

Chapter VIII

Findings and Conclusions

This study was designed to find out the programmatic differences between the CPI and the CPI(M) since 1964 on agrarian reforms and rural democracy. It was also intended to find out the actual practice of the two parties in West Bengal. In this Chapter we intend to summarise our findings in a form which will be appropriate for understanding answers to the research questions included in Chapter I. For this purpose our findings are presented under five relevant heads, namely 1) nature of democratic revolution in the programmes of CPI and CPI(M), 2) place of agrarian reforms in their programmes, 3) place of rural democracy in their programmes, 4) the position of border-line parties on the Right and Left, and 5) actual practice of CPI and CPI(M) in West Bengal.

1) Nature of Democratic Revolution in the Programmes of CPI and CPI(M) :

The CPI was aware of its ultimate aim of embarking on the socialist road. But it felt that the country, though freed from British rule in 1947, had yet problems created by the imperialist forces outside and the vestiges of feudalism from within. The national bourgeoisie which had led the country to political independence and was ruling the country thereafter had not completed the 'anti-imperialist anti-feudal democratic revolution'. For completing this task the capitalist path chosen by the national bourgeoisie

was not appropriate. In fact, the national bourgeoisie has an interest in this task but because of the influence of foreign imperialism and monopoly sections in the country over the national bourgeoisie it is unable to pursue squarely the aims of democratic revolution. Remembering this limitation of the national bourgeoisie and the capitalist path followed by it, the CPI put forward programme of 'national democratic revolution'.

The CPI expects to forge a class alliance among four sections of the Indian people, namely, the working class, the broad mass of peasantry (including rich peasantry) and agricultural labourers, urban and rural intelligentsia and the national bourgeoisie excluding the monopoly section. The CPI notes that the working class was the first and foremost section in this alliance because of its consistent role in completing the democratic revolution. But the CPI does not think of placing even the working class at the position of leadership. Neither does the CPI think of leaving it to the existing leading role to the national bourgeoisie. CPI agrees that the initiative for launching a mass movement for democratic measures has to be taken by the working class. CPI seems to be careful not to antagonise or scare away the national bourgeoisie from the path of democratic revolution. Therefore, the precondition of working class leadership is firmly rejected by the CPI.

Under four-class alliance for the national democratic revolution, the CPI wants to build up the national democratic front. Its tasks has been identified as that of following the non-capitalist path to a democratic revolution. The CPI fears that the capitalist path is fraught with the danger of growing influence of monopoly power and semifeudal and landlord classes. The CPI feels that many of the negative features in the present position of Indian economy and society arise from these dangerous trends. Particularly, foreign monopoly investments, the tying of India's external trade with the world capitalist market and adverse conditions under which India was receiving economic aid were all tending to affect the national interest of the country.

The CPI hopes to pursue the aim of national democratic revolution through a national democratic state run by a national democratic front and hopefully enumerates democratic tasks to be undertaken by this state for completion of the national democratic revolution.

The CPI(M), too had declared its resolve to carry the country along to its ultimate aim of building a socialist society. It agreed that the first stage of India's revolution which was against direct foreign imperialist rule came to an end in 1947. But differing with the CPI, it asserted that the power of the state was transferred to the national bourgeoisie and landlords headed by big bourgeoisie which

had compromised with foreign imperialism. These forces of reaction did not carry forward the country's democratic revolution to its completion. For the CPI(M), the nature of revolution in this present stage is essentially 'antifeudal, anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly and democratic'. The CPI(M) considers, the existing bourgeois - landlord government headed by the big bourgeoisie cannot complete the democratic revolution because this government has to compromise with imperialist-finance capital from outside and landlord reaction within the country. This class-rule stood in the way of the development of the toiling millions of the Indian people and put them in perpetual poverty. In view of the weakness of the existing bourgeois-landlord state headed by the big bourgeoisie, the CPI(M) calls for immediate completion of democratic tasks by forwarding a programme of 'people's democratic revolution'. The principal aim of this revolution is to bring radical agrarian reform to an early completion and to wipe out monopoly landlord domination over the state.

For this purpose it wants to form a people's democratic front on the basis of an alliance of the working class and the peasantry including middle and rich peasants, the urban as well as other middle classes and the national bourgeoisie. The CPI(M) thinks that this alliance will bring together all the patriotic and democratic forces of the country.

The CPI(M) insists that the people's democratic front is basically rest on an alliance of the working class and the peasantry. It recognises that the peasantry has some grounds of disunity among the various sections of it, namely, the poor, middle and rich sections. Still it expects a unity of the entire peasant masses because of the intense exploitation of all them at the hands of usurers, feudal elements and the capitalist market. However, the CPI(M) believes that the main strength of these masses as an ally with the working class must come from the poor peasantry and agricultural labourers.

The CPI(M) wants to bring not only the peasantry but also the national bourgeoisie into the alliance because it has a contradiction with the imperialists from outside and the feudal landlords from within the country. So far as the national bourgeoisie can be persuaded to oppose the influence of the big bourgeoisie which is responsible in India for the continuation of imperialist and feudal exploitation and oppression, the national bourgeoisie is expected to participate in the people's democratic revolution.

The CPI(M) insists, however, on the leadership of the proletariat in the people's democratic front because of the fact that this class is alone fully prepared to complete the democratic revolution and hastened the coming of the next stage, socialism to this country. The CPI(M) thinks that any hesitation on this point will definitely frustrate the aim.

of democratic revolution.

The CPI(M) too draws up a programme for the people's democratic state when it will be run by a people's democratic front.

It is found that the two parties disagree mainly on three points. Firstly, about the class character of the existing Indian state. The CPI thinks that the national bourgeoisie as a whole holds the state power in India though within the national bourgeoisie, the big bourgeoisie has a powerful influence and it has strong links with landlords. On the otherhand the CPI(M) thinks that the present Indian state is the organ of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and the landlords led by the big bourgeoisie. Secondly, about the task of the democratic revolution the CPI emphasises the adoption of the non-capitalist path of economic development. But the CPI(M) emphasises the task of completing agrarian revolution as essential for the democratic stage of revolution. Thirdly, the CPI and CPI(M) both include in the democratic front of working class, peasantry middle classes and the national bourgeoisie, the CPI does not stipulate the leadership of any of these classes while the CPI(M) insists on the leadership of the proletariat.

2) Place of Agrarian Reforms in the Programmes of the CPI and the CPI(M) :

We have found that the CPI is not at all happy with the

agrarian measures of the government since independence. It admits that statutory feudal land relations have been curbed and semi-feudal landlordism, abolished in zamindari areas. But strong survivals of semi-feudal land relations is still predominant with attendant evils in the form of share-cropping and usury. Capitalist land relations have developed in the agrarian set up but there has been an interpenetration of survivals of feudalism and growing capitalist relations in agrarian life. It also notes that the number of agricultural labourers has steadily risen as a result of much evictions and general impoverishment of the peasantry. It, therefore, includes in its national democratic task the elimination of all feudal, semi-feudal survivals by breaking the concentration of land, abundant state aid to peasant, provision of cheap and long term credit to tillers, nationalisation of the wholesale trade in agricultural produce and adequate living wage to agricultural workers. This agrarian reform, the CPI hopes, will take economic development along the desired non-capitalist path.

The CPI(M), however, believes that the landlords to be partners in the class rule of India and believes also that agrarian reform has been left incomplete in the interest of this feudal class. The people's democratic revolution chalking out by the party, therefore, includes such tasks as the abolition of landlordism without compensation and the distribution of land free of cost among agricultural labourers

and poor peasants, the cancellation of debts of peasants, agricultural labourers and village artisans to moneylenders and landlords, the provision of cheap credit to peasants for improved cultivation, guarantee of irrigation facilities and adequate living wages to agricultural labourers. The CPI(M) emphasises that agriculture thus freed from the clutches of the feudal landlord class will provide the supply of raw materials to ensure industrialisation and also increase indigenous demands for industries to free it from the influence of foreign monopoly. Thus agrarian reform to CPI(M) is the cornerstone of the democratic revolution.

The outlook of the CPI and CPI(M) in their work for agrarian reform has also been different. The CPI(M), emphasised the necessity of working in the peasant front mainly depending the poor peasantry and agricultural labourers. The CPI, however, depended on the entire peasantry rather than on any particular section of it.

3) Place of Rural Democracy in the Programmes of the CPI and the CPI(M) :

Both the CPI and the CPI(M) consider the extension of democracy to the villages as an essential part of the aim of democratic revolution in India. The CPI realises that without such extension it was not possible to successfully implement the agrarian reforms nor to strengthen democracy

in India. It particularly complains that during the rule of the national bourgeoisie under the influence of the big bourgeoisie local organs of self-governments have failed to bring to the rural masses the necessary control over the administration of local affairs. The so called panchayati raj, in its view, has remained 'an instrument of the bourgeoisie seeking to consolidate its power in the countryside'. The party's spokesmen have often emphasised the necessity of its branches in the rural areas to initiate and lead movements for democratic changes to the economic political and social spheres in the villages. Thus the struggle against untouchability, illiteracy, discrimination against women, casteism, communalism, religious obscurantism, etc., was emphasised for the fulfilment of the democratic tasks chalked out in the programme for rural India.

The CPI(M) considers extension of rural democracy has a concomitant of agrarian revolution which has received a great emphasis in its programme of people's democratic revolution. It too pointed out that panchayati raj has failed to become really democratic because in a bourgeois democracy run by exploiters and their bureaucrats keeps the institution as an instrument for consolidating the power of the ruling classes in the countryside. The CPI(M) has laid great emphasis on turning the local administration into an instrument at the hands of poor peasants, agricultural labourers and artisans, the lower castes and the backward communities in

their movement against poverty and injustice. The programme also emphasises that these rural classes could hope to find the proletariat as their close ally in their struggle. The tasks of rural democracy, according to it, would include setting up of a wide network of local bodies from the village upward, directly elected by the people and vested with power, and a key role is to be given to the peasant and agricultural workers' associations in consultation with whom the local bodies should pursue the cause of the downtrodden in the rural areas. The CPI(M) believed that in this way rural democracy could be extended and strengthened for performing its due role in agrarian reform and also in removing exploitation and oppression of various weaker-sections in the countryside.

4) The position of Border Line Parties on the Right and Left :

For understanding the position of CPI and CPI(M) on the issues of agrarian reform and rural democracy we have considered it necessary to examine the position of the Indian National Congress and the Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist (CPI-ML) as constituting the outer borders of the CPI and the CPI(M). The Congress stands on the border of the right and the CPI(M-L) on the Left.

The Congress party came into the question of land reform,

particularly in aid of peasants, quite late in the history of India's struggle for freedom. It was since 1936 that views were expressed by Congress leaders clearly on this subject. However, after independence the Congress Economic Programme Committee under Jawaharlal Nehru's Chairmanship suggested a few radical proposals, such as allowing only the users of land as a source of employment and their right to own and manage it. A ceiling was also suggested beyond which the surplus land was to be taken over by the state and then handed over to the village cooperatives. The more radical and concrete steps suggested by Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee under the Chairmanship of J.C. Kumarappa did not receive the approval of the party. From 1950-51 under the Constitution of India agrarian reform came under the jurisdiction of states which pursued not any uniform policy. However, from this time the party's policy is best followed through the five-year plan programmes adopted by Congress governments at the Centre.

The abolition of intermediaries, fixing a ceiling on land holdings with exemption for efficiently managed farms, village reconstruction through cooperatives, provision of better irrigation through supply of fertilisers, seeds and equipments and through education of cultivators in better methods, introduction of intensive cultivation, abolition of bonded labours, implementation of minimum wages act are some of the most important steps taken by the government of

India from time to time through the successive five-year plans. Actually there have been a number of land reform legislations in different states, but often these have been evaded by the landed interests. While these indicate an idea of land reforms of the Congress party from the experience in West Bengal we have found that mainly because of reliance on the bureaucracy for implementation of these policies and also because of the dependence of Congress leadership in the countryside on the landlords and other landed interests the party's programme has not yielded much salutary results for the poor peasants and agricultural labourers to appreciate. In fact even when poor peasants and agricultural labourers sought the implementation of any of these legislations it is the landed interests who received assistance of the police in preventing peasants from their active efforts.

With regard to the position of the Congress on rural democracy there was initially a hope because of M.K.Gandhi's strong plea for rural uplift and Panchayat system, and also because these ideas found place in the 'Directive Principles of States Policy' under the Constitution of India, that the Congress might pursue a consistent programme on rural democracy. However, under the advice of the U.S. experts a Community Development Programme which was initiated under the First Five-Year plan soon proved to be a failure. Then, on the recommendation of a committee set up by the Govt. of India a three-tier panchayat system was attempted on a

non-party basis of popular election. In West Bengal for instance elections were held in 1964 but thereafter nothing was done to continue with the experiment till the Congress was removed from power in 1977. The panchayats, formed through elections proved in most cases to be dependent on the government and close to the general policies of the Congress in the countryside.

With regard to the CPI(M-L)'s position on agrarian question and rural democracy it is to be remembered that this party was formed with those elements who earlier formed part of the CPI(M) but since 1967 when the CPI(M) joined United Front Government in West Bengal, those elements took an independent line of revolution alleging the CPI(M)'s betrayal of the revolutionary cause. They wanted still a people's democratic revolution through revolutionary tactics of annihilation class enemies and forcible seizure of lands by peasants. This party did not have any immediate aim of legislative programme. Agrarian revolution was aimed at as a step to people's democratic revolution to be achieved through a people's war including guerrilla warfare in the countryside.

In its programme it said that the basic task of the Indian revolution was to overthrow the rule of feudalism, comprador-bureaucrat capitalism, imperialism and social -imperialism. This was understood as a stage of democratic

revolution the essence of which was agrarian revolution. Its programme included confiscation of all land belonging to the landlords and redistribution of such land among the landless and poor peasants, cancellation of debts of the peasantry and other toiling people and to guarantee all facilities necessary for developing agriculture. In fact the CPI(M-L) equated agrarian revolution and the seizure of power. It may be noted that at a later stage many groups within the CPI(M-L) doubted this tactics of the party.

The CPI(M-L) considered democracy at the rural and urban areas not as isolated phenomena. It's task was to establish the dictatorship of the working class, the peasantry, petty-bourgeoisie and even small and middle bourgeoisie under the leadership of the working class. The programme of the party however, mentioned following as tasks of the people's democratic state after the revolution : formation of revolutionary people's council for exercise of political power, developing democratic culture in place of colonial and feudal culture, abolition of caste system and removing all social inequalities and discriminations on grounds of religion, sex, etc. It also emphasises the necessity to guarantee better living condition to the people and to remove unemployment. In liberated areas the landless and poor peasants were expected to be the main force for establishing democracy. Revolutionary people's council and people's court were to be instruments for distribution of the confiscated land and deciding local disputes against

oppressor landlords.

It will be understood that the CPI(M-L) programme on agrarian revolution and rural democracy was far more radical than that of even the CPI(M). That is why the position of CPI(M-L) is on the left of the continuum beginning from the Congress on the right extreme.

5) Actual Practice of CPI and CPI(M) in West Bengal ;

Besides highlighting of the differences between the CPI and the CPI(M) on agrarian reforms and rural democracy, the following discussion is placed on the basis of findings of their practices retrieved through a field survey technique.

The followings are the findings of the field survey.

As for the period since independence upto 1964 when the CPI(M) emerged from a split of the CPI, it is found that the undivided Communist Party worked for the complete abolition of landlordism, distribution of surplus land among landless peasants, preventing eviction of sharecroppers and securing the interests of tenants in general. For this purpose the most widely used methods adopted were meetings, protest procession and submission of memoranda. Also there was encouragement from the CPI to forcibly acquire vested and benami lands. The largest numbers of leaders in the party and its peasant organisations came from the sections of middle peasants, followed by agricultural labourers and poor

peasants. These movements were confronted by the opposition of landed interests who mainly depended on armed attack on tenants and police help. Obviously because in this period the Congress government allowed these landed interests to indulge in these coercive methods. Therefore, much of the surplus land would be held as benami.

For the period from 1964 to 1985 we have found it useful to record our findings in certain aspects on the basis of a division into 1964 to 1977 and 1977 to 1985.

We find that in the period from 1964 to 1977 the means and methods used by the peasant organisations of the two parties were meetings/protest processions in all cases. Next of importance was strike/demonstrations to which CPI(M) peasant organisation took a greater resort than the CPI peasant organisation. But none of them had placed any faith in legal battles as an effective means. What is further more significant to note is that the CPI(M) Kisan Sabha relied very largely on the forcible acquisition though the CPI Kisan Sabha seemed to be lukewarm. In this period in most cases the landed interests wanted to dissuade peasants from their movement by resorting to punitive evictions, and used armed attack, police help and legal harassment for this purpose. It is important to remember in this connection that during this period only twice non-Congress left and democratic parties came to power for very brief periods in

1967 and 1969. The Congress party was in power for the rest of it. The radical posture of peasant organisations in this period was specially due to the new awareness of CPI(M) that the peasant movement should be based primarily on the poor peasants and agricultural labourers. This fact is specially highlighted by the fact that while 20 of 24 respondents from the CPI(M) mentioned forcible acquisition of benami and surplus lands as a form of movement, only 7 out of 24 respondents from the CPI would indicate similar affirmation (Table 9 in page 495).

In the period from 1977 to 1985 the CPI(M)'s peasant organisations relied on methods such as meetings/protest procession, strike/demonstration and forcible acquisition of vest and benami land. But the peasant organisation of the CPI used meetings/protest processions and to some extent strike/demonstrations. These means that the difference between the two parties still continued in its peasant movements as in the previous period of 1964 to 1977. A significant change of attitude was found in the means and methods adopted by the landed interests. While in the previous two periods since independence, namely, 1947 to 1964 and 1964 to 1977, direct armed attack, resort to police help and eviction of tenants were the principal methods, in the period from 1977 to 1985 they had to depend mainly on legal harassment by resort to court cases. On this point

the respondents from both CPI and CPI(M) offered the similar opinion.

With regard to the movement of agricultural labourers for their economic rights in the period from 1964 to 1985 it is significant to note that the CPI and CPI(M) respondents indicated very different responses. While all the CPI and CPI(M) respondents affirmed the use of meetings/protest procession and bargaining, it is only the CPI(M) respondents who claimed to have resorted to boycott and strike actions also in a very large number. This may be seen consistent with the difference already noticed with regard to peasant movements mentioned earlier. With regard to the perception of the two parties of the main danger in the countryside faced by agricultural labourers and poor peasants the significant difference of the two parties was that while the CPI considers the capitalist market posed the main threat, to CPI(M) respondents the threat came mostly from landlordism. This shows, perhaps, a good indication of the correct perception of their respective programmes by the cadres of the two parties in the countryside.

With regard to the role of different rural classes in ensuring rural democracy, there is no disagreement about the agricultural labourers and poor peasants/sharecroppers and artisans as the principal and reliable force. But about the middle peasants and the educated middle class there is some

difference between CPI and CPI(M) respondents. With regard to middle peasants more than a half of CPI respondents allows it the role of principal and reliable force, but the CPI(M) respondents totally deny it. About the educated middle class both CPI and CPI(M) respondents seem to be undecided and just less than half of their respondents grant this role to the educated middle class. With regard to the middle class about four-fifth of the CPI(M) respondents grant the role of helping force to it but of CPI respondents not even half would do so. On the other hand CPI respondents in large numbers grant the helpful role of rich peasants and rural businessmen. There is a difference between the CPI and CPI(M) group of respondents also about the potentially helpful role of these two sections. It is the CPI(M) respondents who in a majority affirm it. The CPI(M) respondents also point to the landlords as the opposing force but the CPI respondents do not agree.

With regard to their perception and practice the rural activists of the CPI and the CPI(M) exhibited a fair amount of consistency with their respective programmatic assertions. Still such activists seemed to be divided among themselves about the role of middle peasants and educated middle classes. This might be due to the uncertain character of these sections of the rural population. Again this might be also due to lack of clarity in pronouncements of the respective programmes. However, in conclusion we can not

miss the fact that has been a qualitative change in the countryside of West Bengal in the period since 1977. Particularly the land reform measures and democratisation of the panchayati institutions are facts explaining this change. And for this change greater credit goes to the CPI(M) than to the CPI because it is the former which took initiative and responsibility for organising the lower levels of rural population and also for helping these sections with governmental actions, which are illustrated by 'operation barga' and reorganisation of popular 'panchayats'.
