIC and the GIC will be cornered

by private companies and these funds will not be available for development based on national priorities. The CPI(M) and the Left parties appeal to all sections of public opinion to vigorously protest against the privatization of the insurance sector which will have very harmful consequences for the country. The crisis in the South-East Asian countries due to financial sector liberalization should be a warning which must be heeded.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) expressed its serious concern at the proposed amendments to the Indian Patent Act, 1970 which will allow foreign companies to have exclusive marketing rights as a first step for going for product patents. The Polit Bureau calls upon the government to consult all national political parties before proceeding with such a move.

Observe December 6

The Left parties have given a call to observe December 6 as a day of communal harmony and to mobilize all sections of people against the communal danger. The RSS and its outfits like the VHP are continuing to rake up issues targetting the minorities, whether it be at Kashi, Mathura or other religious places where disputes are sought to be created. All secular and peace-loving sections of the people must remain vigilant to foil the efforts to generate communal tensions.

Make The General Strike a Success

The Polit Bureau called upon all its Party units to intensify the preparations and support for the call of the National Platform of Mass Organisations to make the December 11 general strike a big success. The PB also extended its support to the two-day strike of the public sector workers on December 10 and 11. It appeals to all sections of people who have been badly affected by the wrong policies of the government to join and make this strike call an effective protest action.

CPI(M) Condemns BJP-led Government's Stand on The Cinema: 'FIRE'*

Statement Dated December 5, 1998 Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the decision of BJP-led Government to refer the film 'FIRE' for re-examination by the Censor Board. This is being done when the film had already secured clearance from the Censor Board and has been exhibited in many places for some time. The Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, who communicated this decision, has stated that this decision arose because of "public resentment and violent demonstrations throughout the country". The most deplorable aspect of this decision is that it is nothing but succumbing to the unruly and violent attacks on one or two cinema theatres in Mumbai and Delhi by small groups of Shiv Sena activists. The fact is that veteran film personalities and Human Rights activists have appealed to the Supreme Court Chief Justice to ensure the smooth screening of the film.

The reported statement by Shiv Sena leaders that the Sena activists should not attack the theatres but target the film artists is a clear indication of the BJP-Shiv Sena's nefarious objectives as well as methods. This episode once again exposes the narrow parochial and intolerant attitude of the BJP in most matters.

The Polit Bureau demands that this decision be reversed and firm action be taken against those indulging in vandalism.

CPI(M) Greets 15th Congress of The Communist Party of Spain*

On behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), General Secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet attended the XV Congress of the Communist Party of Spain held at Madrid Between December 5-7, 1998, and greeted the Congress. The message of the Party on the occasion follows:

Dear Comrades,

The Communist Party of Spain is one of the oldest contingents of the international communist movement. After the end of monarchy, it along with other patriotic forces had won the battle against the rightist forces after a struggle for five years with the Popular Front becoming victorious. But the counter-revolutionary forces led by Franco and backed by Hitler and Mussolini launched attacks against the Republic, resulting in the imposition of civil war on Spain. Heroic fight given by the progressive forces with the Communists playing an important role won the support and sympathy from the people all over the world. The International Brigade, which fought side by side with the Spanish people, has written a glorious history in the struggle for independence and social transformation.

The Communist movement since then has faced many ups and downs but nobody has succeeded in presenting an alternative to the basic theory of historical materialism propounded by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto 150 years ago. The mistakes committed in the application of this science can not negate the basic principles enunciated.

With its rich experience the Communist Party of Spain today is in the forefront of the struggle against neo-liberalization and globalization being imposed on the world by US dominated agencies. The fight against these policies has become an important task for the Communist Parties the world over along with other Left, democratic and patriotic forces to defend their economic sovereignty. Communist Party of Spain has formed the United Left to carry on this struggle.

The Indian people too have been subjected to the worst form of exploitation under the policies of neo-liberalization and globalization. The Indian Government, under the dictates of the IMF-World Bank is going ahead with the privatization of public sector industries and opening up various sectors of the economy to unbridled loot of multinationals. These, while on the one hand are imposing greater burdens on the people and on the other is making the country's economy subservient to the interests of US imperialism.

The 16th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) held in October 1998 has resolved to intensify the movement against these policies.

It is against this background that the public sector employees throughout the country are going on a countrywide general strike on December 11, 1998. On December 11 a general strike will also be observed throughout India at the call of the National Platform of Mass Organizations in which the CPI(M) and the Left are playing an important role.

Comrades, with the assumption of the reins of power by the rightwing Bharatiya Janata Party, the threat to national unity has grown. The secular values and traditions of the country are being subjected to growing attacks. Our Party and the Left is making all efforts to unite the democratic and secular forces in the country to take on this challenge. The intervening capacity of the Left has increased manifold in recent years. While making all efforts to build such a front to meet the concrete situation, the Party Congress decided that the Party should not hesitate to demarcate with it when necessary.

Comrades, we are confident that the deliberations and conclusions of this Congress of the Communist Party of Spain will go a long way in further advancing your Party as well as the Communist and democratic movement in Spain.

We wish your Congress all success.



CPI(M) Greetings to The 16th Congress of The Communist Party of Sri Lanka*

Dear Comrades,

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) conveys its warm fraternal greetings to the Communist Party of Sri Lanka on the occasion of its 16th National Congress.

We were, indeed, honoured to have the General Secretary of the CPSL with us in our recently concluded 16th Congress at Calcutta. We are confident that the relations between our Parties will continue to strengthen, and contribute to strengthening the relations between our countries and peoples.

Comrades,

Your Congress is being held at a time when world capitalism, despite the favourable circumstances created for its consolidation by the collapse of socialism in the former USSR and Eastern Europe, is showing itself as a system that is inherently exploitative and crisis-ridden. The recent financial crisis has exploded the myth churned out by imperialism that the only salvation for humanity, particularly the third world countries by adopting imperialist prescriptions for economic growth and developing only as appendages of the advanced capitalist countries. In the South-East Asian countries, scavengers are too picking the bones of what were once considered 'Tigers'.

The imperialist attempt to impose a new economic recolonization of the third world through its agencies—the IMF, World Bank and the WTO—needs to be resisted by all progressive peace-loving peoples the world over. We are confident that the deliberations of your Congress will contribute to this process of solidarity the world over, particularly in our region.

Comrades,

Your 16th Congress will undoubtedly evaluate your experience of the People's Alliance government of which you are a constituent. We are aware of the complex problems that you face in Sri Lanka. We are confident that your struggle to put into effect the promised constitutional reforms, a long lasting solution of the ethnic problem and ending the ongoing civil war, redressing the most pressing problems confronting the Sri Lankan people, will grow in strength.

With the confidence that this 16th Congress of the CPSL will work out the tactical line of the Party which will strengthen the party's bonds with the Sri Lankan people and its toiling classes, we once again, extend our revolutionary greetings to the Lankan Communists.

The CPI(M) wishes your Congress all success in its endeavours.

Commuque Issued By The Central Committee of The CPI(M) Following Its Meeting Held in New Delhi on December 15-16, 1998*

Results of The Assembly Elections

The Central Committee noted that the results of the Assembly Elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi constitute a decisive rejection of the policies and the performance of the Vajpayee Government at the Centre. The BJP lost both in the states where it had governments, and also where it was in the opposition, underlining the fact that this verdict is against the BJP. The people have voted against the BJP primarily for two reasons. Firstly, the BJP Government's economic policies have resulted in a severe price rise of essential commodities and other hardships for the people. Secondly, the intolerant pursuit of the Hindutva agenda marked by efforts to communalize the educational system, attacks on Christian minorities and efforts to foment tensions about places of religious worship have alienated large sections of the people.

The popular verdict has been more a rejection of the BJP and not an endorsement of the policies which have been pursued by the Congress Party. It is pertinent to note that the alienation of the people has been largely due to the impact of the policies of liberalization and privatization pursued by the BJP-led Governments at the Centre and the States.

The defeat of the BJP in its strongholds has significantly weakened the BJP-led coalition at the Centre. Already within eight months, the image of the government had been seriously damaged with the internal conflicts and divergent positions being taken by the partners of the coalition. The significant defeat is intensifying the internal strains with its resultant effects on governance.

Deteriorating Economic Situation

The loss of political legitimacy of the Vajpayee Government is accompanied by the steady worsening of the economic situation. The economy is in the doldrums. The recession in industry continues with industrial production registering less than half the growth recorded in the previous year. The trade deficit is expected to double in the current year to around Rs. 50 thousand crore, leading to a serious balance of payments crisis. Exports are continuing to register a decline. The lack of public investment in agriculture is creating serious problems for the farmers.

The worst attack on the living conditions of the people is taking place through the all-round price-rise of essential commodities. There is no let-up in the rising consumer price index, particularly of food items.

The hallmark of the Vajpayee Government has been its pro-trader bias and the refusal to check hoarding and profiteering.

Faced with this dismal situation instead of taking corrective measures and changing its economic policies, the Vajpayee Government has decided to brazen it out and go ahead with policies to appease international finance capital and multinational corporations. All talk of "Swadeshi" is abandoned.

No Opening Up of Insurance

The Central Committee strongly opposed the Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill which has been introduced in Parliament. The insurance sector has long been coveted by the foreign financial companies who want to capture the massive resources which are now being garnered by the LIC and GIC. They will utilize these resources for their own commercial interests and for repatriating profits abroad. By providing for 40 per cent foreign equity in companies which can enter the insurance business, the BJP is betraying its own commitment to the people. The Vajpayee Government has shamelessly offered this concession to the USA during the secret talks between Jaswant Singh and Strobe Talbot in the hope of some relaxation of sanctions.

The Central Committee resolved to mobilize all sections of the people to fight the attempt to open up the insurance sector and

financial sector liberalization which will create havoc for the economy, just as in the South-East Asian countries.

The Vajpayee Government is implementing the harmful policy of disinvestment in profitable public sector units. It is selling off shares of such companies to foreign financial institutions and banks cheaply and they will profit by selling these shares in the market when conditions improve. The Vajpayee Government, faced with a burgeoning, budgetary deficit, wants to sell off the PSU assets cheaply in a desperate bid to bridge the deficit. The arbitrary action taken by the ministry of civil aviation in disbanding the Indian Airlines and Air India boards shows the callous manner in which the BJP Government deals with public sector undertakings.

The dismantling of the public sector cannot be allowed as this will knock out the basis of a self-reliant economic development.

The Central Committee noted with concern that the BJP-led Government has introduced legislation to amend the Indian Patents Act to allow exclusive marketing rights to foreign companies and providing for product patents. The Government is in a hurry to introduce this bill due to the pressure of the multinational companies. The amendments to the Patents Act will adversely affect the agricultural sector and public health. These are state subjects and the Central Government has no right to sign away vital interests in these matters without having consultations with all State Governments.

Congress Attitude Wrong

The Congress Party has facilitated the tabling of the Patents Bill in the Rajya Sabha by extending full support to it. The Congress Party, if it goes ahead with support to the Patents Amendment Bill, opening up of insurance and indiscriminate liberalization, will be seen by the people as identified with policies harmful to the country. It is these same policies which discredited the Narasimha Rao Government.

Surrender To US Pressures

After seven rounds of secret talks between Jaswant Singh and Strobe Talbot, the Vajpayee Government has emerged as a

suppliant trying to meet the terms set out by the United States. After the Pokhran tests, the Vajpayee Government has succeeded in isolating itself internationally and becoming vulnerable to the increasing pressures being mounted by the United States. It is shameful that the Vajpayee Government has not responded firmly to the blacklisting of 200 Indian organizations and companies by the United States even after the placatory steps taken by the government. The effort to sign the CTBT and trying to get the US to accept India keeping a minimum nuclear deterrent, is a policy which will end in capitulating to the USA and accepting its role as an arbiter in the South Asian region. The CPI(M) reiterates its opposition to the signing of the CTBT and to the policy of nuclear weaponization. Both these steps are detrimental for the country.

Romesh Sharma Affair

The Central Committee demanded that the Union Government expedite the enquiry into the criminal activities of Romesh Sharma whose links with some top politicians and mafia groups have been exposed. It is essential that the CBI enquiry uncovers the criminal-politician nexus. Firm action will have to be taken against all those political leaders who have been patronising Romesh Sharma and his criminal activities.

Purnea Killings

The Central Committee strongly condemned the massacre of seven adivasi men and women by the landlord gang at Nikharail village in Purnea district. The adivasi landless people have been struggling to cultivate lands illegally occupied by the local landlord. The attack leading to arson and killings were organized to suppress the rights of the landless on land. The CPI(M) sent a delegation consisting of Mehboob Zaidi and Subrato Mukherjee, Lok Sabha MPs and Subodh Roy, member of the Central Committee to Purnea immediately after the news of the killings became known. The Central Committee demands swift action to arrest all the culprits. The State Government should provide adequate compensation and assistance to all the victims.

December 11 Strike

The Central Committee congratulated the working class and all sections of the people who came forward to make the December 11 strike a big success. The general strike was a powerful expression of the people's opposition to the harmful effects of the economic policies being pursued by the BJP Government. The total strike in insurance, banking, port and dock, public sector units, industrial areas, plantations, mines, educational institutions and mercantile offices in many parts of the country, shows the depth of the popular discontent and anger against the policies of liberalization.

Immediate Tasks

The Central Committee taking stock of the response to the strike decided that the Party should actively work for taking up the immediate issues of different sections of the people and support efforts of the mass organizations to launch struggles to defend the rights of the people. The CPI(M) and the Left parties will take all measures to strengthen and widen all such movements and struggles. The CC called upon the Party to take up the following tasks:

1. Step up the mass struggles and joint movements against the BJP Government's economic policies specifically on attacks on the public sector, the insurance bill, the patents bill and unemployment;
2. Build movements against price rise, demand dehoarding, checking profiteering and strengthening of the public distribution system, with provision for supply of 14 essential commodities;
3. • Fight the BJP-RSS-Shiv Sena attacks on minorities, the efforts to foment tensions in religious places and the RSS penetration of educational and cultural institutions;
4. Mobilize popular opinion against the surrender to US pressures on signing the CTBT and to oppose the sanctions and other hostile measures taken by the US;
5. Take up issues concerning the rights of women, rights of dalits, social, oppression and problems of education and health facilities for the common people.

Forge Third Alternative

The support extended to the December 11 general strike by a large number of democratic and secular parties and the growing cooperation of these forces within Parliament, underlines the relevance and the necessity to reforge the third alternative. The Central Committee decided to pursue the efforts to bring all such Left, democratic and secular forces together. There are a number of issues connected with the defence of secularism, the harmful economic policies of the BJP Government and the resistance to US imperialist pressures which form the basis for coming together of such forces.

New Polit Bureau

The Central Committee elected a 17 member Polit Bureau. From the outgoing Polit Bureau, Comrade Benoy Krishna Choudhury has retired. Comrade Benoy Choudhury is a veteran leader of the Party, and prominent leader of the peasant movement. He was one of the architects of the implementation of land reforms in West Bengal as minister in the Left Front Government. The Central Committee recorded its appreciation for the services rendered by comrade Benoy Choudhury as a member of the Polit Bureau. He will continue to contribute to work as a member of the Central Committee and the West Bengal State Secretariat.

Polit Bureau of The CPI(M) Elected by The Central Committee in Its Meeting Held in New Delhi on December 15-16, 1998(*)

1. Harkishan Singh Surjeet
2. Jyoti Basu
3. E. Balanandan
4. E.K. Nayanar
5. V.S. Achuthanandan
6. Sailen Dasgupta
7. Prakash Karat
8. S. Ramachandran Pillai
9. Sitaram Yechury
10. P. Ramachandran
11. R. Umanath
12. M. Hanumantha Rao*
13. M.K. Pandhe*
14. Biman Basu*
15. Anil Biswas*
16. Manik Sarkar*
17. Pinarayi Vijayan*

(*newly elected)

Central Committee of The CPI(M) Elected Its New Members in Its Meeting Held in New Delhi on December 15-16, 1998*

New Members of the Central Committee

1. S. Suryanarayana Rao
2. T.K. Rangarajan
3. T. Veerabhadram
4. Mithali Kumar
5. Shreemathi
6. Kanai Banerjee

CPI(M) on Shiv Sena Hooliganism in Mumbai*

**Statement Dated December 12, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The demonstration by Shiv Sena workers outside the residence of film actor Dilip Kumar is a crude attempt at intimidating artists who dare to criticize the Sena's violent and fascistic activities. The threats hurled at the film actor by the mob should be condemned by all citizens who cherish democratic values.

The demonstration has taken place after Bal Thackeray called upon the Shiv Sainiks not to attack the cinema halls but target those who make and act in the films objected to by the Sena. The Shiv Sena, faced with losing popular support, is increasingly taking the law into their own hands. The declaration by the Chief Minister of Maharashtra that the Pakistani cricket team will not be allowed to play in Mumbai is one such instance. The BJP coalition Government at the Centre cannot evade its responsibility in the matter as the Shiv Sena is a constituent of the Union Government.

The CPI(M) warns the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance to stop such undemocratic attacks on cultural freedom in Mumbai.

Political Report Adopted by The Central Committee of The CPI(M) in its Meeting Held in New Delhi on December 15-16, 1998

Major Events Since Party Congress

The Party Congress had highlighted the danger posed by the communal forces especially after the BJP's coming to power at the Centre and the necessity to intensify the resistance to the economic policies pursued in the name of liberalization. In the short period since then events have unfolded in such a manner which portend major political developments at the national level. The last two months since the Party Congress have seen the defeat of the BJP in the assembly elections to the four states, the revival of the Congress party in the three states where it won elections, the growth of dissensions within the BJP and the coalition it is leading and the big success of the 11th December general strike in the background of the deteriorating economic situation.

The most significant event has been the assembly elections to the four states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Mizoram. The results of these elections have been a major blow for the BJP and the Vajpayee Government. The results show how quickly the BJP's image has been eroded within a pace of eight months since the BJP-led Government assumed office. Both the unprecedented price rise and deteriorating economic conditions and the intolerant pursuit of the Hindutva agenda have contributed to the growing isolation of the BJP.

As warned by the Political Resolution of the Party Congress, the BJP Government is rapidly shedding all pretensions of *Swadeshi* and going ahead with the liberalization/privatization policies at a pace not witnessed in the past seven years. The attacks on the public

sector, the opening up to foreign capital and the surrender to pressures from international finance capital have reached new heights.

An important reason for the exposure and isolation of the BJP has been the continuing attacks on the minorities and the efforts to push through the RSS agenda for communalising the educational system and the penetration of the State apparatus.

As predicted in the Political Resolution, the BJP Government has gone from a jingoistic nuclear policy towards capitulation to US pressures for signing the CTBT and for accepting overall US supervision on nuclear proliferation matters in the region.

All these have contributed to the growing isolation of the BJP and eroded the credibility of the Vajpayee Government. This was strikingly illustrated by the results of the three state assembly elections. The decisive defeat of the BJP and the rejection of the performance and record of the Vajpayee Government and the state governments run by it have inflicted serious political damage to the BJP-led coalition.

The political consequences of this defeat will be unfolding in the coming period.

Pursuit of Communal Agenda

Soon after the Party Congress, the Union Government held the conference of the State Education Ministers. The agenda for this conference included a report on the "Recommendations of a group of experts" which is actually a paper prepared by the RSS run Vidya Bharati. The conference was to be also addressed by a Calcutta based businessman affiliated to the Vidya Bharati. Such an unprecedented step where the RSS agenda was so brazenly sought to be smuggled into the Education Ministers' Conference led to widespread outrage and opposition. The Vidya Bharati paper wanted the educational system to be "Indianized, nationalized and spiritualized", it wanted Sanskrit to be compulsory from Class III to X; Article 30 of the Constitution guaranteeing the rights of minorities to run educational institutions to be amended and the Vedas and Upanishads to find place in the curriculum. The opening of the conference with the Saraswati Vandana was an indication of the tone of the conference.

The Education Minister of West Bengal took the initiative to mobilize the non-BJP State Governments to oppose the agenda for the conference. It is significant that apart from the Education Ministers belonging to the non-BJP alliance state governments, the Education Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Punjab also joined in the protest. Faced with this wideranging protest, the HRD Minister was forced to withdraw the agenda paper prepared by the Vidya Bharati. By this single event, the whole country came to know how the RSS wants to infiltrate its Hindutva agenda in the educational system.

Prior to the Education Ministers' Conference, the BJP had already begun planting known RSS persons in key research institutions and higher education bodies like the ICHR, ICSSR and the Institute of Advanced Studies. The UP Government issued a circular making the singing of Saraswati Vandana and Vande Mataram compulsory in primary schools. Later, this was disowned by the Chief Minister.

That the BJP-RSS combine would go ahead with its own communal agenda became all the more evident with the growing incidents of attacks on the Christian community and its institutions. In the last two months, this assault on the Christian community came into prominence. The rape of three nuns in Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh, which took place in the end of September alarmed the Christian community and general public opinion. All over the country protests were organized through church-led institutions. The attacks in Gujrat continued. This was followed by attacks on a small nunnery in Haryana and the savage beating up of a Christian priest and the congregation in a church near Mangalore in Karnataka. On December 4, the United Christian Forum representing all denominations held a countrywide protest with all Christian institutions closing down and peaceful marches being organized all over the country. The attacks on the small Christian community have shattered illusions among sections of those people who thought the BJP would moderate its position after coming to power at the Centre.

The RSS outfits like the VHP and the Bajrang Dal continue with their aggressive and violent activities. On the Kashi issue, the

VHP has moved to form a trust which would organize the demolition of the mosque adjoining the existing temple and for the construction of a new temple. In Karnataka near Chikamagalur, the VHP made an issue out of a Sufi shrine at the Baba Bundengiri hills. This has been a common place of worship of both Muslims and Hindus. The decision to lead the *rath yatra* and a suicide squad to this place of worship was a planned move to foment communal tensions to advance the aims of the RSS combine. In Ayodhya proper, in October, the local municipality adopted a resolution to close all Muslim graveyards and not allow further burials within municipal limits. This is part of the overall plan to drive out the minorities from the town, a process which began before the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Advani in his speech at the Sarnath function sought to appropriate Buddhism as part of Hinduism and denied its separate religious status. This led to protests from Buddhist circles.

The Shiv Sena in Maharashtra continues to instigate trouble by ranking up communal issues. Bal Thackeray opposed the holding of a cricket match with the Pakistani team playing in Mumbai. Its stormtroopers have been busy, cinema halls showing a film which was condemned by the Shiv Sena were attacked. Noted artistes protested against this vandalism; Dilip Kumar and two others took up the matter in the Supreme Court. The Shiv Sena held a demonstration outside Dilip Kumar's house and hurled threats at him. In the Rajya Sabha, a Shiv Sena MP branded him a Pakistani leading to widespread protests.

The intolerance of the RSS combine and the BJP-led Central Government playing a complicit role by refusing to take action to curb attacks and intimidation of the minorities have made people increasingly conscious of the dangers if such a government continues at the Centre.

Economic Situation

The deteriorating economic situation has been analyzed in detail in the Political Resolution of the Party Congress. Since then, there has been a further worsening of the overall situation. The trade deficit has reached alarming proportions. It is estimated that there

will be a 12 billion dollars, i.e., Rs. 50,000 crores deficit in the current year. This will lead to a balance of payments crisis. The revenue collection is expected to have a shortfall of Rs.12,000 crores from what was targetted in the budget. Experts are already talking of a foreign exchange crisis similar to 1991. Recession in industry shows no sign of abating. The increase in industrial production in the first seven months of April to October 1998 has been a meagre 3.6 per cent compared to 6.2 per cent increase in the corresponding period in 1997. Already, people were suffering the consequences of the policies of liberalization with cuts in public investments, social sector expenditure and growing unemployment. On top of this has come the severe prics rise which has made life miserable. The skyrocketting prices of vegetables, pulses, edible oils and all other essential commodities have become the hallmark of the failure and incompetence of the Vajpayee Government. Behind this failure lies the pro-trader bias of the BJP. It has allowed hoarders and profiteers to loot the people and reap profits. The scandal of the onion prices exemplifies this nexus between the BJP and the big traders. If there is one-single issue which has led to the massive erosion of the BJP support and credibility, it is the all-round price rise which has affected all sections of the people.

Faced with this dismal situation, the Vajpayee Government has, instead of taking corrective measures and retracing its economic policies, decided to brazen it out and go ahead with policies to appease international finance capital and multinational corporations. The decision to introduce the IRA Bill, the succumbing to pressures to amend the Indian Patents Act, the stepping up of the disinvestment in the profitable PSUs and closure of some PSU units; the new concessions given in the power and telecom sector to private companies and MNCs are all part of this shameful surrender.

The insurance sector has long been coveted by the foreign financial companies which want to capture the massive resources which are now being garnered by the LIC and the GIC. The myth is being propagated that opening up of the insurance sector will ~~lead to~~ big flow of funds into the country and this essential for ~~infra~~ ~~ture~~ development. Contrary to this, the actual fact is that foreign financial companies would like to exploit the resources

which can be raised through the insurance business and utilize it for their own interests and for repatriating profits abroad.

During the UF Government, the IRA Bill introduced only talked of opening up the health insurance sector as the first step and did not spell out the extent of foreign equity participation which was to be decided later on by the IRA. Even this bill failed to get through Parliament. Now, the Vajpayee Government has decided, contrary to their stand, that no foreign capital should be allowed in the insurance sector, to permit 40 per cent foreign equity in companies which can enter the insurance business. Such an open betrayal of its own commitment has led to protests from sections within the BJP and the RSS. Betrayal on the insurance issue actually stems from the fact that the Vajpayee Government has assured the United States in the secret talks between Jaswant Singh and Strobe Talbot to provide these concessions in return for some relaxation of sanctions.

The struggle to stop the liberalization of the financial sector and the opening up of insurance has a vital place in the overall struggle against the anti-national economic policies being pursued by the BJP-led Government. The CPI(M) and the Left parties should continue to mobilize all sections of the people so that public pressure is built up on the bourgeois parties, many of whom are not clear about the issue.

The other surrender by the Vajpayee Government is on the patents issue. As per the WTO guidelines India will have to amend its patent laws. After the signing of the Marrakesh Treaty, the Narasimha Rao Government had tried to amend the Indian Patents Act but failed to pass it through the Rajya Sabha. Now, the BJP which opposed the move is bringing legislation to allow exclusive marketing rights to foreign companies. Exclusive marketing rights would mean that any foreign company which goes through this route will be able to have a monopoly of the market if it holds a patent on the product in any other member country. The WTO treaty specifies that all members must have product patent regimes by 1.1.2005. But the government is in a hurry to introduce it immediately due to pressure of the foreign companies. The proposed change in the patent laws will have an adverse effect on agriculture and public health with steep rise in cost of medicines.

The hostility of the BJP to the public sector is well-known. From the days of the Jan Sangh, it has been for only the private sector and a market economy. The government has announced its decision to close eight public sector units which are running at a loss. Further, despite the depressed share market, the Finance Minister is determined to go ahead with the disinvestment of five profitable public sector undertakings. This hurry is due to the fact that proceeds from the sale of PSU shares are necessary for the government to fill some of the yawning gap in its budgetary deficit. The first round of disinvestment of profitable PSUs was done for the Container Corporation of India where shares have been sold for much below the present market value to foreign financial institutions and banks.

The twin attacks of disinvestment of the most profitable PSUs and outright closure of units must be resolutely opposed and fought back. The privatization drive is being conducted in other major sectors too. In the power sector, the government has announced measures to allow duty-free imports of power equipment for mega-power projects. This is meant to help the MNC power companies and will have very harmful consequences for the BHEL. In the telecom sector, the Telephone Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has proposed steep increase in the rental and telephone charges of ordinary telephone-subscribers which is a blatant move to help the private operators at the expense of ordinary subscribers and which will adversely affect the expansion of the telephone network in the country.

Surrender to US Pressures

After the Pokhran tests in May 1998, the Vajpayee Government has started secret negotiations with the United States. The talks between Jaswant Singh and Strobe Talbot which began in June has now completed seven rounds, most of them held in a clandestine fashion in third countries. Despite the systematic efforts at disinformation, it is becoming increasingly clear that the United States is exercising tremendous pressure on India which has become vulnerable after the international isolation it has suffered after the nuclear tests. Utilizing the weakened situation of both India and Pakistan, the United States has manoeuvred to place itself in the role of arbiter on the nuclear issue between India and

Pakistan. It is demanding that India sign the CTBT, join the FMCT negotiations and cap its fissile material production prior to that, exercise restraint by not deploying nuclear weapons, check its missile development programme, institute strict export control measures and conduct talks with Pakistan to resolve all outstanding issues particularly Kashmir.

India has been asking for lifting of the prohibition of dual-purpose technology and keeping a minimum nuclear deterrent in return for signing the CTBT. The United States is driving a hard bargain by demanding that India should inform them how many weapons it proposes to have and where it will keep them without actually deploying them as warheads on missiles.

The US has waived sanctions for one year but is implementing it in such a manner that India continues to be at a disadvantage. The US has withdrawn its opposition to Pakistan getting an IMF loan to bale it out of the economic crisis. Such a facility is not extended to India. Furthermore, the US has announced an "Entities list" by which over 200 institutions and companies in India have been put on the list prohibited from having economic and trade relations with US organizations. All this was done while the next round of Jaswant-Talbot talks were to be held in Rome. It is shameful that the US attack by targetting Indian companies/organizations in a prohibited list has met with no firm response from the BJP-led Government. Our Party should mobilize people against the US blackmail. Our Party had warned that the decision to weaponize after the Pokhran tests will subject India to imperialist pressures led by the USA. The economic sanctions is only one of the levers being used against India. We, in principle, oppose weaponization as it will impose an enormous burden on the people and fuel a nuclear arms race with Pakistan and spoil the prospects of peace and security in the region. The Vajpayee Government's stance of citing China as a security threat is being used by the USA to manoeuvre a deal which will go against the country's interests.

We cannot accept India becoming a signatory to the CTBT and at the same time the Vajpayee Government going in for a nuclear weapons stockpile. We should not sign the CTBT nor go for weaponization. This will preserve India's independent decision-

making capacity, while, at the same time, help it to strive actively for universal nuclear disarmament.

The Jaswant Singh-Strobe Talbot talks is a glaring example of how the Vajpayee Government has given up the basic orientation of India's foreign policy of non-alignment and its current pre-occupation is to become an acceptable junior partner of the US strategic designs in South Asia.

After much discussions, the Vajpayee Government has now announced the formation of a National Security Council. This NSC has as its National Security Adviser the Prime Minister's principal secretary, Brijesh Mishra. The composition of the NSC is designed to help the BJP Government's aggressive nuclear policy. The fact that the National Security Adviser is the PM's principal secretary shows that this structure will be outside the parliamentary system of governance. Our Party should demand that the National Security Council Apparatus should be within the cabinet system of governance. There has to be co-ordination with Parliament and it should be accountable.

Assembly Elections

We had stated that the assembly elections to the four states would have a direct bearing on the national political situation. This is because three states, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi going to the polls are strong bases of the BJP. In two of them, there were BJP Governments. A defeat for the BJP, in these elections, would affect their Central Government and its prospects. The results have shown a sweeping defeat for the BJP. It lost badly not only in Delhi and Rajasthan where it had incumbent governments but it failed to dislodge the Congress in Madhya Pradesh where it was expected to take advantage of the anti-incumbency factor. In Madhya Pradesh, the BJP had led in 222 assembly segments during the 1998 Lok Sabha Elections. But eight months later, it could manage to win in only 119 assembly seats. This can be directly attributed to the negative impact of the Vajpayee Government at the Centre.

That the BJP lost both in states which it ruled and where it was in the opposition constitutes a serious political defeat. It cannot hide behind the theory of anti-incumbency. The defeat resulted

from two major factors. Firstly, the severe price rise and the erosion in the living standards of the people resulting in a strong anti-BJP trend. Secondly, the BJP's intolerance and pursuit of its communal agenda alienated not only the minorities but other liberal-minded sections of the people who are concerned about national unity.

In Mizoram, the Congress lost the elections as the people were fed up with corruption of the Lalthanwala Government and the failure to deliver its promises to the people. The BJP was no factor in these elections and therefore, cannot claim any credit for the defeat of the Congress.

The results are an anti-BJP verdict. The people have voted determinedly to reject the BJP. Such a verdict cannot be seen as a positive preference for the Congress party and its policies. In these three states, as is well-known, the situation is polarized between the Congress and the BJP with no other parties of the third force having any effective electoral presence. In such a situation, the massive anti-BJP feeling got translated into victory for the Congress party, the only other credible force in the electoral arena. The Congress party will be mistaken if it interprets this verdict as an endorsement for the policies it has been pursuing when it was in Government at the Centre or when it was in state governments.

In fact, the results should lead the Congress to ponder over how the people are reacting adversely to the impact of the policies of liberalization which favour big business, big traders and the affluent sections and repeatedly voting out parties which implement these policies.

The Muslim minority and sections of the scheduled castes who had earlier deserted the Congress in these states have voted for the party in these elections. As far as the Muslim minorities are concerned, this is a continuation of the trend which has been developing of their going back to the Congress as it sees no other party capable of defeating the BJP in these states. Such a trend was seen in the Parliament elections too. The scheduled castes and other poorer sections have also voted for the Congress as life under the BJP rule had become intolerable for them. This itself indicates the need for fresh policies. However, there are no indications of the Congress leadership going in for such introspection.

The by-elections held in many states along with the three assembly elections also show disenchantment with the BJP Government's policies. That is why the Akalis lost the Adampur seat after having won it with a big majority earlier. In Bihar, the BJP-Samata combine failed to win a single seat out of the four seats which went to the polls. Three were won by the RJD and one by the CPI(M). In West Bengal, the CPI(M) won the three assembly seats and the Trinamul Congress lost ground both in the assembly elections and in the municipal elections. In the Howrah Municipal Corporation elections, the Left Front won 35 out of the 50 seats, retaining the majority and improving its tally by three seats over the last elections. This is a significant victory as Howrah is a major urban and industrial centre. In the other two municipal elections, the Congress retained Berhampore and in Krishnagar municipality no party or front got a clear majority.

The allies of the BJP were given a clear signal—association with the BJP is a liability for them. The same factors of economic performance and anti-secular measures are not acceptable to the people who follow these parties.

At the same time, there should be no tendency to write off the BJP as a major force. In Madhya Pradesh, for instance, the difference between the Congress and the BJP, in terms of votes polled, was less than 2 per cent. In the absence of any effective electoral third alternative, the BJP is capable of recovering ground in the future given its strong bases in these states.

The election results have enormously weakened the BJP-led Government at the Centre. Already, the coalition is under increasing stress and strains after the hostile position taken by Jayalalitha, the Biju Janata Dal has just managed to patch up its sharp division. The election results have starkly posed the question of the viability of the coalition and its political future. It is in this background that the general strike call on December 11 given by the National Platform of Mass Organizations took place.

December 11 Strike

The December 11 general strike called by the National Platform of Mass Organizations was a highly successful mass protest action.

The significance of the strike was also in the support that it got from sections of the people and political forces who normally do not participate in such working class-led actions. The sweep of the strike was not only due to the intensive preparations made by the trade unions, the mass organizations and the Party but also due to the widespread discontent and anger among the working class and other sections of the people who are suffering from the economic policies.

The strike was complete in the port & dock, insurance and the bulk of the banking sector. In West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura it assumed the form of a total bandh; Tamil Nadu also saw life come to a standstill. In Assam too, the strike was very successful. The main feature was the industrial strike by the workers in most states. Public sector units were on strike except in Bangalore where the strike was to be held on 14th December. State government employees went on strike in many states. In many places, rail-roko and rasta-roko were resorted to by peasants, agricultural workers, women, students and youth. A majority of the educational institutions were also closed on the day. In many places, workers belonging to the INTUC, BMS and other trade unions joined the strike action.

The strike was successful despite repression. In Haryana, the Bansilal Government used ESMA and arrested 42 leaders of the state government employees' organization. There were lathi-charges and arrests of picketting workers in some places in Andhra Pradesh, MP, Bihar and UP. In Parliament, over a hundred and twenty MPs held a dharna outside the House, before raising the matter in both Houses forcing adjournments of the session. After the Party Congress, the Party units have, by and large, moved everywhere to actively mobilize and support the strike call. The initiative taken by the Left has resulted in other secular bourgeois parties coming out in support of the strike. In Tamil Nadu, the DMK, TMC and Janata Dal joined the Left in support of the strike call. Even the AIADMK extended support. In Assam, the AGP supported the strike call. Even the allies of the BJP like AIADMK and the Biju Janata Dal supported the call. In Parliament, apart from the former constituents of the United Front, the RJD and the BSP also joined the dharna and protest within Parliament.

The Party Congress gave direction to develop mass movements and struggles with Left initiative as the way to advance the Left. A step towards translating this into practice was through the general strike call. As the Political Resolution stated: "The Left's emphasis on developing joint struggles and movements and drawing in the masses from all other parties should help the Left to widen its base and increase its strength and influence in the coming period."

The momentum created by the general strike must be carried forward. Struggles should be launched of different sections of the people on the major problems affecting them. The mass organizations should build up all India movements and struggles at different levels on the urgent problems affecting the people in their category. The focus should remain on the BJP Government's economic policies and the resistance to the attacks on the working people. The international developments with the global financial crisis have created an atmosphere where there is rethinking on the harmful policies imposed by the IMF-World Bank the world over. We should demand a review of the IMF-World Bank-dictated policies and for formulation of policies more in tune with the interests of the country and the working people.

Fluid Political Situation

Within the BJP-led coalition, the Trinamul Congress, Biju Janata Dal and the Samata are increasingly asserting positions to differentiate themselves from the BJP. The Akali Dal is also riven with differences. Weakened by the defeat in the assembly elections, the BJP has already had to retreat on the question of the Deputy Speakership of the Lok Sabha and agreed to the Congress nominee. The dissensions within the BJP itself are getting sharper.

In such a situation, a debate has begun within the BJP-RSS combine. A section is asserting the necessity to pursue a hard-line Hindutva policy to at least regain their old constituency. Our approach has to be to see that conflicts within the coalition widen by taking up such issues which put the BJP in the dock on communal issues. The aggressive moves of the Hindutva forces will lead to fertile ground for fundamentalist forces within the minority

community. Our campaign must address the minorities on this question and draw them into common democratic struggles.

As the recent experience of the 11th December strike has shown, it is possible to rally the non-BJP, non-Congress parties on joint platforms on specific issues. The efforts to reforging the third alternative should be taken up. This must be done by stepping up our efforts for united movements and joint platforms on various issues, while keeping in contact with all such parties and forces which can be brought together to constitute the third force.

In the coming days, we should focus on the issues which can help both to attack and isolate the BJP and also strengthen the process of bringing together the third force. Both the BJP and the Congress hope for a polarization between the two parties and prevent the emergence of the third alternative. But this will not be possible given the present correlation of forces all over the country. Hence, the efforts to reforge the third alternative must be given due importance.

Current Tasks

The 16th Party Congress Political Resolution had stressed the utmost importance of the struggle against the BJP-RSS combine and the communal forces. It had called upon the Party and the Left forces to take the lead in fighting the economic policies at the same time. The resolution had stated: "It is necessary to see the link between liberalization and the fight against the communal forces." With the BJP Government at the Centre, both aspects of this struggle have to be taken up. Following from this political line, we should go ahead with the following tasks:

1. Step up the mass struggles and joint movements against the BJP Government's economic policies, specifically, on the attacks on the public sector, closures and retrenchment; growing unemployment against opening up of the insurance sector; patent bill; and opening up to foreign agro-business.
2. Build movements against price rise, demand for dehoarding, checking profiteering and strengthening of the public distribution system with provision for supply of 14 essential commodities.

3. Fight the BJP-RSS-Shiv Sena attacks on minorities, efforts to foment tensions in religious places and the RSS penetration of educational and cultural institutions.
4. Mobilize popular opinion against the surrender to US pressures on signing the CTBT and to oppose the sanctions and other hostile measures taken by the US.
5. Take up issues concerning rights of women, social oppression, rights of dalits and problems of education and health facilities for the common people.
6. Support the efforts of mass organizations to take up the immediate issues/problems of the people and launch struggles at the local, state and national levels.

CPI(M)'s Greetings to Cuba on The 40th Anniversary of Cuban Revolution*

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) extends its warm revolutionary greetings to the Communist Party of Socialist Republic of Cuba, Comrade Fidel Castro and to the heroic people of Cuba on the 40th Anniversary of the victorious Cuban Revolution.

The Cuban Revolution has completed four decades of its glorious existence overcoming the most formidable obstacles created deliberately by US imperialism and the forces of world reaction. The Cuban people have fought against incredible odds and venal machinations of US imperialism with a commitment to socialism and determination to defend it, unprecedented in modern times.

On this occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, the CPI(M) salutes the heroic Cuban people for keeping alive the flame of freedom and liberation. It remains a source of inspiration for the progressive people the world over.

The Cuban Revolution has proved its strength and resilience during 1998 once again. Faced with an unprecedented drought, worst known since the Revolution, which caused all-round damage, the Cuban Government and the popular committees for the defence of the Revolution rose magnificently to ensure that scarce resources were distributed equitably. A drought of such dimension would have led to many starvation deaths anywhere else in the capitalist world. But not so in Cuba where the guiding force of the socialist system is the welfare of the human being.

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, January 3, 1999. This greetings was sent by the Central Committee of the CPI(M) during its session in New Delhi on December 15-16, 1998.

Worse still, before the problems caused by the drought could be overcome, Cuba was hit by Hurricane Georges, which led to devastating destruction. It is only a socialist system that could have undertaken such a massive rehabilitation of evacuating more than 7,00,000 people. As a result of which there was not a single case of injury, leave alone death of a child or adolescent or a young adult. What is more admirable is the fact that within a few weeks, the damages caused by the Hurricane to electric supply, roads, communications etc. were repaired. This, once again, shows the superiority of the socialist system, particularly when compared to woeful tragedies of the people in neighbouring Central America which were devastated by Hurricane Mitch.

1998 saw the strengthening of international solidarity with Cuba. This has reflected in the vote of the UN General Assembly where 157 countries voted in favour of Cuba against the inhuman US imperialist blockade. Only two countries (USA and Israel) voted against the resolution and 12 abstained. This is the seventh consecutive time that the UN has passed a resolution against the blockade. On each occasion, the number of supporters increased (In 1992, on the first occasion, the resolution received 59 votes in favour and in 1997, it received 143). The US imperialism, however, as is its character, refuses to accept the growing international public opinion against its policies.

The CPI(M) is heartened to note that despite this blockade, the trade and economic cooperation between Cuba and the world has constantly increased. It grew by 41 per cent between 1989 and 1996 with eleven Latin American neighbours. As a result of this and the unique diplomatic initiatives undertaken, Cuba has become the first Caribbean country to enter the Latin American integration association as the twelfth partner. With the economic turn-around that Cuba has achieved entirely through its own efforts, such international developments, we are confident, will further strengthen the process of economic prosperity in Cuba.

Of particular inspiration to the struggling people the world over, has been the decision of Cuba to totally cancel Nicaragua's outstanding debt amounting to 50.1 million dollars. This has come following the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch to the

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Central American countries. Cuba has appealed to the international community that the external debts of Nicaragua and Honduras, the worst affected countries, be cancelled. It must be borne in mind that the present Nicaraguan regime is not very friendly with Cuba. Despite this, the Cuban decision, despite the formidable economic problems that it faces, stands out as a noble example of humanism and internationalism.

The CPI(M) reiterates its unflinching solidarity with the people of Cuba who heroically defend socialism in their motherland. Cuba's struggle today is the symbol of humanity, is quest for emancipation from exploitation and sovereign right of every nation to choose and steer its own destiny.

CPI(M) on The Undemocratic Move of BJP Government on Vananchal Bill*

Statement Dated December 24, 1998 Issued by The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) is strongly opposed to the manner in which the bill to create a separate state of Vananchal was introduced in the Lok Sabha. The division of an existing state under the Indian Union is a serious matter and the BJP-led Government has shown contempt for the federal principle by the way the bill was undemocratically rushed through. The Bihar State Assembly to which the bill was referred, rejected the proposal for the division of Bihar. It is shocking that the BJP-led Government is pushing through a major Constitutional amendment bill for its narrow political interests against the wishes of the elected legislature of Bihar. It is unfortunate that some Left and democratic parties are willing to go along with this attack on the federal principle which portends a serious threat to the powers of the states. The CPI(M) calls upon the people of Bihar and all democratic minded sections in the country to protest the introduction of the bill in the Lok Sabha to divide Bihar.

CPI(M) on MP's Rs. 2 Crore Scheme*

**Statement Dated December 24, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The decision of the Vajpayee Government to double the constituency fund for Members of Parliament to Rs.2 crores per year is unwarranted. It perpetuates a scheme which goes contrary to the utilization of funds through a decentralized plan process from the state government, downwards to the panchayats. It is unfortunate that the minister concerned has described this as "The Prime Minister's new year gift to the people". The allotment of rupees two crores every year to be decided by an MP for projects in the constituency is viewed more as distribution of patronage.

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, January 3, 1999. Here Vajpayee Government means the Government of Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee.

CPI(M) Condemns The Attacks On Christian Institutions in Gujarat*

**Statement Dated December 28, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the fresh outbreak of violent attacks against Christian Missionary schools and churches in Gujarat. The worst affected is the Dangs district of South Gujarat where a series of attacks have taken place. Surat has also been rocked by such incidents.

Such systematic attacks are continuing despite assurances to the contrary given by Union ministers. The inability to rein in the culprits smacks of a connivance of both the state government and the Union Government in permitting if not encouraging such attacks. The strident stand by the VHP signals that the Saffron Brigade is gearing for more organized and premeditated violence against the minorities.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) demands of the BJP-led Government that it fulfill its responsibility of upholding the rule of law. The Union Home Minister who has gone on record stating that there is no law and order problem in Gujarat following the earlier round of violent incidents, should take cognizance of such violence being perpetrated against Christians on Christmas Day and take necessary action.

The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) appeals to the people of our country to rise together in defence of the secular democratic tenets of modern India and spurn the provocations of the saffron combine who are bent upon establishing a rabidly intolerant variant of a Hindu society.

On Dismissal of Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat*

**Statement Dated December 31, 1998 Issued by
The Polit Bureau of The CPI(M)**

The dismissal of the Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat, by the Central Government is an action which has caused serious apprehensions. It is a matter of grave concern that for the first time a serving Chief of Staff has been terminated from service. This is an unwarranted step which raises questions about the motives of the Vajpayee Government. The dispute about the appointment of the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff could have been resolved, if the political leadership in the government had taken the appropriate initiative. Already appointments in the armed forces have unfortunately become a matter of litigation in courts. Recently, the Delhi High Court struck down an appointment in the Army made by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.

While there can be no question about the supremacy of the civilian-political authority over the armed forces, it is important that the role of the service chiefs and the integrity of the command structure is not interfered with. The armed forces have a commendable record of staying aloof from the political sphere and maintaining neutrality. Nothing should be done to disturb the balance. It is strongly condemnable that communal allegations were made to tarnish the image of Admiral Bhagwat—an effort which should have been strongly rebuffed by the government; but it failed to act. Many former Chiefs of Staff have pointed out the harmful consequences of the drastic action. The Vajpayee Government must be held responsible for this unfortunate state of affairs.

‘Ganashakti’ : Thirty Years of Advance And Popular Support*

Harkishan Singh Surjeet

Ganashakti, which not only means but also symbolizes people's power, is now 30 years old, in its present form. However, it has a long and chequered history behind it.

Creditable Role Before 1947

The name *Ganashakti* has been known far and wide in Bengal since 1934 when a monthly of the same name made its appearance. As the students of our history know, this was a very tough and trying time for the Party. The Communist Party was still illegal and was bearing the brunt of British imperialist repression, though the prisoners of the Meerut ‘conspiracy’ case, launched by British to wipe out the party, had come out of prison and a full-fledged Central Committee had begun to function in an organized fashion. At that time, the *Ganashakti* not only propagated Marxism-Leninism, the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat but also gave a staunch fight to imperialist rule and contributed a lot in strengthening the movement for national liberation. It continued to play its creditable role during the 1940s as well when the party faced a most trying situation. In fact, the *Ganashakti* carried forward the glorious revolutionary traditions laid down by earlier

*Published in “PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY”, New Delhi, January 12, 1997. ‘Ganashakti’ was a Bengali monthly of the Communist Party of India since 1934 and its publication was suspended when Communist Party of India was banned several times during the British rule in India. After the split in the Communist movement in India when the Communist Party of India (Marxist) was formed in 1964, the West Bengal State Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) started publication of ‘Ganashakti’ as an Evening Daily from January 3, 1967 and it was converted into a Morning Daily from May 1, 1986.

Communist papers like *Inquilab* (Urdu), *Kirti* (Punjabi), *Thozhilali* (Tamil) and no less by *Langal* (Bengali) which was edited by the revolutionary poet, Qazi Nazrul Islam.

The *Ganashakti* continued to play its due role even when a serious inner-party struggle was raging within the united party. It continued to uphold the revolutionary tenets of Marxism-Leninism, against revisionism as well as dogmatism and sectarianism.

Solid Support from Masses

Shortly before the Tenali Convention (June 1964) when the Party had already split in effect, the *Ganashakti* was converted into a fortnightly in May 1964 and subsequently into a weekly. This speaks volumes about the paper's growing appeal to and popularity among the masses. In fact, the *Ganashakti* not only played a creditable role during the inner-party struggle, enlightening the Communist cadre and supporters on the real issues of this struggle but also highlighted the people's grievances and problems, exposed the administration's high-handed behaviour whenever it occurred, and opposed the oppression of the toiling masses at each and every juncture. This was the way it made itself a publication liked, admired and backed by the people.

This support and admiration received from the people, very soon led to the conversion of the *Ganashakti* into an Evening Daily, which started publication on January 3, 1967, i.e., on the eve of the fourth General Elections. Finally, in 1986, it was transformed into a Morning Daily—yet another instance of the popular backing enjoyed by the paper. Now, the circulation of the paper is in the vicinity of one and a half lakhs, while its special editions run into twice that figure or more.

Progress of Party

The progress of the *Ganashakti* daily runs parallel to the progress made by the Left and democratic forces in the state. In the fourth General Elections that took place in March 1967, the CPI(M) emerged as the biggest non-Congress party in West Bengal and secured 18 per cent of the popular votes, giving lie to the bourgeois propaganda that the 1964 split had considerably weakened, if not

altogether finished, the Marxist-Leninists. Then, the first United Front Government, of which the CPI(M) was the biggest constituent, was dismissed through the use of Article 356, as the Party's role in the government had begun to catch the imagination of the masses and galvanize them. This had frightened the bourgeois-landlord classes and their political representatives in the state and at the Centre.

However, when mid-term Assembly polls took place in February 1969, the Party increased its share of votes to 28 per cent; its seats in the House too more than doubled. But the ruling classes could not tolerate the second United Front Government either, and it too was dismissed. Then, in the 1971 Assembly polls, the Party secured about 35 per cent of votes, i.e., roughly double its share in 1967.

This growth of the Party frightened the ruling classes so much that in the following year, the Congress not only thoroughly rigged the elections but even instituted a semi-fascist terror regime which continued till 1977 when the first Left Front Government came to power. The story of this terror regime, intended to crush the Marxists for ever, is too well-known to need reiteration here.

Now, the CPI(M) alone commands about 46 per cent of the votes in the state and has a comfortable majority in the assembly, while its allies command another six per cent or so. Admirably, the Left Front of West Bengal has created a record of winning five assembly polls in a row, while Jyoti Basu has the distinction of being the longest serving Chief Minister in the country.

It goes to the credit of *Ganashakti* that it kept the banner of Communist journalism high even under the conditions of a brutal semi-fascist terror regime. Today, West Bengal is regarded as a strong bastion, an advanced outpost of Left and democratic forces in the country, and *Ganashakti* too proudly shares the credit for erecting, maintaining and defending this advanced outpost.

Demarcation from Bourgeois Press

A Communist paper, by its very definition, is quite distinct from the bourgeois Press. The former always aims and strives to defend the interests of the working class, peasants and agricultural workers, middle class employees and other toiling sections, as against the

interests of the bourgeois and landlord classes. Also, while a number of bourgeois papers are overtly or covertly attempting to further the interests of imperialist powers, a Communist paper always exposes the obnoxious designs and conspiracies of imperialism which has been a target of attack of the Communist movement from the very beginning. . . .

Moreover, as enjoined upon us by the great Lenin, a Party paper constantly endeavours to educate the cadre as well as the masses at every juncture of the movement, and intends to serve as the rallying point for the entire party.

In this regard, Communist journalists can learn a lot from papers like *Iskra* and *Pravda* which, under the guidance of Lenin, set a new tradition in journalism. These papers not only gave a fitting rebuff to the right-wing offensive against the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party but also ably defended the basic tenets of Marxism at a time when the Party had had to function underground, under the conditions of illegality and czarist oppression.

Development of the Communist Press all over the world has followed a more or less similar pattern. In the beginning, when the Party consists of only small groups, more emphasis is laid on ideological propaganda and education. But with the growth of the Party, when it becomes a mass force, capable of influencing the whole of society, day-to-day problems of agitation come to the fore and demand attention, while at the same time, utmost care has to be taken about correctly applying the tenets of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of one's country.

What Lenin Enjoined

It was, in such a context, that Lenin, in the Draft Declaration of *Iskra* and *Zarya* (*Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p.326), enjoined on the comrades “*to combine all the concrete facts and manifestations of the working class movement with the indicated questions; the light of theory must be cast upon every separate fact; propaganda on questions of politics and party organization must be carried on among the broad masses of the working class; and these questions must be dealt with in the work of agitation..... We must try to create a higher form of agitation by means of the newspaper, which must*

contain a regular record of workers' grievances, workers' strikes, and other forms of proletarian struggle as well as all manifestations of political tyranny in the whole of Russia; which must draw definite conclusions from each of these manifestations in accordance with the ultimate aim of socialism and the political tasks of the Russian proletariat.

However, while containing all manifestations of struggle, such an organ must have "*an independent and quite definite tendency*".

In the Leninist conception, a Party paper has three distinct but inter-related tasks before it:

First, it has to project the viewpoint of the working class on various international and national issues, and educate the cadre as well as masses about them, while keeping the interests of class struggle in mind.

Second, it has to give a running battle to the bourgeois ideological offensive and other alien influences that seek to mislead the masses into wrong directions and divert their attention from the real issues. In today's India, this has assumed all the more importance when foreign media are penetrating the country and striving to foster a degenerate culture among the younger generations in particular.

Finally, a Communist paper has to intervene, from the Marxist-Leninist standpoint, in the developing situation on behalf of the toiling masses, in order to develop vigorous mass movements and struggles, strengthen the Left and democratic forces, and change the correlation of class forces in favour of people's democracy and socialism.

Our Present Context

These tasks of a Communist paper acquire added urgency in our context when a very complex situation faces our country. In the immediate context, the main fight is against communal forces which are striving hard to take over the reins of power, and it is, in order to ward off this danger, that we are supporting the United Front Government at the Centre from outside. However, in West Bengal, the situation is rather different and here the main attack is to be directed against the Congress party. Here the endeavour of the Congress (I) and its backers in the bourgeois Press is to perpetuate

the currently obtaining division of the masses between the CPI(M) and the Left Front on the one hand and the Congress party on the other. While a Party paper has to properly interlink the struggle against the Congress(I) as well as that against the BJP, it also has to strive to demolish the said division, win over as many sections as possible and bring them to the fold of the Left and democratic forces. A very heavy responsibility devolves upon the *Ganashakti* which has to help the Party and the mass movements led by it to overcome this division.

In this context, something can definitely be learnt from the experience of Kerala which has formulated a People's Plan which is attracting various sections of the people with varying political affiliations or no affiliation.

In fact, even today, the *Ganashakti* is doing a lot in this regard. Its pages cover all aspects of life—economy, politics, culture, sports, social issues and so on. It should also see that its coverage is further expanded as much as possible, no event of importance is left out, while the headlines of the news items reflect our approach. Its editorials and articles do reflect substantial improvement over the years, and have earned people's admiration. It is not without reason that, beginning from a small place in Alimuddin Street, it has not only got its own building but also a modern press with all up-to-date machinery and facilities for news coverage and transmission. But the most important thing is that the paper is ably combating the misrepresentations and distortions being carried out by bourgeois newspapers appearing from Calcutta and other places in the state. Yet, as regards further expansion of coverage, enhancement of influence over the masses, winning them over to the side of the Left and democratic forces, and becoming their very own paper is concerned, there are still immense possibilities before the Party and the *Ganashakti*, and no stone should be left unturned to exploit these possibilities.

Joint Statement of CPI(M), CPI, Samajwadi Party and Janata Dal on United Electoral Fight in Punjab*

Statement Issued on January 13, 1997

Harkishan Singh Surjeet, General Secretary of CPI(M); A. B. Bardhan, General Secretary of CPI; Sharad Yadav, Working President of Janata Dal and Mulayam Singh Yadav, President of Samajwadi Party issued the following statement on January 13, 1997 on the election strategy of UF partners in Punjab:

Our four parties met yesterday (January 12) and discussed the electoral strategy to be adopted in Punjab in General Elections to the Vidhan Sabha. In view of the serious danger of communal forces of BJP-Akali Dal alliance and the loss of credibility of the Congress, we have decided that our parties will have no alliance with any party and combination there and will unitedly fight to strengthen the Left, democratic and secular forces. We appeal to the electorate of Punjab to support the candidates sponsored by our parties so that peace is maintained in Punjab and unity of the Punjabi people is strengthened to carry forward the glorious traditions of the freedom movement in which Punjab played an important role.

Harkishan Singh Surjeet's Letter to Prakash Singh Badal, President of Akali Dal, on Punjab Situation*

[Harkishan Singh Surjeet, General Secretary of the CPI(M) had written the following open letter to the Akali Dal President Prakash Singh Badal.]

Dear Prakash Singh Badalji,

Punjab can take pride for having been in the forefront of the freedom struggle. The Ghadr martyrs, the Jalianwalla Bagh massacre, Bhagat Singh and his colleagues, Babbar Akalis and the Akali movement—all were part of this heroic struggle. Though most of these heroes and martyrs were Sikhs, they became symbols of the unity of the Punjabi people irrespective of their faith. Most of the Akali leaders at that time had joined the Congress party and the then illegal Communist Party and contributed their mite to the movement for national independence. It is unfortunate that today most of those who had participated in the Akali movement or witnessed its activities in those days are now no more.

Those were the days when the British imperialists were making use of communal feelings to divide and disrupt the national movement, and the Akalis played an important role in defeating this game. I can cite two instances which are of historic importance. Baba Bhagwan Singh Canadian with 24 of his colleagues came to India in 1925 and made extreme sacrifices in the Akali movement. By the time he landed at Budge Budge, the Akali morcha had achieved victory. The British, at that time, were trying to inflame communal feelings among the Hindus and Muslims. He, along with his whole jatha, took a vow and toured from Howrah to Peshawar

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to warn the people against this danger, to preach communal peace and to raise high the banner of nationalism in order to fight the British imperialists and defeat their game. The second instance I would like to cite belongs to 1930 when the British launched an attack in the Kissa Khani Bazaar of Peshawar and killed many soldiers. At that time Master Tara Singh took a jatha of 100 Akalis in support of the people. The British consistently tried to create a wedge between different communities, but the Akali leaders who had joined the national mainstream fought against all such attempts.

After independence, however, there took place a reversal and the basic values which the Akali Dal had stood for in the days of the struggle against imperialism, suffered an erosion. The Akalis too started to indulge in communal politics leading to an erosion in their feelings of national pride, which to an extent, resulted in isolating the Sikh community from the national mainstream.

Drastic changes have taken place since the time when the Akalis stood as symbols of and championed national unity. This, however, is not to imply that no injustice has been done by the Central Government either to the Akali Party or to Punjab as a whole. But the method to fight against such injustice is not to get alienated from, but to integrate with the democratic-minded people and the forces which stand for secularism, national unity and in defence of independence.

You may be aware that the impact of secular feelings was very strong in Punjab up to 1946 and the Muslim League could not create its base in the state. It was the Unionist party (though representing feudal interests) which then ruled the state and whenever certain issues of conflict between different communities arose they were sought to be resolved peacefully. This does not mean that we should ignore their pro-imperialist role; they did back the imperialists till the end. But from 1946 onwards, first the entry of the League into the state on the one hand, and later the communalization of politics among the Hindus and Sikhs, cost Punjab heavily. Partition resulted in a total migration of Sikhs and Hindus from the areas of Western Punjab, and migration of millions of Muslims from East to West Punjab, accompanied by large-scale riots, killings of innocent people, arson and destruction and

molestation of women. This naturally poisoned the minds of both people who began to hate those from another community. There were left only a handful to raise the flag of secularism and human values.

You might not be ignorant of the fact that in those days it was the Communists who, on both sides of the border, worked to save the minorities even at the cost of their own lives. This, however, could not stop the erosion of the values of secularism and patriotism and thus the earlier divide between the Hindus and Sikhs on the one hand and the Muslims on the other, came to be replaced by a Hindu-Sikh divide in Eastern Punjab.

Hindus, fearing linguistic reorganization, did not own up to their own language from the 1951 census onwards. And the political scenario changed with the Akalis raising the slogan of a Sikh State, ignoring the old heritage which our great heroes had cherished. In this respect, one cannot ignore the role the Congress party ruling at the centre played in aggravating the situation. This resulted in further communalization of the situation from the early seventies onwards when the Central Government subverted the democratic process when they did not allow the Akalis to continue in power.

The Hindu-Sikh divide has cast its influence on elections as well. If one reviews the election results from 1952 onwards, it becomes clear that as against the Akalis, Hindus rallied behind the Congress. It was only when the Akalis struck a compromise with the Congress that the Hindus voted for the Jan Sangh. In this process, the Left and democratic forces got comparatively marginalized in spite of their earlier glorious contribution to the freedom movement and in defence of the interests of the working class, peasantry and other toiling sections.

The Anandpur Sahib resolution of 1973, advocating a separate Sikh State, marked the culmination of this path. The resolution adopted the philosophy advocated by a retired IAS officer, late Sardar Kapoor Singh. Even so the Akalis put up a heroic resistance to the Emergency and in the 1977 elections emerged as a major political force, defeating the Congress. It was during this period that, after a prolonged interaction, the present version of the Anandpur Sahib resolution, which tries to provide a democratic cover to the Akali politics, came into existence.

Sometimes many people have reproached me for my connections with the Akalis. The fact is that I have tried to do my utmost to see that the Akalis do not give up the traditions of their movement, and to stop them from falling victim to communal politics instead of taking up the demands of the whole state. You will recall that you yourself, Tohra, Talawandi and myself had met before the 1978 Akali Conference. During the course of that meeting I impressed upon you the necessity to modify and bring the Anandpur Sahib resolution within the framework of Indian unity, with the thrust on restructuring of Centre-state relations, giving more autonomy to the states. You will also remember that, at that time you had demarcated yourself from the politics of Bhindranwale. It goes to the credit of J.S. Talawandi that later he asked Bhindranwale to leave the stage when he started making a speech contrary to the platform of the Akalis.

This situation, however, was short-lived. As soon as the Congress got power in Punjab in 1980 the Akalis began to backtrack. A long charter of demands was drafted. Again I met you and Sant Harchand Singh Longowal at Jallandhar and reasoned that this could lead to isolation of the Sikhs. Ultimately, ten demands were worked out that became the basis for the Akalis' struggle. It was, then, the Government of India that backtracked on the issue and failed to live up to its commitments, despite the several meetings (including the tripartite ones) that were held and the near agreements that were arrived at. All along, all the major opposition parties, with the sole exception of the BJP, had been supporting your demands. You are also aware that an agreement was arrived at, in which myself and Sardar Swaran Singh were involved. But the government backed out again on some plea.

I would like to cite another instance. At the residence of P.C. Alexander, the then Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, an understanding with the government was arrived at and an aircraft was kept ready to take you to Amritsar. But before putting your signatures you thought it proper to consult me. Apart from Balwant Singh and yourself, Ravi Inder Singh and Amrinder Singh from your side and R. Venkataraman, former President and then a Union Minister and P.C. Alexander were present from the government side. All of them were taken aback when I walked in.

I took Venkataraman aside and told him that if pursued, this would have serious repercussions because this did not meet the general demands of the Punjabi people. Then you followed me to my house where you said that "We are thankful to you for saving us". I knew that you were being forced to agree to that position. And then, finally, the plane did not take off. But on all occasions we stood firmly with you in your fight for the just demands, both inside and outside Parliament and cornered the government on the issue. Unfortunately, the support that you were able to rally, could not be maintained.

Subsequently, with the rise of Bhindranwale, things passed out of your hands into the hands of the extremists. However, even then the demarcation between Sant Harchand Singh Longowal and Bhindranwale remained. Fundamentalism and terrorism arose and the Pakistani rulers backed by US imperialism began to make full use of the situation. I again warned that the Central Government, instead of finding a solution, was trying to blame the Akalis by putting the onus on them, which would lead to an isolation of the Sikhs from the rest of the people. Then the tragic incident of Operation Blue Star outraged the Sikh masses, and Pakistan started directly instigating trouble.

Despite all this, when the Rajiv-Longowal accord was arrived at, people responded to it overwhelmingly. The people wanted peace and did not want to fall prey to the game of the Pakistani rulers. In the immediate aftermath of the signing of the accord, you were vacillating and did not appreciate its positive aspects. It was only after the people delivered their verdict that you recognized the importance of the accord. But with Barnala assuming Chief Ministership, factional quarrels started amongst the Akalis, finally leading to a parting of the ways. Subsequently, terrorism and extremism gained the upper hand, with many Akalis openly supporting them. It is very unfortunate that while you did not approve of these activities, you still did not pick up the courage to oppose them. You are also aware that our Party took a firm position—while on the one hand we exposed the government's position, on the other we were fighting against the extremists.

The sufferings that the people of Punjab have had to undergo were also partly due to your vacillations. While you did not hesitate

to attend the Bhog ceremonies of the extremists whose hands were soaked in the blood of the innocent, you did not pick up the courage to go to a single place to express your sympathy with the innocent who were killed at the hands of the extremists.

No doubt the people are fed up with the misrule of the Congress party, the rampant corruption in the administration, the erosion of moral values and the virtual collapse of the administrative machinery. But the people who have lost more than 25,000 of their sons and daughters, desire peace. They do not want this to be disrupted, and whatever efforts you make, you will not be able to replace the Congress unless and until communal politics are given up.

On many occasions you have made declarations about the Akali Party opening its doors to the people from other religious faiths. But these declarations have remained on paper. In reality, you have evolved a theory that in the state of Punjab you can come to power only in cooperation with the BJP. Communal politics has overpowered you so much that you erroneously think in terms of the Akalis representing the Sikhs, and BJP the Hindus, and that the coming together of these forces can defeat the Congress. This is a mistaken understanding. A party based on religion and a party which mixes religion with politics can only play a disruptive role. This is not in tune with the democratic aspirations of the people. How do you reconcile yourself with the stand of the SGPC towards the BJP?

The White Paper recently issued by the SGPC, with the introduction by its president Gurdarshan Singh Tohra, knocks the bottom out of your theory. Analyzing the role of the Hindu communal organizations it states:

“The militant Hindu organizations like the BJP, RSS, VHP, Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal, etc., argue that ‘Hindutva’ alone can be the basis of India’s unity. This combine claims that Hinduism is the other face of Indian nationalism. They also assert that Hinduism is not a religion, but a way of life. The erstwhile RSS chief Golwalker sought to unify the heterogeneous and diverse people of the country by projecting ‘Hindutva’ as the only way to maintain unity. In his book, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, Golwalker says that the

Hindu nation is one where 'all those not belonging to the nation, i.e., Hindu race, religion, culture and language, naturally fall out of the pale of real national life. The foreign races in Hindustan must either adopt Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence the Hindu religion, must entertain no idea except the glorification of the Hindu religion and culture, i.e., the Hindu nation, and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race or they may stay in the country wholly subordinate to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizens' rights. "This is the definition of nation based on 'Hindutva'. The theoretical and intellectual exercises of their leaders and the practical slogans given to their followers have brought out the diabolical nature of their campaign. The slogans given at the grass-roots and poisonous communal propaganda have created a deep sense of insecurity among the minorities."

After this assessment, one fails to understand for what reason the Akali Party has entered into an alliance and brought about an unprincipled combination with the BJP, if not for sheer opportunistic purposes. Otherwise too, on most of the issues concerning Punjab, where does the BJP stand vis-a-vis the stand of the Akali Party? Whereas the Akali Dal demands more autonomy for the states and a restructuring of Centre-state relations to further strengthen the federal structure, the BJP is opposed to the concept. The BJP denies the very fact that India consists of various nationalities. The BJP advocates the formation of smaller states, merely for administrative purposes, but not on the linguistic principle for which the people of the country fought.

Even on the demands of the Punjab State, what is the stand of the BJP? Does the BJP support the Rajiv-Longwal Accord? Does it subscribe to Chandigarh being handed over to Punjab and bringing about a satisfactory solution to the water dispute? Will it accept the inclusion in Punjab of the Punjabi-speaking areas that were left out of the state when it was formed, due to the distorted census enumeration of 1961 when the Hindus were asked to mention Hindi instead of Punjabi as their language? Chandigarh, everyone knows, was built after vacating purely Punjabi-speaking villages.

What does the BJP advocate? What has been the attitude of the BJP towards the 10 demands of the Akali Party which had launched a morcha for them? It was the Left and democratic forces in the country which have been supporting these legitimate demands of the Punjabi people. This does not imply that any injustice should be done to the adjoining state. But, while reorganizing the states, a lot of injustice was done to Punjab, which should be undone now. This, as is known, has been one of the sources of trouble in Punjab.

The present alliance with the BJP shows that the Akali Party does not adhere to any principles. Its only aim seems to be to secure power. Towards this end it is ready to seek the cooperation of whosoever is ready to help it. During the parliamentary elections, due to the stiff opposition from within the Akali ranks and a section of the leadership, you could not join hands with the BJP. Moreover, you were also aware that the BJP would not bring you sufficient votes, and therefore you chose to go with the BSP. This marriage of convenience, however, did not last long and within a few months both the BSP and you came to loggerheads.

Under your leadership, the sole aim of the Akali Party seems to be to saddle itself in power, even if it means sacrificing the principles for which the Akali Party has stood so far. The BJP, which has been vehemently opposing the Akalis so far, has also done a somersault and allied with you to share power. Both of you have only one thing in common—the communal appeal. But this too entails clashes. Their and your philosophies both knock the bottom out of each other. It is due to this that you have not succeeded in uniting all the Akali forces which once had come under the banner of the Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar). Whatever may be the outcome of the elections, with the present stand and the politics that you are pursuing, stability will stay away from Punjab. Also, the potential for development of agriculture and industry which is immense in Punjab will remain unutilized, with the problem of unemployment and poverty continuing to haunt the people of the state.

Therefore, I would appeal to you, if you have the interests of Punjab at heart, to give up the communal politics that you have been pursuing, separate religion from politics and go back to the old traditions of the Akali Party, which was part of the national

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movement. Such a stand will strengthen the Akali Party and enable you to contribute more to the well-being of the state. People of the state are realizing the futility of Akali politics. They had to suffer a lot due to the moral support given by the Akalis to the extremists who tried to disrupt the unity of the Punjabi people. That is why people of the state give the utmost priority to the maintenance of peace in the state. They would not like any government to come into existence which would disrupt peace. The euphoria which the Akalis feel now, as though they are on the verge of victory, will not last long. When the people react to it, you will realize that the path which you have chosen is a futile one and has nothing to do with the traditions of the Akali Party or the interests of the Punjabis.

Joint Letter Sent by Leaders of Left Parties to H.D. Deve Gowda, Prime Minister of India, for Honouring The Promises of Common Minimum Programme*

We are writing to you on behalf of the Left parties on certain policy matters and issues of public interest on which we would like you to consider our views.

1. The institution of the Lokpal was a commitment made in the Common Minimum Programme of the United Front with a view to curbing corruption in high places. However, the Lokpal Bill which has been introduced in Parliament and which is now being examined by the Standing Committee for Home is a highly defective and misguided piece of legislation. The provisions of this Bill, instead of curbing corruption and bringing to book those guilty, will help in protecting any person holding public office who has indulged in corrupt practices. Since it is not just one or two provisions of the Bill which are objectionable, we would suggest that the whole Bill be redrafted after a proper discussion on the scope and intent of the legislation.
2. It is reported that the government is proposing to introduce a Constitutional Amendment Bill on the question of the appointment of judges in order to restore the position prior to 1993 where the executive would make the appointment in consultation with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The issue is being posed as to who is the appointing authority—the executive or the judiciary? In the light of the vital importance of the judiciary and the necessity to safeguard its independence and credibility, we would like to

*Joint letter dated March 16, 1997. Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, March 23, 1997.

record our disagreement with the proposed amendment. What is required is an independent Judicial Commission which will be norms. Such a commission should consist of reputed jurists and other representatives to give it an independent character. Such a proposal has already been made by the representatives of the bar and other legal associations.

3. There is talk of measures being taken to validate the arbitrary use of powers by the former Minister of Petroleum on the allotment of petrol pumps and gas agencies. This is a matter which is already before the courts. Hence it will not be proper to initiate any action which will be legitimizing the arbitrary misuse of official powers. It would be pertinent to remember that the CMP has stated: "Discretionary quotas, hitherto enjoyed by ministers, will be abolished."
4. The Left parties are extremely concerned about the Bill introduced in Parliament for amendment of the Electricity Act to enable private sector entry into transmission of power. As per the Bill each state can give licences to private companies for transmission of power within the state and the Centre will give licences for inter-state transmission. It is totally irrational to encourage multiplicity of agencies for transmission of power and separate generation from transmission. This will introduce anarchy and disfunctioning in the power grid system. The crisis in the power sector will further aggravate matters, with damaging consequences for balanced distribution of power and at the cost of increased power tariffs for the consumers. The Left parties strongly urge the government not to proceed with this legislation and allow a proper discussion on the implications of this move for the power sector and the economy.
5. The Left parties wish to record their dismay at the continuing delay in the passing of the Bill for reservation for women. This is a commitment made by all major national political parties during the last elections. It is the bounden duty of the United Front Government to move for the adoption of the Bill in the budget session of Parliament itself.

6. Another commitment made in the CMP is with regard to the central legislation for agricultural workers. The Left parties attach great importance to this law as it will benefit the worst-affected sections of the rural poor. The government should bring this Bill in Parliament without further delay.

We are raising the above issues with the understanding that the UF Government must act on these matters with policies which are in consonance with the people's interests and fulfil the commitments made in the Common Minimum Programme.

[The signatories to the letter are CPI(M) General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet, CPI General Secretary A.B. Bardhan, Forward Bloc General Secretary Chitta Basu, and RSP's Secretariat member Sushil Bhattacharjee.]

Twenty Years of Left Front Government in West Bengal*

Harkishan Singh Surjeet

The Left Front Government of West Bengal will be completing 20 years in office on June 21, 1997. This is a record in itself. On this historic occasion, we remember with pride the glorious sacrifices made by the people of West Bengal. It is the faith and trust bestowed by the people on the Left Front and its major constituent, the CPI(M), that has made all this possible. It is an occasion for us to recall the political developments that finally culminated in the formation of the Left Front, the achievements of the LF Government, and also its limitations.

Many people abroad consider this to be a wonder—a state government of the Left parties being in power uninterruptedly for 20 long years, even while working within a bourgeois-landlord social order. Even while appreciating this fact, people abroad fail to comprehend the limitations under which this government functions, and the progressive role it plays by influencing the political scene in the country.

Here, a fact that has to be emphasized again and again is that this is not an ideal Communist or socialist government which would be implementing the basic policies and programme of the Communist Party or the Left parties. As stated earlier, it is a government working within the bourgeois-landlord order. This implies that it has to function within the constraints of the Indian Constitution. This naturally imposes severe limitations on it. In the federal set-up in India, there is not much decentralization of

powers, with most of the powers concentrated in the hands of the Central Government. Apart from other powers like control over the armed forces, para-military forces, finance, communications, etc., the state governments are virtually at the mercy of the party that rules at the Centre, thanks to certain provisions in the Constitution. Article 356 of the Indian Constitution is one of the most misused ones, using which many state governments have been dismissed. Moreover, it is up to the Centre to decide what ratio or share of the taxes and duties it levies, it would give to the states.

It is within these constraints and limitations that the Left Front Government, or any state government for that matter, functions. Yet even while working within these limitations, the Left Front Government in West Bengal has commendable achievements to its credit. People in the country see in the West Bengal Left Front Government an alternative to the course pursued by other political parties and formations of the bourgeois-landlord classes.

As Communists, we know that the exploiting classes, in this context the bourgeois-landlord classes, do not surrender power voluntarily, even if it be the will of the people. They utilize all resources at their command to perpetuate their class rule.

In India, in the very first general elections after independence, i.e., in 1952, when the Communists and their allies were in a position to come to power in the then composite state of Madras, they were prevented from doing so. In the 1957 elections, the first after the state of Kerala was formed, the Communist party got on its own a majority in the assembly. This was the first ever breach in the monopoly of power of the Congress party. But that government was allowed to continue only as long as it did not threaten the class interests of the bourgeois-landlord classes. The EMS Namboodiripad Ministry was dismissed, misusing Article 356, once it started enacting legislations for land reforms, reforms in the education system, and tried to bring in other progressive measures.

Background: Terror Regime

In the 1967 elections, in a major reversal for the ruling Congress party, eight states returned non-Congress Governments.

Whereas in West Bengal the United Front came to power, in Kerala the CPI(M) again came to head a government. The UF Ministry in West Bengal adopted various progressive measures, basing itself on an 18-point programme. It put a stop to police intervention in favour of the management and owners in case of industrial disputes, thereby restoring some basic trade union rights. In agriculture, the basic rights of the sharecroppers to a share of the produce of the land they till was ensured. Both these measures of the United Front Government militated against the class interests of the bourgeois-landlord classes. Its representative, the Congress party, which was ruling at the Centre, raised a hue and cry that law and order had broken down in West Bengal, in order to create conditions for the dismissal of the government.

When, finally, that government was dismissed on November 21, 1967, a reign of terror was let loose against us. Over 6000 people were arrested and 12 were shot dead by the police. Thousands of men and women were mercilessly beaten up by the police. However, when elections were held in 1969 again, the Communists and Left parties got a much wider support. The CPI(M) increased its support base from 18 to 28 per cent. But soon the second United Front Government was also dismissed.

In the 1971 assembly elections, the Communists further increased their votes to 35 per cent. However, the Congress which came to power in 1972 elections through rigging, unleashed a reign of semi-fascist terror against the CPI(M). Some 1,200 of its leaders and cadres were martyred at the hands of the police and Congress goons. Over and above this, more than 20,000 families had to leave their hearth and home and move to safer places.

This naked white terror continued till 1977. By this time an authoritarian system of governance under the Congress party had come into being at the Centre also, with the internal Emergency promulgated in June 1975. But the backlash against the Emergency was so powerful that in the 1977 elections the Congress was wiped out in the whole of northern India and had to face severe drubbing in other parts of the country. For the first time, it lost power at the

Centre. These elections saw different political parties and combinations coming to power at the Centre and in different states. The Congress Party has faced decline after decline since then; today it has only 143 members in the Lok Sabha out of 545, and has governments in only six out of 25 states.

It was in this background that the 1977 elections to the West Bengal Assembly saw the Communist Party of India (Marxist) led Left Front sweeping into power with a massive majority. There has been no looking back since then. In election after election, the Party and the Left Front have won and increased their tally of seats. Today the CPI(M), on its own, commands an absolute majority in the West Bengal Assembly. However, the Congress still commands big influence in the state, with as much as 40 per cent of the votes.

Serious Limitations, Solid Achievements

It is 20 years since the first Left Front Ministry was sworn into office. It has ruled all these long years uninterruptedly. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, with a crisis engulfing the political scenario, splits took place within the ruling class and its parties. This provided enough manoeuvrability to the Left. Secondly, the influence and strength of the Left has increased considerably. This is on account of the service rendered by the Left Front Government to the people of the state, through measures aimed at improving the lot of the working class, peasantry, employees and other sections of the toiling people. This, however, is not to indicate that the Left Front has been able to meet all the aspirations of the people and fully satisfy their urges. Within the limited powers of the state, the government has tried its best to do whatever is possible. Neither the Party nor the Left Front is satisfied with what has been done.

Much more could have been possible had it not been for the discriminatory attitude of the Centre. Though the Centre stopped direct intervention in the 1980s and would not resort to dismissing the government, it used other powers at its disposal to discriminate against the government. The Centre starved the state of funds; it did not grant permission to set up major industries in the state and employed such other measures to stifle the economic growth of

the state. Legislations passed by the assembly were denied Presidential assent for years together.

It was in the course of fighting against these odds, waging a day-to-day struggle for its existence and growth that the Left Front endeared itself to the people. It can be take pride for providing stable governance for the last 20 years, taking out West Bengal from the morass of political instability. It enacted land reforms ensuring right of ownership to the tenants, updating land records and protecting the rights of the sharecroppers. It is owing to these land reforms, along with the provision of increased irrigation facilities and agricultural inputs, that West Bengal made tremendous progress on the food output front. It ensured democratic rights to trade unions. The police is now no more sent to crush the workers during the times of industrial disputes and strikes. Simultaneously, measures were undertaken to decentralize the administration and strengthen grass-roots level institutions. Elections to the panchayats, block samitis, zilla parishads, etc, are held regularly and they have been given more powers. For the first time in the country, education was made free up to Class XII. Examinations are held regularly in contrast to the chaos that reigned the campuses earlier. Nearly 80 per cent of rural population has been covered under the drinking water scheme.

Had it not been for the discriminatory attitude of the Centre for all these years, the Left Front Government could have no doubt, provided much more relief to the people and improved their living conditions still further. Today, it is only providing whatever relief is possible within the limitations that it finds itself in. A democratic restructuring of the Centre-state relations, with more powers to the states, is what is required to enable the state governments to meet the people's aspirations. This struggle is still on and the installation of the United Front Government at the Centre, in which many regional parties are partners, has kindled hopes in this regard.

The Left Front has also been able to maintain communal peace and harmony in the state. It stands as a shining example in this respect, even while the situation in other parts of the country,

especially the north, is very dangerous. Communal and fundamentalist forces have been kept at bay and their activities curbed.

Impact on National Political Scene

The existence of the Left Front Government in West Bengal has tremendously influenced the political situation in the country. The CPI(M) and the Left are no more regarded as outcasts. Their growing influence has forced the parties of the bourgeois-landlord ruling classes to treat them with respect. This is also owing to the realities of the Indian political situation where the support of the Left is needed not only in numerical terms but also from a moral point of view—to instil confidence among the people, who have high regard for the Left. This owes to the uncompromising struggle of the Left and its consistent stand on various issues—economic, political and social. The Left Front Government's completion of 20 years in office has heightened the prestige of the CPI(M), and the Left as a whole, in the country. The political scene of the country has undergone a sea of change in these 20 years and the voice and opinion of the Left counts. This is a contribution made by the existence of the Left Front Governments of West Bengal and Tripura as well as the Left and Democratic Front Government in Kerala.

This achievement is the result of consistent struggles of the working class, peasantry, students, youth and women for an improvement of their lot, which has led to the emergence of powerful organizations of workers, peasants and other sections of the toiling people. It is not accidental that today every third adult in rural West Bengal is a member of the Kishan Sabha. Their class battles, combined with the ideological struggle carried on by the Party and the Left Front partners, has resulted in rallying vast sections of the people. So in developing the revolutionary movement we have to combine both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities without which a radical change in the correlation of forces cannot be brought about. This is vindicated by the experience of West Bengal.

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On this occasion, we send our greetings to the West Bengal State Committee of the CPI(M), to the Left Front Committee, and the people of West Bengal. We wish them all success and more achievements in the coming days.

Manifesto of The Left Parties for Lok Sabha Elections 1998*

INTRODUCTION

The people of India are, once again, called upon to elect a new Lok Sabha. This mid-term poll has been forced upon the country because of the unreasonable and senseless decision of the Congress to withdraw support to the United Front Government.

We are currently observing the 50th Anniversary of India's Independence. At this juncture, the people have to decide how to strengthen the Republic and its secular-democratic basis which can meet the aspirations of all citizens.

The Indian Republic is facing a major challenge to its secular-democratic foundations. The very forces which sought to divide and disrupt the struggle for independence have once again, reared their heads. The rise of the communal forces represents everything that is backward looking and reactionary in our society. Feudal elements who cannot reconcile to a democratic order, religious revivalists who feel threatened by a modern secular society, the richer classes who want to protect their privileges, are the forces behind the rise of the BJP. They have to be stopped if India is to remain a united and democratic country.

The Congress party has degenerated both politically and organizationally. It is a party in decline, as it has pursued, when in power, economic policies which militate against the people; it betrayed the secular heritage by compromising with the communal forces and it is a party riddled with corruption. It is this dismal

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CPI(M), CPI, Forward Bloc and Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP)-these four
Left Parties jointly released this Manifesto on January 16, 1998 in New Delhi.

record of the Congress which led to its resounding defeat in the 1996 Elections. Its attitude, since then, shows no redemption. The Congress is no more a party which can govern at the Centre or provide the country with a new agenda.

The United Front came into being at a time when a new alternative was required. An alternative to the discredited Congress and a firm secular response to the communal platform of the BJP, India will be governed by coalitions in the coming days. The question is what type of coalition? The United Front has proved its worth as a united and stable coalition which represents the rich diversity of the people of India.

Left Platform

The Left parties played a crucial role in the formation and consolidation of the United Front. The Left parties while striving to strengthen the United Front and making it victorious wish to present before the people their alternative policies and the way to make India a vibrant democratic and just society.

The Left platform represents the aspirations of all sections of the working people, of all patriotic citizens who are committed to the fashioning of a socially and economically just order. The Left is the guardian of the interests of the working people, it fights for economic policies which promote self-reliant growth, employment, equal opportunities and reduction of inequalities.

PART I

SECULARISM AND FEDERALISM:

CORNERSTONE OF INDIAN UNITY

Secularism has been defined as a basic feature of the Constitution by the Supreme Court. This constitutional principle expresses the reality of the daily life and experience of the millions of Indians who live and work harmoniously together irrespective of caste, creed and religion. However, secularism has come under continuous assault by the forces represented by the BJP and its mentor, the RSS. There can be no compromise with those who wish to erode the secular basis of the State and the political system.

The Left parties will work for:

- *Legislation for separation of religion and politics.
- *Prohibition on use of religious issues for electoral purposes by political parties.
- *Reference of the Ayodhya dispute to the Supreme Court under Article 138(2) for a speedy judicial verdict.
- *Protection of the basic right of religious belief and practising one's religion.
- * Implementation of the "Protection of Places of Worship Act" which prohibits change of the character of religious places of worship after 1947.

Strengthen Federalism

The Left parties, in contrast to the sectarian communal version of nationhood based on Hindutva, have an alternative vision to strengthen Indian unity. As against a highly centralized and undemocratic system of concentration of all powers at the Centre, federalism requires a reworking of Centre-state relations.

The Left parties will strive for:

- * Adequate powers to the states for decision-making in the economic and political spheres.
- * Strong states will result in a strong Centre. Constitutional amendments for devolving more powers to the states—economic, fiscal and administrative.
- * Article 356 to be suitably amended so that the draconian power of the Centre to dismiss State Governments is curbed and this power is exercised only in extreme contingencies where there is a direct threat to national unity or an onslaught on the secular basis of the state.
- * Further activation of the Inter-State Council and empowering the National Development Council with sufficient powers on planning.

Defend National Unity

It is essential to strengthen Indian unity by removing the feelings of alienation and neglect which has bred separatism in different parts of the country. Imperialism seeks to utilize such forces to advance its aim of weakening the unity of the country. Both in

Jammu & Kashmir and the North-Eastern region, challenges to the unity of India exist. The Left parties have been in the forefront in championing the democratic aspirations of the peoples of diverse cultures and language groups in a federal set-up as a basis for strengthening Indian unity.

The Left parties will continue to work for:

* Maximum autonomy for the state of Jammu & Kashmir by maintaining Article 370 of the Constitution; regional autonomy to be provided to Jammu and Ladakh regions within this framework.

* Negotiations to be conducted with all those groups in the North-East who are advocating separatism while firmly defending the integrity of the Indian Union.

* Special provision for the development of the North-Eastern region with particular emphasis on infrastructure and development of employment opportunities.

Foreign Policy

The United Front Government took some commendable initiatives to improve relations with India's neighbours and to resist pressures to sign the CTBT. In the new world situation where the United States and its western allies seek to dominate the world, it is imperative that Indian foreign policy continues with its basic orientation embodied in the non-aligned policy. This means not succumbing to imperialist pressures which will undermine India's independent positions and harm its security interests.

In the area of foreign policy, the Left parties will ensure that:

* India is projected as an independent power which plays a constructive role in defending the interests of the third world and promoting South-South cooperation.

* India does not sign any discriminatory treaty on nuclear weapons like the NPT or the CTBT.

* Further steps are taken to strengthen and improve relations with South-Asian countries and promote SAARC cooperation. Special efforts to improve relations with Pakistan and promote people-to-people ties.

* Relations with India's biggest neighbour, China, are strengthened and economic ties increased. Relations with Russia to be further strengthened.

- * The Indo-US military cooperation agreement is cancelled.
- * Nuclear weapons are removed from the US military base in Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

PART II FOR AN ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC POLICY

It is a grim reality that fifty years after independence 400 million Indians live in abject poverty. India has the largest number of illiterates in the world with only half the population literate. Child malnutrition figures are the highest in the world, excepting Bangladesh.

The policies ushered in, in the name of economic reforms since 1991, have only worsened the situation. Liberalization has meant a bonanza for the big business houses, landlords, financial speculators and big traders who make super-profits and accumulate huge incomes. Under the IMF-World Bank-dictated model, the priorities for India's economic growth are determined not in the interests of the Indian people but for a narrow affluent section at home and foreign capitalists. By these policies, 10 per cent of the population have enriched themselves at the expense of the remaining 90 per cent of the people.

The recent financial turmoil and economic crisis which has hit the countries of South-East and East Asia are a timely warning to those who have pushed for indiscriminate liberalization in our country. South Korea which was held up as a model for India, reached the brink of financial collapse and was forced to apply to the IMF for a huge loan to bail itself out. India cannot follow this disastrous path.

Economic reforms require a different orientation. The Left parties have consistently advocated an alternative set of policies.

As against the policies of total deregulation of the economy giving full play to the market, rampant privatization, dismantling of the public sector, indiscriminate entry of foreign capital and import liberalization; subjecting Indian agriculture to the vagaries of the international market by promoting so-called export-oriented

agriculture and withdrawal of the state from development of infrastructure and public economic and social investment, the Left parties advocate an alternative path of self-reliant economic development.

Land Reforms: Key to Progress

The main cause for poverty is the unequal and exploitative land relations; parasitic landlordism with its attendant social and economic oppression is the major obstacle to ensuring a better life for the majority of the Indian people.

Fifty years after independence, only 52 lakh acres of surplus land have been taken over and distributed out of a total of 75 lakh acres declared surplus which itself is a gross underestimate. On the contrary, under liberalization, land ceiling laws are being diluted to favour big business and foreign companies; wasteland and degraded forest lands are sought to be allotted to these big companies and not to the landless. It is only the Left-led Governments of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura which took up land reforms seriously and implemented them. West Bengal alone has distributed 20 per cent of the total surplus land distributed in the country. The Left will ensure that there is no dilution of land reform legislation.

The Left parties will work for:

- * Speedy and comprehensive measures for implementing radical land reforms.
- * Takeover and distribution of surplus land above the ceiling; cultivable wasteland to be given to the landless.
- * Correction of land records.
- * Security for tenants.
- * Issuing joint pattas for women.

Agriculture

- * Increased public investment in agriculture.
- * Greater allocation for developing irrigation facilities.
- * Ensure self-sufficiency in foodgrains production for food security.
- * Comprehensive insurance schemes for crop and cattle.

- * Expansion of credit facility for the poor peasant and small farmers.
- * Proper assistance to producers of traditional crops and protection of markets and sources of raw materials.

Agricultural Workers

Agricultural workers constitute the most oppressed section both economically and socially. For them:

- * Minimum wages have to be guaranteed.
- * Pension and other social welfare benefits provided.
- * Equal wages for equal work for women agricultural labourers.
- * Provision of homestead land.
- * The Left parties will step up the struggle for adoption of a Central Legislation for agricultural workers, a commitment made in the United Front CMP which has not yet been implemented.

Rights of the Working Class

Industrial workers have been the worst affected by the onslaught of liberalization and privatization. The closure of thousands of private sector units, the dismantling of the public sector enterprises and the failure to revive sick industries like textiles have led to the loss of jobs of tens of thousands of workers. In the name of reforms, big capitalists have been given the freedom to shut down factories, reallocate units and retrench workers in a big way.

The Left parties will fight for:

*Revival of sick units; ending of disinvestment in profitable public sector units, revival of some of the sick public sector units by a package of measures including joint sector ventures, the revival package for the NTC mills, fertilizer units, IDPL etc should be part of an overall thrust to rejuvenate the public sector and revive industries which are essential for self reliance.

*Provision of need-based minimum wage for workers; protective legislation for unorganized workers, protection of employment and emoluments with inflation-linked increase in wages.

*Recognition of trade unions through secret ballot and protection of trade union rights.

*Schemes for workers' participation in management and observance of the principle of collective bargaining protected.

*Grant of pension to working people as a third benefit; one-rank one-pension for ex-servicemen; upgrading pensions of all categories of pensioners in consonance with the cost of living.

Industries and Infrastructure

Increased public investment in infrastructure is essential. The present policy of cutting down public investment should be reversed. The private sector cannot replace the role of public investment in this sphere. Review the power and telecom policies, adequate public outlay should be provided for expansion of power generation, communications, roads etc.

Incentives for foreign capital in all spheres and across the board import liberalization have adversely affected domestic industries.

The Left parties want:

* Strengthening of the public sector in the core and strategic areas with sufficient injection of capital and technology. The public sector be streamlined and fresh investment be channelled into key sectors. The public sector will have to play the crucial role in meeting some of the basic needs of the people like mass transport, health services, education etc.

* Foreign capital to be solicited in those areas for which clear-cut priorities are set. These priorities are to be determined by the need for developing new production capacities and acquiring new technology.

* Protection of domestic industry from indiscriminate lowering of import duties and takeover of existing Indian companies by foreign companies. Private sector will be encouraged to invest in new productive areas, R&D and service sector like tourism.

* Encouragement to small scale industries with adequate incentives and sufficient credit from banks.

* Protection of traditional industries such as handloom, coir etc. Yarn to be provided for at control rates for the weavers and adequate facilities for the marketing of their goods.

* End to deployment of deep-sea fishing trawlers, protect rights of the fishing community.

The WTO treaties are loaded in favour of the richer countries of the North against the interests of the developing countries.

India should take the lead to forge common cause with the countries of the South to negotiate terms which safeguard our interests with regard to TRIPS, TRIMS and financial services.

Financial Sector

The efforts to stampede India into opening up the financial sector to suit the interests of international finance capital must be resisted.

* The insurance sector should not be privatized; LIC and GIC should be streamlined to make them more efficient. Foreign companies should be barred entry into this sector.

* The trend of privatizing the banking sector should be halted. Reforms to make banks accountable and restore social priorities.

* Proper regulation of non-banking finance companies to safeguard interests of depositors.

* Regulate capital flows; no convertibility on the capital account.

Adequate Resource Mobilization

* Broaden the direct taxes base; instead of reducing taxes on the rich, raise the tax rates on the affluent sections (corporate tax, wealth tax, income tax etc.) and ensure strict compliance; tax evasion should be firmly dealt with.

* Unearth black-money kept inside and outside the country and tap it for productive purposes.

* Wasteful expenditure and the growing misuse of public money by officialdom and public servants should be stopped.

Public Distribution System

The Left parties attach the highest importance to the strengthening and expansion of the public distribution system. This is the most effective way to protect the common people from the adverse impact of the price rise of all essential commodities. For this:

* 14 essential commodities should be included for supply in the PDS.

* A network of fair-price shops and co-operatives should cover all panchayats.

* For those below the poverty line, there should be provision of supply of foodgrains at 50 per cent below the central issue price.

* Overhead costs should be curtailed, wastage and leakage from the FCI and distribution mechanism should be eliminated.

PART III
FOR BETTERMENT OF CITIZENS' LIVES

The overall progress of the country can be ensured only when the people experience all-round improvement in their material and cultural lives. The neglect of the social sector must be abandoned and state expenditure stepped up substantially.

Education

The per capita expenditure on education in India is one of the lowest in the world. This is a shameful record. It is in the states with Left-led Governments like Kerala and West Bengal that adequate provision is made for education in the budget. To see that every child goes to school and illiteracy is abolished must be the priority goal.

The Left parties pledge to:

- * Introduce compulsory primary education accompanied by free mid-day meals, provision of text books and other education materials.
- * Free and universal education must be guaranteed for all children up to the age of 14 years. The 83rd Constitutional amendment making education a basic right should be adopted for children up to the age of 14.
- * Rapid expansion of primary school network.
- * Upgrade the salaries of elementary school teachers and provide schools equipped with minimum facilities.
- * Syllabus and curriculum to inculcate secularism, progressive values, scientific temper and national unity.
- * Allocation of 10 per cent of Union Budget and 30 per cent of States' Budget for education.
- * Support to mass literacy programmes.
- * Democratization of the higher education system and development of vocational education.

Health

Liberalization has led to neglect of the public health system and cutbacks in expenditure on public health. Epidemics and mass outbreak of water-borne diseases are taking a heavy toll of lives.

In this connection, the Left parties advocate:

- * Immediately increasing the expenditure on public health to 5 per cent of the GDP (at present it is a miserable 1.12 per cent).
- * Provision of adequate network of primary health centres with sufficient stocks of medicines as laid down by the Ministry of Health itself.
- * Ensuring supply of essential drugs at prices affordable to the common people.
- * Increasing the outlay on preventive medicine and eradication of diseases like malaria, tuberculosis etc.

Water Resources

- * There should be a National Water Policy. Provide for community/panchayat role in management of water resources. Exercise control on indiscriminate use of groundwater.
- * Drinking water is a problem in 2 lakh villages. Provision of potable drinking water to all villages must be a priority task.

Housing

- * Housing to be accorded the status of a basic right; housing schemes for urban and rural poor to be stepped up.

Employment

- * Guarantee right to work as a fundamental right.
- * Provide food-for-work programme to generate employment.
- * Ensure adequate credit for self-employment schemes for educated unemployed, artisans and handicapped persons:
- * Scrap freeze in recruitment and cuts in existing employment in the government sector.

Women

Women are struggling to acquire equal status in all spheres — social, economic and political. The Left parties have been the firmest champions of women's rights and for ending gender discrimination.

- * Implementation of equal rights and other legal and Constitutional guarantees.

* The Left parties have consistently fought for the adoption of the Constitutional amendment providing for one-third reservation for women in legislatures, in the last Parliament. The Left parties are committed to see this is implemented in the new Parliament expeditiously.

* Special schemes for female-headed households in rural areas and increasing employment opportunities for women.

* Strict measures against atrocities on women and legislation to check sexual abuse of children.

* Equal legal rights for women of all communities should be provided.

* Equal rights in property and joint matrimonial property rights; compulsory registration of marriages.

* Abolition of child labour.

* Universal provision of child care services.

Population Policy

Conduct widespread campaign for a family size norm of two children per couple without any gender bias. Withdraw the proposed 79th Constitutional Amendment Bill for disqualification of all those who have more than two children as it will militate against women's interests.

For Social Justice

The struggle to end social exploitation and caste discrimination requires a sustained struggle to fight all forms of caste oppression and inhuman practices like untouchability. The state should undertake not only to implement laws in this respect but also discharge its responsibilities to propagate against casteism.

The Left parties call for:

Dalits and Adivasis

* Stringent action against atrocities against scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and invoking of the provisions of the Prevention of Atrocities Act for this purpose.

* Ensuring that quotas for reservation for scheduled castes and tribes are filled up.

- * OBC reservation to be implemented.
- * Reservation to be extended to Dalit Christians.
- * Protect land rights of adivasis and restore land alienated from them illegally.
- * Ensure the right of access to forests and forest produce; the Forest Act be amended for this purpose.
- * Regional autonomy should be provided for tribal compact areas, wherever necessary.
- * Foster the development of the languages and culture of adivasis.

Rights of Minorities

- *Protection of the just rights of the minorities; implement provisions of the Constitution to prevent discrimination.
- *Special schemes for promoting educational facilities for deprived minorities.
- *Protection and encouragement of Urdu language.

Youth

- *A national youth policy must be adopted which comprehensively deals with issues of special concern to youth.
- *The state should provide for an adequate network of sports and cultural facilities for youth in all parts of the country.

Media and Culture

The state should provide facilities for development of secular and democratic culture. The diverse cultural traditions of the people must find free expression and equal treatment by the state.

*All national languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution should be equally encouraged and developed.

*The Prasar Bharati Corporation must be strengthened so that it becomes a genuine public broadcasting service. There has to be legislation to prevent growth of monopolies in the print and electronic media which is inherently undemocratic. No foreign ownership of print media. Revamp the proposed Broadcasting Bill in this light.

*Enforce a media code for satellite broadcasters.

*Ensure that states have a say in media policy and programmes in the public broadcasting service.

Science and Technology

In promoting self-reliance, it is essential that a science and technology policy be adopted which provides for development of scientific institutions and development of substantial R&D potential in India. A patents policy which promotes indigenous research and scientific development must be adhered to. Any review of the Indian Patent Act of 1970 should safeguard the interests of Indian industry, research priorities, self-reliance, food-security, public health and national security.

Environment

- * Formulate an environment policy which is integrated with the needs of rapid and sustainable development.
- * Strict control must be exercised against industries using hazardous technology which affects the health of workers and the neighbourhood.
- * Stringent action should be taken against contractors illegally cutting down forests.
- * There has to be a uniform national rehabilitation policy for persons displaced by development projects.
- * Develop mass-transit and public transport system to curb vehicular pollution.

PART IV **STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM**

The Left parties will work for strengthening the parliamentary democratic system. They will oppose any move to truncate parliamentary democracy or alter it by introducing the Presidential form of government. Any move to undermine parliamentary democracy will usher in authoritarianism to which the Left is totally opposed. The first step to strengthen parliamentary democracy in the country is to ensure electoral reforms.

Electoral Reforms

These must include:

- *Amendment of Section 77 of the Representation of People's

Act to plug loopholes in enforcing ceiling on election expenditure by bringing all election expenses including those by parties and friends in the candidates expenditure.

- * Proportional representation with partial list system.
- * Effective steps to prohibit persons with criminal background from contesting elections.
- * State funding in the form of material for recognized political parties.
- * Amendment of the Anti-Defection Law so that any elected representative who leaves the party he or she represents has to vacate the seat forthwith.

Curb Corruption

- * Steps to curb corruption at all levels particularly those holding high public office. Lokpal Act should be adopted which will provide for investigation and binding recommendation on prosecution of public servants up to the level of Prime Minister. Provide for CBI and other investigating agencies getting functional autonomy to investigate cases leading up to prosecution.
- * The system of governance should be made more accountable for which citizens must have the right to information for which a Right to Information Act must be passed.

Judicial Reforms

- * Constituting a National Judicial Commission for appointment of judges of High Courts and Supreme Court. Reforms in judicial system to provide speedy relief at affordable cost to the common people and to heighten accountability.
- * There should be a proper balance in the relations between the legislature, judiciary and the executive and the exercise of powers in their respective spheres without encroaching into the legitimate domain of the other organs.
- * Devolution of powers from the Centre to the states with suitable Constitutional amendments. Decentralization of powers to the district bodies and panchayats; ensuring local participation in formulation of plans and projects.

Left Governments

The Left-led Governments of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura have established the credentials of the Left. Implementation of land reforms, protection of the rights of the working people, decentralization of power to the panchayats, preservation of communal harmony and taking democracy to the grass-roots have been some of the achievements of these governments. The Left wants these pro-people democratic policies to be on the agenda of the Centre.

Voting for the Left parties—the CPI(M), CPI, Forward Bloc and RSP—will be a mandate for:

- * Guaranteeing the secular-democratic basis of the Indian Republic and national unity.
- * Pro-people economic policies.
- * Advancing the struggle for a corruption-free government and system.
- * Ensuring a stable UF Government which will work for growth with equity.

Increase the Left Representation in Parliament !

Defeat the BJP and the Congress !

Elect The United Front To Government !

Left Parties to Oppose BJP's Confidence Motion in Parliament*

Leaders of the Left parties met on March 8, 1998 to review the present political situation and came to the following conclusions:

1. In the complex situation of a hung Parliament where no party or pre-poll alliance has secured a majority, a situation may arise where the BJP may be called to form a government. Under these circumstances, the Left parties along with their democratic and secular allies will oppose a motion of confidence moved by the BJP.
2. The Left parties emphasized the need to maintain and strengthen the unity of Left, democratic and secular forces to meet the challenges posed to the secular democratic foundations of our country by the communal forces.

The meeting was attended by Harkishan Singh Surjeet, P. Ramachandran, S. Ramachandran Pillai and Sitaram Yechury from the CPI(M), A. B. Bardhan, D. Raja and J. Chitharanjan from the CPI, Abani Roy of the RSP and Debabrata Biswas and G. Devarajan of the Forward Bloc.

Joint Statement Issued by CPI(M) And CPI for Avoiding Arms Race And to Pursue Disarmament*

Our two parties have been appreciating the contribution of Indian scientists in the development of nuclear research and programmes which has led to India developing its independent capability in this field. Our country has been consistently adhering to the policy that we wish to use nuclear development for peaceful purposes. India has also firmly refused to sign the NPT and CTBT which are discriminatory and which allow the monopoly of nuclear weapons for some countries.

Aware of the security concerns, we have been stressing the need for developing our independent nuclear capability without any relaxation in our defence preparedness. At the same time, India has been consistently advocating universal nuclear disarmament, non-use of nuclear weapons and avoiding a nuclear arms race in the sub-continent.

Only the BJP has advocated a policy of exercising the nuclear option and reiterated this in its recent election manifesto. However, after the formation of the Vajpayee Government, government spokesmen have been declaring that such an option would be exercised only after a strategic review. But the decision to go ahead with the nuclear tests at this juncture has not been explained, nor its international and national implications spelt out.

The CPI(M) and the CPI want the Vajpayee Government to adhere to the policies pursued so far with regard to nuclear disarmament and avoidance of a nuclear arms race in South Asia so that peace and security is maintained in the region.

* This joint statement was issued on May 12, 1998 and signed by S. Ramachandran Pillai and Prakash Karat on behalf of CPI(M) and A.B. Bardhan and D. Raja on behalf of CPI. Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, May 17 1998.

India Government Must Desist From Arms Race Escalation*

**Joint Statement Issued by The CPI(M)
and The CPI on May 29, 1998**

The response to the Indian tests at Pokhran have come with the five tests conducted by Pakistan in the Chagai hills. This is not a vindication of the policy adopted by the BJP-led Government as the Prime Minister has claimed, but an inevitable confirmation of how wrong has been the reversal of India's long-standing nuclear policy. It has undone the progress in establishing good-neighbourly relations with our neighbours and securing peace in the region. The short-sighted step taken by the Vajpayee Government and the reaction of the Pakistani Government is leading to the step by step escalation in the nuclear arms race in the subcontinent and its attendant tensions.

Such a course is harmful to the peoples of both countries and will only serve to divert attention and resources from the pressing and massive problems of poverty and underdevelopment in both India and Pakistan. While the BJP Government has, with its precarious majority, undermined the sound foreign and nuclear policies being pursued, the Pakistani Government, which faces more serious problems, will find it convenient to distract the people's attention. Any move to whip up tensions will only hamper and retard the prospects of economic and social progress of both countries.

The Vajpayee Government should not seek to rouse national chauvinism on a sensitive issue like nuclear weapons. It should immediately open a dialogue with the Pakistani Government to defuse tensions. *The CPI(M) and the CPI want to make it clear that a national consensus can be evolved only on the following*

*Published in "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY", New Delhi, June 7, 1998.

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basis: (a) India should not go for weaponization and the Vajpayee Government must not make or deploy nuclear weapons; (b) the government should immediately declare no first-use of nuclear weapons; (c) the government should not proceed towards signing the CTBT; (d) India should step up efforts for universal nuclear disarmament; and (e) what should be done in the post-Pokhran test period should be discussed with all national political parties so that a common approach is formulated.

Party Letter on Nuclear Tests and Its Implications*

Issued by The Central Committee of The CPI(M) on May 18, 1998 for Circulation to All Party Units

Dear Comrades,

In a major policy departure, the BJP-led Government has conducted five nuclear tests at Pokhran in Rajasthan. This has created a new situation. The BJP is seeking to divert the whole attention of the people from the urgent problems faced by them and is arousing jingoistic sentiments in pursuit of their narrow political interests. So as to explain to the whole Party, the implications of these blasts and its repercussions and at the same time to expose the game-plan of the BJP, the PB has decided to address this letter to all members of the Party.

Nuclear Tests and Its Implications

India has been pursuing a policy of peace and has been a consistent opponent of the arms race. In recent years it has been striving for good relations with other countries, particularly our neighbours.

In spite of imperialist pressures, particularly from the USA, India resisted all attempts to browbeat it into signing the NPT and the CTBT, as these treaties are discriminatory in nature. These treaties fixed no timetable for the destruction of the nuclear arsenal of the nuclear powers, leading to their eventual elimination. They sought to impose an unequal regime dividing the world between nuclear haves and have-nots. By refusing to sign these treaties, India kept its right to exercise the option, if the need arose. Even while

*Circulated under CPI(M) Central Party Letter No.1/98 dated May 18, 1998 from Central Committee Office at New Delhi.

possessing nuclear capability, India advocated peaceful, non-military uses of nuclear energy within the larger perspective of achieving universal nuclear disarmament. This independent policy pursued by the country refused to accept any discriminatory controls, while at the same time keeping its sovereign right to develop the nuclear programme. It is the restraint exercised by India that acted as a deterrent on Pakistan also. This nationally accepted policy also mirrored the commitment of the country that India shall not initiate a nuclear arms race in the subcontinent.

This national policy stood the country in good stead. This policy heightened India's prestige in world forums and helped in improving relations with neighbours. It is owing to this policy of peace that India pursued, that it received support in different forums like the UN, non-aligned movement, Asia-African Solidarity apart from other regional forums like the Organisation of African Unity, Arab League etc.

One of the main aspects of India's foreign policy orientation was improvement of good relations with its neighbours. It has made serious efforts towards this end, with special emphasis on improving relations with China and Pakistan.

Relations with China were strained after the border conflict in 1962. Since then, however, many changes have taken place inside China. The international situation also demanded an improvement of relations between the two most populous countries of the world. It is against this backdrop that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China in 1988. Both countries agreed to develop relations in the economic field and improve cultural ties, pending a solution of the border dispute. This successful visit paved the way for improvement of relations between the two countries and helped in creating a peaceful atmosphere in the region. The relations had improved to such an extent that both countries had reached agreement on reducing the strength of troops developed on the line of actual control to de-escalate tensions, maintaining peace and tranquility. There has been a constant exchange of visits between the two countries the highlight of which was the visit of the Chinese President Jiang Zemin to India in 1996. It was during this visit that agreements were arrived at on confidence building measures and

deinduction of forces besides several other bilateral accords. During this period, China had also changed its stand on the Kashmir issue and declared that this issue has to be sorted out through dialogue between India and Pakistan. Trade and economic ties improved between the two countries.

The United Front Government during its short tenure did immense work in improving relations with other countries, especially our neighbours. Prime Minister Deve Gowda's successful visit to Russia sought to revive the spirit of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between India and the Soviet Union signed in the seventies. It succeeded in radically improving relations with Bangladesh with the agreement over the sharing of the Ganga waters. The West Bengal Government also played an important role in this regard. After the signing of the Mahakali Treaty, the relations with Nepal also improved further. Relations were also improved with Sri Lanka, Malaysia etc. As regards Pakistan also a concerted effort was made to improve relations with that country, despite the fact that Pakistan was interfering in the internal affairs of India and training and arming militants to create disturbances in Kashmir. India indicated that while these matters have to be sorted out, economic and cultural ties should be improved between the two countries.

These developments of improved relations between India and China and India and Russia were not to the liking of the imperialist powers, particularly the USA. The coming together of these countries would mean a potential threat to imperialist interests and greater strength to resist imperialist pressures. This is more so in a world situation dominated by the USA. The UF Government played a big role in this respect and a new atmosphere for peace and friendship was created in our neighbourhood and among Asian countries as a whole.

The nuclear tests carried out at Pokhran on May 11 and 18 have reversed this whole process at one stroke. It can have dangerous consequences for the future of the country and the region as a whole.

The RSS and the forerunner to the BJP, the Jan Sangh, have been demanding the making of an atom bomb from the sixties. This fits in with the RSS-Hindutva ideology of a strong militaristic India which is aggressive towards 'Muslim' Pakistan.

From the BJP's Hindutva philosophy and anti-minority stance, particularly its anti-Muslim leanings, stems its anti-Pakistan attitude. Also its avowedly anti-Communist outlook does not permit it to appreciate either the rapid advances made by China or the improvement in relations between the two countries. The Defence Minister, George Fernandes, who is also the President of the Samata Party, an ally of the BJP, has been openly advocating independence of Tibet, a demand at variance with the policy pursued by India. The office of the organization demanding an independent Tibet is in fact situated in the house of George Fernandes.

In fact, in the days preceding these blasts at Pokhran, a consistent campaign was carried on by George Fernandes against China. He levelled all sorts of unsubstantiated allegations against China. Starting from accusing China of providing the technology to Pakistan for the development of the Ghauri Missile (a fact which even the US denied). Fernandes went on to accuse China of constructing a helipad in Arunachal Pradesh, only to be contradicted by the Prime Minister. Later on, speaking at the Krishna Menon Memorial Lecture in New Delhi, he charged China of building airstrips along the international border in UP, of inducting missiles in Tibet directed at India and made the spurious claim of China having a base in the Coco islands of Myanmar. He also termed China to be the main security threat to India. These provocative statements were met with a strong rebuttal from the Chinese side. It termed these statements as being irresponsible. Even Myanmar denied that China had built any bases in any of its islands. As was apprehended, these statements had the approval of the Prime Minister, as Fernandes himself declared.

That this was a concerted effort to build up and project a so-called threat to national security becomes all the more evident with the issue of the RSS mouthpiece organizer coming out the same day that the first blasts were conducted (May 11). This issue of organizer is a nuclear special with lead articles from eminent RSS-BJP men on why India should go nuclear. This was no mere coincidence.

That China was sought to be made the excuse for conducting the tests became all the more evident by the letter of Vajpayee to President Clinton on May 11, 1998. While keeping the political

parties and the country at large in dark about the reasons that prompted the test, it is indeed a matter of indignation that the Prime Minister wrote to the US President putting forth the reasons. This letter was not made public in India, but was published in the *New York Times*. Vajpayee writes: 'I have been deeply concerned at the deteriorating security environment, specially the nuclear environment, faced by India for some years past. We have an overt nuclear weapon state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962. Although our relations with that country have improved in the last decade or so, an atmosphere of distrust persists mainly due to the unresolved border problem. To add to the distrust that country has materially helped another neighbour of ours to become a covert nuclear weapon state'. The Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry in its statement of May 14, 1998 stated that the Indian Government 'has even maliciously accused China as posing a nuclear threat to India. This is utterly groundless. Ever since China possessed nuclear weapons, it has advocated the comprehensive prohibition and complete destruction of nuclear weapons and has unilaterally undertaken not to use or threat to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states and nuclear free zones. This gratuitous accusation by India against China is solely for the purpose of finding excuses for the development of its nuclear weapons.'

It is only the BJP, which has campaigned against the nationally accepted policy of keeping the nuclear option and not exercising it while not signing the NPT or the CTBT. In all its election manifestos from 1991 onwards it has advocated India going nuclear. Whereas the 1991 manifesto has asked for giving "our defence forces nuclear teeth", the 1996 manifesto has called for a re-evaluation of the country's nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons", the 1998 manifesto goes further and demands that we "expedite the country's nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons". The National Agenda for Governance adopted by the BJP and its allies, in the overall context of a first ever strategic defence review, states : "Towards that end we will re-evaluate the nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons."

The capacities and capabilities of our scientists in developing the nuclear technology indigenously were never in doubt. What came as a surprise, however, was the sudden announcement of the BJP-led Government that it had conducted the tests. The BJP-led Government, which has a precarious majority and is yet to prove its ability, by this act, reversed the policy pursued by successive governments of not inducting nuclear weapons but of keeping the option open. By doing so, the BJP is consciously rousing jingoistic and chauvinistic sentiments.

What is the motive behind conducting these tests and proudly proclaiming that India has gone nuclear ?

While on the one hand, an orchestrated euphoria is sought to be generated, on the other, it is being projected as though India did not possess the nuclear capability earlier and that it is only after the BJP came to power that this was accomplished. The achievement is entirely thanks to the strenuous work put in by our nuclear scientists and has got nothing to do with the BJP. After the first nuclear test at Pokhran in 1974, Indian scientists had worked hard in further developing the technology. It has been reported that a test was scheduled even in 1995 when the Narasimha Rao Government was in office. But this test had to be abandoned under US pressure. Again in 1996 and 1997 this proposal was there before the Deve Gowda and Gujral Governments. But these governments did not want to depart from the accepted national policy and disturb peace in the subcontinent. Therefore, the BJP can only take pride and credit for reversing our long standing nuclear and foreign policy and not for the development of our indigenous nuclear technology.

In a bid to mislead the people the BJP and Atal Behari Vajpayee himself are claiming that this shift in policy has the support of the wide spectrum of political opinion in the country. This is totally false. While the Left parties have come out in firm opposition to these tests, the Congress Party and some other parties like TMC and Samajwadi Party have also demarcated themselves on this issue and have asked for the reasons which necessitated this action.

While by and large the media is being made part of an orchestrated campaign projecting as though the country has won a big victory, voices of dissent against this policy reversal are slowly

coming out. Several independent organizations organised a demonstration in New Delhi. Various newspapers have carried editorial comments or lead articles criticizing this decision of the BJP-led Government (See extracts in annexure).

It is clear that the BJP is pursuing a domestic political agenda of whipping up jingoism. This becomes evident from its call for celebrations on the anniversary of the Pokhran blast of 1974. The BJP is seeking to divert the attention of the people from both the problems that it is facing from its coalition partners and more importantly from the urgent problems that the people are facing. Given the precarious nature of the coalition, the BJP by whipping up jingoistic sentiments by appealing to national pride is seeking to consolidate itself politically. It will now be better placed to implement its own exclusionist agenda. No explanation has been given to the country as to what is the dramatic change that occurred in the situation after the BJP assumed office that necessitated such a change and reversal in policy.

Strangely, however, the Vajpayee Government is silent on the US military base in Diego Garcia and threat emanating from it. The US in the Gulf War had used this island base in the Indian Ocean. It has a wide range of weapons targetted against India. Such deliberate silence about imperialist military manoeuvres and support to anti-India extremist activities reflects the pro-imperialist shift in Indian policy. Increased tensions in South Asia will enable USA to actively intervene in the region.

What are the International Implications

The restraint that India exercised acted as a deterrent and Pakistan also did not opt for going nuclear. Now that India has opted to go nuclear, Pakistan that has the capability will also induct nuclear weapons. It has already declared that it will go head with the conducting of tests in spite of US pressure. This will be seen as a retaliatory measure. The atmosphere in the whole region will get vitiated and an arms race will begin. The process of restoration of relations with China will receive a setback. Even with regard to Bangladesh, it will harm our relations. Pakistan is likely to further intensify its activities in Kashmir and will encourage extremist

activities in Punjab disturbing peace there.

Such a policy, apart from undermining the long-standing independent foreign policy of India, severely jeopardizes the ongoing initiatives taken by India towards improving relations with our neighbours. It negates the advances made during the period of the United Front Government. At one stroke the BJP-led Government has harmed the atmosphere of good relations being built. The strident anti-China campaign reverses the important initiatives for reduction in arms build up and the confidence building measures that the two countries have arrived at after a decade of diplomatic efforts.

It will harm the reputation and standing of India among the peace loving nations and people and among the non-aligned and third world countries.

In the economic sphere also there will be harsh implications. The consequences of nuclear arms race in the subcontinent will have a disastrous effect on the Indian economy and the livelihood of millions of working Indians. Economic growth will be retarded both as a consequence of the sanctions as also the diversion of huge funds towards defence expenditure. The value of the rupee went lower to Rs. 40.77 against the dollar, which is likely to go down further. The stock markets also responded with share prices falling. The US, Japan, Australia, New Zealand have imposed sanctions with many more countries likely to follow suit.

In the name of combating sanctions, the BJP-led Government will go in for further liberalization of the economy and opening it up further for penetration by foreign capital. These are evident from the offer of counter guarantees to three multinational companies for power projects and a bonanza of contracts for foreign petroleum and mining companies. Accelerating this disastrous course will not combat the effect of sanctions but on the contrary, will make India more vulnerable to imperialist economic pressures jeopardizing the country's economic sovereignty and simultaneously imposing greater burdens on the working people. The arms race, at the same time, will both divert scarce resources away from compelling economic needs and divert people's attention from pressing problems. The Finance Minister's statement that INDIA

can cope up with the sanctions and that it has a sound balance of payments position is misleading. The foreign exchange balance of \$ 26 billion is enough for imports for six months only. The balance is not based on trade balance but on NRI deposits and hot money flowing in for speculative purposes. This money can be withdrawn and flow away from the country any moment and therefore, does not offer any guarantee.

For the working people who are struggling to make ends meet, the call for increasing defence expenditure for financing the arms race, the branding of all opposition to jingoism as "anti-national" will be the weapons used by the reactionary BJP Government to try and suppress all mass struggles.

Imperialism will also seek to use the sanctions to mount pressure on India to sign unequal and discriminatory treaties like the NPT and CTBT.

The US or the powers that possess nuclear weapons have no right to impose sanctions on us. We will have to unite all sections of the people to fight against this.

The BJP Government by adopting such a course in fulfilment of its own agenda, keeping the people and the political forces in the dark, has exposed the country and its people vulnerable to various threats. This will escalate tensions and begin an arms race endangering peace in the whole of South Asia.

This will also divert the attention of the people from the real problems that they are facing. Instead of addressing their basic issues, jingoistic sentiments are sought to be whipped up and urgent problems are sought to be relegated to the background. The economic hardships of the people will increase.

Our Immediate Tasks

1. The entire Party will have to be rallied to expose this nefarious game that the BJP is playing. It is the bounden duty of the Party to rally all peace loving patriotic citizens to carry forward the long-standing nationally accepted policy for ridding the earth of nuclear weapons, for peace and disarmament and against imperialism.
2. The Party will have to caution the people against falling prey to the jingoistic sentiments that the BJP is trying to

whip up, which it seeks to utilise to consolidate itself politically. The making of the nuclear bomb is the BJP-RSS agenda to advance Hindutva, it is not the country's agenda. A sustained campaign has to be conducted by the Party on these lines.

3. The BJP-led Government will have to be forced to declare that it shall not induct nuclear weapons and build a nuclear arsenal triggering a nuclear arms race in the subcontinent. The Government should categorically assure the people that it shall not submit to imperialist pressures to be party to unequal and discriminatory international treaties.
4. In this campaign as many parties and forces as can be rallied have to be rallied for the adoption of positions which will help preserve peace and security in the region and strengthening of good-neighbourly relations.

Annexure

Extract From Editorial in The Times of India of May 12

"It would appear that the BJP-led Government gave the formal go-ahead to the country's defence scientists soon after assuming power. Coming as they do in the wake of the war of words with Pakistan after the later tested its Ghauri missile — as also Defence Minister George Fernandes's remarks about China being India's potential threat number one — the tests are bound to cast an ominous shadow over India's frayed relations with its neighbours. Pakistan, which has not yet openly tested a nuclear device, can be expected to take counter-measures. That, in turn, could open up the prospect for a damaging and futile nuclear arms race of the kind India has often accused the nuclear weapon powers of indulging in..... Beijing might well surmise that Mr. Fernandes's recent remarks were meant to prepare public opinion in India — and even abroad — for Monday's dramatic news. As Defence Minister, Mr. Fernandes must have been fully aware of the preparations. Thus, for him to seek to raise the temperature on the eve of the three nuclear tests suggests that the Vajpayee Government was working to a plan."

Extracts from The Hindu Editorial of May 13

“It is important at this critical moment to avoid the temptation of allowing legitimate national pride in a scientific achievement that reinforces India’s defence preparedness to degenerate into a bellicose chauvinism which will only darken the security environment in the region further. With the unveiling of India’s nuclear weapons status, it is now inevitable that Pakistan will succumb to the compulsion of similarly demonstrating its own capability..... The Prime Minister’s Principal Secretary, Mr. Brijesh Mishra, has explicitly linked these tests to the Government’s concern about the “nuclear environment in India’s neighbourhood”. Such statements are bound to inflame the atmosphere further and aggravate the chauvinist sentiment here and in Pakistan, increasing the pressure on the Government in Islamabad to follow suit. This would provide much more space for international intervention within the region and for efforts to isolate and weaken India in the global arena.

Extracts from the Editorial of The Economic Times of May 13

“Lot of jingoistic Indians are delighted that India has exhibited nuclear biceps, but actually that news is 24 years old. What is new is bicep-flexing will now attract economic penalties. Japan will freeze aid, US law mandates an aid cut-off and voting against future World Bank or IMF loans to India more will follow.”

In an editorial that is otherwise approving of the policy adopted by the BJP-led Government, the Statesman of 13th May writes: “A footnote is appropriate. We need no longer worry about drinking water in villages, compulsory education, a bearable health service, housing, or infrastructure. We have the bomb.”

Amrita Abraham writing in the Asian Age notes that “The country cannot be expected to look ahead confidently when a sound national consensus on nuclear policy, built on a sturdy commitment to democracy, is overturned by a shaky and inexperienced coalition led by a party for whom national security has acquired the mythical aspects of the Ram Janmabhoomi and in whose political strategy the international community is fast occupying the position hitherto given to India’s minorities.”

Resolution Adopted at The Mass Rally Held in New Delhi on September 16, 1998 at The Call of CPI(M)*

This public meeting organized by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) on 16 September, 1998 expresses its deep sorrow and concern at the large-scale destruction caused by floods in the states of Assam, West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Such an unprecedented flood situation has not been seen in recent times.

In Assam, 21 districts have been badly affected. More than 150 people have died and the floods have affected 45 lakh people. In Bihar, over 1.3 crore people in 7,600 villages have been affected by the floods. More than 350 people have died. In Uttar Pradesh the floods have badly affected eastern districts of the state and over 1100 people have lost their lives. And over one crore people have been affected by the flood waters.

In West Bengal, more than 60 lakh people have been affected by the floods and more than 180 people have died and the flood situation remains critical with all the rivers in spate. In Orissa too the rivers have started rising affecting a large number of villages.

It is extremely regrettable that all the states have not received prompt and immediate assistance from the Central Government. All the state governments have complained about the lack of assistance. What is required is to *declare the floods a national calamity* and make special provision for funds to help in repairing the damage and rehabilitating the people.

This meeting conveys its heartfelt sympathy to all the people who have suffered the loss of their family and relatives, become homeless or lost their properties.

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The CPI(M) calls upon all its Party ranks and sympathizers to raise funds to help the flood-affected people. To launch this Party fund the Central Committee has decided to contribute an amount of Rs. one lakh.

Surjeet Demands More Forces for Tripura to Tackle The Grim Situation in The State*

The text of letters addressed by Harkishan Singh Surjeet, General Secretary of the CPI(M), to Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani and Defence Minister, George Fernandes, on October 1, 1998 on the grim situation in Tripura:

Dear Shri Advaniji,

Nearly a month back, I had talked to you on phone on the deteriorating situation in Tripura. You assured me that you would take the necessary steps to send more reinforcements. Subsequently, the Chief Minister of Tripura, Manik Sarkar, also met you.

You might be aware that the extremists based in Bangladesh have intensified their activities in recent months. But it seems that the Central Government has taken no tangible steps to meet the situation. You might also be aware that Tripura is one state where our Party has successfully maintained the unity of the tribals and non-tribals, though the tribals who were in a majority in the state, have been reduced to a minority due to the influx of refugees from Bangladesh.

If because of the lack of adequate security this unity gets disrupted, it will be easy for the extremists to play their game. I had expected that you as the Home Minister would take all necessary steps for assisting the state government to defeat the game plan of the extremists. Regrettably, however, you have advanced the argument that as compared to the population of the state the security forces are more.

When dealing with such problems in a highly sensitive state, which has international borders and is strategically positioned,

utmost care has to be taken. It has to be accorded the highest priority. The home ministry has also been taking the plea that the local police force should deal with this problem. You might be aware that the local police even now is not equipped with modern arms to match those used by the extremists, due to lack of funds with the state government. It is only recently that some effort has been made in this direction. This is in spite of the fact that the state government has been consistently demanding provision of funds for equipping the local police with modern equipment.

In a situation where certain places in the state have been declared disturbed areas, it is incumbent on the central government to do everything to help the state government to see that the threat posed by the extremists is defeated. When on a lesser scale extremist activity had begun in Punjab with the backing of Pakistan, effective support was provided by the central government. This despite the fact that Punjab had a much better equipped local police force.

I hope you will not delay the matter any more and will do everything to help the state government in this hour of need to combat extremist activity in the state.

Dear Shri George Fernandes, ·

I had talked to you on phone on the issue of Tripura and the necessity of sending more military forces there. Your response to this request was positive. You had also informed me that such a request had been made to you earlier and that you would take all necessary measures.

Since then more than a month has passed and the extremists have intensified their activities. I am sorry that nothing tangible seems to have been done from your side.

I had never expected that the defence ministry would be so lax when it came to countering insurgency in sensitive areas and especially when parts of the state have been brought under the purview of the Disturbed Areas Act.

I appeal to you for the sake of the country's unity that no other consideration should be allowed to come in the way. When the

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country's interest is at stake, political differences should not be an impediment.

I, once again, request you to please supplement the forces in the state and extend all necessary cooperation to the state government in tackling this enormously difficult situation.

I am sure, you will accord topmost priority to this issue.

Jyoti Basu's Letter to Prime Minister on Patents Bill*

[The West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, has written to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, calling for more discussions with the State Governments and others before going ahead with the proposed amendment to the Patents Act. The full text of the letter dated December 10, 1998 is given below:]

I have seen reports that the Union Government intends to move an amendment to the Indian Patents Act, 1970, to let foreign firms enjoy exclusive marketing rights for their products in India. This is supposed to be in line with the commitment which our government has entered into with the World Trade Organization at the time of the signing of the Marrakesh Treaty.

As you are well aware, the implications of the proposed amendment to the Patents Act are wide-ranging and affect severely the interests of the states. The State Governments have, according to our Constitution, major responsibilities in the sphere of agriculture and public health. It is, therefore, crucially important that any piece of legislation allowing foreign firms exclusive marketing rights in pharmaceutical and agro-chemical products must be closely examined by the State Governments.

I understand the point of view, as just stated, has also the support of the Standing Parliamentary Committee on Commerce which has recently submitted a report in this regard.

I would earnestly request you that a meeting of either the National Development Council or the Chief Ministers Conference or the Inter-States Council be convened to discuss this sensitive

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issue before the Central Government initiates any legislative measures.

May I hear from you immediately in the matter?

Left Parties Ask The BJP Government : Heed The Voice of The People*

Joint Statement Dated December 11, 1998 Issued in New Delhi by The CPI(M), CPI, Forward Bloc and RSP on The Massive Success of The General Strike and Hartal on December 11, 1998 All Over India.

The CPI(M), CPI, RSP and Forward Bloc salute the millions of people throughout the country who participated in the all-India general strike and hartal (on 11th December, 1998) protesting against the disastrous economic policies being pursued by the BJP-led Government at the Centre.

By all accounts, this mass action constitutes the broadest and the biggest of such actions in Independent India. In many parts of the country, like Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Assam, Bihar, etc. industrial activity came to a grinding halt paralyzing normal activities. Such was the impact that in many parts of the country, train services and flights did not operate. All the major ports of the country, banks and insurance and other financial institutions remained closed. The public sector workers observed the strike in a large number in protest against the policies of the unbridled privatization.

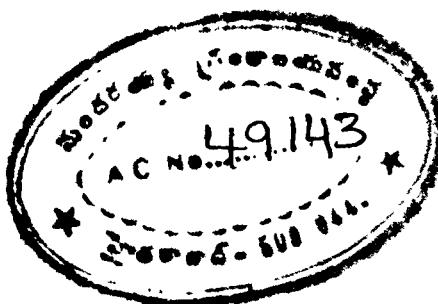
Unable to face any further agony and erosion of their livelihood, the working class was joined by its brethren in rural India through actions like 'rasta roko', 'kacheri jam', etc.

That such a massive action took place despite repressive measures and intimidatory arrests, as in Haryana, reflects the widespread anger and indignation of the people against the present BJP-led Government. Reports of arrests and intimidation have come from various states - Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, etc.

Left parties, while expressing complete solidarity with the National Platform of Mass Organizations, warns the BJP-led

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Government that the people of our country will not tolerate the loot of our economic assets, being permitted through policies of privatization and liberalization. The Left parties demand that the government heed the voice of the nation and withdraw the proposed Bill to privatize the insurance sector including foreign participation, to reverse the unbridled privatization of the public sector and refrain from pushing through the Patents Amendments Bill which will severely jeopardize India's economic sovereignty.



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