

**A STUDY OF THE PROGRAMMATIC DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE
CPI AND THE CPI (M) SINCE 1964 ON RURAL DEMOCRACY
AND AGRARIAN REFORMS AND THEIR ACTUAL
PRACTICE IN WEST BENGAL**

*Thesis Submitted for The Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Arts) of The
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PREFACE

The peasant question particularly its Asiatic syndrome is one of the most embarrassing issues to the Marxists since the days of Marx himself. Therefore the problem in the agrarian system of Asiatic countries has received a special treatment in Marxist literature. This issue was singled out and theorized altogether differently. Lenin's famous 'National and Colonial Question' and Mao's emphasis on 'Peasant Revolution' have opened up a plethora of new aspects for the succeeding generation of communist activists of the Asiatic countries to pay their deep attention to.

These broad guidelines being too general, it is imperative to the communist-activists of these countries to frame their own strategy and tactics upon the careful analysis of the concrete national factors which are typically & peculiarly their own. These factors are different on many counts from one country to another. This unevenness of social situations which are typical properties is bound to be dealt with in social science.

Therefore, it is seen in all countries, without exception, that communists differ in appreciation of the objective situation of their given countries, though they commonly held the Marxist principles of social change as their guide line to determine the ultimate course of revolution.

It is evident that communists in India are divided; and they are working under different shades. Their main difference revolves round thinking on agrarian question and the early completion of the unfinished democratic revolution. They equally admit the handicapped position of our agrarian economy under the existing ruling class but they differ on the type and amount of domination.

Indian communists observe, agrarian economy provides the main livelihood to the largest segment of our people, but that economy is handicapped owing to pressure from the exploitation of semi-feudal, landlord and capitalist market (which has a definite link with multinationals and the world imperialist economy). To the Marxist, the agrarian economy serves the basis of the rural economy which affects the life of the majority of the exploited peasants and agricultural labourers. The rural administrative bodies serving the interests of the landed class can be seen as a superstructure which also preserves or helps to continue the prevailing casteism, bias against sex, religious bigotry, illiteracy, and similar other feudal prejudices. The power over land in India's vast countryside determines the power over rural administrative bodies. Here the Marxists' intention is to bring to an end the existing situation dominated by the semi-feudal, landlord & bourgeois classes and to get this change through the initiatives and efforts of peasants and

agricultural labourers. In doing so, the Indian communists are not of the same opinion as they perceive the problem with some difference.

In brief, this present study is designed to explore areas of difference on two important programmatic issues - agrarian reforms and rural democracy. It is also intended to look closely into the actual practices of the two communist parties, namely, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) both of which feel it urgent to achieve these targets in the present stage of democratic revolution. These two communist parties understand, as their respective programmes reveal, that the democratic revolution has not been completed in India even to this day under the leadership of the present ruling class. Though they differ on the nomenclature of the revolution, nature & alliance of the classforces of the appropriate revolution which is due to be achieved at the present historical stage of Indian society. The CPI calls it 'National Democratic Revolution' (NDR) and the CPI(M) calls it 'peoples' Democratic Revolution' (PDR). Difference of approach was revealed with the adoption of the separate programmes by the two communist parties emerging after the great split of the communist movement in India in 1964.

I have tried my level best to explore the areas of difference on these two important issues from their respect

party programmes and their actual practices from the field examination without any bias. Now the thesis will tell in its own.

I remember with gratitude the encouragement I used to receive from my deceased mother who I can't but remember on this date.

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CHATURBHUJ KUNDU

ABBREVIATIONS

ABKMU	Akhil Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union
AIAWU	All-India Agricultural Workers' Union
AICC	All-India Congress Committee
AICCR	All-India Coordination Committee of Revolutionaries
AIKC	All-India Kisan Council
AIKS	All-India Kisan Sabha
AITUC	All-India Trade Union Congress
APRCC	Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Committee
CCC	Central Control Commission
CCR	Central Committee Report
CEC	Central Executive Committee
CITU	Centre of Indian Trade Union
CKC	Central Kisan Council
Comintern	Communist International
Congress (I)	Congress (Indira)
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPI-M	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPI(M)	
CPM	
CPIM-L	Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)
CPI (ML)	
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union

CSP	Congress Socialist Party
FB	Forward Bloc
FB(M)	Forward Bloc (Marxist)
HMS	Hind Mazdoor Sabha
INC	Indian National Congress
INTUC	Indian National Trade Union Congress
JD	Janata Dal
JP	Janata Party
KMPP	Krishak Mazdoor Praja Party
LC	Local Committee
LDF	Left Democratic Front
LS	Lok Sabha
MLA	Member of a Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
NC	National Council
NDF	National Democratic Front
NDR	National Democratic Revolution
PDF	People's Democratic Front
PDR	People's Democratic Revolution
PKC	Provincial Kisan Council
PM	Prime Minister
PSP	Praja Socialist Party
PULF	People's United Left Front
RCPI	Revolutionary Communist Party of India
RS	Rajya Sabha
RSDLP	Russian Social Democratic Labour Party

RSP	Revolutionary Socialist Party
SP	Socialist Party
SSP	Samyukta Socialist Party
SUCI	Socialist Unity Centre of India
UDF	United Democratic Front
UF	United Front
UP	United Province; Uttar Pradesh
WB	West Bengal
WBLR	West Bengal Land Reform

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CHAPTER I

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Section 5 Methodology : Method and Techniques of Study.

Section 1 Scope and Objective of Study

The seminal point of enquiry pursued in this study was to examine communist thinking in India on agrarian reforms and rural democracy. This study has analysed these two aspects from the programmatic positions and practical activities of the two leading communist parties in India, namely, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M). Besides the examination of the programmatic positions of the two communist parties over these two issues, their actual practices have been examined on the basis of data collected from the selected areas of West Bengal.

For an appraisal of communist thinking the study has confined the period since 1964 to the late 1980's. The year 1964 is significant in the history of Indian communist parties because of two important reasons. Firstly, in this year there was the first split of Communist Party resulting

in the emergence of the two communist parties with reference to which this study has been carried on. Secondly, it is in this year that communist parties in India for the first time felt it necessary to indicate their respective distinctiveness by adopting programmes on the basis of their own assessment of the socio-economic and political condition of the country and of their own assessment over the international communist movement.

The two communist parties understand as their programme reveal, that the democratic revolution has not been completed in India even to this day under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. Though they differ on the nomenclature of the appropriate revolution which is due to be achieved at the present historical stage of the Indian society, both the parties emphasize that it has to be a democratic revolution - the CPI calls it the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) and the CPI(M) calls it the People's Democratic Revolution (PDR) as a step towards the next socialist stage of revolution. Both these parties again emphasize the fact that in Indian society the rural masses constitute the largest segment and therefore, naturally in their thinking the extension of rural democracy is an important element in their targetted democratic revolution. Besides, both the parties admit that agrarian relations in India remain dominated by the feudal, semi-feudal and landlord sections and the bourgeoisie (though

they differ on the amount of domination of the former) so largely that the country's economic, social and political development cannot proceed in the right direction. Therefore, agrarian reforms and rural democracy constitute together a crucial area in the pursuit of their respective programmes in their respective democratic stage of revolution. This study has provided considerable attention in highlighting their respective programmatic positions based on their individual understanding over the national and international situations (as the communists adhere to the aims of Communist Internationalism). The ideology of a Communist Party finds its expression in concrete terms in a given historical context in its programme. Therefore, to make a study of its activities, one has to begin with a study of its programme.

For ascertaining the actual practice on the two programmatic issues, this study has been directed to find the actual practice of the two parties in West Bengal during the period mentioned earlier. For the purpose of understanding the two parties' activity along their lines laid down in their programmes, the study has examined the practical activities through their respective organisations at the lower level (peasant fronts, agricultural labourers' associations, youth organisations etc.) of the two parties. Along with this, the study has analysed the activities of both these parties while they were and are in power in the

state government of West Bengal. But in regard to actual practice the study has been based on data collected from three districts of West Bengal, namely, Midnapore, Burdwan & West Dinajpore where both these parties have marked areas under their respective influence. For this purpose a field survey has been conducted to seek primary information about their separate ways of thinking as well as activity. Such information collected therefrom have been compared with the understanding analysed from their respective programmatic positions on agrarian reforms and rural democracy.

Initially, the study had proposed to cover the period from 1964 to 1986, but since in some cases data have been available upto the year 1990, they have been used only in corroboration of trends already found.

In fine, this study has attempted to examine their programmatic differences and difference between their individual practices on the real political plane over mainly the issues mentioned earlier. Besides, this study has highlighted as to how far the programmatic assertion of the two individual party is being translated into practice.

Here the issues under study have received much thought and attention from many political groups and parties since before and after independence. Therefore, besides the

concern of the CPI and the CPI(M), the two representative views have been drawn in this study from the two political extremities - one from the Indian National Congress and the other, from the Communist Party of India (Marxist -Leninist) (CPIM-L). This has been done to mark the relative position of the CPI and the CPI(M) over these issues from altogether different corners of analysis.

Another aspect revealed from this study is that, however much the cadres and supporters of each communist party may try to appreciate the merit of its own, there has not been any sound attempt to obtain actual data with an academic orientation; the present study is intended to fill this gap.

In addition, this study has thrown light on the question of split of the Indian communist movement in 1964 and on the tension and disagreement in pursuit of a correct programme within the Communist Party of India since its foundation.

In this connection, it may be useful to add the list of research questions to which answers have been sought through this study.

Research Questions

- (a) How does the Communist Party of India (CPI), indicate the nature of democratic revolution ahead for this country ?
- (b) How does the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) indicate the nature of democratic revolution ahead for this country ?
- (c) How does agrarian reform figure in the democratic revolution as the programme and other authoritative literature of the CPI indicate ?
- (d) How does agrarian reform figure in the democratic revolution as the programme and other authoritative literature of the CPI(M) indicate ?
- (e) How does rural democracy figure in the programme and other authoritative literature of the CPI ?
- (f) How does rural democracy figure in the programme and other authoritative literature of the CPI(M) ?
- (g) Are there any other communist or non-communist parties the programmes of which on agrarian reform and rural democracy constitute the boundaries of CPI and CPI(M) on those questions ?
- (h) Do the rural cadre and activists of the CPI show conscious understanding of this party's position

indicated in answer to question nos. (a), (c), and (e) ?

- (i) Do the rural cadre and activists of CPI(M) show conscious understanding of this party's position indicated in answer to question nos. (b), (d) and (f) ?
- (j) Does actual practice vindicate the conscious understanding of the CPI's position indicated in answer to question nos. (a), (c) and (e) ?
- (k) Does actual practice vindicate the conscious understanding of the CPI(M)'s position indicated in answer to question nos. (b), (d) and (f) ?

While pointing to the programmatic differences between the two communist parties in India, this study has duly highlighted the Marxist, Leninist and Maoist principles of programme and their influence over the CPI and the CPI(M) in the framing of their respective programme of action for India's revolution.

As the study concerns - activities of the two communist parties in India, the entire study has been carried out following the Marxist framework of thought elaborated in the methodology. A conscious effort has been made all along to avoid any kind of subjective bias whatsoever.

To be clear enough this study did not incorporate the influence of recent political changes in the socialist world upon the activity of the two communist parties in India as they have not considered it necessary so far to change their positions on the main issues involved in this study in the context of any such changes in the socialist world.

Section 2 On Communist Party Programme

Programmatic difference between the two Communist parties is the result of division of the Communist Party of India into Communist Party of India - Marxist (CPI-M) and Communist Party of India (CPI) in 1964. The latter retains the earlier name of the party. The division of the party and adoption of separate programmes have had far-reaching consequences in the left political movement in India.

It is stated that division of the party¹ was the product of a prolonged inner-party struggle on the question of national and international issues over decades specially in the years following India's independence in August 1947.

The inner-party struggle mainly centered on the class assessment of the transfer of power, the controversy over the role of Indian bourgeoisie in the national liberation struggle and the role of its main political organ i.e. the Congress Party, and Jawaharlal Nehru at its head. They seemed to differ over the significance of Nehru's increasing friendship with the socialist bloc particularly with Soviet Union's, Non-alignment movement, five-year plan, etc. On the other hand, inner-party struggle was also more aggravated by the ideological difference that surfaced in

the world communist movement after the 20th Congress of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) in 1956 which took some controversial ideological positions. The India-China border dispute added a new dimension to the political and ideological division inside the CPI².

Thus the ground for the party split was being laid earlier, though the formal split took place in the middle of the year 1964, when 'Tenali Convention' was convened by a section of the party and later they met at Calcutta and adopted a programme in October-November, 1964 in the Seventh Congress. This section of the divided party was named as the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M). The other section which met in December, 1964, at Bombay and adopted a separate programme retained the earlier party name, the Communist Party of India (CPI). Again both of them claim to be the real successor to the pre-split Communist Party of India and its several party Congresses.

After being divided in 1964, each of the two communist parties unequivocally claims itself to be committed to Marxism and Leninism and the ultimate cause of socialist revolution in India. At the same time both are critical of each other; and each one hurls the allegation that the other has deviated from Marxism-Leninism and misreads India's actual situation. This sort of inter-party aspersions is presented in their respective party documents in their habitual polemic manner.

Their ultimate commitment to the historical task of performing socialistic and then communistic revolution in India have been clearly spelt in their respective party programmes. The Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) in its programme declares "The Communist Party of India [Marxist] firmly adheres to its aim of building socialism and communism [in India]"³. So also does the programme of the Communist Party of India (CPI) explain : "The Communist Party of India believes that real socialist reconstruction of society ... can be undertaken only by applying the scientific and universal truths of Marxism-Leninism to Indian condition"⁴.

Before we delve into the programmatic differences and their actual practice on certain specific issues which form the subject-matter of this study, it is essential to understand the meaning of 'programme' in communist literature, and the importance, or even indispensability, attached by the architects of communist thought and movement to the programme of a communist party. The practice of prominent communist parties in the world in regard to the use of a programme will also be enlightening.

It is an imperative for the Marxist-Leninist party to have a 'scientific'⁵ programme of action for the attainment of socialism and communism. It should be remembered that the celebrated Manifesto of the Communist Party (February,

1848) was the first of its kind to guide the international organisation of the communists. "... the Manifesto of the Communist Party ... which was the most important programme document of scientific communism appeared in 1848. It openly proclaimed to the whole world the existence and aims of the communists"⁶.

Both Karl Marx and Frederick Engels admitted the necessity of a political programme. They clearly stated it in the 'Preface to the German Edition of 1872' of the 'Communist Manifesto' that "The Communist League, an international association of workers ... commissioned the undersigned [them] at the Congress held in London in November 1847, to draw up for publication a detailed theoretical and practical programme of the party. Such was the origin of the following Manifesto ..."⁷.

To acknowledge the necessity of this historical programme so long capitalism remains, Engels stated "However much the state of things may have altered ... the general principles laid down in the Manifesto are, on the whole as correct to-day as ever"⁸; and "... the Manifesto became a historical document which we have no longer any right to alter"⁹.

Last, The importance of the Manifesto has also been acknowledged by the later Marxists. "The Manifesto was a document of tremendous inspiring force, a document whose

entire contents called for a struggle against the economic and political yoke of the bourgeoisie. Today, too, the Manifesto exerts a strong influence on the minds of millions of people. Its world historical significance and the role it plays in the development of working-class communist movement are a fine proof of the prophetic words uttered by Lenin : 'This little booklet is worth whole volumes ; to this day its spirit inspires and guides the entire organised and fighting proletariat of the civilised world'¹⁰.

So it is clearly meant that any communist organization or any communist party of any individual country must recognise the indelible postulates of the 'Manifesto of the Communist Party' and to act likewise for the purpose clearly spelt out in the 'Manifesto'. In doing so, one is free to choose the strategy and tactics i.e. 'revolutionary measures' by properly considering the peculiar 'historical conditions for the time being existing'¹¹.

It is clear from the foregoing analysis that it is indispensable for a communist organisation and a communist party to have a 'revolutionary programme'. 'The Communist League' and the successive 'Communist Internationals' had adopted programmes for chalking out present and future political actions. Again it is seen, each and every communist party in different countries in the world where communist movement has taken place has adopted its own programme for the organised task of it.

In this regard Lenin's view can be recalled. Lenin, the great architect of Socialist Russia emphasised the need for a scientific party programme. In the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) which was convened in exile, London in August 1903, a programme was adopted with the statement that the Party of the Russian Proletariat was one of the contingents of the international working-class movement. It consisted of two sections, framed with a view to the then Russia, namely, a minimum programme of immediate democratic objectives and a maximum programme which declared that 'socialism would be the ultimate goal'¹².

The minimum programme as a whole demanded the complete democratisation of state and social life and the same would be achieved by complete liquidation of tsarist rule and feudalism including remnants of serfdom in the countryside. And the implementation of the minimum programme ensured the optimal conditions for the struggle for socialism, as stated in the maximum programme.

A programme in Lenin's definition represents "a brief, clear, and precise statement of all the things a party is striving and fighting for"¹³ [Emphasis original]. For Lenin, the party programme serves as an ideological, theoretical and political platform for uniting the communists in a voluntary union of like minded persons. He emphasised that

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"a programme must be built on a scientific foundation. It must explain to the people how the communist revolution arose, why it is inevitable, what its significance, nature, and power are, and what problems it must solve"¹⁴. Now, this means that, based on revolutionary teaching and taking into account concrete historical conditions, the Programme should determine both the closest and prospective tasks, and the ways and means of completing them. Historical experience shows that without a clear programme of action the party cannot consolidate and lead the masses, cannot successfully fight for the liberation of the working people, for the elimination of the system of exploitation and for the construction of a new society.

Another question often put in case of a communist party programme is whether it should contain tactical questions of the movement. Commenting on the desirability or otherwise of incorporating the question of tactics and means of struggle in the communist party programme Lenin wrote :

"The Programme should leave the question of means open, allowing the choice of means to the militant organisations and party organisations and Party Congress that determine the tactics of the Party. Questions of tactics, however, can hardly be introduced in the programme - with the exception of the most important questions, questions of principles, such as our attitude to other fighters against autocracy. Questions of tactics will be discussed by the party newspapers as they arise and will be eventually at Party Congresses"¹⁵.

So the party programme is not the place where tactical questions can be discussed and decided as the tactics will have to be changed frequently depending on the ebb and tide of the revolutionary movement and several other factors need to be constantly assessed from time to time and issue to issue. In a very precise way one can say that strategy is meant for revolutionary war, and tactics is meant for revolutionary battle; though the tactics can not be followed in isolation from strategy of a communist party programme. Tactics should constitute an integral part of strategy. The latter can sometime, though not always necessarily, give some valuable hints of tactics. The ultimate aim of tactics is to expedite the strategy; and it has no independent aim other than that of strategy¹⁶.

Views of Mao Tse-tung, the architect of Socialist China, may be referred in matters relating to the communist party programme. Mao emphatically asserted : "we communists do not conceal our political views, definitely and beyond all doubt, our future maximum programme is to carry China forward to socialism and communism"³⁰.

He explained that communist party "programme may be divided into two parts, the general and the specific"¹⁷. He further explained that "Our party must also have specific programme for each period based on general programme. Our

general programme of New Democracy will remain unchanged throughout the stage of the bourgeois-democratic revolution"¹⁸.

It is said that programme remains valid for the entire stage of a revolution. But it is not that it can not be amended or elaborated. Only the Party Congress or the Politbureau or Central Committee has the authority to do the same whenever necessary by properly i.e. critically understanding the existing national situation. However, a communist party can elaborate or amend its programme only the matters of national questions particularly the issues relating to tactical matters or for determining the nature of the given stage of revolution.

So, to the Communist Party, the programme must be scientific whose significance is beyond question. Lenin expressed his view in an article "Our Programme" that "There can be no strong socialist party without a revolutionary theory [embodied in the programme] which unites all socialists, from which they draw their convictions, and which they apply in their method of struggle and means of action"¹⁹. A scientific programme is a store-house of ideological weapon, which is resolute and uncompromising for the revolutionary war, and in absence of it, the revolutionary movement is deprived of the right to exist and is inevitably drawn sooner or later to political collapse²⁰.

A communist party adopts a programme and acts according to the guidance of the programme for the sake of the goals to

achieve which the communist party had come into existence, namely, for the socialist transformation of society by making revolution i.e., changing the production relation that existed in capitalism in particular and the mode of production in general.

At the time of the adoption of a programme a communist party must seriously take into consideration a practical and critical understanding of the given situation, i.e., national and international situations, in a way for which Marxist philosophy provides the basic outlook. Particularly, historical materialism indicated by Marx and Engels serves the basic foundation.

Section 3 Concept of Democracy Treated in Marxian Literature:
Sub-section a) i. Concept of Bourgeois-Democracy in the
thoughts of Marx and Engels

The programmatic positions of the CPI and the CPI(M) differ widely on the nature and type of 'democratic' revolution. This stage is obviously to precede the ultimate socialist revolution and is necessary for preparing the prerequisites for that revolution. This overwhelming issue has shrouded the whole gamut of Marxist thinking in India particularly since the 50's. In 1964 when the Communist Party of India was divided into the present Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) this issue became a hotly debated one.

Indeed, the nature and type of 'democratic' revolution and 'alliance of classforces' for this revolution are burning questions before the Marxists in India. Although various analytical syndromes start from almost the same factual points of departure still the points of arrival are wide apart. So, before going into details, it is necessary to place an overview on this matter from the writings of Marx himself, Engels and later Marxists. Their approaches to the democratic revolution in dealing with their specific situations are certainly not similar to the present Indian condition, but their basic theoretical postulations may

present an analytical paradigm which, at least, can help in tracing out the cause and their position behind the difference of understanding of the present CPI and CPI(M) in Indian context for democratic revolution.

Both Marx and Engels, themselves were fully pre-occupied with the problems of capitalism in Europe at their times. Although, side by side, they had formulated a broad theoretical framework for the belated presence of capitalism specially in Germany during the late 40's and 50's of the last century, still this variation was within the general limits of European capitalism. The only similarity between the German and Indian condition is that 'bourgeoisie' is weak in both the cases and unable to complete independently bourgeois-democratic revolution in their respective countries. Indeed, it is to be borne in mind that lateness of capitalism in Germany and the backwardness of capitalism in the ex-colonial countries like India are quite obviously different. Ex-colonial countries are backward in a different way, suffering from a different kind of backwardness, because of the all-important difference of colonialism. Therefore, any sort of linear or mechanical formulation only leads one into a methodological quandary.

Though capitalism as a world phenomenon emerges out of decadent feudal system yet its growth and development

is not uniformly spread over in all the countries at a single moment. Slowly growing but weak (for any reason) bourgeoisie historically strives to take the help of proletariat for early completion of bourgeois democratic revolution. Marx's reaction in this regard left a significant theoretical proposition. While he was writing his magnum opus the Capital, Marx dealt with not only the case of Germany but also left rough notes [later published as Grundrisse], where he took up the question of the notion of pre-capitalist societies²¹.

Besides, Marx viewed the Indian problem of his time, but that too was with a journalistic interest. In his time, he had foreseen the possibility of a capitalist transformation of India under British rule²², but when he had written about Indian situation, the Indian bourgeoisie had not yet grown; consequently, the relations of class-forces were entirely differently structured. Therefore, we have to get an idea of his view on bourgeois-democracy and its relation with the proletariat from his exhaustive study on Germany during the disastrous rising of 1848-49 and a telescoping idea in the 'Manifesto of the Communist Party' (written with Engels) and some other writings.

The Manifesto of the Communist Party declared that the communists everywhere were cooperating to unite and bring to an understanding the democratic parties²³ of all

countries and that the struggle for democracy is the first step in the workers' revolution. Marx and Engels viewed that bourgeois-democracy is the first step before the socialist revolution. For them, bourgeois-democracy which is characterised by universal suffrage, political liberties, rule of law and political competition, pre-eminence of legislative power, limited rights and freedom, freedom of speech, the press and of assembly and also the freedom of movement. However, all this can help the proletariat and their party to further its cause. But it is full of complexities with contradictory possibilities, i.e., it can turn with severe reaction to the proletariat.

Marx and Engels in their Address of the Central Council to the Communist League (1850)²⁴ give instructions to the disorganised remnant of Communists in Germany in the wake of disastrous rising in 1848-49. This document has a great significance in that it explicitly contains Marx's views covering the role to be played by a Communist Party in such circumstances. They advise that it is in cooperation with, but at the same time not losing the independence of the working class it is advisable to take cooperation from the petty bourgeois democrats and bourgeois liberals struggling against the weakened reactionary elements who have seen forced to yield limited concessions to the bourgeoisie.

They also worked out the strategy and tactics of the proletariat in the coming bourgeois-democratic revolution

in a different way. They laid "special stress in the Address on the need for the setting up of an independent proletarian party and for isolation from the petty bourgeois democrats"²⁵ without any "special union"²⁶ in the case of struggle against a common opponent. The workers' party would fight independently against the enemy when the democratic petty bourgeois would begin fighting the same enemy. Furthermore, they were not even interested in directing the workers' party to join the bourgeois-democratic government rather they argued for setting up of a "revolutionary workers' governments"²⁷ alongside the bourgeois ones.

Later this rich source of Marxist heritage was endowed to Lenin who carried forward the Marxist thought of his changed circumstances. Marx's theoretical position on bourgeois-democracy was translated in Russia when the bourgeoisie was rising at the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th centuries.

Marx and Engels' strategy for revolution in backward countries has taken an obvious importance from their strategy for backward Germany in 1848. Lenin was a close student of this writing on Germany in the 1848 period, and his disciples in other developing countries have generally followed suit. From the most obvious source, the Communist Manifesto, every one can recall, how concluding paragraphs forecast a certain telescoping of revolutions in Germany that we may label a "permanent revolution" (even though Marx and Engels adopted the term momentarily in 1850).

Frederic L. Bander observed very rightly that the Address of the Central Council to the Communist League (1850) of Marx & Engels "... has been extremely influential upon the way in which Lenin conducted the Bolsheviks during the year between the first Russian Revolution of 1905 and the February Revolution of 1917. This scenario has been repeated scores of time in other countries, as Communists seek to gain control on nationalists (i.e. bourgeoisie) against colonial and neo-colonial domination, as well as democratic opposition to bourgeois regimes"²⁸.

Section 3

Sub-section a)ii. Concept of Bourgeois-democracy in the Thoughts of Lenin and Stalin :

The great service Lenin rendered was that he creatively developed the Marxist teachings with reference to the changed historical conditions, and gave it a concrete form on the basis of his practical experience of the Russian revolutions and the international proletarian movement since the death of Marx and Engels. The milestones of his revolutionary struggles were the bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1905, the bourgeois-democratic revolution of February, 1917 and the victorious October Socialist Revolution of 1917.

"Leninism" Stalin remarked "is Marxism of the era of imperialism and the proletarian revolution. To be more exact, Leninism is the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution in general, the theory and tactics of the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular ... Lenin ... pursued his activities in the period of developed imperialism, in the period of the unfolding proletarian revolution, when the proletarian revolution had already triumphed in one country, had smashed bourgeois democracy and had ushered in the era of proletarian democracy ..."²⁹.

The goal of proletarian revolution which Lenin by his unparalleled leadership achieved was a culmination of successive revolutions. He started his struggle gradually for democracy against the Tsarist-military-feudal regime and then to replace the bourgeois democratic state by the People's Soviets in the final proletarian revolution. Naturally the stamp of his genius has marked many steps, tactical and strategic, in these struggles of the then Russian situation. These instructions have left rich revolutionary heritage to the successive generations of the Communists who dedicated themselves to the cause of proletarian revolution even in their changed perspectives in the later part of the twentieth century.

Since the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P in August 1903 to the February 1917 democracy was the objective. To

attain this objective it was necessary to destroy radically the economic and political power of the feudal lords and the Tsar upon which that system was based. It was seen from the outset that the democratic revolution connoted, to Lenin, as much an economic programme as a political programme. As a Marxist he knew that constitutional measures to alter the political balance of forces in the country would be meaningless and futile without a simultaneous assault on the economic basis which had so long sustained the autocracy. So, for him, the question of democratic revolution was the question whether the proletariat could dispose of sufficient real force to wipe out the landlords and the Tsarist autocracy and to prevent the bourgeoisie from vacillating in this course.

Lenin's theoretical position regarding the democratic revolution and participation of the proletariat therein is evident from his following remark. He argued, it "... was a stage in the transition to socialism and ... socialists had the duty to struggle for democratic rights, even if only a few of them could be fully attained"³⁰.

Moreover Lenin has left a landmark analysis important to the later Marxists of the future generations about the participation in the constitution controlled by the decaying feudal elements and relatively weak bourgeoisie. On the event of the 1st Russian Duma in 1905, the bourgeoisie participated wholeheartedly and it was pretending optimistically that the Russian Duma was no less than that of British Parliament.

Lenin warned the Russian working class and the toiling people that they must not be cheated by the bourgeois illusions. His analysis in this regard founded the basis for the course of his future action up to February 1917. Lenin explained ;

"By constitutional illusions we mean deceptive faith in a constitution. Constitutional illusions prevail when a constitution seems to exist but actually does not ; in other words, when affairs of the state are not administered in the way parliament decides ... the liberal bourgeoisie, dreading the extra-parliamentary struggle, spreads constitutional illusions even when parliaments are impotent ... social Democrats [i.e., members of RSDLP-Bolsheviks] stand for utilising the parliamentary struggle, for participating in parliament; but they ruthlessly expose 'parliamentary cretinism', that is, the belief that the parliamentary struggle is the sole or under all circumstances the main form of political struggle"³¹. (Emphasis original).

Repeatedly Lenin pointed out that the Russian Communists had to insist the point that so long as the autocracy remained undisturbed in its power, so long as the Duma remained 'a fig-leaf for the autocracy',³² and so long as the popular movement was growing in extensiveness and depth, the main object of attention must be the active preparation of an armed uprising. For him it was the obligation of the communists to be the first in the field to give out the slogan of last uprising which would sweep away the remnants to tsarist autocracy and feudalism for ever by the leadership.

of them relying on the bond between the proletariat and the rural proletariat. However, it was successful in Feb. 1917 by the Russian Communists under the guidance of Lenin.

To be brief, in the Russian case the tactical alliance with the bourgeoisie by the proletariat and the whole of peasantry upto the period 1905-07 was the first stage of the bourgeois-democratic revolution³³. In the next stage, the bourgeoisie specially the big bourgeoisie moved with the remnants of the tsarist autocracy and feudalism, formed the enemy circle against the radical aim of the proletariat and its close ally the poor peasantry and the rural proletariat and petty bourgeoisie which were actually interested to complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution. So it was proved that where the bourgeoisie was not capable of carrying the bourgeois-democratic revolution singly then it urgently sought the help of the proletariat, but at the moment of partial victory when some of their objectives would be fulfilled they turned against their erstwhile ally, the proletariat. It was Marx and then Lenin who uttered cautions for the proletariat about the very

objective nature of the bourgeoisie. They consequently drew up the course of action by which the proletariat and its close ally could fulfil the duty to carry the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the stage of completion, simply because their aim was to carry it further to the socialist stage. To the proletariat, the teachings of Lenin are this that they must be ready for permanent revolution.

In the above, the nature and type of the bourgeois-democratic revolution under the guidance of Russian proletariat and above all under the leadership of Lenin is briefly cited to arrive at a clear methodology about the nature, character and aim of the various participants in the democratic battles. The tactical alliance of the class forces and floor-crossing, betrayal of the bourgeoisie in the work of completion of the democratic revolution and the role of the proletariat to carry the revolution forward are indeed the most important tactical answers left for the future occasions in other countries. Leninism proved the teachings of Marx of 1848-51 as fully scientific, but what was more in Lenin was that he translated the theory of Marx into practice in the given Russian condition.

Lenin's analysis of bourgeois-democracy was theoretically based upon Marx's class analysis. He later developed

it and interpreted this in his own time when new historical phenomena significantly emerged such as imperialism. Following Marx's distinction between the revolutionary progressive and the reactionary phases in the development of the modern bourgeoisie, Lenin distinguished such phases.

The first stage from the French Revolution to the Franco-Prussian war was accordingly the period of the rise and complete triumph of the bourgeoisie, of bourgeois-democratic movement in general and of bourgeois-national movements in particular - the period in which the absolute feudal-absolutist institutions were destroyed. The second phase was that of the full domination and decline of the bourgeoisie towards reactionary even ultra reactionary finance capital. The third phase just beginning in (1907), according to Lenin, found the bourgeoisie in the same situation as the feudal lords were during the first period³⁴. What Lenin observed and concluded in general, is : "From a rising and progressive class the bourgeoisie has turned into a declining, decadent, and reactionary class"³⁵.

Basing on the above framework Lenin developed his analysis on capitalism in his memorable work, 'Imperialism : The Highest Stage of Capitalism (1915)' and many other discourses. In his life time he saw the first imperialist

war in 1914-19. All these were signs of, according to him, decadent bourgeois phase and it was the proper time of the rising of the proletarian movement.

The foregoing theoretical analysis on bourgeois -democracy briefly discussed from Lenin's writings is important to the communists as a method of further analysis for carrying forward proletarian movement. Particularly the strategy and tactics of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in general have a major implication to the colonial and dependent countries. Lenin gave significant attention to the problem of colonial countries in the later phase of his life. Particularly after 1920's Lenin turned his eyes to the problems of colonial and dependent countries. In the Second International Lenin duly discussed the problem of colonial countries. Actually the problem of a theory of revolution, particularly the bourgeois-democratic revolution, in the colonial and dependent countries was taken up very seriously by that International. The clarity of discussion came in the Second Congress in Moscow in 1920 in the course of debate between Lenin & M.N.Roy³⁶. Lenin produced a draft colonial thesis³⁷ which started on an implicit distinction between two qualitatively different situations, i.e., between Russian case and colonial case.

For Lenin Russia was a backward country in Europe, so in the Russian case, it was a question of applying Marx's

general paradigm of a revolution in 'late capitalist' system, such as Marx thought about the case of Germany with the logic of lateness. Quite obviously, Lenin considered the lateness of capitalism and the backwardness of the colonies as different. He developed an altogether different theory with quite a number of the Russian suppositions reversed. It was a qualitative break at least in theory. Lenin's methodological point about the colonial thesis was that - colonies were not just backward because they were suffering from a different kind of oppression by the ruler countries. So the formula of the Russian revolution could not be mechanically applied to the colonies and the dependent countries. It would be a transgression of the methodological basis of the Marxist dialectic.

Various commentators have subsequently interpreted Lenin's 'National and Colonial Question'. Here some important points are worth mentioning which have been considered as providing general guideline to the backward colonial and dependent countries. First of all the thesis called for "the closest alliance with soviet Russia, of all national and colonial liberation movements"³⁸. Another important task is "with regard to the more backward states and nations, in which feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant relations predominate, it is particularly important to bear in mind : first, that all communist parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation

movement in these countries, and that the duty of rendering the most active assistance rests primarily with the workers of the country the backward nation is colonially or financially dependent on"³⁹ .

In this thesis Lenin further stated, "the need, in backward countries, to give special support to the peasant movement against the land owners, against land proprietorship, against all manifestations or survivals of feudalism, and to strive to lend the peasant movement the most revolutionary character ..."⁴⁰

Here Lenin advised the completion of the first stage of bourgeois democratic revolution and his further advice was to "struggle against attempts to give a communist colouring to bourgeois democratic liberation trends in backward countries"⁴¹ . At this time there was a trend in this congress that revolution in the colonies must be a communist revolution⁴² . This trend was mainly held by M.N.Roy.

Lenin asserts in his thesis,

"the Communist International should support bourgeois-democratic national movements in colonial and backward countries only on condition that, in the countries, the element of future proletarian parties, which will be communist not only in name, are brought together and trained to understand their special tasks, i.e.,

those of the struggle against the bourgeois-democratic movements within their own nations. The Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries, but should not merge with it, and should under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even if it is in its most embryonic form⁴³.

Lenin, the successful leader of the successive bourgeois-democratic and socialist revolutions, had grasped the full significance of the movement for colonial emancipation. His ideas on the proper tactics for harnessing the national revolution in Asia to the overall goal of world revolution had been taking place gradually since 1905 and in the Second Congress of the Communist International in July 1920, his views on the 'National and Colonial Question' were formulated in a set of theses, and formally adopted by the International with minor modifications of this 'Draft Theses'.

Historians recorded the controversy developed in this Congress on the proper tactics for bourgeois-democratic revolution or national revolution in the colonial and backward countries mainly between Lenin & M.N.Roy. The latter was an Indian but formally, the Mexican delegate to that Congress.

Roy's original draft⁴⁴ was a total theoretical alternative to Lenin's thesis. Roy expected the bourgeoisie to betray national revolution and go over to the side of imperialism. For him it was a predetermined certainty that the economic interests of the exploiting classes - of the imperialist and the colonial bourgeoisie - were similar. To Roy contradictions between imperialism and the colonial bourgeoisie were not too fundamental as might help the colonial liberation movement. Therefore, in regard to the colonial liberation movement he was in favour of the consistent revolutionary stream under the leadership of the proletariat, expected to be the hegemonic force in the close future rather than of the movements under bourgeois leadership.

Roy explained the Indian society by applying Marxism straight without any qualification of the specificity of its condition. "India was not under the feudal system"⁴⁵. Feudalism was destroyed peacefully by the induction of British capitalism and the emergence of indigeneous bourgeoisie. This breakdown of feudalism gave rise to a strange capitalism, almost a capitalism by proxy. The Indian economy was controlled by British Commercial capital, not by the indigenous bourgeoisie. As a matter of fact he had built his theory that feudalism was insignificant and had no remarkable dominance in Indian society. For him it

generated a curious situation, existence of capitalistic exploitation, without a capitalistic socio-economic structure. The Indian society, for Roy, was divided into four distinct classes - the landed aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, the intellectuals, the petty peasantry and the working class including the landless peasantry⁴⁶. Perhaps it was a simplified model of the class structure calculated to make the Indian and European capitalist societies alike⁴⁷.

Roy could not see the historically progressive nature of the indigenous bourgeoisie in the liberation struggle in India. Even he did not believe that there could be any irreconcilable contradiction between the British and the Indian capitalist classes. Its (bourgeoisie's) ideologies and practices, therefore, were calculated to bring pressure on the imperialists by the help of the masses for simply accomodating a berth in the economic field. Therefore, Roy rejected the movement led by Gandhiji on behalf of the Indian National Congress as it was not a movement for bourgeois democracy, nor a socially based movement. For him, "The movement for national liberation is a struggle of the native middle class against the economic and political monopoly of the imperialist bourgeoisie"⁴⁸. (Emphasis original). So for him, it was not a popular movement. He went on saying that "when the latter [the working class] will begin the struggle earnestly it is expected to be more of a social nature than a political

movement for national liberation. Since 1918, the Indian Movement has entered this stage. It may still have the appearance of a national struggle introducing the masses of the population, but fundamentally, it is a social strife, the revolt of the exploited against the exploiting class, irrespective of nationality" ⁴⁹.

Roy considered that the leaders of the Comintern Congress, basically the Soviet leaders, were to go much too far in conciliating the bourgeoisie, and did not insist sufficiently on the leadership of the proletariat in the Asian revolution. On the other hand, he affirmed categorically that the key role to the world revolution lay in Asia, and that the European proletariat would never accomplish anything until a prior upheaval in the colonies had shattered the foundations of the capitalist order and prepared the ground for its overthrow. Lenin had long fought the tendency of European Social Democrats, including even such radicals as Rosa Luxemburg, to minimize the revolutionary capacities of the non-European peoples and consider the latter as mere passive objects waiting deliverance at the hands of the European proletariat. He was not prepared, however to follow Roy to the opposite extreme. Finally the Congress adopted a position which was basically that of Lenin, with some limited and largely verbal concessions to Roy. Over tactics, it was laid down

that in the colonial countries the communists, both the International and the local, should collaborate with the "bourgeois-democratic" movements (as Lenin had written in his original Draft). Immediately later, on 28th July 1920, in the colonial thesis finally adopted, there was one important change. The words, "bourgeois-democratic" changed into "national revolutionary" or sometimes "revolutionary liberation movements" - a change fraught with contradictory possibilities⁵⁰.

Subsequently there had been intensive debates on exactly how to interpret the significance of this change; whether it was a mere terminological change to pacify Roy, or a more basic analytical shift. Somebody explained that Lenin made quite clear in his report to the Congress that this change was purely formal, since by the nature of things any nationalist movements in the colonies would be of a bourgeois-democratic character⁵¹. Again, on the contrary, it was apparently quite a substantial change, and could have serious applicatory implications in concrete practice⁵². A Soviet economist, Y. Verga in the late 60's thought it was merely a verbal change⁵³. According to him, it did not change the formulation fundamentally, it was nothing more than a terminological manoeuvre to get round Roy's objections. All colonial movements were led by the bourgeoisie or at least, two most important ones of

that period, in China and India, were. According to Verga, the concepts 'national revolutionary' and 'bourgeois -democratic' were interchangeable. In the final analysis, it is seen that Lenin specifically asked for more empirical material for the construction of a theoretically valid and empirically correct colonial thesis for the guidance of the Comintern. Later what was seen is that history was in favour of Lenin's in the long and arduous battle of the colonial liberation movement.

A few years later, specially after the demise of Lenin in 1924 a kind of development was found in the colonial China, that there, the communists who were participating with the bourgeoisie in the antiimperialist struggle were expelled by the Kuomintang, the party of the Chinese bourgeoisie. At the first sight it was a kind of development that may not seem consistent with Lenin's thesis of 1920. Naturally and inevitably the Chinese question figured in the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928 in a big way, because all other colonies were actually being translated into the language of Chinese politics.

"The findings of the Sixth Congress were, in a way, paradoxical. Of course, every body knew that the debate on China was an implied debate on the entire colonial question. Chinese experience naturally determined the later Marxist assessment of the colonial situation. The Sixth Congress thesis implied that the

conditions had sufficiently altered to make a 180° turn from Lenin's position in the Second Congress"⁵⁴ .

The thesis started with the assessment that the internal situation had changed in terms of "the economic & social structure"⁵⁵ - "strengthening of elements of capitalist and industrial development, intensification of the agrarian crisis, growth of the proletariat 'and' intensified deprivation of the peasantry"⁵⁶ . The external situation had also changed in two lines : intensification of aggressiveness of the imperialist countries on the one hand, and growth of the anti-imperialist power of the Soviet Union, on the other. As a result of this change, colonial movements of the future were to develop anti-imperialist emancipatory struggling front with the forces of internal class struggle.

The debate over the Chinese question was historically important because the expulsion of the Chinese communists by the Chinese bourgeoisie from the anti-colonial struggling front forced the colonial question into the face of debate with the earlier thesis formulated by Lenin and adopted by the Second Congress in 1920.

The thesis of the Sixth Comintern Congress noted that "the hegemony of the proletariat in the national-revolutionary movement finally impelled the native

bourgeoisie in the camp of reaction"⁵⁷. Besides, by the augmentation of the agrarian revolution the petty bourgeoisie also joined the reactionary camp⁵⁸. After all, these were the positive developments, the thesis welcomed, in the liberation movement in the colonies.

The basic understanding of the colonial question in the Second Congress had gone into a sea change in the Sixth Congress. Not only the terminological change (i.e. from bourgeois-democratic revolution in the Draft thesis to the national revolution in the final thesis of the said Congress) made by Lenin, but also actually the concept was almost entirely altered in the due course of time. Now in the Sixth Congress, the composition of class forces for liberation movement was radically realigned which showed a marked contrast of Lenin's Thesis in the Second Congress. Lenin thought of the proletariat, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, and even a section of the national bourgeoisie to be a part of the movement. Lenin found dualism among the ranks of bourgeoisie in the colonies. So for him it was a predictable behaviour that ultimately the bourgeoisie would take shelter in the reaction camp of the imperialists for fear of the growing upsurge of the proletariat. Then there were only the proletariat and the peasantry with the communist party as the hegemonic force.

The Sixth Congress remarkably altered the perspective of the revolution included the hegemony of the communist party as a political precondition in the national revolution.

Historically the findings of the Sixth Comintern Congress took the support of the Chinese case of 1927 and the first great antiimperialist struggle in India (1919-22) which ended in the betrayal of the case of the national revolution by the Indian Bourgeoisie. The thesis of the Sixth Congress which contained a section specifically on India which visualised and explained the Indian situation of 1919-22 as "The real threat to British domination comes, not from the bourgeois camp, but from the growing mass movement of the Indian workers"⁵⁹ and in the maturing of an agrarian revolution, a forcing of the Indian reality into the Chinese pattern. The thesis saw a "collapse of the national-revolutionary movement and gradual decline of bourgeois nationalism".

The findings of the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928 for the colonial question had left a bunch of radical and unilinear oversimplified concepts, had no match with the reality of Indian condition. It overlooked, for example, the basic reality of the Indian movement. "The national movement in India presented a much more complex picture here in terms of the class patterns of leader and the led. The

movement movement was no doubt a mass movement. The bourgeoisie supplied the leadership, the mass provided the ordinary cadre. It was patently unreasonable, in the Indian case, to think of a text book division between the bourgeois movement and the mass movement. Actually, the bourgeois movement had a mass following; the mass movement had a bourgeois leadership. It was one movement, not two"⁶⁰.

'Theses on Revolutionary Movements in the colonies and the semi-colonies' in the Comintern and National and Colonial Questions of the Sixth Comintern Congress convened in Moscow from 17 July to 1 September, 1928, had opened with a formal declaration, actually quite misleading, of continuity with the theses of the Second Comintern Congress held in Moscow in 1920. "Methodologically, and in the abstract sense what the new theses attempted was not wrong. The basic methodal and epistemic tenets of Marxism sanction a reservation of conclusions if the situation has qualitatively changed. The defect of theses was not that it attempted a change. It was that it saw a long-term and essential change, where there was none. So the defect of then theses was empirical, not methodical"⁶¹.

In the end, this line of argument actually made a series of collapse of the specifics of various revolutions at various levels of historical development and national particularisms and denied Lenin's basic theory of a differentiation of levels leading to differentiated models of social change.

Section 3

Sub-section b) i. Mao's New Democracy (People's Democracy)

Mao Tse-tung, the Chief architect and leading theoretician of modern socialist China whose adoption of Marxism-Leninism to Chinese condition has a greater significance to the cause of revolutionary movements towards the road of socialism in the Third World and in the Asian countries in particular.

His major significance lies in the continuation of the well-established Leninist principle that revolution in a pre-capitalist country must have two stages a 'bourgeois-democratic' and a 'socialist' one⁶².

Concept of New Democracy :

In his own country, Mao proceeded to declare that in China the first of these would take the form of what he called 'New-Democracy'⁶³. This new-democracy would be distinguished from the 'old' bourgeois-democratic revolutions of Europe and America by the fact that it would result "not in a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie but in a dictatorship of the united front of all revolutionary classes under the leadership of the proletariat"⁶⁴.

At the time of Mao, the Chinese society was colonial, semi-colonial and semifeudal, and the principal enemies were imperialism and feudalism. The tasks of the revolution were to overthrow these two enemies by means of a national and democratic revolution, in which the bourgeoisie sometimes could take part, because the edge of revolution directed against imperialism and feudalism and not against capitalism and capital, private property in general even if the big bourgeoisie might often betray the revolution and become its enemy; the character of Chinese revolution in this stage was a democratic variant of bourgeois democratic revolution⁶⁵. Then the revolution was to be carried forward to the second stage, in which a socialist society would be established.

The forces behind the new democratic revolution were "the proletariat, the peasantry, the intelligentsia and the other petty bourgeoisie which undoubtedly constitute the basic forces determining China's fate"⁶⁶.

The role of the Chinese bourgeoisie in the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle, Mao assessed in the following manner. "Being a bourgeoisie in a colonial and semi-colonial country and oppressed by imperialism, the Chinese bourgeoisie retains a certain revolutionary quality at certain periods and to a certain degree ... and it may ally itself with the proletariat, and the petty-bourgeoisie

against such enemies as it is ready to oppose"⁶⁷. He further argued, "Here the task of the proletariat is to form a united front with the national bourgeoisie against imperialism and the bureaucratic and warlord governments without overlooking its revolutionary quality"⁶⁸.

Mao has explained the dual character of the Chinese bourgeoisie when they are confronted by dual enemy. They may unite with the workers and peasants against imperialists and feudal lords, but when the workers and peasants are awakened they may turn round to united with their erstwhile enemy against the workers and peasants⁶⁹. He goes on saying, "This is the general rule applicable to the bourgeoisie everywhere in the world, but the trait is more pronounced in the Chinese bourgeoisie"⁷⁰.

The leadership for the new-democratic revolution, Mao preserved very significantly for the Chinese proletariat and not the Chinese bourgeoisie. Mao explained, "In China, it is perfectly clear that whoever can lead the people in overthrowing imperialism and the forces of feudalism can win the people's confidence, because these two, and specially, imperialism, are the national enemies of the people ... [but] History has proved that the Chinese bourgeoisie can not fulfil this responsibility, which inevitably falls upon the shoulders of the proletariat"⁷¹.

In the ultimate analysis Mao reached the conclusion that "The Chinese democratic republic which we desire to establish now must be a democratic republic under the joint dictatorship of all antiimperialist and anti-feudal people led by the proletariat, that is a new-democratic republic ..."⁷² .

In short, the concept of Mao's new-democracy is vastly different from that of the democratic revolutions of Europe and America in that it results not in the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie but in the joint dictatorship of all the revolutionary classes under the leadership of the proletariat.

Again it also differs from a socialist revolution, in that it overthrows the rule of the imperialists, feudal lords and reactionaries in China but it does not destroy any section of capitalists who were capable of contributing to the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal struggle. So the Chinese revolution taken as a whole involves two-fold task - the new-democratic revolution in the first stage, and proletarian socialist revolution in the next stage⁷³ . For him, the Chinese society can advance only through such revolutions, there is no other way⁷⁴ .

Historical Analysis made by Mao to Reach the Conclusion of the Concept of New Democracy :

Mao's theoretical conclusion in 'new democracy' as an intervening stage towards socialist revolution, can be understood by his critical understanding of the Chinese history and his assessment of the changing world. Now let it be examined how has this historical characteristic, i.e., the concepts of 'new-democracy' come into being. To justify this answer Mao goes over to the study of the historical development of China and of the world.

According to Mao, "A brief study of the historical development of China and the world shows that this characteristic [of new-democracy] did not emerge immediately after the Opium War, but took shape later, after the first imperialist World War and the October Revolution in Russia"⁷⁵ .

The colonial, semi-colonial and semi-feudal character of the Chinese society justifies that the Chinese revolution must be divided into two stages. The first step is to change the colonial, semi-colonial and semi-feudal form of society into an independent, democratic society. The second is to carry the revolution forward and build a socialist society⁷⁶ .

Mao analysed the Chinese history. The preparatory for the first step began with the Opium War in 1840, i.e., when

as the alignment of revolutionary forces is concerned, it forms part of the proletarian socialist world revolution. Therefore, for him, after 1917 the Chinese revolution of its first stage must be new-democratic revolution which is to be completed to go to the next socialist stage.

Mao emphasised much on the first imperialist World War and the first victorious socialist revolution which changed the whole course of world history and ushered in a new era in which the world capitalist front has collapsed in one part of this earth. It has revealed its decadence everywhere else, in which the remaining capitalist part can not survive without plundering the wealth of the colonies and semi-colonies, in which the socialist state has been established and has proclaimed its readiness to give active support to the liberation movement of the colonies and the semi-colonies⁷⁹ .

Mao goes on saying, in this era, any revolution in any colony or semi-colony that is directed against imperialism, i.e., international bourgeoisie or international capitalism, no longer comes within the old category of bourgeois-democratic world revolution, but within the new category. It is no longer part of the old bourgeois, or capitalist world revolution, but is part of the new world revolution, the proletarian socialist world revolution. Such revolutionary colonies and semi-colonies can no longer be

regarded as allies of the counter revolutionary front of world capitalism, they have become allies of the revolutionary front of world socialism. Therefore, such a revolution inevitably becomes part of the proletarian-socialist world revolution⁸⁰ .

The concept of 'new-democracy', Mao advocates, as a general theory or concept applicable to the colonial and semi-colonial countries where the imperialist domination is an existing fact.

In support of Mao's concept of 'new-democracy' as a general theory, Liu Shao-Chi wrote "The thought of Mao Tse-tung ... make great and useful contributions to the struggle for emancipation of the peoples of all countries in general, and of the peoples of the East in particular"⁸¹ . Therefore, it meant that when the Chinese revolution was victorious the masses of many colonial countries would follow the example of China and similar victories of their own, because all these revolutions in colonial and semi-colonial countries would have a 'new democratic' character like that of China. However, this statement has been interpreted simply as an affirmation of the solidarity uniting all dependent countries, and of the family resemblance characterizing their political forms⁸² .

In people's democracy, Mao states "who are the people ? At the present stage in China, they are the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. These classes, led by the working class and the Communist Party, unite to form their own state and elect their own government; they enforce their dictatorship over [the stooges of] imperialism - the landlord class and bureaucratic bourgeoisie, as well as representative of those classes"⁸³ . He spells out the concept of people's democratic dictatorship in this way. "The combination of these two aspects, democracy for the people and dictatorship over the reactionaries, is the people's democratic dictatorship"⁸⁴ .

Mao states "The people's democratic dictatorship is based on the alliance on the working class, the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie, and mainly on the alliance of the workers and peasants ... these two classes are the main force in overthrowing imperialism and the ... reactionaries"⁸⁵ .

The people's democratic dictatorship needs the leadership of the working class. For it is only the working class that is most farsighted, most selfless and most thoroughly revolutionary. The entire history of revolution proves that without the leadership of the working class revolution fails and that with the leadership of the working class revolution

triumphs⁸⁶ . Mao stresses upon the role of the working class leadership, on the epoch of imperialism, for the unity over the imperialism, feudalism and big bourgeoisie and for establishing people's democratic state or new democratic state. Working class and the peasantry are the close allies. The transition from new democracy to socialism also depends mainly upon their alliance.

Mao states "apart from who leads whom, the principle of democracy stated above corresponds as a general political programme to what we call People's Democracy or New Democracy"⁸⁷ . Therefore, there is no difference between people's democracy and new democracy. Mao summed up in this manner "it is the people's democratic dictatorship under the leadership of the working class (through the Communist Party) as based upon the alliance of workers and peasants. This dictatorship must unite as one with the international revolutionary forces. This is our formula, our principal experience, our main programme"⁸⁸ .

Role of Peasantry in the Democratic Revolution may be a Lesson to the Colonial, Semi-colonial and Backward Countries :

The role of peasantry in the democratic revolution particularly in the countries where feudalistic features

are prominent has been given importance. In the context of democratic revolution in China, i.e., in the stage of New Democracy, Mao stated "... the Chinese revolution is essentially a peasant revolution and that the resistance to Japan now going on has essentially peasant resistance. Essentially, the politics of New Democracy means giving the peasants their rights⁸⁹ " where the economy and polity of a society is predominantly dominated by the strong presence of feudal and semi-feudal relations of production and necessity of peasant participation in the revolution has been acknowledged. J.V.Stalin once delivered a speech Concerning the National Question in Yugoslavia in the Yugoslav Commission of E.C.C.I. March 30, 1925; he stated, "... the peasantry constitute the main army of the national movement, ... there is no powerful national movement without the peasant army, nor can there be. That is what is meant when it is said that, in essence the national question is a peasant question"⁹⁰ . [Emphasis original].

While assessing the role of the national forces participated in the anti-Japanese War Mao observed, "The anti-Japanese war is essentially a peasant war ... And essentially it is the peasants who provide everything that sustains the resistance to Japan and keeps us going. By 'essentially' we mean basically, not ignoring the other sections of the people, as Stalin himself has explained.

As every school boy knows, 80 per cent of China's populations are peasants. So the peasant problem becomes the basic problem of the Chinese revolution"⁹¹.

[Emphasis original]. But he reserves the duty of leadership in the hands of the working class as that is the most farsighted and selfless revolutionary force among all the forces in the revolution. In the epoch of imperialism, in no country can any other class lead any genuine revolution to victory⁹². Therefore, under the leadership of the working class, the peasantry constitutes the main & strongest force in the countries where feudal, semi-feudal elements are present and the spread of capitalism is limited to degree due to circumstances - the presence of imperialists from the above, and the existence of feudal and semi-feudal forces.

In formulating tactics Mao was very categorical that poor peasants & rural proletariat are the vanguards of the revolution⁹³ where the middle peasants are always gripped with vacillating attitude and they think that the revolution will not bring them much good. Mao stated, "If it essential for the peasant associations to get the middle peasants to join and to do a good deal more explanatory work among them"⁹⁴. Mao has deserved, that "the rich peasants are not keen on doing any work for the [revolutionary] associations. They remain inactive throughout"⁹⁵, because they are not the

benefited section in the peasant revolution. Although the rich peasant stratum is exploited by the imperialist and bourgeois market and landlords (warlords) still this stratum does not see any effective provision in the peasant revolution. Therefore, the demand of the situation is to make it inactive in siding with the reactionaries in the peasant revolution in the democratic stage.

This China's experience serves as a lesson before the communists of the countries where imperialist, feudal, semi-feudal forces are strong.

Relation and Impact of the World Proletarian Revolution :

Mao claimed that his theory of 'new democracy' is a general theory emerged after the first World War and the Socialist Revolution of Russia in 1917, and it has world wide applicability where imperialist domination is a standing fact. He further goes on saying that "The correct thesis the Chinese revolution (i.e., new-democratic revolution) is a part of world revolution"⁹⁶. He argued, "The World Revolution' no longer refers to the old world revolution, for the old bourgeois revolution has long been a thing of the past, it refers to the new world revolution, the socialist world revolution. Similarly, to form 'part of' means to form part not of the old bourgeois but of the new

socialist revolution. This is a tremendous change unparalleled in the history of China and the world"⁹⁷ .

Mao acknowledges that his political thesis has been formulated with help from Stalin. He wrote, "This correct thesis [the new-democracy] as advanced by the Chinese Communists is based on Stalin's theory"⁹⁸, Mao quoted Stalin where Stalin wrote an article (in 1918) commemorating the first anniversary of the October Revolution, Stalin wrote;

"The great world-wide significance of the October Revolution chiefly consists in the fact that :

i) It has widened the scope of the national question and converted it from the particular question of combating national oppression in Europe into the general question of emancipating the oppressed people's, colonies and semi-colonies from imperialism;

ii) It has opened up wide possibilities for their emancipation and the right paths towards it, has thereby greatly facilitated the cause of the emancipation of the oppressed peoples of the West and the East, and has drawn them into the common current of the victorious struggle against imperialism;

iii) It has thereby erected a bridge between the socialist West and the enslaved East, having created a new front, a revolution against world imperialism, extending from the proletarians of the West, through the Russian Revolution, to the oppressed people of the East"⁹⁹ .
[Emphasis original].

Mao further wrote, "since writing this article, Stalin has again and again expounded the theory that revolutions

in the colonies and semi-colonies have broken away from the old category and become part of the proletarian-socialist revolution"¹⁰⁰.

Mao states, "The new-democratic revolution is a part of the world proletarian-socialist revolution, for it resolutely opposes imperialism, i.e., international capitalism"¹⁰¹. To oppose international capitalism i.e., imperialism the revolutionary forces headed by the proletariat in the colonial and semi-colonial countries seeks to advance towards socialist revolution through the completion of new-democratic revolution which is what Mao has described as proletarian-socialist in character in lieu of old bourgeois type. Mao states "This revolution has the proletariat of the capitalist countries as its main force and the oppressed peoples of the colonies and semi-colonies as its allies"¹⁰². Mao explains it "No matter what classes parties or individuals in an oppressed nation join the revolution, and no matter whether they themselves are conscious of the point or understand it, so long as they oppose imperialism, their revolution becomes part of the proletarian - socialist revolution and they become its allies"¹⁰³. Mao Tse-tung views his theory of new-democracy is not an isolated fact applicable to the Chinese condition only, but is an extensive phenomenon which has emerged after the first imperialist world war and the first socialist

revolution in Soviet Russia in 1917. From them, according to Mao, it is applicable to the colonial, semi-colonial and dependent countries of the Third World with necessary consideration of their national peculiarities. Again this concept has a definitive link or itself a part of the world-proletarian-socialist revolution, a variant of, or rather in place of old bourgeois-democracy, simply because it opposes the world imperialism and capitalism. He has argued this theory of 'New-Democracy' and its follow up actions leading to the socialist revolution have full integrity with the communist-internationalism rejecting the claim of his close comrades both inside and outside his country who claimed his theory put forward a 'Chinese path'.

Mao's Debt to and Departure from Marx and Lenin ;

Mao's debt to and departure from Lenin the leader of the socialist revolution in Russia has been the subject of prolonged polemics participated by both the Marxist and non-Marxist scholars.

As Marxists both Lenin and Mao regard Marxism as a scientifically-based system of philosophical, economic and socio-political views; it is the doctrine of the cognition and transformation of the world. But the difference is apparently in the application of Marxism to the peculiarly different societies. Both of them face different subjective

and objective conditions of their respective national societies to transform them into the stage of socialism.

Lenin being the fore-runner, Mao's debt to him is obvious. He owes to Lenin, among other things, very significantly the Leninist principle of two stages of revolution (in a country where democratic revolution has not bloomed, i.e., pre-capitalist phenomena are dominant), the first stage becomes the bourgeois-democratic (or its variant, to Mao, it is a new-democratic) and the second stage is the socialist.

Mao owes to Lenin the theory of 'imperialism' which explains how normally hostile classes, for example the different sections of bourgeoisie, in colonial and semi-colonial or dependent countries are united by a common interest in opposing foreign exploitation. In this democratic revolution against imperialist, feudal and semi-feudal forces a broad alliance can be made on the basis of joint revolutionary democratic dictatorship with the bourgeoisie led by the proletariat¹⁰⁴.

Besides, Mao has debt to Lenin for the idea of an alliance between the proletariat and certain other classes particularly the peasantry, as the form of state power during the 'democratic' phase of the revolution. More, even to Lenin's disciple, Stalin, Mao owes the formula of the 'four-class block' (workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie and

national bourgeoisie) which lies at the heart of his theory of 'people's democratic dictatorship',¹⁰⁵.

Mao got the rich source of heritage of Marxism from Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. He gathered, very scientifically, together all the scattered elements, i.e., raw materials in the treasure of Marxism and transformed them scientifically suited to the condition of China for furthering Chinese revolution in particular and world revolution in general in the era of decaying imperialism. It is not improper to say that Mao's thought is a variant of Leninism, because Mao has taken over unchanged elements from Lenin and transformed them for changed circumstances. Here lies the departure of Mao from his heritage. It is argued that "... though much of this Leninist and Stalinist heritage is still apparent in Mao Tse-tung's thought, it has been transformed into something which is not only different but which has its own characteristic unity"¹⁰⁶. Besides, Lenin had developed the general theory of imperialism and had spelt out, at the second Comintern Congress, the detailed tactics of collaboration with 'bourgeois' nationalists to be applied by communists in colonial and semi-colonial areas¹⁰⁷. However, this was in theory in Lenin, but for Mao all such compromise with the 'bourgeoisie' and 'nationalism' were dictated by necessity rather than by choice and he had to work with it practically. Again, for Lenin and Stalin, the necessity of compromise with the national bourgeoisie and

petty bourgeoisie was a mere passing phase in the development of revolution, but for Mao, it was possible to go all the way with them at least until the cultural Revolution was successful.

Critics further argued, Lenin was European primarily interested in world revolution, who regarded the very existence of national difference as a misfortune, though as a realist he was quite prepared to compromise with nationalism if in this way he could harness the revolutionary energies of the colonial countries to his larger goal. Mao, on the other hand, for whom nationalism is not a necessary evil but an authentic value in itself. If there can be no doubt that Mao is authentically nationalist, it is scarcely to question that he is also authentically revolutionary he belongs to the Leninist tradition¹⁰⁸.

Mao's subjective orientation was fully made up with the Marxist and more often by the Leninist principles and the objective understanding was made up with the existing Chinese society and the impact of imperialist and semi-feudal influence on it.

However, there are some of the main aspect of Mao's thought regarding the democratic revolution before going to the socialist revolution relevant to the dependent countries of the Third World and Asiatic countries in particular.

Mention may be made in this place that Mao was confident in judging the objective conditions of Asia and

India in particular to utilise China's experience in launching the democratic revolution with the tactical alliance of forces resemble to that China. Mao wrote "The Indian people is one of the great Asian people, with long history and vast population; in many respects, her past fate and her path to the future resemble those of China. I firmly believe that India, relying on the ... Communist Party ... and the unity and struggle of all Indian patriots, will certainly not remain long under the yoke of imperialism and its collaborators. Like free China, a free India will one day emerge in the socialist and people's democratic family ..."¹⁰⁹ Mao's conviction was that India's path of revolution would be quite nearly similar to that of China, although, as a Marxist, he believed the influence of national peculiarities sometime might steer the revolution in a non-conventional way still he emphasised the basic strategic policies which might be similar to that of China particularly the class alliances.

Section 3

Sub-section b) ii. Other National Aspects (National Democracy)

The seminal idea of the two-stages of revolution - one 'democratic' and another 'socialist' has been recognised as well-established Marxist-Leninist principle for social

change. The debate over the democratic revolution has been the part of ideological and tactical exercise since it attaches many national peculiarities. Both Marx and Lenin were of the opinion that democratic revolution in the European countries was 'bourgeois-democratic revolution'. This theorem holds good for the European countries where bourgeoisie emerged as a strong social force and led the revolution against the feudal and monarchical rule. For this revolution the bourgeoisie sought the help of the working class¹¹⁰, peasants and intelligentsia and was successful in establishing its hegemony over all other classes. Therefore, the immediate stage of social change, according to Marx and Lenin, was socialist stage by the leadership of the proletariat and its party - the communist party in alliance with the peasantry against the bourgeois government.

But the case of the Asian and other colonially ruled countries was quite different. Particularly the bourgeoisie in these countries are not sufficiently matured largely due to the imperialist pressure over them. Therefore the dynamics of social change does not necessarily follow what has been prescribed for the European countries.

The social paradigm of the Asiatic, African & Latin American countries is quite different from that of the European counterpart. The bourgeoisie of these countries is not powerful enough to launch decisive struggle against the imperialist, feudal and landlord power-pressure. Imperialism

and feudalism with their variants exist in these countries. They wield maximum state power. The bourgeoisie of these countries, therefore, is not capable of completing bourgeois-democratic revolution. Naturally the burden of democratic revolution rests with the other progressive sections which emerged in the meantime to carry out the struggle for socialist society.

Another historical fact, the October Socialist Revolution of Soviet Russia (1917) has paved the way for the organisation of the proletarian party, i.e., Communist and Workers' Party which has emerged as a fully revolutionary force. In this changed context the democratic revolution must not be the same old bourgeois-democratic. For the first time, Mao Tse-Tung practised it and was successful in the Chinese condition. He coined this democratic revolution as 'New Democracy' or People's Democracy¹¹¹.

The revolutionary forces for the new democracy or people's democracy are "the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. These classes, led by the working class and the communist party, unite to form their own government, they enforce their dictatorship over [the agents of] ... imperialism - the landlord class and bureaucratic bourgeoisie as well as representatives of those classes"¹¹².

Mao states "the people's democratic dictatorship is based on the alliance of the working class, the peasantry

and the urban petty bourgeoisie, and mainly on the alliance of the workers and peasants ... These two classes are the main force in overthrowing imperialism and the ... reactionaries"¹¹³.

Mao summed up, in this manner : "... it is the people's democratic dictatorship under the leadership of the working class (through the communist party) and based upon the alliance of workers and peasants. This dictatorship must unite as one with the international revolutionary force. This is our formula, our principal experience, our main programme"¹¹⁴.

The Chinese experience of people's democracy or new democracy has got definite followings in the Asiatic, African & Latin American countries with states ruled by imperialist, feudal & landlord and big bourgeoisie. The Asiatic countries, particularly the countries like India which are recently liberated from direct colonial rule are yet to finish democratic revolution. This is the opinion of the national and international communist circles. Naturally the communists of these countries get impetus from the new democratic revolution practiced in the Chinese soil, although they have an earlier example - the bourgeois-democratic revolution of Lenin.

What is more, the communists of India and some other Asiatic countries are in search of democratic revolutionary strategy which will be suitable to their peculiar and particular national condition. In India, some of them

(Communists in the CPI-M) proposed the people's democratic revolution, a prototype of Chinese example¹¹⁵ and some of them (communists in the CPI) argued for national democratic revolution as a variant of bourgeois-democratic revolution¹¹⁶. The strategy and tactics of these two types of democratic revolution are quite different. Therefore, at least a brief discussion is warranted to know the respective programmes for democratic revolution they preach for.

National Democracy

The concept of "national democracy" as opposed to people's democracy has its genesis in the Second Congress of the Communist International held in Moscow in 1920¹¹⁷. The thesis of the Second Congress of the Communist International (which was also called as Second Comintern Congress) marked the intense debate over the role of communist party regarding its strategic and tactical relationship with the national bourgeoisie. The role of national bourgeoisie in the colonial countries, Lenin's thought, was always opposed to imperialism and colonialism. Although M.N.Roy, an Indian Communist but Mexican delegate in that Congress held the view that the bourgeoisie in a colony to betray the national revolution and go over to the side of imperialism during the mass upsurge of emancipatory struggle.

But Lenin had an altogether different understanding regarding the colonial issues which had some influence of the Russian experience. He was not categorically against the bourgeois-leadership in the colonial liberation movement. The Draft theses called for "the closest alliance with Soviet Russia, of all national and colonial liberation movements"¹¹⁸. It exhorted all communist parties in the colonies to "assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries" to give "special support to the peasant movement against the landowners, against the landed proprietorship, and against all manifestations or survivals of feudalism"¹¹⁹. He further advised to "struggle attempts to give a communist colouring to bourgeois-democratic liberation trends in backward countries"¹²⁰. Lenin further suggested in the Draft theses that, "The Communist International should support bourgeois-democratic national movements in the colonial and backward countries ... The communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois-democracy in the colonial and backward countries ..."

When the colonial theses were finally adopted, there was one important change in the face of strong opposition from an alternative thesis placed in that Congress by M.N. Roy. The words "bourgeois-democratic" were changed into "national-revolutionary" or sometimes "revolutionary-liberation movements"¹²¹.

However, Lenin's theoretical formulation for the colonial and backward countries was guided by the Marxian methodological understanding of the contradiction between bourgeoisie in the colonial and backward countries and imperialism. The strategy for 'national democratic' revolution is based on the acceptance of the theoretical understanding of Lenin provided in the Second Congress of the Communist International (1920). Communists in the countries newly liberated from colonial exploitation consider the contradiction between the national bourgeoisie and the colonial and neo-colonial powers as the basic contradiction even at this stage. Therefore, they call for a broad democratic front including the national bourgeoisie to end the anti-imperialist anti-feudal, national democratic revolution in this democratic stage as a prelude to the next socialist revolution.

Lenin in his colonial theses did not prescribe any precondition of the proletariat leadership but it asked for participation with the national bourgeoisie for early completion of the democratic revolution.

But the shift of policy in view of the change of some empirical facts was clearly echoed in the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928 held in Moscow. The betrayal of the Kuomintang party the party of the Chinese bourgeoisie in 1927 and the withdrawal of the mass movement

in India during the national upsurge of 1919-1922 forced the Sixth Congress to reconsider its earlier colonial policy. Although this Sixth Congress had taken a paradoxical view of the working-class leadership still an alternative policy was in the verge of emergence which was practised by Mao and his Chinese communists since then, and later which was popularly known as 'people's democratic revolution' in this democratic stage. This stood for absolute proletarian leadership in this democratic revolution and a front composed of working classes, peasantry, middle class and the national bourgeoisie.

The Maoist formulation of People's Democratic revolution as an immediate democratic stage towards the socialist revolution was not opposed by the CPSU leaders during the entire Stalin era as anti-Marxist-Leninist tradition. At that time many countries in Asia accepted the People's Democratic revolution as a strategic goal in the democratic stage of revolution. In India, the CPI (before split) in its 1951 first Party Programme declared People's Democratic revolution as its immediate strategic goal, so also did the Burmese Communist Party for Burma. Many Communist Parties of the Asiatic countries found close resemblance with the Chinese path.

But this scenario had begun to change following the ideological dispute between the CPSU and the CPC for the former's declared policy of peaceful transition to socialism

and peaceful co-existence with the capitalist bloc in its 20th Party Congress in 1956. This change of attitude of the CPSU leaders in the post-Stalin Russia and the tense situation of the Cold War period and the presence of Socialist China as an alternative axis within the socialist bloc which might threaten the CPSU's hegemonic influence over the World Communist movement were the important events which influenced the later course of communist thinking and attitudes. Their relationship sharply deteriorated when the CPC withdrew its endorsement on the resolution of the 81 Socialist and Workers' Parties' Conference held in Moscow in 1960. The CPC strongly criticised the CPSU as revisionist because it had abandoned the Marxist-Leninist path of revolution and it had become a social imperialist force. On the other hand, the CPSU accused the CPC that it had broken the solidarity within the socialist bloc and had become left sectarian. Thenceforth the CPSU leaders started to discard everything Chinese and began to formulate its policy based on its understanding for the colonial, semi-colonial and newly liberated countries so that it could mobilise the communist parties of these countries in its favour.

The CPSU's formulation on the question of democratic revolution which was basically opposed to the Maoist line was to call for the early completion of national democratic revolution in the colonial, semi-colonial and even in the newly liberated countries. It has been claimed as quite

different from the classical bourgeois or bourgeois-democratic revolution¹²². For it, "The urgent tasks of national rebirth facing the countries that have shaken off the colonial yoke can not be effectively accomplished unless a determined struggle is waged against imperialism and the remnants of feudalism by all the patriotic forces of the nation united in a single national-democratic front"¹²³. [Emphasis added]. It considered the principal threat surely to come from the imperialist forces, therefore participation of all patriotic forces including the national bourgeoisie should be ensured. In its assumption, "In present conditions, the national bourgeoisie of the colonial and dependent countries unconnected with imperialist circles, is objectively interested in the accomplishment of the principal tasks of anti-imperialist, anti-feudal revolution, therefore retains the capacity of participating in the revolutionary struggle against imperialism and feudalism. In that sense it is progressive"¹²⁴. And "The national-democratic tasks on the bases of which the progressive forces of the nation can and do unite in the countries which have won their freedom, are : the consolidation of political independence, the carrying out of agrarian reforms in the interest of the peasantry, elimination of the survivals of feudalism, the uprooting of imperialist economic domination, the restriction of foreign monopolies and their expulsion from the national economy, the creation and development of national industry,

improvement of living standard, the democratisation of social life, the pursuance of an independent and peaceful foreign policy, and the development of economic and cultural co-operation with the socialist and other friendly countries"¹²⁵. In doing so, "The alliance of the working class and the peasantry is the most important force ... This alliance is called upon to be a broad national front. The extent to which the national bourgeoisie participates in the liberation struggle also depends to no small degree upon its strength and stability. A big role can be played by the national -patriotic forces, by all elements of the nation prepared to fight for national independence, against imperialism"¹²⁶.

This position which prescribed for a national democratic front of all the forces within the colonial, semi-colonial and newly liberated countries did not stipulate the precondition for working class leadership in this national democratic stage. This line of thinking was repeatedly hammered on many occasions and in many documents by the CPSU¹²⁷. The successfulness of this path was claimed in view of the development in the Arab states where communist and socialist parties were successful in mobilising the patriotic forces against the threat of world imperialism in the 1960's¹²⁸.

This formulation for the colonial, semi-colonial and newly liberated countries was propagated on many occasions

by the CPSU leaders and the Russian academicians since the Moscow Conference of 81 parties in 1960¹²⁹. Perhaps this line was adopted to meet the twin aims of challenging the U.S. imperialism in mobilising all the forces in the newly liberated countries including the bourgeoisie and on the other hand, it could pose a mighty ideological fight against the CPC.

Their ideological dispute had considerable repercussions within the individual communist and socialist parties of the newly liberated countries. In India a considerable section of communists within the CPI went in favour of the CPSU's line for building a 'national democratic front'. After the split of the CPI, in 1964, into the CPI and the CPI(M), the CPI went in favour of the CPSU's position by repudiating the Maoist thesis of People's Democratic revolution. The programme of the CPI, after split, adopted the National Democratic revolution as the strategic goal in this democratic stage of revolution in India. Actually, after the split, the CPI in its 8th Congress altered the earlier position for People's Democratic revolution (adopted in 1951) in toto. But the CPI(M) remained in favour of the Maoist 'People's Democratic revolution' in this stage for India.

A close examination of the CPI's (after the split) call for 'National Democratic Revolution' could see the

resemblance with the prescription of the CPSU leaders since 1960. The concept of 'National democracy' is explained below in details from the concrete analysis cited in the programme of the CPI - one of the leading communist parties in India. The CPI accepts the strategy of National Democracy as a strategy for democratic revolution in this democratic stage.

The 'national democracy' is a form of democracy proposed for the countries under colonial, neo-colonial or semi-colonial authority where feudal residues and landlordism are still there. The old bourgeois -democratic revolution is no longer necessary because the objective situation has changed enormously. The October Revolution of Soviet Russia in 1917 gave birth to a new world order which facilitated the organisation of the working class and its party - the communist party. Again, the imperialist domination at least in the field of economy is flagrant over the colonially ruled or recently liberated countries. The bourgeoisie as a self-independent class force did not emerge to drive away the predicaments of imperialist and feudal residues. Besides these features, a strong nationalist sentiment prevails within the petty bourgeois and middle class intelligentsia.

In this perspective, the party of the proletariat - the communist party should call for 'national democratic revolution' for establishing 'national democracy', in this

stage. Therefore, the national democratic stage is the stage towards socialist transformation.

In India, many communist revolutionaries thought in this line during the freedom movement and after. An intense debate prevailed among them about the nature of democratic revolution when the direct colonial rule existed. However, this has continued in the post-independence era but the basic proposition remains the same that colonial or imperialist rule over the national economy has not come to an end. The feudal remnants and landlords ruled the countryside as a result of which to a large extent the growth of agricultural production has remained arrested and this state aggravated the misery of the peasants. Monopoly bourgeoisie emerges and has a direct link with the world-wide imperialist chain. As the general crisis of capitalism deepens, the contradiction between the imperialists including the monopoly and the national bourgeoisie will grow sharper. As the monopoly big bourgeoisie will try to pass the burden of the crisis on to the shoulders of the lower strata, the national bourgeoisie also becomes a revolutionary force against the imperialist and monopoly domination. This idea among a considerable section of the Indian communists has prevailed. Therefore, they call for building up a national democratic front for national democratic revolution and thereby seek to establish 'national democracy'¹³⁰.

The national democratic revolution is "the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, democratic revolution"¹³¹. And

"It would be a government of national democracy, directing the country's development along the non-capitalist path"¹³². The first and foremost task of this government will be the replacement of the existing government with a government of the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and anti-monopoly classes. These forces are capable and determined to carry out revolutionary changes, and can reverse the present process of development of capitalism.

In order to create the instrument for implementing the programme of national democratic revolution, it is prerequisite to build a national democratic front, "... bringing together all the patriotic forces of the country, viz. the working class, the entire peasantry including the rich peasants and agricultural labourers, the intelligentsia and the non-monopolist bourgeoisie. The workers - peasant alliance will be the basis and pivot of the front"¹³³.

One section of the Indian communists believes, that the democratic masses are divided into a number of political parties including the ruling party. The national democratic front will arise and take shape in the process of overcoming this division and uniting the broad democratic masses in the course of struggle. It will consolidate mass movements, parliamentary and extra parliamentary struggles, against the reactionary anti-people policies, simultaneously isolating and defeating the right reactionary forces - the imperialist,

feudal and landlords and the monopoly big bourgeoisie¹³⁴.

Nationalism or patriotism exists in the minds of the broad masses of people against imperialist exploitation. Therefore, it is necessary to bring all the nationalist forces into their democratic movement and lead it to success¹³⁵.

The leadership question has been settled in this way that the national democratic revolution and the national democratic government will be led by the joint leadership. The working class hegemony has been considered a left sectarian idea¹³⁶. "In this class alliance, the exclusive leadership of the working class is not yet established, though the exclusive leadership of the bourgeoisie no longer exists. The leadership of this alliance belongs to firm anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, anti-monopoly forces"¹³⁷.

The national democratic front is born out of struggles organised by the working class in alliance with the peasantry and the revolutionary middle classes, along with whom the patriotic sections of the national bourgeoisie will also play a positive role and become its component part.

It is presumed that the national democratic revolution is quite different from the one available from the Chinese communists. It has a close resemblance with the 'bourgeois-democratic revolution' as it has no reservation

for working class hegemony. Therefore, it is far away from the people's democratic type. Patriotism and national question against imperialist oppression have got a bigger place in this national democratic revolution. This is the first time when the question of nationalism has found place in the democratic revolution so directly, and thereby finds a place in the Marxist Leninist heritage of democratic revolution . It is not the proper time to assess its success in the soil of newly independent countries of Asia, Africa & Latin America because it is in the anvil of practice by some communist parties of these countries. However, the process and practice are going on depending on their dialectical understanding of the situation of the countries like India.

Section 4 Significance of Agrarian Reforms and Rural Democracy for Democratic Revolution

The democratic revolution is a necessary historical prelude to the socialist revolution. On the basis of historical tasks completed in the stage of democratic revolution, it becomes possible for a society to undertake the tasks of a socialist revolution. It is in this connection helpful for us to refer to two important tasks of democratic revolution, namely, agrarian revolution and achieving rural democracy and study the significance of these two tasks in the stage of democratic revolution.

Marxists put special importance on radical agrarian reforms in the democratic stage, because remnants of the mediaeval oppression still persisted in the rural economy. The feudal and landlord usurpation over the land and life of the rural people requires to be ended. A thorough agrarian reform is necessary for the rural people to keep pace with the already democratised life of the industrial economy. The solution of the agrarian problem, which directly affects the interest of the vast majority of the population, is of the utmost importance for national regeneration for the countries where democratic revolution is yet to be achieved. Without a radical agrarian reform and a conscious movement to increase productivity in agriculture, it is impossible to solve the food problem and accelerate economic growth. Hence a clean break has to be

made with the past by reorganising the vast agricultural sector by a logical and scientific democratic programme. Therefore, a radical agrarian reform figures in the topmost position of economic programme at the democratic stage of revolution.

Democracy in general and rural democracy in particular are the other important targets of the democratic revolution. The establishment of democracy in the rural areas, where so far the age-old feudal and landlord hegemony persists over the life of the rural people is the immediate task. Without democratic revolution, all the rural areas of the country like India have become the sanctuaries of the existence of mediaeval social evils.

The feudal and landlord usurpation, bondage, share-cropping, occasional eviction from land, caste divide and social prestige of the upper caste and hatred towards the so called lower castes, women's sufferings, mass illiteracy and multiple types of social prejudices have been preserved by the landlords and the other semi-feudal interests in the countryside for centuries. Therefore, Marxists think of annihilating social discrepancies and of snatching the rural political power from the hands of the stooges of the feudal remnants, landlords and their bureaucratic lackeys by launching an all out democratic revolutionary movement in the countryside by ensuring the participation of the vast mass of agricultural labourers and small peasants in the

rural administrative and decision making bodies.

In this revolutionary movement the proletariat finds that the sharecroppers, poor peasantry and the agricultural labourers are the core allies. Actually they are the rural counter-part of the industrial proletariat. This section is the largest in number in the rural population and since they are the greatest beneficiaries, they are expected to be interested in performing this task. The take-over of the power of the rural administrative body and the power of cancellation of the feudal and landlords property and distribution of the same among the land-hungry poor peasants, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers by the rural proletariat are the main democratic measures in the countryside. Actually all these democratic tasks are meant for bringing the rural people into the mainstream of economic and political change called for by the proletariat and its party - the communist party in this democratic stage for expediting the historical move towards socialist revolution.

Thus the edge of the democratic revolution is oriented to the agrarian reform and rural democracy. This will expedite the inner dialectics of the rural economy and its superstructure. This historic task will be initiated and led by the proletariat which is a more conscious and progressive class of the epoch. This will awaken the rural proletariat - the agricultural labourers and poor peasants to shake and mould the mode of production in the agricultural

sector. For the democratic set up in the rural areas they will not only launch a massive struggle against feudal and landlords, but also defend the changes against the reactionary attempts of the vested interests. It will also help to carry forward this stage to the socialist stage by the leadership of the proletariat.

Historically these democratic tasks are the tasks of the bourgeoisie in their revolution which was known as bourgeois-democratic revolution in the West. It is well known that the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the West, particularly in Britain, France, Austria, etc. was carried out by the liberal bourgeoisie as a strong and independent political force which not only democratised the social and political life of the people but also successfully changed the feudal economy, thereby facilitating the unbridled economic progress of capitalism even over the rural economy. All this in course of time sharpened the class polarisation in the countryside without which the ultimate march towards socialism would never come off. In these countries the workers and the peasants were more or less passive in this struggle of that time between the bourgeoisie and the feudal lords and monarchs. But what is important to note is that the leadership and the organisational responsibility were vested in the hands of bourgeoisie solely.

However, this paradigm does not occur everywhere largely due to the specific national peculiarities and due

to the changes of time. Even the condition of Germany during the time of Marx in the middle of the Nineteenth century was dissimilar from the other European countries. Actually the starting of capitalist penetration in Germany was late compared to the rest of the European countries. On the other hand, capitalism thrives on colonial exploitation whether that is direct or indirect. But the German bourgeoisie were initially lacking all these facilities to amass the wealth which ultimately could make them capable of overthrowing the feudal-monarchical rule. In the meantime, the proletariat as a distinct social and political force appeared in Germany. In this perspective, both Marx & Engels advised the German proletariat to fight the absolute monarchy with the German bourgeoisie for early completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Germany. In doing so, whatever concession it could reap for the proletariat would ultimately benefit the proletarian struggle for the next socialist stage.

Both Marx and Engels were in favour of early completion of democratic revolution where it was yet to be finished by the active participation of the communists with the bourgeoisie against the monarchy and feudalism. In the context of Poland and Germany in the 1840s, Marx and Engels stated in the Manifesto of the Communist Party :

"In Poland they [communists] support the party [of the Polish revolutionary democrats] that insists on an agrarian revolution as the prime condition for national emancipation, the party which fomented the insurrection of Cracow in 1846"¹³⁸.

"In Germany they [communists] fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squir-
earchy, and the petty bourgeoisie"¹³⁹.

During the mid Nineteenth century both in Poland and in Germany the bourgeoisie were relatively weak to expel the feudal monarchy from power. But the proletariat as a social force had appeared in those countries in the urban and industrial sectors. In this context Marx and Engels advised the communists of these two countries to take part in the bourgeois-democratic revolution along with the bourgeoisie against feudalism and monarchial rule for making a speedy headway for the next socialist revolution.

The classical Marxian idea did not set any precondition for proletariat leadership for the completion of the bourgeoisie-democratic revolution. But it warns the proletariat that it should not forget the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat but regard the bourgeoisie as a tactical ally against the feudal monarchical rule.

However, Marx did not see any perceptible role of the peasantry in the movement for democratic revolution. The bourgeois-democratic revolution was to be launched by both

the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeois leadership and its supremacy over the struggle were accepted for this stage of revolution in classical Marxian thinking.

This is after all, the classical Marxian concept of social change from the feudal system to capitalist system and which was ultimately to be supplanted by the socialist order. This Marxian paradigm of social change is based on the laws of dialectics, the dialectics of the mode of production - the interplay between productive forces and production relations. This is the motive force of the human history.

In the beginning of the Twentieth century in the age of imperialism the concept of bourgeois-democratic revolution got altogether a different connotation in the hands of Lenin. Lenin and his Russian proletarian party called for early completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia which was completed in two phases - one phase in 1905 and other phase in February, 1917. Actually the total period of 1905 - February 1917 was the period of fulfilment of the bourgeois-democratic revolution against the tsarist and feudal autocracy.

The departure of Lenin from Marx is on the role of the peasantry in the unfinished bourgeois democratic revolution in the Russian context. Lenin began his experiment on the peasant question as a leader of the RSDLP. "It is known

that the serious study of the peasant questions in the ranks of Russian Marxist began precisely on the eve of first revolution (1905) when the question of overthrowing tsarism and of realizing the hegemony of the proletariat confronted the party in all its magnitude and when the question of the ally of the proletariat in the impending bourgeois revolution became of vital importance"¹⁴⁰. It is also known from Lenin's writings that the peasant question in Russia assumed more urgent character during the proletarian revolution. In this sense the peasant question is one of the most vital problems of Leninism.

Lenin saw that in the analysis of the peasant questions by the parties of the Second International there was displayed an attitude of indifference towards the peasant question and a tendency to treat it as passive recipient of good delivered by the bourgeoisie after the bourgeois democratic revolution and proletariat after the proletarian revolution. The peasantry was considered as the reserve of the bourgeoisie during the bourgeois revolution in the west. The Second International thought the peasant question only on the light of developed West. The striking matter in Lenin was that he correctly shunned any dogmatic understanding of the peasantry's role in the bourgeois democratic revolution. However, Lenin and Leninists sought to find out the revolutionary potential among the peasantry in the Russian context against the tsarist and feudal oppression which would act as a reserve of the proletariat both for the

unfinished bourgeois democratic revolution and subsequent socialist revolution.

It is quite clear that for Lenin a radical solution of the agrarian problem was the fundamental economic objective of the democratic revolution. As a Marxist revolutionary Lenin sought the answer to the question : which class and political groups in his contemporary Tsarist Russia had an objective interest in the destruction of landlordism and which would strive to preserve it ? Lenin's own theoretical analysis had long provided him with the answer that only the proletariat and the poor peasantry were wholeheartedly committed to the destruction of landlordism. But the bourgeoisie would vacillate, make concessions and ultimately side with the landlords.

Lenin recognised the existence of revolutionary capacities in the ranks of the majority of the peasantry and the possibility of using them in the cause of the revolutions. Hence the practical conclusion that the toiling masses of the peasantry must be supported in their struggle against bondage and exploitation in their struggle for deliverance from oppression and poverty and which helps to transform the peasantry into a reserve and ally of the working class. "That is how the alliance between the workers and the peasants in the bourgeois-democratic revolution took place that is how the hegemony (leadership) of the proletariat in

the common struggle for the overthrow of tsarism took shape - the hegemony which led to the February Revolution 1917"¹⁴¹.

Lenin's theoretical position regarding the bourgeois -democratic revolution was clear in his Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in Democratic Revolution written in June & July 1905. He states - "The democratic revolution is bourgeois in nature. The slogan of general redistribution, or 'land and freedom' - the most widespread slogan of the peasant masses, downtrodden and ignorant, yet passionately yearning for light and happiness - is a bourgeois slogan"¹⁴².

Lenin's unequivocal stand for agrarian reform and rural democracy is clear from the following statement. He states, in the Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in Democratic Revolution, that "... it is not only by the prospect of radical agrarian reform that the peasantry is attached to the revolution [i.e. bourgeois democratic revolution], but by all its general and permanent interests as well. Even when fighting with the proletariat, the peasantry stands in need of democracy, for only a democratic system is capable of accurately expressing its interests and ensuring its predominance as a mass, as the majority. The more enlightened the peasantry becomes ... the more consistently and resolutely will it stand for a thorough going democratic revolution; for, unlike the bourgeoisie, it has nothing to

fear from the people's supremacy, but on the contrary stands to gain by it. A democratic republic will be the peasantry's deal as soon as it begins to throw off its naive monarchism ..."¹⁴³.

But Lenin did not consider the peasantry as a pure proletarian class, therefore he did not compromise the leadership of the movement with the peasantry. He correctly analysed the class position of the peasantry in the ensuing bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia in the beginning of the 20th century. He analysed, "The peasantry includes a great number of semi-proletarian as well as petty bourgeois elements. This makes it also unstable, compelling the proletariat to rally in a strictly class party. However, the instability of the peasantry differs radically from that of the bourgeoisie, for at present the peasantry is interested not so much in the absolute preservation of private property as in the confiscation of the landed estates, one of the principal forms of private property. Without thereby becoming socialist, or ceasing to be petty bourgeois, the peasantry is capable of becoming a whole-hearted and most radical adherent of the democratic revolution"¹⁴⁴.

Lenin was successful in formulating the programme and in putting it into the practice and political and economical aspects of the agrarian question in the Russian context (1905 - Feb.1917) which not only overthrew the feudal

-monarchical system in the bourgeois-democratic stage of revolution but also curbed the absolute influence of the Russian bourgeoisie in the bourgeois-democratic revolution successful in February 1917.

In the Chinese context Mao had to experiment a kind of democratic revolution which was altogether different from that of the European and Russian democratic revolution. The entire second quarter of the Twentieth century was the period of Mao's experiment with the democratic revolution which was gone through as a prelude to the socialist revolution in China. The peculiarity of Chinese society and economy and the changed circumstances in the international political order due to the emergence of Socialist Soviet Russia were the factors which Mao had to consider before formulating his theory of democratic revolution and its principal tasks of agrarian reforms and ensuring democracy.

Chinese society was basically a feudal society of the Asiatic nature. After the Opium War in 1840 China was gradually exposed to colonial exploitation. In 1911 the Imperial rule of thousand years was ended under the leadership of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. The May 4th (1919) was marked as democratic upsurge in Chinese history. The penetration of capitalism¹⁴⁵ and the emergence of working class in the 1920's were important developments in China. The external factor was the emergence of the Soviet Socialist

Russia in 1917 through a revolution based on the principles of Marxism and Leninism in the epoch of world imperialism.

For Mao, in the democratic stage, the participation of the peasant masses was a must in the predominantly agrarian countries like China. The edge of the revolution is oriented against feudalism and imperialism. Therefore, in this stage, according to Mao, "the Chinese revolution is essentially a peasant revolution ..."¹⁴⁶ For him "the politics of New Democracy means giving the peasants their rights"¹⁴⁷.

The basic economic programme in the New Democratic stage, according to Mao, is the following : "The republic will take certain necessary steps to confiscate the land of the landlords and distribute it to those peasants having little or no land, carry out Dr. Sun Yat-sen's slogan 'land to the tiller' abolish feudal relations in the rural areas, and turn the land over to the private ownership of the peasants. A rich peasants economy will be allowed in the rural areas. Such is the policy of 'equalization of landownership'. 'Land to the tiller' is the correct slogan for this policy. In general, socialist agriculture will not be established at this stage, though various types of cooperative enterprises developed on the basis of 'land to the tiller' will contain elements of socialism"¹⁴⁸.

In the democratic revolution, the programme of

configuration of land from the feudal-lords and the distribution of the land to the tillers not only facilitated the millions of Chinese peasants but also ended the feudal economic and political relations of the three thousand years in the history of China. In this stage the rich peasants' economy was allowed to an extent under the policy of 'equalization of landownership' which limited the unhindered growth of land monopolization. The unfettered growth of economy in the capitalist line was checked by the New Democratic government because it was not and never could be the same as the pure bourgeois-democratic government of the West.

Thus the agrarian policy of the New Democratic government was to end feudalism from the village economy forever and to begin a private ownership of land up to a definite level conducive to let out the class contradiction in the countryside which could sharpen the same for carrying the movement towards the socialist revolution.

For Mao, "The people's democratic dictatorship is based on the alliance of the workers and peasants, because these two classes comprise 80 to 90 per cent of China's population. These two classes are the main force in overthrowing imperialism and the Kuomintang reactionaries. The transition from New Democracy to socialism also depends mainly upon their alliance"¹⁴⁹.

This was the general formulation of Mao's conception of democratic revolutionary class forces and the role of the peasantry in view of the peasant problems in the democratic stage and their alliances and leadership against the reaction during his time in China for establishing people's democracy.

Within the general paradigm of Mao's people's democracy, the concept of rural democracy forms a significant part. In the Report on the Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan, March 1927 at the end of the first revolutionary victory after the Northern Expedition, Mao states, "Once the peasants have their organisation the first thing they do is to smash the political prestige and power of the landlord class, and specially of the local tyrants and evil gentry, that is, to pull down landlord authority and build up peasant authority in rural society. This is a most serious and vital struggle. It is the pivotal struggle in the second period, the period of revolutionary action. Without victory in this struggle, no victory is possible in the economic struggle to reduce rent and interest, to secure and other means of production, and so on"¹⁵⁰.

Mao put the slogans "Down with the Local Tyrants and evil gentry !" and "All Power to the Peasant Associations !" in this stage (in 1927). He elaborated, "The main targets of attack by the peasants are the local tyrants, the evil gentry and the lawless landlords, ... [and] hit against patriarchal

ideas and institutions, against the corrupt officials ... and against bad practices and customs in the rural areas". Mao unreservedly emphasised "All power to the peasant association"¹⁵¹.

Mao from the beginning asked the Chinese Communist Party to put the people's democratic programme into practice in the areas liberated from Kuomintang and Japanese occupied territory. He stated, "In all our work in the Liberated Areas, we must take great care to help the local people administer local affairs and to cultivate many local cadres from among the best local people. It will be impossible to accomplish the great task of the democratic revolution in the rural areas unless comrades who come from other places identify themselves with the local people and help the local cadres whole-heartedly, painstakingly and in ways that fit the actual conditions, and unless they cherish them like their own brothers and sisters"¹⁵². He considered "China's Liberated Areas" as the "centre of gravity in the nationwide people's struggle to resist Japan"¹⁵³.

In the rural democratic set up Mao had a noticeable concern for the agricultural labourers and the poor peasants than any other rural classes. He stated very categorically that "The interests of the poor peasants and farm labourers and the forward role of the poor peasant leagues must be our first concern. Our party must launch land reform through the

poor peasants and farm labourers and must enable them to play the forward role in the peasant associations and in the government organs of the rural districts"¹⁵⁴. (Emphasis added). Mao also favoured the unity forged with the "middle peasants"¹⁵⁵ in the governance of the rural areas. He opposed the sectarian unity of only the poor peasants and farm labourers in the countryside (although they constituted the basis of the rural govt.) casting aside the middle peasants and small independent craftsman and small traders. For him, therefore, the slogan was "In the villages, it is the farm labourers, poor peasants, middle peasants and other working people, united together under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party who ... should rule the country"¹⁵⁶. In the later years Mao changed the outlook of the party regarding the middle peasants and brought them within the fold of united front to govern the countryside for the completion of the people's democratic revolution. Thus the stage would be ready for the immediate socialist revolution.

The Indian communists particularly the communists within the CPI and CPI(M) have accepted the Marxian tradition of two stages of revolution and they think that democratic revolution has not yet been fully established even after the end of direct imperialist domination and adoption of a constitution and parliamentary government. Therefore, they call for the immediate democratic revolution. For CPI(M) it is - People's Democratic and for the CPI it is National

Democratic revolutionary stage respectively as prelude to the socialist revolution.

Although they have remarkable differences regarding the analysis of the existing state power of India, the alignment of the classforces in their respective democratic revolution and on the question of leadership during and after the democratic revolution, still they commonly agree that a democratic revolution is a must in the present context of the Indian condition. Furthermore, they agree that the first stage of Indian revolution against the direct foreign imperialist rule was over in 1947 by the achievement of independence by the united national front but even then they consider alike that the democratic revolution is not yet over in India. This is, for them, basically due to the fact that the Indian bourgeoisie is still weak to extend its hegemony over the sphere of economy and polity, and the share of state power is enjoyed by the semi-feudal and landlords in the various spheres of state power with varying degrees and the world imperialist oppression indirectly affects the life of the people. But what is important, with the growth of bourgeoisie the emergence of working class and its party have emerged; and in due course they have gathered enough strength, therefore, they are not destined to sit idle in performing the democratic tasks in this democratic revolutionary stage in India. Their ultimate aim is to build a socialist India.

In the present democratic stage they (i.e. both the CPI and the CPI-M) called for active participation in this revolution to expedite the same. The CPI(M) is one step ahead, it calls for control over the democratic revolution and democratic state after the revolution by the proletarian party. They argued that henceforth the proletariat will not and should not wait for the deliverance of democracy from the hands of independent bourgeoisie because it will not be the old bourgeois-democratic revolution of the West where the proletariat had no active role to play in the democratic revolution.

Therefore, both the parties think in this changing context of India, the active participation is a binding necessity on the part of the proletariat and its actual allies - the vast agricultural labourers and poor peasants of the countryside.

The main slogan in this stage is to end semifeudal and landlords rule over the agrarian economy and to wipe out their hegemony over the social and political life in the countryside and to put a ban over the outright capitalist path of development. Their respective party programmes contained clauses demanding a thorough land reform by abolishing landlordism and distributing the same to the vast majority of the agricultural labourers and land hungry poor peasants.

The magnitude of the need of agrarian reform arose out of the existing monopoly over the landholding and existing semi-feudal relation based on land. It is seen that in the country as a whole 2.43 per cent of the total rural households each own more than 30 acres of land totaling 28.5 per cent of the arable land; whereas the other 82.5 per cent own between them only 27.43 per cent of the total land¹⁵⁷, and the holding amount vary from less than one acre to four acres. Therefore the elimination of the concentration of land from the grip of semi-feudal and landlords is of utmost importance in this democratic stage. Without a radical agrarian reform and a conscious movement the poor peasants and agricultural labourers who constitute the majority in the vast rural areas can not be saved from the age-old depredation by the feudal forces¹⁵⁸.

They (communists within the CPI and the CPI-M) think that the ruling fabric of the countryside is monopolised by the few landed aristocracy by their innumerable tactics. The rural level administration is run at the behest of them through their lackeys - bureaucracy, police administration. Justice is shelved by the propertied and the influential. All these constitute an organised violence and exploitation over the vast majority of the country's population. Government at the state level has always been in favour of the landed aristocracy though it has enacted some paper legislation for the land ceiling and power to the people

still it lacks sincerity from the point of view of its class interests and continuance in the state power. The majority of the rural folk is worst exploited by the twin ravages, one from the landlords and other by the capitalist market economy. Therefore, the communists in India call for the conscious proletarian movement allying itself with the agricultural labour and poor peasants to fulfil the radical agrarian reform and sweeping social political reforms as most urgent and important tasks in the democratic stage in the Indian context.

Bourgeois-democratic revolution has got different nomenclatures given by the communists with the changes of time and context. Popular among them are the bourgeois -democratic, democratic, new democratic, people's democratic, national democratic etc. However, the major tasks of the democratic revolution, the end of semi-feudal and landlord economic oppression and semifeudal relations of production in the countryside remain the same. Only exceptions are visible on the questions of alliance of class forces for the revolution and the question of leadership and direction of the revolution. This study already noted the departure from classical Marxian idea about bourgeois-democracy at the hands of Lenin in Russia and later Mao in China. In other words, they successively extended the Marxian idea in the changed circumstances and practised the same in the peculiar national contexts successfully. Therefore, it has got an altogether different dimension from the classical

Marxian understanding.

Although Marx and Engels were basically engaged in the socialist revolution in the context of fullfledged bourgeois-democratic or capitalist states in Europe still the nucleus idea in the 'Manifesto' for the German condition where workers' participation in the bourgeois-democratic revolution was a binding necessity, provided the clue to the communists in the countries lacking democratic revolution. Semi-feudal landlordism, existence of mediaeval prejudices compounded by the direct and indirect imperialistic oppression, emergence of bourgeoisie and the working class, vacillation of the bourgeoisie were the dominant features in the backward countries like China, India and other backward nations. Therefore, on the question of bourgeois-democratic revolution a significant departure (or extension of Marxian idea in the changed circumstances) of Lenin from Marx, of Mao Tse-tung from Lenin and of other communists (for example the Indian communists in the CPI and CPI(M) since 1964) all these have enriched the revolutionary tradition on the line of Marxian thinking of social change.

Section 5 Methodology : Method and Techniques of Study

This study has aimed at discovering differences in the perception and practice of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) in respect of agrarian reforms and rural democracy. It has been necessary to understand the concern of both these parties on these two issues from their respective perceptions of the historical context and the reality of the Indian situation in which they drew up their own goals, tasks and tactics. Since both these parties professedly adopted Marxism as the basic philosophy for their guidance, their points of view on the historical context, national situation, goals, tasks and tactics can be understood only by following the Marxist methodology. And the present study has followed this methodology in the perception of the views and activities of the two parties. The Marxist position and concepts have been followed simply because any communist party, whether it is in India or outside, determines its activities following the Marxist concept of social change. For better comprehension the Marxist paradigm has been accepted and its vocabularies and concepts have accordingly been used.

To the communists, every party has a class basis and its class interest. Therefore, a communist party, a party of the working class or the proletariat as has been claimed by the Marxists, has its own class interest or class outlook¹⁵⁹. According to the Marxists, the 'programme' of

the communist party is otherwise the statement of strategy which embodies goals for a defined stage of revolution and remains valid entirely for that stage of revolution; and short-term political activities in response to the existing situation for attaining the programmatic goals are spelt out as tactics.

India has at present several communist parties or groups. However, this study has concerned two major communist parties, namely, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M). They actually are the off-shoots of a single communist party bifurcated in 1964 to provide their different outlooks or programmes for the ensuing democratic revolution as a step to the final socialist revolution. It has been remembered, however, that the two parties have their own different views about the nature of the democratic revolution. For understanding this difference too, the Marxist framework of thinking has been followed.

To examine the programmatic differences between the said two communist parties the basis of class-relations of society in India has been principally followed for this study because the context of class-relation is the main theme of any communist party's programme and activities. Therefore the study has started with due consideration of the Marxist-Leninist contributions to the thoughts on the formation of a communist party and determination of its programme. It is

in this background that an attempt has been made to appraise the position of the two communist parties of India in respect of their contentions on the questions of agrarian reforms and rural democracy.

The programmatic approaches of the two communist parties of India have thus been examined side by side for a close comparison on the basis of their individual party literature and other authoritative commentaries available so far. Efforts have been made to use maximum information from the primary literature of the concerned parties.

While pursuing this research, we had to keep in mind that a political party is not a totally autonomous organisation or its growth and activities do not constitute an autonomous process involving merely the political ideology, important personalities and events of its own. Hence it can not be studied purely on the basis of its own self-consciousness. What is logical is a richer sensitivity that it always acts in an environment in which other political parties carry on their activities, pursue their ideological positions, and are bound to work in their respective national historical settings. It has been considered that there is in every society a social, economic and cultural milieu in a given period of time where political parties work¹⁶⁰. An additional thing considered while studying communist parties is their faith in communist internationalism and ideological coherence

with the international communist movements, although they are bound to work for their given countries over their peculiar national questions.

We have made a comparison of the two communist parties in respect of the issues indicated earlier. But, since the content of such comparison may be fully intelligible only in a Marxist framework of thought, comparison made has been concentrated on such dimensions and evaluation made on such scales as have been relevant to Marxism.

However, the study has aimed at finding the differences, if any, in the practices and understanding of the two communist parties. For this, a field survey has been necessary. This field survey covered two basic issues - agrarian reforms and rural democracy. The period covered in this survey is from 1964, the year of emergence of the two parties out of the split of the Communist Party of India to 1985. (In some cases data have been available upto 1990).

This survey has been conducted through a structured questionnaire prepared on the basis of the common factors dealt with by the programmes of the two parties. This questionnaire has been used as a tool to retrieve actual information about the ground realities of the said two parties during the period mentioned above. The questionnaire is appended as Appendix II.

The respondents have been chosen from those in the two parties who have been actively engaged in politics in rural areas particularly over these issues since 1964. The number of respondents has been more or less equal from each of the two parties.

Through this field survey, information has been collected from areas where both the communist parties have considerable political base since 1964 and therefore have pursued the political activity particularly over the issues mainly dealt with here.

The areas of field survey have been chosen from the State of West Bengal. These are Panskura (West) Legislative Assembly Constituency in Midnapore District, Bhatar Legislative Assembly Constituency in Burdwan District and Itahar Legislative Assembly Constituency in the District of West Dinajpore. These three Assembly constituencies are located in three distant geographical parts of West Bengal. Panskura (West) is in the extreme West of West Bengal, Bhatar is in the middle of West Bengal and Itahar is situated in the northern part of West Bengal. All these three surveyed areas are purely rural, based on agricultural economy.

Another important feature of these three Assembly Constituencies is that the concerned communist parties are not merely significantly present with their strong organisation in these areas but also have helped electing their

candidates or have finished seconds at different times.

The period of liberation struggle in (undivided) Bengal had the distinction of launching peasant movements with the other parts of the country. One such successful movement spread over a large part of Bengal was the historic Tebhaga movement launched immediately around the time of Indian independence and organised by the undivided CPI.

When the Communist Party of India was divided, and two communist parties emerged out of the split, the peasant question came to the forefront. This peasant question became more important with an unprecedented momentum when the CPI(M) faced and suffered from another split from which the CPI(ML) has emerged as a separate party which put exclusive importance on the question of agrarian revolution as the immediate democratic stage of the revolution.

It is not an exaggeration that Bengal is the fertile land of leftism. Therefore, West Bengal has been chosen for the areas of field survey where considerable activities on agrarian reforms and democratisation of rural life have been done. Moreover, the CPI and the CPI(M) which constitute the targetted parties for this research have had some alliances at different times in forming the state governments. Therefore, they had opportunities to put forward their individual programmatic measures for practice in an ambient condition. The questionnaire for the field survey has also

been framed to touch upon their relationships from either side at the grassroots level.

An utmost care has been taken to present a totality of the programmatic differences and the actual differences in practices on the two basic issues extensively.

In fine, it should be mentioned here, that, since this study has required collecting data through field survey, it has been necessary also to make use of such techniques and tools of survey research as have helped for ascertaining facts on a scientific basis and avoiding any subjective bias whatsoever. The analysis of data has been carried out by employing techniques of quantification accepted by the science of social research.

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CHAPTER II

Contents

A historical study of events leading to the adoption of Programme by the Indian Communists:

Section 1 The adoption of and almost simultaneous controversy over the programme of the CPI in 1951 →

Sub-section (i) Adoption of 1951 's programme, and treatment of agrarian reform and rural democracy;

Sub-section (ii) Controversy over the programme of 1951;

Section 2 The split of the CPI into CPI and CPI(M); and

Section 3 The adoption of two new programmes by the CPI and the CPI(M) respectively.

Split in the Communist Party of India in 1964 was the culmination of prolonged inner-party differences on strategic and tactical matters cropped up on many occasions since the time of its foundation. If one analyses the documents of the CPI when the party was united (1920-1964) there could be seen differences of opinion on ideological and political grounds which ultimately led to the division of the party.

Starting from the foundation of the party the founder leadership of the CPI was never unanimous over ideological, political and factual issues. One such factual issue relates to the time and place of formation of the CPI. One group within the party which was later known as Leftist faction of the party agreed and acknowledged the fact that "... the Communist Party of India formed at Tashkent on 17 October, 1920, by M.N.Roy and others soon after the Second Congress of the [3rd] Communist International"¹ and accepted the guidelines of the 3rd International. Later it was affiliated by it in its Third Congress in 1921². Another group, which was much later branded as Rightist faction of the party, hammered the point that the CPI was formed "... on 26 December 1925 at Kanpur, when the first central committee was formed and the first constitution framed"³. Again the latter has also doubt about the affiliation of the Communist Party of India by the Third Congress of the Communist International

in 1921. This group was much sceptical about the question - "Was the CPI formed at Tashkent affiliated to the Communist International?"⁴ However, this group remained unconvinced over the affiliation issue of that time. In retort the other group harboured criticism that some among the leaders had little faith in the communist internationalism and favoured the name of the party as 'Indian Communist Party' and not the 'Communist Party of India', during the Kanpur Communist Conference⁵.

About the formation of the Communist Party of India abroad in 1921 although there was a debate among the communists in India still the fact was prominent that the Indian Communists were active both inside and outside the country about their political activities. After the end of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922, M.N.Roy prepared a programme entitled 'A Programme for the Indian National Congress'. It was sent to communists working in India and was placed in the Gaya Congress of the Indian National Congress on behalf of the communists. However, this programme has another implication. It stated that "... the National Congress which is not a cohesive political party, but the traditional organ of our National Struggle"⁶. Indian communists since then had accepted it and used it as a political platform upto 1942. Another implication, this was the first programme prepared by the Communist Party of India formed abroad which was affiliated to the Communist International.

The under-current of differences of opinion within the CPI occasionally came over ground. The Central Committee of the CPI on 18 August, 1959 adopted "... the date of Kanpur Communist Conference as the date of the formation of the party"⁷. When the party was divided the CPI formed by the Rightist faction of the united party retained and accepted the 1959 resolution on it. But the CPI(M) formed by the Leftist faction of the united party stuck to the year 1920 as the actual time of formation of the party. It is evident from the above statements that the party was not capable of drawing unanimous view about a simple factual matter. Two main divergent currents of views had flown from the very beginning of the communist movement in India.

During this period the Indian communists contributed to the national freedom movement two new factors : firstly, a logically formulated political and economic programme of national independence and secondly, an independent class-oriented workers' and peasants' movement. Naturally, they had to face the three rounds of repression unleashed by the British rulers soon. These were : a) the Peshwar Conspiracy Case of 1922-23, b) the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case of 1924, and c) the Meerut Communist Conspiracy Case of 1929-33.

In this phase Indian communists had no clear and agreed guideline for the party where strategic questions would have been discussed for determining tactical movements. But their

basic understanding was to organise peasants and workers along the Marxist class-line and to prepare them for fighting the enemies, principally, the British imperialists, feudal lords and the rising Capitalists. They carried out their activities in different groups scattered in different parts of India. Regular coordination among themselves was not possible due to successive bans on the party and conspiracy cases against them. Therefore, all of them in the beginning used the platform of the Indian National Congress to fight for national independence⁸. This was also in accordance with the guideline of the Second Communist International for the communists working in the colonial countries.

In this phase of inhuman repression over the communists and bans on the Communist Party of India, the communists of India had tried to popularise their revolutionary ideals through different means. Together with the congress socialists, the Communists formed parties of the workers and peasant in different names and in different regions of India. These were - the Labour Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress (1925), Workers' & Peasants' Party of Bengal (1925), Girni Kamgar Union, Bombay, Kirti Kisan Party, Punjab (1928), etc. Ultimately all these parties gave birth to the 'Workers' & Peasants' party in 1928. Activities of these parties were centered round anti-British, anti-feudal and anti-capitalist rage.

In 1928, a conference was organised by the Workers' and Peasants' Party at Calcutta. Communists working in different provinces of India gathered together there and a central Executive Committee was formed of the CPI secretly. After the Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-33) in December 1933, a Central Committee of the CPI was secretly formed, and Dr. Gangadhar Adhikari was elected as the General Secretary of the party. This Central Committee entrusted Ben Bradley to make contacts for affiliation from the Communist International which was withheld over the debate on the 'Draft Platform of Action'⁹ (1928) of the CPI. However, the CPI was successful in achieving the affiliation in 1933.

It is a remarkable fact that in 1928, a draft programme entitled 'A Draft Platform of Action' was prepared by the CPI. This was the first draft programme in the history of the CPI. This draft programme bore a sign of serious thought of the then Indian communists in view of that time. It was first published in the 'International Press Correspondence' of the Comintern (i.e. Communist International) in December, 1930. However, this draft programme was rejected due to the basic disagreement with the policies of the Sixth Comintern Congress, (1928)¹⁰. A little was known about this draft programme of 1928 until 1951 (when the party was to prepare its programme in consultation with J.V. Stalin and the CPSU due to the inner-party disagreement within the CPI over programmatic matters). M. Basavapunnaiiah admitted that

"... it [the Draft Platform of Action] remained a Draft for the archives as it was neither discussed at any Party Conference or Congress nor was it adopted"¹¹.

In 1930, the CPI tried for formal recognition of the Communist International. Disagreement over the Draft programme prevented that recognition temporarily but it died down ultimately in 1933 when the CPI was successful in getting affiliation from the Communist International. At that time the guidelines provided by the Sixth Congress of the Communist International (1928) was held as decisive by the communists working in the colonial countries. It states "The principal task in such countries [China, India, etc.] is, on the one hand, to fight against the feudal and pre-capitalist forms of exploitation, and to develop systematically the peasant agrarian revolution; on the other hand, to fight against foreign imperialism for national independence"¹².

The strategy of the CPI upto its Second Congress in 1948 remained more or less in consonance with the dictum of the Communist International. But some tactical move of the CPI may be said not to be in line with the strategy it followed so far. Obviously this situation occurred due to the turn of the Second World War when Soviet Union was attacked by fascist Germany in June 1941. More importantly, the CPI opposed the historic Quit India Movement (1942)

launched by the Indian National Congress against the colonial rulers when the latter was highly vulnerable.

Although there was a guideline of the Communist International for the colonial emancipation still it was not sufficient to answer the peculiar national condition that prevailed in the respective colonial countries. Therefore, the very fundamental question i.e. the character of the national bourgeois movement of these countries remained unresolved. For India, it is rightly stated that "The characterization of the 'national bourgeoisie' remain central to debates among communists, the Roy-Lenin debate at the Second Comintern Congress (1920), right down to 1947 and beyond"¹³.

Strategic and tactical moves of the CPI in relation to the colonial masters and the National Congress Party led by the National bourgeoisie and feudal lords were of great historical interest.

The First Attempt that Failed

In the beginning of the 1920s the communist circles of India were growing up both within India and outside. This was the direct influence of the October Socialist Revolution of the Soviet Russia in 1917 and the emergence of workers and peasants as class forces in India. However, communist

activists in the 1920s were facing successive bans on their party and conspiracy cases against them were pursued by the imperialist British rulers in India. Close and regular coordination among communist activists were naturally hampered due to the inhuman repression of the colonial rulers in India. Therefore, they had to work either secretly or in the name of different parties or groups other than the Communist Party of India. Such parties were Labour Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress, workers' & Peasants' Party of Bengal, Girni Kamgar Union, Bombay, Kirti Kisan Party, Punjab and Workers' and Peasants' Party, etc.

In 1928, a conference was held by the Workers' and Peasants' Party at Calcutta. Communist activists working in different provinces participated in that open conference in disguise in the name of Workers' & Peasants' Party - activists. Then they secretly formed a Central Executive Committee of the CPI and prepared a draft programme. This draft programme for the CPI entitled - 'Draft Platform of Action' which might lead them as guideline - as a concrete strategy.

Historically this was the first party programme of the CPI. This draft programme was the result of serious thought of the then communist workers in India against imperialist rulers imperialist stooges among feudal lords and rising bourgeoisie and also against the big partner of the freedom

movement - the Indian National Congress. From the beginning communists were pressing the Indian National Congress to call for complete independence. However, the 'Draft Platform of Action' called for complete independence, abolition of feudalism and other mediaeval oppressions and for moving towards socialism.

This 'Draft Platform of Action' was sent for affiliation to the Communist International and was first published on 19 December, 1930 in the International Press Correspondence of the Comintern (i.e. Communist International). However, this Draft programme was rejected due to the basic disagreement with the policies of the Sixth Congress of the Third Communist International (1928). The Thesis of the Sixth Congress had laid down the strategy for the colonial countries. The 'Draft' programme did not consider that the Indian national bourgeoisie had any progressive role in the achievement of complete independence and democracy¹⁴.

This 'Draft' programme met with a premature end due to the rejection by the Sixth Congress of the Communist International and other internal preoccupations like the Meerut Communist Conspiracy Case of 1929-33 and participation in the national liberation struggle of 1929-33. Therefore, this 'Draft' programme went into complete oblivion of the Indian communists for a prolonged period. M. Basavapunnaiyah admitted that "... it [the Draft Platform of Action]

remained a Draft for the archives as it was neither discussed at any Party Conference or Congress nor was it adopted"¹⁵. A little was known about this Draft programme of 1928 until 1951.

In 1951 when the leadership of the Communist Party of India went to Soviet Russia for consultation with Stalin and the CPSU for a programme of its own in view of the differences of opinion within the leadership over the question of the role of the peasants in the democratic revolution, the question of 1928 Draft programme arose. Indian leaders - Rajeshwar Rao, Basavapunnaiiah, Ajoy Ghosh and S.A. Dange met Stalin and discussed with him about a new programme of the party which would be scientific and acceptable by all in the leadership.

M. Basavapunnaiiah recollected in the Stalin's Birth Centenary volume of the Ganasakti¹⁶ in 1979 that Com. Stalin himself asked the Indian communists whether there was any previous programme of the CPI. If there was any than how it had treated the question now under debate ? Indian communist leaders then doubtfully answered that they had no agreed party programme so far. Basavapunnaiiah further stated there that Stalin made them remember about the Draft programme which was placed before the Communist International for affiliation. He then ordered some of his Russian Comrades to search for it in the archives of the Communist

remained unresolved (for instance, the role of national bourgeoisie and the Congress Party in the freedom struggle, Mountbatten award, i.e., partition of the country, nature of independence, etc.). Collaboration with the Indian National Congress was rejected in the name of Right Revisionism, and maintaining an out and out distance from the Indian National Congress and the national bourgeoisie was evident. This was more pronounced in the Second Congress of the Party in 1948. The interests of the Indian national bourgeoisie and the imperialists were seen mostly alike. Therefore, it did not agree that India achieved independence on 15 August, 1947. The CPI then called it as 'formal independence'¹⁸. In order to achieve full independence, according to the CPI, the democratic forces should forge alliance against the imperialist - feudal-bourgeois combine. The national bourgeoisie which was represented through the Indian National Congress was seen as a 'junior partner'¹⁹ in this combination. The above assessment over the prevailing situation had influenced the programme of the party adopted in 1951.

Now the following study will focus on the questions of 'agrarian reforms' and 'rural democracy' treated in this programme.

The programme states :

"The agriculture and the peasant problem are of primary importance to the life of our country"²⁰.

"We can not develop agriculture ... and provide the country with food and raw materials because impoverished peasantry deprived of land is unable to purchase the most elementary agricultural implements and thus to improve its farming"²¹.

This programme also emphasised that industrialisation was not possible because the impoverished peasantry constituting 80 per cent of the population was unable to buy even a minimum quantity of manufactured goods²².

It observed with an anguish that peasantry was in a condition of semi-starvation and the government was a mere on-looker in times of natural calamities and wants.

This programme states that hundreds of thousands of hungry peasants forced by poverty left the countryside for towns, swarmed the labour market and consequently lowered the price of labour, thus increased the army of unemployment.

India's peasantry which constituted the overwhelming majority was culturally backward due to the poor living condition and because it was deprived of any material means to give education to its children.

Therefore, the programme emphasised the necessity to create human condition of existence for the peasants for which it was necessary to take land from the landlords and to hand it over to the peasants²³.

To achieve these aims, the programme called for early completion of the following steps :

"To handover landlords' land without payment to the peasants including agricultural labourers and to legalise this reform in the form of a special land law and thus realise abolition of landlordism without compensation.

To ensure a long-term and cheap credit for the peasants to enable them to purchase agricultural implements and the necessary seeds. To ensure long-term and cheap credit to small artisans to enable them to purchase raw materials, etc. and carry on their manufacture and trade.

To ensure government assistance to the peasants in the improvement of old and the building of new irrigation systems.

To cancel debts of peasants and small artisans to moneylenders.

To ensure adequate wages and living conditions to agricultural labourers"²⁴.

This programme considered that the 'agriculture and the peasant problem' were the most important and primary problems in the life of the majority of the Indian people. It analysed the causes as to why the food problem of India was one of continuing character of the national economy.

Growth of industry in India was directly proportional to the growth of its agriculture, because the market of industry was targetted to the peasantry. When the whole section of the peasantry was in abject poverty the possibility of rapid industrialisation was considered bleak.

Land to the peasants without compensation, cancellation of all debts to moneylenders, cheap credit policy of the national governments were some of the measures to set agriculture in motion. Unilinear growth of industry was not possible unless a stable agricultural economy supported it.

Age-long hereditary poverty led the entire peasant masses to cultural backwardness. Therefore, social and moral development could not be ensured unless the rural economy i.e. the agricultural economy was reorganised. The 1951 party programme analysed the root cause of the peasant problem from the Marxist points of view. Moreover it adopted some revolutionary demands for agrarian reforms.

Now this study will focus on the matter of democracy and more particularly on rural democracy conceived in this programme of 1951.

The programme of the CPI of 1951 was put before the people of India in order to make clear the objective for which they should fight. It states,

"... our party regards as quite mature the task of replacing the present antidemocratic, and anti-popular government by a new government of people's democracy created on the basis of a coalition of all democratic antifeudal and anti-imperialist forces in the country ..."²⁵ (Emphasis added).

In this people's democratic state, the sovereignty of the people will be vested in the hands of the people themselves through their representatives. The people's representatives will be elected by the people and subject to recall at any time upon a demand by the majority of the electors who will constitute a single popular assembly - a single legislative chamber. The people's democratic state will ensure universal, equal and direct suffrage for all male and female above the age of eighteen years in all elections to the legislative elections, and to the various local government bodies²⁶.

The programme laid down provisions for local government through which 'rural democracy' will be established. The infrastructure of the local bodies will wipe out the feudal and landlord supremacy over the various local bodies. These feudal and landlord sections constitute the rural counterpart on agent of the imperialist and big power grippers.

The programme states —

"Local government [will act] on a wide scale and with wide powers through people's committees. The abolition of all local and provincial authorities appointed from the above

[will be ensured]"²⁷.

The people's committees will be the sole determinants of the affairs of the local bodies. In the rural areas most of the people are either peasants and sharecroppers or artisans or small shopkeepers. They constitute 80 to 90 per cent of the rural population. Once, the people rise to power, rather one should say, seize the power of the villages, the pro-peasant measures will be defended and protected at all costs against the age-old feudal and landlord attacks.

Social and economic oppression of one caste by another or social and personal bans and prohibitions imposed by the so called upper castes on the lower castes, specially on the scheduled castes, in the name of custom, tradition or religion shall be abolished and made punishable by law. Religious minorities shall be given protection against discrimination²⁸.

The programme has stated that people's democratic government will establish people's committees in all areas. The power of the people's committees will be more than that of bureaucratic and judicial bodies. The people's committees of respective areas will determine the distribution of land seized from the feudal and landlords and will decide over other social and economic matters. In the people's democratic state there will occur a shift of power from the

imperialist - feudal and landlords and the bourgeoisie to the toiling masses and their allies.

The programme of CPI criticised the constitution framed and adopted by the government of India in 1949. It stated "... while the stronghold of landlords, princes and imperialists on our economy, land and capital is guaranteed by this constitution [which was framed by the bourgeois -landlord govt. of India] not a single item of the life and liberty of our masses is guaranteed, beyond stating them as pious and illusory wishes. The constitution is not and can not be called a truly democratic constitution but a constitution of a landlord-capitalist state tied to foreign imperialist interest"²⁹. Therefore, according to the CPI programme, the constitution of India is a partisan constitution for the vested interests and full of illusory and false promises for the toiling masses who constitute 90 per cent of the population.

Section 1

Sub-section ii) Controversy over the programme of 1951.

'The Programme of the CPI of 1951' was the product of much deliberation and practice. It was the product of a long-drawn-out inner-party struggle, specially in the years following 1947, and the valuable counsel of the delegation of the CPSU, headed by Stalin in the first quarter of 1951.

Another important companion document titled the 'Tactical Line' was also incorporated at that time. This programme was adopted by the all-India party conference, Calcutta, 9-15 October 1951. The Third party Congress, Madurai, 27 December 1953 to 4 January 1954, readopted this programme with a minor amendment³⁰.

'The Programme of 1951' had repudiated the dogmatic and sectarian deviations of the years following 1947. Nevertheless, some serious mistakes remained with this programme which in course of time became evident. "National and international developments moved so fast that several of the basic propositions made in the 1951 Programme did not tally with a new emerging realities; and they could not meet the political requirements of the developing situation in the country and on an international scale"³¹.

Within a few years from the incorporation of this programme, it was evident that some basic provisions of the 1951 party programme were not tallying with the emerging realities. The leadership of the party started rethinking over the programme. The call for amendment of the programme was demanded more vigorously in the successive party conferences and congresses.

To focus on the controversies over the programme of 1951, it is required to look into the provisions of this programme figured in the serious debate within the CPI.

In 1947 the country was divided into India and Pakistan and got independence, but the programme did not admit it, rather the programme observed it as formal independence.

Para 1 of the programme states —

"The people of India were led to believe that foreign imperialist rule was at an end, that India had achieved independence and freedom ..."³².

Para 2 states —

"Four years of the Nehru government in power has belied the hopes of the masses in every respect"³³.

Para 12 states —

"Knowing the desire of the people to make our country completely independent of British imperialism, the government has proclaimed India a republic. But unwilling really to break its ties with imperialism, it has shamelessly proclaimed the republic to be a part of the empire !

The membership of the British empire [British Commonwealth] is not only a formal matter, as is declared ... the government of India essentially carries out the foreign policy of British imperialism". It further states "If the independence of the armed forces of a country is a sign of its sovereignty and independence, then the key part of our

independence is still left in the hands of British imperialism"³⁷.

The last paragraph of this programme stated the following among other things —

"India is the last biggest dependent semicolonial country in Asia still left for the enslavers to rob and exploit".

All these above statements in the programme of the CPI of 1951 rejected the reality of India's independence in 1947. Besides this issue of independence, the programme failed to recognise the fact that India appeared as a Republic in 1950. It analysed the character of the Indian state as power had been shared among the imperialists, landlords and the bourgeoisie. Para 7 mentions —

"This government [Government of India] which is tied to the chariot-wheels of British capital"³⁵.

Para 10 states —

"The people of India are gradually realising the meaning of the state of affairs and are coming to realise the necessity to change this government of landlords and princes this government of financial sharks and speculators, this government hanging on to the will of the British Commonwealth, the British Imperialists"³⁶.

Para 11 states further —

This is the "government of landlords and princes and the reactionary big bourgeoisie, collaborating with the British imperialism ..."³⁷

When the party put itself to practice according to its programme, then immediately it was understood that the provisions made in the programme were completely different from the reality. The nature of India's independence and the character of the Indian state were different from the programmatic views. Therefore, serious rethinking started within the party which led to the demand of amendment and rejection of the wrong provisions in the programme. The alignment of party members under groupings started therefrom, and uncompromising debates took place in the successive conferences and congresses of the party.

The programmatic position suffered deeply due to its failure to acknowledge the reality in the prevailing national scenario. Besides it, the fast changing national and international perspective in the years following 1951 was basically different from its preceding decade. However, the programme of 1951 was prepared over the assessment of that decade.

The developments since 1951 that need special mention were the defeat of the U.S. armies in the Korean War, the rout of the French armies in Vietnam, the Tibetan Agreement

and the signing of Panch Sheel by India and People's Republic of China, the growing Indo-Soviet and Sino-Indian friendly relations, the holding of Bandung Conference under the leadership of China, India and Indonesia, the assertion of the Indian Government of its non-alignment policy in opposition to U.S imperialism and its military alliances such as SEATO, CENTO, etc., the growing tempo of the liberation struggle in Asia-Africa and Latin America, etc. More particularly the Indo-Soviet and Sino-Indian relationship and India's emergence as a non-aligned force at that time were compelling the Indian Communists to rethink for a new programme.

Other notable remarkable changes of the Indian political scene were the planned economy, public sector economy, more and more collaboration with the socialist world, legislation of Zamindari abolition and the declaration of the socialist pattern of the society by the Indian National Congress at its Avadi session in January 1955.

The real problem facing the party 1951 onwards, however, was how to assess and deal with the new positions adopted by the Indian National Congress and the Central Government ruled by it. It appeared that the Congress Party took serious note on the reverses suffered in the 1952 elections, particularly in states where the Communist Party had emerged as a force to reckon with. The Congress leadership's response was the

adoption of new manoeuvres intended to give it a 'left image'.

The most important of these manoeuvres was in the field of foreign policy. Forging relations of friendship with the Soviet Union and People's China, raising the voice of struggle against colonialism, joining the newly emerging nations in the Asian, African & Latin American Continents to develop anti-colonial struggles on a world scale, India was slowly making a mark in the international camp of anti-imperialist fighters.

The question, therefore, arose as to whether these developments in the policies of the ruling Congress Party should be seen in isolation or whether they should be understood as a change in the political complexion of the ruling classes. What happened at that time was a change in the CPI's approach to the ruling Congress.

Namboodiripad remarked that a section in the CPI gave an unhesitating 'yes' to the view that the ruling classes as a whole, and the ruling party - in particular, had started 'moving to the left'³⁹.

Furthermore, the said section in the CPI argued that beginning with an anti-imperialist foreign policy (which was already visible), the 'shift to the left' was bound to extend itself to internal policy. The question in their view was simple - how could a progressive foreign policy fail to

exert its influence on internal policy ? The two after all, were understood to be the integral parts of the policies of the same class.

This point of view had also the vigorous support of the Soviet and Chinese Communist leaders and academicians. They were increasingly becoming friendly with the Indian state and its political leaders, praising them for their anti-imperialist policies and internal reforms. It was in this context that some academicians of Soviet Union started re-interpreting the role of Mahatma Gandhi in the freedom movement; he had earlier been denounced as a counter-revolutionary but now was praised as a 'great national leader'. Some members in the CPI took every pronouncement of such nature made by the Soviet leaders, every article appearing in the journals of those fraternal parties, as a 'guidance to Indian Comrades',⁴⁰. This group within the party popularly was known later as collaborationists who favoured 'national democratic' front for national democratic revolution.

The communist leadership of the Soviet Union and its academic — were quite very appreciative of the role of the Congress Party and its leader Nehru for their role in the anti-imperialist struggle and siding with the socialist camp in the colonial liberation struggle of Asia and Africa in the post world war period. But in the national scene, the Congress was the main enemy of the CPI. Time to time good

certificates from the CPSU for the Nehru government led the CPI to a very embarrassing position. Although the CPI also appreciated the foreign policy of the Nehru government, still it had reservation to work with the Congress, because the Congress Party was considered as the party of the vested interests in the country.

In 1955 the day before the Republic day the Pravda - an organ of the CPSU, in its editorial acknowledged that India was an independent country and supported the internal and external policy of the Nehru government. Therefore, this editorial attacked the very foundation of the 1951 programme of the CPI.

The other group within the CPI, sharply disagreed with this view and held that however welcome the change in the foreign policy of the ruling party and its government be, it did not signify any change in the class character of the government, least of all in the field of internal policy. This group observed, while undoubtedly giving an anti-imperialist thrust to foreign policy, the ruling party was far from taking such position as the working class and its party were striving to make the country to be.

This other group suggested, while the CPI must extend support to those elements of foreign policy which help the world-wide struggle against imperialism, the CPI must

also independently popularise its programme based on the Marxist-Leninist understanding of the world situation. In no case, according to this group, must the illusion be created among the people that the anti-imperialist thrust in the field of foreign policy would automatically lead to progressive changes in internal policy⁴¹. Later, this group argued for the formation of national democratic front with all the left and democratic forces in the country including the ruling Congress Party.

These two lines confronted each other in the Third Congress of the CPI held at Madurai in the last week of December 1953. Among those who attended the session as guests was the British Communist Party General Secretary, Harry Pollitt, whose greetings to the delegates encouraged those pleading for a change in the party's approach to the Congress Party and its government. However, the majority within the CPI in that Congress stuck to its line of opposition to the Congress regime and its class policies while extending support to those elements of foreign policy which helped the world-wide struggle of socialist and other anti-imperialist forces against colonialism and war.

The programme of the CPI (1951), thus failed on the one hand to, highlight the existing reality of the country about the nature of India's independence, on the other hand, it failed to direct the party through the internal and external changes which occurred immediate after the adoption of this

programme in 1951 and its readoption in 1953 at Madurai Congress.

The ruling Congress party changed its course of activities in the face of left opposition. Historic visit of the CPSU leaders in December 1951 by the invitation of J. Nehru - Prime Minister of India helped much in building left-image to the Indian National Congress. In the general election of 1955, the Congress Party fully used the blessings of the Soviet leaders as the Congress itself is a leftist party. Actually from the end of the Stalins' era the Soviet Union always pursued a favourable friendly policy towards the Indian government installed after the end of the colonial rule. This was largely due to the role of anti-imperialistic attitude of Nehru and the Congress.

Indeed, this stand of the Soviet Union was shocking, but the more shocking effect the communist leaderships all over the world received when the CPSU in its 20th Party Congress declared the policy of 'peaceful co-existence' with the capitalist-block and peaceful transition to socialism' the Communist activities all over the world were divided into pro-Soviet and critical to Soviet stand. It was also found in the Indian scene.

The formation of the first Communist Government of Kerala, a few months after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU

in 1956 was claimed (by several people within and outside the communist movement) to be a confirmation of correctness of the line of 'peaceful' parliamentary path of transition to socialism. For the first time in world history, it was said, the communists had succeeded in winning a majority in a free election. It was a popular slogan to them : "Today Kerala, Tomorrow other states, in the end the Centre". However, all hopes were lost when the communist government of Kerala was dismissed in 1959. Internally chaos was created by the state congress from below and from the above - the Congress govt. of the centre dismissed the Kerala government. Thus India experienced the first test in the road towards the much advertised 'peaceful transition'⁴².

Another round of inner party struggle for a correct party programme and political line annulling the 1951 programme of the party had flared up following the Central Committee resolution in June 1955, titled 'Communist Party in Struggle for Peace, Democracy and National Advance'⁴³.

The shift from the programmatic understanding of 1951 was evident in this resolution. It declares -

"The policies that the government of India pursues today in its relation with other countries are essentially independent and are not under the decisive influence of any foreign power". It further states - "The emergence of India as a sovereign and independent republic upholding the cause

of peace and freedom is a factor of profound significance in the present day world".

One more statement in this regard - "The existence of the powerful socialist and democratic camp and of the parallel socialist world market, the resurgence of the freedom movement in Asia, the growth of the democratic and peace movements inside the country, a relative improvement in certain aspects of Indian economy, the deepening contradictions in the imperialist camp resulting in its constant weakening and the growing conflict between the Indian bourgeoisie and imperialism - all these have made it possible for the government of India to assert increasingly India's sovereignty and independence"⁴⁴.

The new stand pronounced in the pre-Fourth Congress resolution of the CPI actually attacked the very foundation of the 1951 party programme about its notion of independence, character of the state and the ruling party, economic situation in the hands of the ruling party and the external policies of the ruling Congress.

A series of 'Forums' expressing conflicting views by several leading members of the Central Committee of the CPI, and of different State Committees were published as pre-Fourth Party Congress discussion documents. The State Committee held prior to the Congress became political battle fields for different clashing political views⁴⁵.

It appeared that there were three distinct political lines before the Fourth Party Congress in April 1956. One was the Central Committee's draft of the majority, the second was the alternative draft critical to the majority from the rightist angle - it was the extreme reformist line presented by P C Joshi, Rajeswar Rao and others who mustered one third strength in the Congress for their alternative political line; and the third one was by five Central Committee Members such as P. Sundarayya, M. Basavapunnaiiah, Harkishen Singh Surjeet, Hanumantha Rao and Prasad Rao, which was withdrawn in support of the official line (majority C.C. line) after it incorporated some amendments⁴⁶.

All of these drafts were thrown open for discussion and comments from the party members and units all over the country and were published in a special publication called 'Forum'. The entire exercise took several months, with all the pre-Congress Conferences being turned into a debate on the issues posed in the draft.

One remarkable feature in these conflicting drafts was that each draft altogether denounced the 1951 programme as useless in the changed circumstances and they, therefore, proposed a new party programme in the Fourth Congress at Palghat in April, 1956.

In this Congress two main groups opposing each other could not arrive at an agreed decision about the question of

a new party programme in place of that of 1951⁴⁷. This Congress resolved that India had achieved independence, not 'formal independence' as mentioned in the 1951 programme unanimously. The political resolution of the Fourth Congress echoed the resolution adopted by the Central Committee, June 1955, it reads - "The emergence of India as a sovereign and independent republic upholding the cause of peace and freedom is a factor of profound significance in the present day world"⁴⁸.

Another most important issue figured in the debate of this Congress was whether or not to have 'a united front at all, from the Congress Party to the Communist Party, leading to the formation of a coalition government'. One-third of the delegates voted for the rightist proposal in favour of a united front with the Congress, (this was the group which placed the alternative c.c. draft before the Fourth Congress which was ultimately defeated and withdrawn). However, the majority went in favour of 'not to have united front with the Congress Party' and showed the danger of a 'shift to the right'. Namboodiripad remarked "It may be noted in anticipation of later developments that this very line of collaboration was what came to be adopted by the post-split CPI which went in a coalition with the Congress in Kerala, the only state where this was permitted by the Congress"⁴⁹.

At the end of the Fourth Congress, however, the Central Committee was entrusted with the preparation of a new

programme for the party and virtually adjourned and rejected the 1951 party programme⁵⁰. Thus the debate over the 1951 first party programme was over.

The next party Congress, i.e., the Fifth Congress was held in Amritsar, 1958 which could not make any progress towards the adoption of a new programme. It devoted its time on the party organisation and party constitution. At that time the party was deeply watching the international scenario, particularly the change of the Marxist line of thinking evident in the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956, which advocated peaceful coexistence of the two systems (Capitalist and socialist) in the world, and peaceful transformation of capitalism to socialism.

The Sixth Congress of the CPI which was held in Vijaywada in April 1961, was proposed to adopt a programme of the party. Two draft programmes were placed before the Congress from the rival groups but none of them was adopted. Actually, at that time the party was divided vertically. One group was led by S.A. Dange, Rajeshwar Rao, Bhupesh Gupta, and others, the other group was led by B.T. Ranadive, A.K. Gopalana, M. Basavapunnaiyah, P. Ramamurti, and others. A lot of debate took place over the rival programmes and other national issues. Important among other issues was whether a National Unity or a Democratic Unity should be built up. The hot debate ended in personal attacks among the leaders

leaders of the rival groups within the party. Ultimately, the guest delegate M. Suslov - a noted ideologist of the CPSU interfered and the party was saved from an immediate division⁵¹. The apparent inner-party unity that prevailed between 1955 and the Sixth Party Congress at Vijaywada in 1961, was so fragile that another round of furious inner-party struggle flared at the Sixth Party Congress. There was an entirely new political alignment of delegates at the Sixth Congress. The Congress delegates were more or less equally divided, several comrades going over to the opposition from their earlier support to the official line. The Sixth Congress of April 1961 ended in an organisational patch up and compromise. Only the speech of the General Secretary (Ajoy Ghosh) was adopted as the resolution of the Congress. Another development in this Congress was that the party chairmanship post was created avoiding the party constitution. Com. S.A. Dange was selected by an agreement as the party chairman. A sharp political division, however, persisted threatening a split⁵² which ultimately came within a few years (1964) after the Sino-Indian border flare-up. Only after this split the two parties that emerged adopted their individual programmes.

Section 2 The Split of the CPI into CPI and CPI(M).

The split of the Communist Party of India took place in the middle of the year 1964 when all efforts to hold a united Party Congress had ended in failure on 4 July, 1964 at its National Council's meeting held⁵³ in New Delhi. One break away group met at its Tenali (Andhra) Convention (7 July to 11 July 1964) and later formed the Communist Party of India -Marxist (CPI-M); and the other group formed the Communist Party of India (CPI) (this group retained the earlier name of the party). Both the groups claimed to be the original party following the correct political line. Arguments and counter-arguments continue among them in these regards even to this day.

The split of the CPI in 1964 was a severe jolt to the communist movement in India. There was a general belief that the ideological schism between the Chinese and Soviet Communist Parties in the late 1950's which had respective followers within the CPI had led ultimately to the division of the party. Of course, there was a definite repercussion⁵⁴ within the CPI of the ideological debate between the CPSU and CPC (i.e. Communist Party of Soviet Union and the Communist Party of China) regarding the grave issues like the thesis of the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956 and the two documents of the international conferences of communist and socialist parties of different countries. These two documents

were - Declaration of the Communist & Worker Parties of Socialist Countries (Moscow 1957), and, statement of the Conference of the 81 Communist & Workers' Parties (Moscow 1960).

The thesis of the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956 had evoked a great ideological debate in the international communist movement. The thesis declared the need and possibility of peaceful co-existence of the two (capitalist and socialist) systems in the world, and peaceful transformation of society from capitalism to socialism. It attacked the role played by Stalin in the name of 'personality cult' in the Russian national context which definitely lowered down the position of Stalin and his role in the struggle against imperialism. The world communist movement was stunned by the new line adopted by the CPSU. A mixed reaction within the communist parties of different countries was soon visible. One section in the world communist movement had started thinking that the Soviet Union had left the path of Marxism-Leninism and entered into the trap of 'revisionism'.⁵⁵

The group within the CPI (often described as the Rightist) who favoured the idea of peaceful transition to socialism advocated in the 20th Congress of the CPSU and had gathered arguments in favour of Kerala way as the path of advance for the party in the whole country. But soon their

hopes were dashed to the ground when the Kerala government was toppled at the end of 1959 by the Congress Party and its central government.

The Fifth Party Congress reiterated the aim of "the achievement of power by the working class, establishment of People's Democracy led by the working class"⁵⁶. But the differences were so acute that the organisational report of the Party Congress had to say :

"Acute political differences had developed in our party before the Congress. These differences and the manner in which they had been fought had led to weakening of the unity of the party. Organised functioning had been paralysed in many areas. Our mass work, specially among the peasantry, had suffered seriously as a consequence"⁵⁷.

It went on to say :

"Divergent and conflicting ideas have grown among different comrades about the decisions of the 20th Congress [of the CPSU], about the implications of the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism. After the general elections, the Kerala State Committee adopted a resolution trying to link our success in Kerala and the formation of the Communist Government there with the broader issue of peaceful transition. Some C.C. members thought the document to be wrong. Some argued with it. But the Central Committee did not even discuss it.

These, however, are not the only instances. An attitude of utter indifference towards basic ideological issues has grown inside the party. Some comrades even dispute such basic concepts of Marxism-Leninism as the dictatorship of the proletariat being essential for the building of socialism"⁵⁸.

The followers of the peaceful transition to socialism saw its practice in Kerala state where the CPI formed the ministry.

But at the end when the Kerala government was toppled the Leftists within the CPI reinforced their arguments that Congress would never let the situation to develop in a way suitable for peaceful transition. Namboodiripad admitted "... the fate that overtook that government in 1959-60, followed by the subsequent struggle in Kerala itself and in other states like West Bengal, showed that formula 'Kerala today, other states tomorrow and finally the centre' [a popular slogan at that time] was completely unrealistic"⁵⁹.

The fall of the government was followed not too lately by the development of the India-China conflict which further widened internal rift. This new rift on the India-China question reopened the controversy within the party and finally led to its split in 1964.

The resolution of the CPI Central Executive Committee (CEC) in its search for the middle ground - confidence in

China's non-aggressive character but commitment to India's territorial integrity - satisfied neither the pro-Chinese internationalist Left of the party nor the nationalist Right. Differences within the party were fully exposed as the consequences of a further incident on 20-21 October in which nine members of an Indian police petrol were killed and ten detained in a clash with Chinese forces forty miles inside the border of Ladakh as understood by India. The CPI's formal acceptance of the McMahon Line in mid - November amounted to a victory for the Right and further alienated the internationalist Left⁶⁰.

The existing internal differences within the CPI was compounded by the events of Kerala, the Sino-Indian border dispute and the Sino-Soviet ideological quarrel. The historic 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956 which adopted the policies of peaceful co-existence and peaceful transition to socialism had earned a mixed reaction among the communists in the world. The days of bonhomie between the two giant socialist states were coming to an end. The major differences came over-ground in April 1960 when the Peking journal Red Flag had published an article 'Long Live Leninism' which attacked the CPSU in ideological terms and the conflict developed at the World Confederation of Trade Unions' conference in Peking and the 3rd Congress of the Rumanian Workers' party both in June 1960. In this perspective the World Congress of Communist Parties was scheduled to be held

in Moscow in November 1960. There the CPI needed to clarify its position. The CEC's resolution, based on the draft of the national party secretary, Ajoy Ghosh, and supported by Namboodiripad, is reported to have explicitly condemned the Chinese Party and endorsed the Soviet line on peaceful transition and expressed concern at the way in which differences in the world communist movement were being handled by the two main socialist countries - the Soviet Union and the Peoples' Republic of China⁶¹. Ajoy Ghosh's speech to the World Congress was conciliatory in tone towards both the CPSU and the CPC but indicated support for the Soviet Party in the ideological quarrel and opposition to the Chinese Party on the Sino-Indian border dispute⁶².

Before the Sixth Party Congress of the CPI, serious differences had again developed inside the Communist Party of India on programmatic issues and on the current policies as well as the ideological issues of the World Communist movement. The two commissions which were appointed by the National Council to draft the Programme and Political Resolution to be placed at the Sixth Congress at Vijayawada, could not come to a common understanding. The serious differences that had cropped up at the Fourth Congress in 1956 (immediately after the Twentieth CPSU Congress) had made it clear that the party programme adopted in 1951 had become out-moded and now, therefore, to be redrafted. There was no common understanding on the lines along which the

redrafting was to be done. The National Council itself having no unanimous understanding for the preparation of a party programme which would be accepted by all in the party.

In this event, while the CPI National Council voted in February 1961 to recommend Ajoy Ghosh's draft political resolution to the Congress for approval, it agreed to circulate the Left alternative draft prepared and signed by twenty two National Council members including B.T.Randive and H.K. Surjeet. A third document, written by Namboodiripad which was critical of both left and right positions was also circulated⁶³. The Sixth Congress, therefore, had three drafts before it, characterised respectively as 'Rightist' and 'Leftist' and 'Centrist'. The first having been prepared by S.A.Dange, P.C.Joshi and G.Adhikari as signatories was supported by C.Rajeswar Rao and others.

In essentials, the Rightists saw the principal threat as coming from monopoly and foreign capital which encouraged reaction - the monopolists and communal forces. The Congress party was represented as having progressive as well as reactionary elements. The CPI should therefore be prepared to work with and against Congress and be ready to extend a welcome to progressive Congressmen in a national democratic front led by the working class.

The left agreed that Congress's record was not entirely black, but accused the Right of Compromising with Congress

and underestimating its reactionary character. The CPI should vigorously oppose Congress party. The working class leadership of democratic forces was emphasized in the choice of the slogan 'People's Democracy'.

Namboodiripad's draft distinguished between two sections of the bourgeoisie - foreign and Indian monopoly capital on the one hand the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal elements on the other, and argued for efforts to win over the latter to the CPI side⁶⁴. Thus the differences were, not confined to programmatic positions but included also questions of assessing the current situations and working out the tactical line. The Sixth Congress of the CPI proved inconclusive for two reasons : First, the Rightists had the barest majority; and second, the Soviet delegation, the first formal delegation in the CPI history, led by the prominent ideologist Mikhail Suslov while supporting the Right counselled against pressing matters to a split in the party.

In the Sixth Congress, the differences were not confined only to the programmatic positions. They concerned questions of assessing the current situation and working out of the tactical lines but there was no common understanding on the political resolution to be adopted by the Congress. While the discussion on the adoption of the new programme was deferred, the Congress was dispersed without having a unanimous or majority document spelling out the Party's current tactics.

A strange procedure was adopted by incorporating the speech of the General Secretary of the party, Ajoy Ghosh after replacing some passages from the speech. The inner party situation, therefore, was one of pandemonium marked by groupism.

The patch-up solution for the choice of top leaders of the party proved very soon to be only a temporary one. The patch-up arrangement was of balancing between the 'left' and the 'right' with an avowed Rightist as Chairman (S.A.Dange) and a 'pro-Left', as General Secretary (E.M.S.Namboodiripad). Namboodiripad personally maintained a stand what was known as Centrist, but he maintained a good relationship with the Left. He was also nominated as General Secretary by the Left. Naturally the tension between them was the inherent property of the patch-up work. In February 1963 Namboodiripad, the General Secretary, resigned in protest against the activities of the Right in dealing with the situation after Chinese aggression. The Right was majority in the National Council.

On 20 October 1962 the Sino-Indian border dispute took a more serious turn, creating an acute dilemma for the party. On 1 November, the National Council adopting an unequivocally nationalist stand, condemned China's aggression and called on the Indian people to unite in the defence of the country.

The anti-China hysteria which had been whipped up since 1959 was powerful enough to rouse general antipathy to the

pro-Chinese leftists in the communist party who demanded peaceful settlement of disputes between India and China from the beginning. The Rightists were reported to have used this chance to discredit and malign the 'Leftists' as 'Chinese agents'. Therefore, they posed the whole question of inner party struggle within the Communist Party as a conflict between the 'patriots' who stood up against China and the 'traitors' who were acting as the aggressors' tools⁶⁵. Actually this dissension had helped the ruling party, the Indian National Congress to put down and discredit the very integrity of a section of the communists in the fashion of Quit India precedence.

Shortly, afterwards on 22nd November 1962 the Central Government commenced to detain nearly 1,000 CPI Leftists under the Defence of India Ordinance⁶⁶. Some of the Rightist leaders were also in custody as for example, Achutha Menon. It was reported to be an assumption of the leftists that the Right had supplied lists of Leftists to the Home Ministry to facilitate the detentions.

But what appeared in this event, that the Dange-group was prompt to use this opportunity to reorganise the state units (as for example in the West Bengal and Punjab) and to pass Rightist and pro-Soviet resolutions in a depleted National Council meeting in Feb, 1963⁶⁷.

Namboodiripad's own resolution entitled 'Revisionism and Dogmatism in the CPI'⁶⁸ was rejected in this National

Council meeting. At the end he resigned from the post of General Secretary in Feb, 1963 just after the end of National Council's meeting. Namboodiripad's document criticised the revisionist and dogmatic activities of the past and present leadership of the CPI. More particularly this document attacked the Right's current chauvinism and accused it of tailing along behind the ruling Congress government. In a further draft resolution he argued that the CPI should not take side in the Sino-Soviet dispute till it had put its own house in order.

The years 1963-64 were marked as the highest stage of internal squabbles among the warring groups of the CPI. Even it crossed the limit of decency and reached the personal digs on issues spanning over 1924 onwards.

M.S. Namboodiripad who was known as centrist resigned from the post of General Secretary in Feb. 1963 because the Right majority in the National Council led by Dange was not acceptable to him. Thereafter, C. Rajeshwar Rao a staunch Dangeite became the General Secretary of the party.

However, the next stage is the stage for unity between the Centrist Namboodiripad and his followers with the Leftists. The first point of their unity was that both of them considered the Right as their common enemy.

In October 1963 a meeting of the National Council was held. The 17 members released from jail also participated

in the meeting. They placed a document known as "The Threatening Disruption and Split of the Party - How to Avert the Disaster". This document was critical of the role played by the Right group led by Dange during the arrest of the Left leaders and followers and blamed the Right for disruption of the unity of the party.

In reply Dange rejected the arguments of the Left and counter charged "... do they really wish to bring about unity or only make manoeuvres under the guise of unity proposals ? We consider that the statement of the seventeen is actuated by a desire to prevent a split. But the measures proposed in their actual effect will lead to exactly the opposite effect"⁶⁹.

Since October 1963 to April 1964 was the period actuated by tremendous bitterness between the rival groups. Accusation and counter accusation by either of the rival groups before the general press was a recurring affair. The two groups were obstinate in their individual way of thinking that created the final plea for division of the party marked by the point of no return.

Consequently on 15th April, 1964, the National Council where Dange group is majority suspended the dissidents enmasse. The expulsion was not only limited to the central organisations of the party, but also it extended to the provincial levels. In West Bengal, Andhra and Punjab the

Leftists were majority. Here the Right formed an alternative provincial committees with its followers⁷⁰.

The last National Council's meeting was held in Delhi on 4th July, 1964. It was a last bid to retain unity of the party. However, the minutes of the discussion⁷¹ were limited to the inner-party differences during China's aggression and the detention of the Left followers. The Left pressed for withdrawal of suspension and expulsion of the left leaders and followers. The Right majority did not accede to the proposal of the Left and asked them to prove their majority in the National Council. Then the 32 members of the Left in National Council walked out of the meeting. They brought out a memorandum condemning the anti-party factional activities being carried on by the Dange-group. This memorandum states "the exchange of views [in the N.C. meeting of 11 April 1964] revealed the fact that we [Leftists] are united not only against the factionalism and anti-party organisational methods resorted to by them, but also against their political line of tailing behind the bourgeoisie through general united front with the Congress"⁷². Ultimately the Left group broke away from the Right, severed all relationship with the Right. Eventually the situation led to the final split and the two warring factions individually as claimed only the successor and following the real Marxist-Leninist path for India's revolution. Both of them were trying utmost to gather as much as supporters as they could. The Leftists

then appealed to the fellow comrades to join with them against the Revisionist group of Dange.

Thus a situation was created in which there could not be found any way of resolving inner-party contradictions in ideological position on international communist cleavages and strategic and tactical questions regarding India's revolution. Later there developed inter-personal bitterness and distrust among the top leaders, and these problems also proved insoluble. The warring groups thought of resolving the contradiction by splitting the party and thereby dividing the movement so far they had built in India against the enemy of the toiling people. Thus the first split was over and it served as a womb for another split occurring within three years though the latter was for different reasons.

In the event of split within the CPI, there were felt this of the two giant communist parties, namely, the CPSU and the CPC which differentiated from each other on international ideological issues. At that time they were busy making allies in favour of their respective stand on ideological issues under debate.

In the split the CPSU openly backed Rightist effort. The CPSU was quick to supplement the effort of the CPI's to fit the revolt into the general pattern of the international split and trace it to the activities of "Peking Splitters". The CPI journal, reprinted from the Soviet journal Partinya

Zhizh, an article denouncing the "splitter groups" as composed of "diverse renegades, Trotskyites, and adventurists attempting to come to top on the dirty foam of Peking's factional struggle against the Marxist-Leninist parties. Among them are quite a number of morally corrupt people"⁷³.

On the other hand, during the split the CPC was completely silent. But what was evident, the CPC had started criticising the Indian ruling circles from the late 1950's. The Indian government headed by J.Nehru was busy to dub and pose the National Congress Party as the champion of socialism and that too was certified by the CPSU after its 20th Congress in 1956 where peaceful transition to socialism was declared as one of the aims. The Rightist faction within the CPI in the pre-split period and after went for the support to the CPSU's stand on Nehrus. This was unacceptable to the CPC. Besides, the Tibet issue in 1959 and Sino-Indian border dispute in 1962 were the events where China's direct national interest was involved. On these issues the Rightist faction of the CPI endorsed the Nehru-government positions and proved its true nationalist identity and alienated the Left in the CPI as Chinese agents or traitors who were not critical of the Chinese stand in the international ideological debate. Therefore, the simple logic ran that China was behind the Leftist faction which engineered the split in the CPI in the fashion the International solidarity of the communist bloc broker by the CPC.

However, the ever undisclosed pro-Chinese position of the Leftist-faction, later known as CPI(M), was maligned thereby absolved of from the accusation very soon when CPC openly supported the break-away group later known as Naxalites from the CPI(M)⁷⁴.

To sum up the whole gamut which culminated in and ended with the split of the CPI in 1964 can be redrawn.

The first major ideological confrontation between the two groups was visible during the Fourth Congress held in 1956 between the two strategical and political trends. The issue raised then was simple and straight; should the party play the role of opposition to the bourgeois-landlord rule symbolized by the Indian National Congress Party and its government at the Centre, or should it work for such an 'all-in unity' as would extend from communists to Congress, ultimately leading to 'the formation of the coalition government' ?

Among developments which followed the Fourth Congress were - the formation of the first ever communist government in Kerala, starting of ideological dissension within the socialist bloc over the thesis of the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956, shift of the Marxian understanding of revolution by the CPSU leadership, in India toppling of the Kerala government by the ruling Congress government in the centre, presence of China factor in the Indian border and

the policy pursued by the CPSU leadership towards the Indian ruling class and its party which was a discouraging factor to the Indian proletariat & its party. China's policy regarding the Indian ruling Congress party was same as that of the CPSU upto 1959. The Left faction within the CPI denounced the CPSU's stand. Meanwhile China also turned back from the Soviet on ideological grounds. Automatically the Left within the CPI who denounced vocally the CPSU were branded as 'pro-Chinese'. The pro-Chinese Left group within the CPI fell in trouble when China attacked India in the border in 1962. Then the Leftists were singled out and maligned by the Rightists of the CPI. The ruling Congress Party and its government did not miss the chance to brand them as traitors in the same fashion as Gandhiji did in 1942 during the 'Quit India Movement' where the Indian Communists did not participate in the anti-imperialist struggle for their different understanding of the then situation. The ruling Congress government kept the Leftists in detention enmasse. All these led to inner-party misgivings and unending group rivalry. These factors facilitated the drifting of the rival groups from one another in just opposite directions. The failure to evolve a correct political line and to maintain unity within the CPI in times of national crisis in the 1960s resulted in harms to the partisan struggle of the Indian proletariat. However, opinion differs. The Right CPI thought that the majority in the National Council was following a correct line but the group of the Left who broke away in 1964 were

responsible for disrupting the united struggle of the masses led by the CPI⁷⁵. On the other hand, the Left CPI opined that by the split it was able to evolve a correct political line in lieu of tailism and revisionism of the united party. They claimed, consequently the revolutionary movement in India was helped by giving encouragement to those who suffered most, the urban and rural proletariat, to join and carry their movement to bigger and bigger success thereafter.

Section 3 The adoption of two new programmes by the CPI and the CPI(M) respectively.

The split of the Communist Party of India (C P I) was marked by the dissidents' meet at Tenali (Andhra) on 7 July 1964 and the adoption of two separate programmes by the two rival factions in their respective Seventh Congresses commencing shortly. In the beginning, these two factions were popularly known as the 'Left' and the 'Right'. The Left faction later named as Communist Party of India (Marxist), in short CPI(M), and Right faction retained and continued with the earlier name the Communist Party of India, in short CPI. Each of them claimed to be the successor of the united CPI, and by the by, they also claimed to be the successor of the earlier six Congresses of the undivided CPI. Therefore, after the split the Left faction organised its party Congress in Calcutta in

31 October - 7 November, 1964, and called it its Seventh Congress. In the same way the Seventh Congress of the Right faction was organised in Bombay in 13-23 December 1964.

The Seventh Congress of the Left which was held in Calcutta in October-November, 1964 had authorised its Central Committee elected by the Congress to change the name of the party if that was found necessary. In 1966⁷⁶, just before the Parliamentary election the Central Committee changed the name of the party to Communist Party of India (Marxist). But the programme which was adopted by the Seventh Congress carried the earlier name the Communist Party of India as it was at the time of adoption of the programme in 1964⁷⁷. In this Seventh Congress the party of the Left adopted a two-tier organisational set up at the highest level - Central Committee and the Politbureau in lieu of earlier three tier system of the united party.

On the contrary the Right faction which was majority in the National Council at the time of division met at Bombay in its Seventh Congress. This Congress prepared a Draft Programme for the party and retained the existing three-tier organisational structure at the top⁷⁸. It blamed the expelled members who broke away and organised the Calcutta Congress as they were dissidents or splinters or renegade or pro-Chinese. It tried to establish its claim

to be original Communist Party of India.

After the split, the majority of the National Council members who had earlier been elected at the Vijayawada Congress (the 6th Congress) remained with the CPI. But the majority of the party members reported and claimed to have rallied behind the Left⁷⁹.

There was a third faction known as 'Centrists' led by E.M.S Namboodiripad. Perhaps the term 'Centrist' was conferred on this group due to its middle position about the understanding of the Indian condition and the proposed courses of action of the party. However, this group appeared with distinction during the Sixth Congress of the Party held at Vijayawada in April 1961.

In the eve of the Sixth Congress, in the meeting of the National Council for a long term party programme Namboodiripad submitted a document, side by side with the respective documents of the Right prepared by Dange, and the Left prepared by Ranadive. The Right argued for working with the progressive Congressmen in a National Democratic front and the Left which argued vigorously for opposing the Congress for its anti-people and reactionary role, therefore, no berth would be allotted for the Congress in its avowed People's Democratic Front. Namboodiripad's document took a middle course. His draft distinguished between the two sections of bourgeoisie - foreign and Indian monopoly

capital on the one hand and anti-imperialist and anti-feudal elements on the other, and argued for effort to win over the latter. It is reported that in the National Council the Right had the majority - 56 were said to support the Right, 36 the Left, and 18 Namboodiripad. The Sixth Congress rejected the documents of the Left and the Centrists⁸⁰.

Namboodiripad's middle course was also evident from his document 'Revisionism and Dogmatism in the CPI',⁸¹ for which he had established himself as an able theoretician in the party. Here he criticised the past zigzags between the revisionism and dogmatism of the CPI leadership.

During the Sino-Indian border clash he accused the Right for its chauvinistic approach and attacked it of tailing along behind the Congress government. His explanatory letter to the world communist parties during the Chinese aggression and the fact that he was of the opinion that the CPI should not take side in the Sino-Indian dispute placed him in the middle position between the two extreme rival faction within the CPI. However the Centrist group was more vocal against the Right group than the Left. The Right was the common target of both the Left and the centurists. After the split, the Centrist merged with the Left but its identity was felt in the Tenali Convention and in the Seventh Congress of the Left and ultimately it could manage a respectable berth in the Left group.

The two Congresses of the two parties had adopted respective programme and tactical lines. The Draft programme of the Right was prepared by S.A. Dange - the top leader of the Rightist group, and it was adopted by the Bombay Congress without significant alterations. The Left draft was prepared by M. Basavapunniah which underwent some modifications before and during the Calcutta Congress largely in response to the Centrist reservation of Namboodiripad and his followers⁸².

In Tenali convention of the Left a preliminary discussion was started for adopting a party programme which would be different from that of the Right. In that convention of the Left, a draft programme was prepared and circulated among the delegates by the organizers. Side by side, there was circulated another 'programme-note' prepared by Namboodiripad which disagreed on some points of the main draft⁸³. However, this matter did not end here. When the party of the Left was all set for the Seventh Congress, there it discussed all the drafts, recommendations and criticisms of the programme from different corners. E.M.S. Namboodiripad in his 'note' disagreed with the official draft programme.

The main point of difference was that Namboodiripad suggested for National Democracy as an immediate stage of revolution and a non-capitalist path. He did not agree

with the formulation of the official draft. The official draft proposed People's Democracy as an immediate stage towards the socialist stage. However, he argued that his proposed analysis of National Democracy and non-capitalist path would be different from that of the Dange group's, i.e. programme of the Right. Furthermore, regarding the class alliance of his proposed National Democracy, he made it categorically clear that he did not visualise any class alliance without the leadership of the working class of which workers and peasants alliance would be the basis. However, this recommendation was voted out by 202 to 126 votes and People's Democracy was accepted as the immediate goal in the programme⁸⁴.

Another recommendation from E.M.S. Namboodiripad found place in the final programme of the Left. It was on the need of alliance with all progressive forces to wipe out pre-capitalist forms of exploitation as the precondition for democratic revolution⁸⁵. It was incorporated in para 86 of the programme.

The two programmes which emerged from the rival CPI congresses (Seventh Congress of the Left and Seventh Congress of the Right) confirm the view that the split occurred over genuine and significant differences among the members, even leaders of the undivided Communist Party over both strategic and tactical questions. These questions

related to the class character of the Indian state, the immediate stage of revolution, the alliance of classforces, etc. At the time when the party was undivided, in its Sixth Congress, the main two drafts were placed for adoption but they remained undiscussed. What was evident was that these drafts reappeared in their respective Seventh Congresses with minor modifications when the party was divided.

An analysis of the two rival programmes brought out by the two main groups of Indian communists, viz., the CPIM) and the CPI can clearly indicate their respective positions and understandings of strategic and tactical matters. This study also can focus on the matter whether the ideological and tactical positions of the warring factions within the undivided CPI had been accommodated in their respective programmes when those factions built independent parties by splitting the CPI. Some of the basic features are highlighted here to touch upon the departure of one from another. Two types of Marxist understandings regarding the Indian condition were revealed by the rival programmes of the two Communist parties in India.

A study of the programmes which emerged from the rival congresses of the two groups of CPI later known as CPI(M) and CPI, confirms the view that the split was turned essentially on the domestic issues like the nature of the

ruling class and its party - the Indian National Congress. Another important factor, i.e. ideological understandings regarding the stages and types of domestic revolution and the primary task of this revolution and leadership question had a plethora of disagreements between the rival programmes.

Some of the basic differences are highlighted here side by side for close comparison :

1. For the Right (CPI) - India's independence 'was a historic event'⁸⁶ and India was now on the path of independent development⁸⁷.

For the Left (later known as CPI-M)-the transfer of power was mere 'compromise'⁸⁸ between British imperialism and congress party. India achieved independence being partitioned into India and Pakistan. Thus India's political independence was secure on the event of August 15, 1947. "Thus ended the political rule of the British in India and the state headed by the big bourgeoisie was established"⁸⁹. The subsequent economic development in India was, therefore, an attempt by the bourgeoisie to strengthen its position - a compromise with imperialism and feudalism at the expense of the people.

2. The Rightist view of the India's economic development was comparatively optimistic. Though the growth was inadequate there was some economic progress and to

that extent independence had been realized⁹⁰.

The Left, on the other hand, argued that economic development was illusory and what passed for planning in India was subordinate to the profit motive of domestic and foreign capital⁹¹.

3. For the Right, the key group which dominates the machinery of the state is the national bourgeoisie in which big bourgeoisie holds powerful influence, and therefore, puts reactionary pulls on the state power⁹².

For the Left, the key groups dominating the machinery of the state are the bourgeoisie and landlords led by the big bourgeoisie⁹³.

- 3.1 To the Right, 'the big bourgeoisie hold powerful influence' over 'the class rule of the national bourgeoisie as a whole'⁹⁴. It visualises "within the national bourgeoisie itself as the top monopoly groups get more and more differentiated from the rest of the bourgeoisie ... The influence of foreign monopoly interests is also felt in this development in which they generally support those monopoly groups"⁹⁵.

Therefore the Right arrives at the decision that "The monopoly groups and feudal circles represent the main anti-democratic forces of reaction in the country"⁹⁶.

According to the Right, the monopoly and big bourgeoisie

are not leading the State of the national bourgeoisie, but they have powerful influence on it. They are considered as reactionary forces because they have a link with foreign imperialist capital. The task of the National Democratic Front, therefore, is to alienate the monopoly and big bourgeoisie from the rest of the bourgeoisie and to forge alliance with the latter for completion of the National Democratic revolution.

- 3.2 To the Left, the big bourgeoisie is leading the bourgeois-landlord government in India. "The big bourgeoisie which headed the national liberation movement and the new independent state after 1947 has been continuously in state power for nearly two decades and has been utilising that state power to immensely strengthen its class position at the expense of people on the one hand and compromising and bargaining with imperialism on the other. Thus they have embarked on the path of capitalist development"⁹⁷.
- The Left observers, "During the last two decades there has been an enormous growth of Indian monopoly and strengthening of capitalism in India"⁹⁸.
- Therefore, the Left calls for People's Democratic Revolution to replace the bourgeois-landlord rule led by the big bourgeoisie and to establish the workers-peasants rule led by the proletariat.

4. For the Right, the national bourgeoisie 'has strong links with the landlords', this factor also gives rise to 'reactionary pull on the state power'⁹⁹.

For the Left, the landlord class shares the state power with the bourgeoisie¹⁰⁰.

5. Both Right and Left agree that forces of imperialism are in league with the big bourgeoisie¹⁰¹. Both of them accept the need of use of the parliamentary means as one of the methods of struggle for this goal¹⁰².
6. The Right's central slogan was, therefore, the establishment of National Democracy through a front of all patriotic and progressive forces including the national bourgeoisie.

For the Left, the central slogan is the establishment of People's Democracy through a front of working class, peasants, intelligentsia and national bourgeoisie.

7. The Right considers that the worker-peasant alliance is the motive force of this front but the leadership of the front "belongs to anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and anti-monopoly forces"¹⁰³. It proposes combined leadership among the participating forces in the national democratic revolution of this stage.

For the Left, the worker-peasant alliance is the

basis of the front. The Peoples Democratic Revolution of this stage will be led by the working class through its party - the communist party¹⁰⁴.

8. For the Right, after the National Democratic Revolution the National Democratic State will be run by all the participating democratic forces but it hopes that the balance will be shifted in favour of the proletariat which will carry it forward to the ultimate stage of socialist revolution¹⁰⁵.

For the Left, after the People's Democratic Revolution the People's Democratic state will be run under the proletarian leadership and only then it will be possible to carry it forward to the next socialist stage¹⁰⁶.

Therefore, for the Right, after the democratic revolution all the patriotic forces will get berth in the democratic set up to share power and enjoy results there from. But for the Left, after the democratic revolution the proletariat will lead the democratic state in alliance with and with the support of the peasantry and in no case the bourgeoisie will be allowed to share the state power, because the bourgeoisie would be the target of the socialist revolutionary struggle.

9. For the Right, the main task in the National Democratic stage is to direct the country's economy along the non-capitalist path of development against the imperialist penetration and internal big and monopoly reaction over the national economy¹⁰⁷. Other important tasks, in this stage, are to carry out the remaining works on land reforms and to ensure democracy at all levels. .

On the contrary, for the Left, the main task in the People's Democratic stage is to carry out agrarian revolution and to make a sweeping democratic reform in the social system. The second urgent task is to eradicate and expell the foreign monopoly capital and national big and monopoly interests¹⁰⁸.

10. Besides the establishment of democracy and democratisation of all set-ups after the respective democratic revolutions, the aim of agrarian reform is another most important activity in this stage. The Right assessed the consequences of the agrarian measures of the existing government that "Feudal land relations have been curbed ; Statutory semi-feudal landlordism has been abolished in the erstwhile zamindari areas. The major part of the area under cultivation is within the category of self-operated ownership holdings while the areas under lease, which

constituted the major area before land reform, is now confined to a small area"¹⁰⁹. It sees that the ruling Congress Party's agrarian policy has largely curbed feudalism.

Furthermore, it sees the entrance of market economy in the rural sector. It states "The stronghold of commercial and financial interests over the rural market during the last several years has been tightened enormously. The price mechanism and market manipulations drive the peasants of whatever little benefits they secure on account of land reform and technological development"¹¹⁰. For the right, the peasantry is exposed to the capitalist oppression. The rural bourgeoisie has emerged in place of the feudal elements and landlords. Therefore, it vows for wiping out the remnants of feudalism and landlordism of whichever extent is remaining for the 're-organisation of the agrarian economy'¹¹¹ in the 'non-capitalist'¹¹² line. In this agrarian reform the participation of the whole of the peasantry including the rich peasants¹¹³ is sought.

For the Left, the agrarian reform is one of the most important aims of the People's Democratic revolution. It sees that "Nearly two decades of Congress rule has proved beyond any shadow of doubt that the aim and direction of its agrarian policies is not to smash the feudal and semi-feudal fetters on our land relations and thus liberate the

peasantry from age-old bondage, but to transform the feudal landlords into capitalist landlords and develop a stratum of rich peasants ... to make these sections the main political base of the ruling class in the country side"¹¹⁴. The Left assesses that the ruling Congress policy for the agrarian reform is not to smash the feudal and semi-feudal fetters but to make them political base in the country side.

The Left analyses the existing Indian class rule as the 'organ of the bourgeois-landlord' government led by the big bourgeoisie¹¹⁵. Therefore, it recognises that the landlords enjoy state power in the existing Indian state, and the big bourgeois leadership is working in league with the landlords and feels no need of smashing the landlords, rather to help them persist.

Therefore, for the Left in order to complete the agrarian revolution the existing bourgeois-landlord rule should be changed. The Left does not rely upon the big bourgeois leadership for the agrarian reform. For it, the Left calls for workers-peasants alliance and proletarian leadership for the People's Democratic revolution and radical agrarian reforms. It recognises the agricultural labourers and poor peasants as the most revolutionary forces in the countryside. To complete the agrarian revolution these sections are the main forces "who constitute 70

per cent of the rural households and are subjected to ruthless exploitation by landlords by their class position in present day society, will be basic allies of the working class"¹¹⁶. The Left is conscious about the classification among the peasantry. The poor peasants and the agricultural labourers are the core ally of the working class. The working class leadership and the active participation of the rural proletariat are the only guarantee for sweeping democratic reform of the social system and the completion of the agrarian revolution in the People's Democratic stage¹¹⁷.

However, both the Right & the Left perceive the capitalist penetration, but the Right thinks that it is near completion by the Congress's land reform measures and the remaining part is to be completed "Basing itself on the agricultural labourer & poor peasantry and uniting all sections of the peasantry in their struggles".¹¹⁸ On the contrary the Left thinks it is still existing dominant in the rural economy; therefore, it has rallied the forces for immediate completion of agrarian reform as the foremost goal of democratic revolution; and to do the same, rural proletariat (constituted by the agricultural labourers and poor peasants) is the main force, not the whole of the peasantry. It considers other sections of the peasantry, particularly the rich peasantry as the most vacillating section; hence any urge for radical agrarian reform is not reliable in the rich

peasantry. On the other hand, for such reform the urge in the agricultural labourers and poor peasants is genuine and strong. For the Left, historically the working class and the rural proletariat are the main forces to carry the People's Democratic revolution into a success.

The foregoing analysis has dealt with the facts as to how and when the two factions of the CPI prepared their respective party programmes according to their understanding of the condition of the Indian state and its ruling class. A comparative analysis of the two programmes has been placed side by side to demarcate their difference of understanding of the Indian condition. However the forthcoming chapter will deal purely with the issue to issue positions of the two parties particularly on matters of establishment of democracy at all levels, particularly in the rural areas and agrarian reforms as enunciated by the programmes of the CPI & CPI(M) respectively.

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Section 1 The Problem

The main document on the basis of which any communist party works is the programme document which is considered as the basic document for the entire epoch of the revolution. It must explain to the people how the revolution, it works for is to arise, why it is inevitable, what its significance, nature, and powers are, and which problems it must solve. Moreover, for Marxists, it should be always prepared on the basis of the concrete application of the science of Marxism - Leninism to the concrete conditions of the country concerned¹.

But what was experienced in the Indian context, the two communist parties, namely, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) in 1964 came out with two different understandings about the concrete conditions of the country. It would be clearer from the two programmes that on a series of pivotal theoretical and ideological issues connected with the Indian revolution they differed from each other very significantly. These led to a very grave difference on strategical and tactical issues in the subsequent years of their division. These differences not only gave rise to the debatable discourses but also led to many complexities and heterogeneity for the left political movement in itself for the country.

On every basic question connected with the Indian revolution there are differences between the programmes adopted by the CPI and the CPI(M). The main focus of the present study being the 'agrarian reforms' and 'rural democracy' in their programmes, it is inevitably necessary to cite up some basic theoretical understandings of the nature of Indian state, the stages and tactics of revolution and the class assessment attached thereto, embodied in their respective party programmes; and then to find out the place and importance given to agrarian reforms and rural democracy in their programmes for their courses of action leading to the desired ultimate goal of socialism through revolution.

Section 2 Assessment of the Class Character of the Indian State

To the CPI, the party programme, which has been adopted in its Seventh Congress held in Bombay on December 1964 and amended in 1968 in its Eighth Congress held in Patna, has stated the present class character of the Indian State in the Post-independence era, thus -

"The State in India is the organ of the class rule of the national bourgeoisie as a whole, in which the big bourgeoisie holds powerful influence. This class rule has strong links with the landlords. These factors give rise to reactionary pulls on the state power"².

The CPI holds that the Indian state is the class rule of the entire Indian capitalist class - the monopoly bourgeoisie, the non-monopoly bourgeoisie and the rural bourgeoisie. In this state the big monopoly bourgeoisie wields powerful influence. Moreover, this class power has strong links with the landlords. The inherent limitations and defects of bourgeois rule in India are that there is an added factor of the powerful influence of the big bourgeoisie over it and its links with the landlords³.

The existing bourgeois state power where big bourgeoisie holds powerful influence and has links with the landlords cause reactionary pulls on the policies of the state.

This can be analysed in the following manner :- i) India is a class-state of the bourgeoisie as a whole. The whole of the bourgeoisie composed of, namely, monopoly and big bourgeoisie, non-monopoly bourgeoisie and rural bourgeoisie; ii) big bourgeoisie holds powerful influence in framing the policies of the state, but they are even today not the sole powerful or undisputed hegemonic force of the state; iii) bourgeoisie as a whole as a class has links with the landlords, and landlords are not sharing the state power; if they share then the feudal and semifeudal interests would remain fully protected and entrance of capitalism in agriculture be impossible; iv) the powerful influence over the state power by the big bourgeoisie (who are more, inclined to take the help of imperialists) and the links

of the landlords with the present bourgeois class as a whole exert reactionary pulls on the state power.

To the CPI(M), the party programme, which has been adopted in its Seventh Congress held in October-November 1964 in Calcutta and has been amended in its Ninth Congress held in June-July, 1972 in Madurai, has stated the class character of the Indian state, thus -

"The present Indian state is the organ of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and landlords, led by the big bourgeoisie, who are increasingly collaborating with foreign finance capital in pursuit of the capitalist path of development. This class character essentially determines the role and functions of the state in the life of the country"⁴.

The CPI(M) in its programme characterises the present Indian state as 'the organ of the class rule of bourgeoisie and landlords led by the big bourgeoisie'. The underlying idea is that every state in essence is a class state, and the existing Indian state is a class state of bourgeoisie and landlords. So the landlords have a share of power of the state and it is imperative to wrest the power from their hands if the anti-feudal revolution is to be led to completion. The bourgeoisie are also sharing the state power, among them the big bourgeoisie hold leadership of the state who are increasingly collaborating with the imperialist forces; so it is imperative to wrest the power from their hands if the anti-imperialist revolution is to

be led to completion⁵. And in order to make India a capitalist country, the big bourgeoisie are increasingly collaborating with foreign finance capital for their own interest. So this present Indian state is the instrument securing the interest of the big bourgeoisie and landlords. Their class interest determines the internal and external policies of the existing Indian state. Now the class character of the Indian state by the CPI(M) which has been stated in its party programme can be arranged in the following manner helpful for comparison with its counterpart :- i) the bourgeoisie and landlords are in power in this existing state; ii) this state is run under the leadership of the big bourgeoisie ; iii) in order to strengthen its position the big bourgeoisie has entered into an alliance with the landlords and has shared the state power with them; iv) the principal aim of the big bourgeoisie is to make India a capitalist country with the help of the imperialist monopoly capital to protect and consolidate its class rule over the state apparatus; and v) now the interests of the landlords and big bourgeoisie determine the internal and external policies of the existing Indian state.

Section 3 Assessment About India's Independence

Both the parties are of the same opinion that India's achievement of independence in 1947 marked the completion of one stage in her struggle.

For CPI "One stage of India's revolution was over with the attainment of national independence from imperialism"⁶.

For CPI(M)

"The first stage of Indian revolution ... chiefly directed against foreign imperialist rule came to an end"⁷.

One noticeable feature is that both the Communist parties accepted and placed the notion of India's independence in their respective party programmes. They again converged on one point that this stage was anti-imperialist and regeneration of democracy. Consequently the next stage of revolution to them is 'democratic'; but CPI thinks it as a 'national democratic' and the CPI(M) thinks it as a 'people's democratic' revolution. But class assessment differs widely.

Section 4 Acceptance of the Two Stages of Revolution

Arising from these differences of understanding of the nature and character of the Indian state, there are

differences as to how to win over allies and fight against enemies for the attainment of successive stages of revolutions. Both of them accepted the theory of the two stages of revolution as strategy, which again showed marked differences on the nature of the immediate democratic stage of revolution. They also accepted that this theory was practicable.

Both the CPI and the CPI(M) agree on the two stages of revolution considering India as a country having not completed bourgeois democratic revolution so far. They share the views of Lenin and Mao that any country having pre-capitalist syndrome dominant, the working class of that country must bear an active burden of completion of the unfinished bourgeois-democratic revolution; and only then, it is possible for a working class party to arrive at the next desired socialist stage of revolution.

Again both of them agree that working class participation in the unfinished bourgeois-democratic revolution is a historical necessity of today which makes this bourgeois-democratic revolution a category different from the orthodox bourgeois-democratic revolution that occurred in the long past in England, France and America where complete hegemony of the bourgeoisie was established. For India, CPI named it, in its programme, the 'National Democratic' revolution and the CPI(M) named it, in its programme, the 'People's Democratic' revolution. This

analysis of them can be understood as a continuation of Leninist and Maoist tradition in the Indian context.

But one significant difference between them is on the question of leadership in the democratic revolution, i.e., the first stage of revolution which the CPI has named the 'National Democratic' and the CPI(M) has named it as the People's Democratic revolution.

It is obvious that the CPI(M) continues to adhere to Mao's concept of absolute working-class leadership in the democratic revolution. Mao declared that in the New Democratic revolution which was a variant of bourgeois-democratic revolution, the dictatorship of the front composed of forces—the working class, the peasantry, the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia—must be established but the unquestionable leadership would certainly be preserved for the working class alone, so that the forward march for socialist revolution would be easier without any contradictory possibilities⁸. The programmatic position of the CPI(M) in this regard echoed the same view of Mao.

Indeed, Mao's plea is that the absolute leadership of the working class for the completion of the democratic revolution in the dependent countries has emerged as a historical fact only after the first imperialist World War and the Socialist Revolution in Russia (1917) in the era of decadent world imperialism. So the bourgeoisie of

today, in the ultimate analysis, is no longer a progressive force to whom the natural burden of leadership could not be entrusted⁹. Such leadership cannot be given to any class other than the most progressive and historically advanced working class. However, it can be said that the CPI(M) is more Maoist in its perception of the democratic revolution. This is reflected also in its acceptance of the Maoist concept of hegemony of the working class in this revolution.

On the other hand, the CPI, in its programme, does not follow Mao's concept of the absolute working-class leadership in this democratic stage of revolution. In its programme, it states, it does not like to set any precondition for the absolute leadership in the democratic revolution, nevertheless, it is not denying the active participation and sharing of the leadership of the front¹⁰. Its programme further argued that it would be an obstinacy to preserve the absolute leadership of the working class in the democratic revolution lest it would lose the opportunity of building a front for the completion of the unfinished democratic revolution. The programme of the CPI concluded that after the successful democratic revolution the balance of class forces and leadership would continuously shift in favour of the working class which ultimately would expedite the socialist revolution in the next stage¹¹.

It can be said that the programme of the CPI(M) in

this regard, i.e., on the question of leadership in the democratic revolution, is nothing but a continuation of the Chinese path where as the programme of the CPI does not go beyond a view expressed by Marx¹² on Germany in 1850 and another remark made Lenin on Russia on February revolution of 1917¹³.

4.1 CPI's National Democratic Revolution

For the CPI, the first stage or immediate stage is 'National Democratic Revolution'¹⁴ and for the CPI(M) it is the 'People's Democratic Revolution'¹⁵. These are embodied in their respective party programmes.

To the CPI

"In order to embark on the socialist road and begin the construction of a society, India has, however, to go through the stage of completing the anti-imperialist anti-feudal, democratic revolution"¹⁶.

Aims

Its aims are as follows :

"... in order to complete the national democratic revolution, wipe out all legacies of the former imperialist

rule, develop industry and agriculture rapidly, abolish unemployment, raise the income and standard of living of the masses, help their cultural advancement, democratic social life and take the country forward to a bright happy future"¹⁷. [Emphasis added].

In spite of having freedom the Indian people have not yet resolved their contradiction with imperialism and feudalism, have not yet won economic independence and completed the task of democratising their society and economy. As a result the national bourgeoisie has not yet exhausted its anti-imperialist and anti-feudal potential. The task at this stage therefore is not primarily to solve the contradiction between the working class and the capitalist class but that between the Indian people as a whole including the national bourgeoisie, and imperialism, feudalism and their ally-the monopoly bourgeoisie. So the basic aim of the present phase of the Indian revolution is to complete the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, democratic revolution and prepare for the transition to socialism¹⁸.

"But this programme cannot be implemented unless the rule of the national bourgeoisie and the capitalist path which it is pursuing are ended and national democracy is established"¹⁹.

The programme of CPI is very emphatic in explaining the alternative path. "This alternative path will mean,

first and foremost the replacement of the Congress or any other form of anti-imperialist, antifeudal and anti-monopoly classes and forces capable and determined to carry out revolutionary changes, reversing the present process of development of capitalism. It would be a government of national democracy, directing country's development along the non capitalist path"²⁰.

The basic aims of the National Democratic government have been spelt out in the following manner in the programme :

First and foremost, the grip of foreign monopoly capital on our economy will be completely eliminated.

Second, a state sector, independent of foreign monopolies and functioning on a democratic basis, will be expanded and strengthened as a powerful lever for building a selfreliant national industry and economy.

Third, Indian monopoly combines who have concentrated in their hands economic power in industry, commerce, banking etc. will be broken up, and any tendency to development of monopoly will be effectively checked.

Fourth, the power of landlords and feudal remnants will be completely eliminated; radical agrarian reform in the interests of the peasantry will be carried out and the

grip of usurious, trading and bank capital on our agriculture will be removed"²¹.

The programme stated, "This will open up for our people a path of development which, through far-reaching reforms, unshackles the productive forces in industry and agriculture, ensure rapid economic growth, rising living standards of the masses and their active participation in production. This is an intervening stage of non-capitalist development because the government of national democracy purposefully directs the economy on such lines that the growth of capitalism, both in industry and agriculture, is progressively restricted and the prerequisites created for putting our country on the road to socialism"²².

Successful achievement of these specific aims will unfetter so far hidden potential productive forces in the national economy which will raise the living standard of the toiling people and abolish the burden of foreign, and national monopoly capital and inhuman oppression by the landlords over the peasantry"²³.

Alliance of Class Forces

About the forces composing the National Democratic revolution, CPI states in its programme.

First and foremost, the working class, which stands for the complete and consistent carrying out of this programme ...

Second, the broad mass of the cultivating peasants, including the rich peasants and the agricultural labourers ...

Third, the rising class of urban and rural intelligentsia ...

Finally, the national bourgeoisie, excluding its monopoly section, which is objectively interested in the accomplishment of the principal tasks of the anti-imperialist anti-feudal revolution ..."²⁴

The programme of the CPI pointed out that for the completion of the National Democratic revolution the working class, all strata of peasantry including the rich peasants, the agricultural labourers, the urban & rural intelligentsia & the national bourgeois will participate for their objective interest in this revolution. The programme further states—

"... in order to create the instrument for implementing the programme we will have to build a national democratic front, bringing together all the patriotic forces of the country, viz. the working class, the entire peasantry, including the rich peasants and agricultural labourers, the

intelligentsia and the nonmonopolist [sic] bourgeoisie. The worker-peasant alliance will be the basic and pivot of the front " ²⁵

The programme states, "such a front is not in existence today because the democratic masses are divided into a number of political parties, including the Congress party itself, while a section of the democratic masses is drawn in the united fronts struggling against the anti-people policies of the ruling class. The national democratic front will arise and take shape in the process of overcoming this division and uniting the broad democratic masses in the course of struggle. It will be consolidated in the course of countrywide united mass movements, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggles, against the reactionary anti-people policies, simultaneously isolating and defeating the forces of communalism and right reaction seeking to disrupt the same" ²⁶.

It further stated, "the working class, forging the unity of its class organisations, will have to take the initiative in launching this national mass movement. Its struggles for the defence and betterment of its living standards, for democratic measures like the nationalisation of banks, oil monopolies and foreign trade, and for the expansion and democratisation of the state sector will form a vital part of this national movement" ²⁷.

Forces Opposed to

The CPI programme has clearly stated about the enemies of its declared National democratic revolution. The forces opposed to the establishment of national democracy are "the growing power of monopoly groups which, in alliance with feudal elements and in collaboration with foreign monopoly capital are presenting an increasing threat to India's independent economic development itself"²⁸.

The programme pointed out that the main threat has been unleashed by the growing Indian monopoly houses in collusion with the foreign monopoly power and semi-feudal and landlord classes. These classes are out and out reactionary and not only have gripped the national economy but are also dangerous to the democracy and democratic forces in this stage.

"These dangerous features of economic development follow directly from the contradiction of capitalist path pursued by the national bourgeoisie - a path whose links with foreign monopoly capital and with feudal and semifeudal interests results in compromise with them"²⁹.

The programme of the CPI observed that, "Foreign monopoly investments have trebled since independence", "India's external trade is tied up with the world capitalist market and a very substantial share of her exports and

imports goes to the foreign monopolies", "the conditions on which so called economic aid from the imperialist powers is secured hit our national interests and serve the interest of imperialism"³⁰ and "so long as foreign private monopolists are allowed to maintain their entrenched positions in our economy in this manner and are given more concessions, India's progress towards a self-reliant economy is bound to be frustrated. Nor can the country's political life be made safe from the pressures interference and blackmail by the imperialists who function closely linked with the reactionary circles within the country"³¹.

"One of the most striking results of this path of capitalist development is the concentration of capital and economic power in the hands of a few big monopolists who seek to enrich themselves at the expense of the people and the broader sections of the national bourgeoisie to the detriment of the country's national economic development"³². Besides, "Heavy concessions have been made to monopolists even in respect of several industries originally scheduled for the public sector"³³.

In the Indian countryside "the survivals of semifeudal modes of exploitation combines with the growth of commercialisation of agriculture have produced a new set of reactionary vested interests. Landlords, usurious and wholesale dealers, often combined in the same person,

constitute the modern parasites holding up the progress of agriculture and supporting right reaction"³⁴.

Question of Leadership

The existing right reactionary forces - the imperialists, monopoly capitalists and feudal and semifeudal elements seek to undermine the limited parliamentary democracy achieved after independence. So, in order to make possible the National Democratic Revolution against the narrow interests of the right reaction by the National Democratic Front the question of leadership is stated thus--

"The national democratic state in the hands of the national democratic front will be a transitional stage, in which power will be jointly exercised by all those classes which are interested in eradicating imperialist interests, routine of the semifeudal elements and breaking the power of the monopolies. In this class alliance, the exclusive leadership of the working class is not yet established, though the exclusive leadership of the bourgeoisie no longer exists"³⁵.

In National Democratic Front (hereafter may be mentioned as - NDF) there is a four-class alliance - workers, peasants, urban middle strata and intelligentsia, and the non-monopoly national bourgeoisie; and the leadership of the National Democratic Front will belong to all firm anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and anti-monopoly forces.

An exclusive leadership by the working class is not the precondition of this front. Of course the non-proletarian democratic classes, including the non-monopoly stratum of the national bourgeoisie have objective interests in the accomplishment of the principal tasks of anti-imperialist anti-feudal revolution. So the working class in Indian has to treat with its allies on an equal footing.

The struggle now is to implement the programme of completing the national democratic revolution. It is primarily directed against the stout resistance offered by the imperialists, the landlords and other semifeudal elements. Considering the class position of the NDF there will be struggle also within it as the implementation of the programme proceeds. The working class and its party, the Communist Party of India, will be the most consistent, far-sighted and self-less fighters for the implementation of the NDF programme both against the class enemies of the national-democratic revolution and also against the vacillation, drift and at times even outright opposition of its partners in the NDF. It is through this process that the balance within the NDF will shift in favour of the working class and the worker-peasant alliance. It is through this process that the way will be paved for the leadership of the working class in the state. And it is through this process that the transition to socialism commences and the next state (socialist stage) of the Indian revolution begins³⁶.

In this manner the CPI visualises the entire revolutionary transformation of the present-day Indian society into the future socialist India through the transitional stage of 'national democracy'.

4.2 CPI(M) 's People's Democratic Revolution

The CPI(M) had declared its resolve to struggle for People's Democracy as the central strategic objective in this existing stage.

"While adhering to the aim of building a socialist society, the Communist Party of India [-(Marxist)] taking into consideration the degree of economic development, the degree of the political-ideological maturity of the working class and its organisation, places before the people as the immediate objective the establishment of people's democracy based on the coalition of all genuine anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces headed by the working class"³⁷.

For this second stage of India's revolution i.e., People's Democratic Revolution (hereafter may be mentioned as PDF) the CPI(M) calls for "People's Democratic Front" which can "dislodge the bourgeois landlord Government headed by the big bourgeoisie"³⁸. It is the stage of people's democracy because after independence the bourgeoisie "does not carry forward the national democratic revolution to its completion. On the contrary ... as the social contradictions

intensify, it tends to compromise with imperialism and allies with domestic landlord reaction"³⁹. So the leadership of the working class can forge ahead the unfinished democratic revolution and to pass over to the final stage of socialist revolution.

So the CPI(M) holds,

"The nature of our revolution in the present stage of its development is essentially anti-feudal, anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly and democratic"⁴⁰.

The basic tasks of the democratic revolution can not be completed except by waging decisive battle against the bourgeoisie and their political representatives in leading position inside the state. The People's Democratic Revolution is certainly based on its opposition to feudalism and imperialism. At the same time, however, it is also totally opposed to the big bourgeoisie (who are leading the state) and foreign monopoly capital⁴¹.

Aims

It aims at the

"... replacement of the present bourgeois-land-lord state and Government by a state of people's democracy, a government led by the working class on the basis of a firm worker-peasant alliance"⁴².

For specific two purposes mentioned there are two primary tasks. First, "the tasks of making such sweeping reforms in the social system, however, are inextricably bound up with the completion of agrarian revolution which in fact is the axis of the democratic revolution"⁴³.

Second,

"The second urgent task ... is the total eradication and summary expulsion of the foreign monopoly capital from our national economy ..."⁴⁴

At present the bourgeois-landlord government headed by the big bourgeoisie can not completely finish democratic revolution because the same will in turn hamper their own class interests. The monopoly and big bourgeoisie are, for their own class interests, increasingly collaborating with imperialist-finance capital for building India as a capitalist country. Regarding the 'monopoly bourgeoisie' and the 'big bourgeoisie' the programme seeks to mean, both are the categories of a same stratum. This view may be explicit from the statement of the programme of the CPI(M). "The present Indian state is the organ of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and landlords by the big bourgeoisie who are increasingly collaborating with the foreign finance capital ..."⁴⁵ Again on the same matter it reads "the bigger and monopoly section, after attainment of independence,

seeks to utilise its hold over the state power, ...
 [and] it is developing strong links with foreign monopolists and sharing power with landlords"⁴⁶. So the monopoly bourgeoisie constitute an apex part of the big bourgeoisie and both these sections are firmly opposed to the 'people's democratic front'. But the national bourgeoisie section is an active partner of People's democratic revolution. Again, the monopoly and big bourgeoisie are linked with foreign monopolists for financial and technological help. As the general market crisis of world capitalism deepens, the contradiction between foreign monopolists and them grows in all its intensity and the big bourgeoisie using its economic power and leading position in the state attempts to solve its crisis at the expense of its weak class-brethren in the country⁴⁷.

Again the feudal and semi-feudal interests are standing in the way of the development of the millions of peasantry and agricultural labourers and put them in perpetual poverty and bondage. So the people's democratic revolution is aimed at to wipe out these two most reactionary forces in this country.

Alliance of Class Forces

Forces for this People's Democratic Revolution are to be composed thus :

"The core and the basis of the people's democratic front is the firm alliance of the working class and the peasantry"⁴⁸. The "middle peasants"⁴⁹, "rich peasants"⁵⁰, "urban as well as other middle classes",⁵¹ and the "national bourgeoisie"⁵² and a "unity of all patriotic and democratic forces"⁵³.

The programme of the CPI(M) declares that People's Democratic Front must rely mainly on the firm alliance of the working class and the peasantry'. It is this alliance, indeed, that is the most powerful driving force of this stage of revolution. Not only this, it is the only force that can draw the other vacillating classes inside the front and stabilize them⁵⁴.

Again, the whole 'peasantry' is not a homogeneous class. Only the poor peasantry and the agricultural labourers are closely and firmly related with the working class. Seventy per cent of the rural population consist of these two sections, which are the worst exploited and, therefore, the nearest to the working class. The middle peasants, too, subjected, as they are, to intense exploitation at the hands of the usurers, the feudal elements the capitalist market and the capitalist landlords, become the reliable ally of the working class.

Regarding the rich peasants the party programme is somewhat critical because, it has been stated, it is they who have benefited the most under the land reform legislation

of the Congress Government. Their interests come into clash with those of the agricultural labourers; besides, they aim at becoming capitalist farmers. Even then, they are harassed by the government policies of price-increase and increase in taxation, as also by the ever-rising prices on industrial goods. Often they are not spared from the blows inflicted by the capitalist market and are compelled to oppose the governmental policies which help the monopolists and traders. It is, therefore, possible to bring this section, too, inside the front and retain it there.

A proper assessment of different strata inside the peasantry in respect of political importance shows that the main strength and support come from the agricultural labourers and poor peasantry. "This most oppressed and utterly pauperized section in the countryside is the closest to the working class"⁵⁵ in this struggle for People's Democratic Revolution.

Forces Opposed To

In people's Democratic Revolution, the CPI(M) programme has stated that the role of bourgeoisie is to be dealt with much caution which needs concrete understanding of their position and also the part played by them during the freedom movement and after. It stated -

"The Indian bourgeoisie as a class, coming as it is from an underdeveloped and newly liberated country as ours, has its conflicts and contradictions with imperialism and also with the feudal and semi-feudal agrarian order. But the bigger and monopoly section, after attainment of independence seeks to utilise its hold over the state power to resolve these conflicts and contradictions by compromise, pressure and bargain"⁵⁶.

The ruling bourgeoisie are not free from incapacibilities which are inherent in them because they have chosen "... to develop the country's economy on the line of capitalism ... [and this] capitalist path of development the Indian bourgeoisie has chosen in the period when the world capitalist system is fast disintegrating and has entered the third stage of the general crisis of capitalism"⁵⁷. The crisis of market is the stumbling-block before the Indian bourgeoisie in general and big and monopoly bourgeoisie in particular. Now what has been evident is that the dual character of the bourgeoisie since the years of freedom struggle (when mobilising the people against imperialism and compromising with imperialism) has taken a new shape after independence. Despite the growth of contradiction between imperialism and feudalism on the one hand and the people including the bourgeoisie on the other, the big bourgeoisie who head the present state of India do not decisively and fully oppose imperialism and feudalism. Rather -

"... it [the big bourgeoisie] seeks to utilise its hold over the state and the new opportunities to strengthen its position by attacking the people on the one hand and on the other, to resolve the conflicts and contradictions with imperialism and feudalism by pressure, bargain and compromise. In this process it is forging strong links with foreign monopolists and is sharing power with the landlords ... it [the big bourgeoisie] is anti-people and anti-Communists [sic] in character and is firmly opposed to the completion of the democratic, anti-imperialist tasks of the Indian revolution"⁵⁸.

Another statement from the 'Statement of Policy', a companion document of the CPI(M) party programme stated in this regard "The present party programme correctly characterising the present stage of Indian revolution as the second - agrarian - stage of the revolution which is directed not only against the landlords and imperialists but also against the Indian big bourgeoisie, has laid down that the big bourgeoisie has no place in the People's Democratic Front"⁵⁹.

Unhesitatingly the CPI(M)'s programme argued that the big bourgeoisie are the confirmed opponents of the democratic revolution because they are out to compromise with imperialism and feudalism. They have no place in this front, on the contrary they are the enemies of the front and it is against their state that the front has to fight its main battle⁶⁰.

The case of the national bourgeoisie, i.e., other than the big and monopoly bourgeoisie, has been dealt with in

the party programme. It is said,

"... the national bourgeoisie which are either having no links altogether with foreign monopolists or having no durable links, which are not by themselves monopolistic and suffer at their hands in a number of ways, are objectively interested in the accomplishment of the principal tasks of the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist revolution"⁶¹.

As for the section of the national bourgeoisie whose interests are not tied up with those of foreign monopoly capital and whose interests damaged by the monopolists, — their objective interests lie in completing the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal revolution⁶².

"As the general crisis of the world capitalist system deepens, as the contradiction between foreign monopolists and them grows in all its intensity and as the big bourgeoisie using its economic power and leading position in the state attempts to solve its crisis at the expense of its weak class-brethren in country, this stratum of the bourgeoisie will be compelled to come into opposition with the state power and can find a place in the people's democratic front"⁶³.

As the general crisis of capitalism deepens, the contradictions between the foreign monopolists and these sections of the bourgeoisie will grow sharper. As the big bourgeoisie will try to pass the burden of the crisis on to the shoulders of these sections, utilizing their

economic and political power for the purpose, these sections of the national bourgeoisie will have to stand up against the present régime and it will then be possible to find a place for them in the front.

Caution should be taken, the party programme stated, that national bourgeoisie "are still sharing state power along with the big bourgeoisie and entertain high hopes of advancing further under the same régime".⁶⁴ Though they are objectively progressive in character, due to their weak class position vis-a-vis Indian big and monopoly bourgeoisie and foreign imperialists, they exhibit instability and extreme vacillation between the imperialist and the big bourgeoisie on the one side and people's democratic front on the other. The party programme further indicates that,

"Owing to its dual nature, its participation in the revolution depends on a number of concrete conditions, on changes in the correlation of class forces, on the sharpness of the contradictions between imperialism, feudalism and the people on the depth of the contradictions between the bourgeois-landlord state led by the big bourgeoisie and the remaining sections of the national bourgeois class"⁶⁵.

So there are limitations of this national bourgeoisie in their participation in the People's Democratic revolution though they have contradictions with imperialism and big and monopoly capitalism.

Question of Leadership

On the question of leadership in the people's democratic front for people's Democratic Revolution the CPI(M)'s programme states—

"In the present era, the proletariat have to lead the democratic revolution as a necessary step in its forward march to the achievement of socialism. Hence it is not the old type of bourgeois - led democratic revolution but a new type of people's democratic revolution organised and led under the hegemony of the working class"⁶⁶.

The party programme unequivocally declares that the hegemony of the working class in the struggle for people's democratic revolution is the correct assessment for the present Indian condition.

Capitalist development in India is not of the type which took place in Western Europe and other advanced capitalist countries. Even though developing in the capitalist way Indian society still contains within itself strong elements of precapitalistic hang-overs. Unlike the advanced capitalist countries where capitalism grew over the ashes of pre-capitalist society, destroyed by the rising bourgeoisie, capitalism in India was superimposed on pre-capitalist society⁶⁷.

In India, the bourgeoisie and the landlords headed by the big bourgeoisie achieved power from the British

imperialists, and this ruling big bourgeoisie proceeded to develop the country's economy on the line of capitalism by making some sort of adjustment with feudalism and imperialism. Though there are contradictions among them, still they have no alternative but to swallow maladjustment with the imperialists and landlords because "... the capitalist path of development the Indian bourgeoisie has chosen when the world capitalist system is fast disintegrating and has entered the ... stage of general crisis of capitalism"⁶⁸.

The big bourgeoisie who occupy the leading position in the state resist and oppose the carrying out of radical and genuine agrarian reforms by abolishing feudal and semi-feudal relations in the vast countryside and also protect foreign monopoly capital and facilitate its further penetration unhindered. With their policies of compromise and collaboration with foreign monopolists and alliance with the landlord, they are vigorously pursuing the path of capitalist development which in turn is immensely facilitating the growth of monopoly capital in our country. So it is the duty to oppose feudal landlordism, foreign monopoly capitalism, big bourgeois rule and its policies of compromise and collaboration with foreign finance capital and alliance with native landlordism⁶⁹.

"It has thus fallen to the lot of the working class and its party to unite all the

progressive forces interested in destroying the precapitalist society and to consolidate the revolutionary forces within it so as to facilitate the most rapid completion of the democratic revolution and preparation of the ground for transition to socialism"⁷⁰.

So the immediate objective is the establishment of a people's democratic front "led by the working class on the basis of a firm worker peasant alliance"⁷¹ for the replacement of the present bourgeois landlord state and government. Among the peasantry the poor peasants and agricultural labourers constitute seventy per cent of the rural population the worst exploited and therefore the nearest to the working class in this front. These sections are the chief allies of the working class though the middle and the rich peasants, the urban middle class and intelligentsia and the national bourgeoisie are considered as the allied forces of this front.

Considering all the facts, working class hegemony and the people's democratic front is a historical necessity in this state of revolution. This has been further explained in the party programme, thus—

"The people's democratic front cannot successfully be built and the revolution cannot attain victory except under the leadership of the working class of India and its political party, the Communist Party of India [Marxist].

Historically no other class in modern society except the working class is destined to play this role and the entire experience of our time amply demonstrates this truth".⁷²

In the foregoing discussion on the question of leadership in the present phase of revolutionary movement, i.e., movement by the people's democratic front depends on the unquestionable hegemony of the working class with its closest ally the poor peasantry and agricultural labourers, and its broader alliance with the middle and rich peasants, middle class urban intelligentsia, national bourgeoisie and also the patriotic masses of India. In this manner the leadership question has been resolved in the programme of the CPI(M) for the people's democratic revolution.

Section 5 Means to be Pursued to Attain the Revolution :
CPI and CPI(M) 's Policy

Means of attaining their respective revolutions, namely, national democratic revolution for CPI and people's democratic revolution for CPI(M), are stated here side by side.

To the CPI, the national democratic revolution-

"... will be consolidated in the course of countrywide united mass movements, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggles, against the reactionary antipeople policies, simultaneously isolating

and defeating the forces of communalism and right reaction seeking to disrupt the same"⁷³.

The programme of the Communist Party of India has stated that it will strive to achieve the establishment of national democracy and create conditions for the advancement of the goal of socialism by peaceful means.

This peaceful means has been spelt out in this manner : By developing a powerful and stable majority in parliament, backed by such a movement, the working class and its allies will strive their utmost to overcome the resistance of the forces of reaction and transform parliament from an instrument serving the bourgeoisie into a genuine instrument of the people's will for effecting a fundamental transformation in the economic, social and state structure⁷⁴.

Though the programme is very clear about the peaceful means of organising mass movements and of winning the parliamentary battle for transition to national democratic stage, still a considerable amount of doubt seems to persist and this has made the party cautious as is apparent from the following statement :

"It needs to be always borne in mind that the ruling classes will not relinquish their power voluntarily. Experience shows that they defy the will of the people and seek to suppress it by lawless and violent methods. It is therefore necessary for the revolutionary forces to so orientate themselves and their work that they can

face up to all contingencies, to any twist and turns in the political life of the country"⁷⁵.

So it seems clear that in times of exigencies the revolutionary forces may have to face up the violent designs of the opponents with forces if necessary. For an ultimate analysis, the party and the NDF where the former is also a partner will lead the front even in the face of all sorts of extraparliamentary 'lawless and violent methods' of the enemies of the revolution.

To the CPI(M)-

"... it strives to achieve the establishment of people's democracy and socialist transformation through peaceful means. By developing a powerful mass revolutionary movement, by combining parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forms of struggle the working class and its allies will try their utmost to overcome the resistance of the forces of reaction and to bring about these transformations through peaceful means"⁷⁶.

CPI(M) in its party programme agrees to take the help of the existing advantages of parliamentary form of struggle combined with the extraparliamentary methods such as

organising mass movements for dislodging the present ruling classes and establishing a people's democratic state and government based on the firm alliance of the working class and peasantry with their allies. The significance of this peaceful means lies in that the party will obviously have to work out various interim slogans in order to meet the requirements of the rapidly changing political situation in the country. So it can participate in the parliament and in the state government. This active participation and sometime forming state governments will "... give great fillip to the revolutionary movement of the working people ... though not solve the economic and political problems of the nation in any fundamental manner ... such governments of a transitional character ... may give immediate relief to the people and thus strengthen the mass movement"⁷⁷ for the final take-over of power by dissolving the existing ruling classes.

Beside the peaceful means, the CPI(M) party programme makes the revolutionary forces cautious and vigilant against all sorts of untoward contingencies by the following words which are in term and essence same as the statement made by the CPI program.

"... it needs always to be borne in mind that the ruling classes never relinquish their power voluntarily. They seek to defy the will of the people and seek to reverse it by

lawlessness and violence. It is therefore necessary for the revolutionary forces to be vigilant and so orientate their work that they can face up to all contingencies, to any twist and turn in the political life of the country"⁸.

So it is spelt out there that the revolutionary forces will face up to all sorts of contingencies created by the existing ruling classes. Though the people's democratic front may follow the parliamentary means of struggle still the existing ruling classes may denounce that path and may refuse to relinquish the power voluntarily. Conscious worker peasant alliance by the working class with all its allies can play the active role in transforming the bourgeois --landlord state.

Section 6 Programme on Agrarian Question

So far this study centres round the basic proposition of the programmatic understanding of both the communist parties on the subjects namely, the class character of the Indian state, stages of revolution, forces helpful to and inimical to, and also the determination of leadership for leading the revolutionary movement to a success. Hereafter the study will delve into, on the basis of their respective understandings, two important subjects, namely, agrarian reforms and rural democracy dealt with in their respective party programmes.

CPI's Programme on Agrarian Reforms

The CPI stresses adequately the problem and importance of agriculture in its party programme, because-

"Agriculture constitutes the major sector of our national economy, accounting for 46.8 per cent of the national income. As such as 69.5 per cent of the total population derives its livelihood from agriculture ..."⁷⁹
 [Emphasis original].

From British rule when India got independence it was a backward and decaying agrarian system which, despite the growth of commodity production and money economy, that took place during the British regime, remained under the domination of feudal landlords and a variety of other semifeudal vested interests⁸⁰.

According to the CPI's programme, after independence in 1947, the ruling Indian bourgeoisie heads the government and leads the country's economy along the capitalist path.

"The national bourgeoisie having secured state power set itself the task of putting the country on the path of independent capitalist development"⁸¹.

This capitalist way of development needs reorganisation of agricultural sector of economy from the ditch of age-old backwardness under the shackles of feudal vested interests for growing industrial economic development for

steady supply of food and raw materials and also for free labour market and internal commodity market.

The Indian National Congress, i.e., the political wing of the national bourgeoisie inherited the government of independent India, its main aim has been examined in the party programme in the following manner :

"The main aim of Congress agrarian legislation has been to replace semi-feudal relations and forms of production in agriculture by capitalist relations and capitalist forms of production"⁸².

To pursue the general aim of capitalist path the national bourgeoisie has taken various legislative measures. The consequence of these measures has been as follows :

"(a) Feudal land relations have been curbed :

Statutory semifeudal landlordism has been abolished in the erstwhile zamindari areas. The major part of the area under cultivation is within the category of self-operated ownership holdings while the area under lease, which constituted the major area before land reform, is now confined to a small area. The curbing of the semifeudal land relations together with the independent capitalist development of the national economy has given an impetus to the growing commercialisation of agriculture, production

for the market and increasing replacement of tenants-at-will by wage labour.

(b) In spite of these changes, strong survival of semifeudal land relations continue to prevail.

(c) Capitalist relations of production has made significant inroads into the agrarian set-up.

(d) Interpenetration of the strong survivals of feudalism and growing capitalist relations of production are the dominant characters of socio-economic life in India's countryside.

Concentration of land in a few hands (10 per cent of the agricultural families possessing 58 per cent of land under cultivation) is a peculiar product of this interpenetration. Land so concentrated is partly cultivated by wage labour with improved techniques and partly sublet in disguised form. The majority of the tillers of the soil are without any landownership (agricultural workers and sharecroppers, etc.).

(e) The economy of the bulk of the self-cultivating peasantry has not improved ... on account of the continuation of semifeudal burdens and the exploitation of the producers through the market.

(f) The number of agricultural labourers has grown as a result of mass evictions in the course of the agrarian reforms ... and the general impoverishment of the peasantry.

(g) The survivals of semifeudal modes of exploitation combined with the growth of commercialisation of agriculture have produced a new set of reactionary vested interests. Landlords, usurers and wholesale dealers often combined in the same person, constitute the modern parasites, holding up the progress of agriculture and supporting right reaction.

... ..

The stronghold of commercial and financial interests over the rural market during the last several years has been tightened enormously. The price mechanism and market manipulations deprive the peasants of whatever little benefits they secure on account of land reform and technological development. The peasant is fleeced by commercial capital, both as a producer and as a consumer"⁸³.

It is evident from the above discussion on the consequence of the agrarian policies of the Congress rule, that the programme of CPI holds the view that agricultural sector is in the process of significant change from feudal landlordism to the capitalist direction. Changing agrarian relations under the Congress rule have substantially curbed

feudal vested interests through various legislative measures. These have gone hand-in-hand with conscious efforts to develop and foster a class of rich peasants and capitalist landlords who could become the backbone of the new capitalist agrarian set up. These rich peasants are helped considerably to grow more production, to adopt modern techniques, to grow cash crops as raw materials for industries and to build and to sustain credit institutions, etc.⁸⁴.

Again the major part of the area under cultivation is within the category of self-operated ownership holdings, while the area under lease, which constituted the major area before land reform, is now confined to a small area. The curbing of the semifeudal land relations together with the independent capitalist development of the national economy has given an impetus to the growing commercialisation of agriculture, production for the market and replacement of tenants-at-will by wage labour. Thereby capitalist relations of production have made significant inroads into the agrarian set up. These are regarded as the cardinal changes brought about by the policies of the Indian National Congress after independence⁸⁵.

But there are some inherent limitations in the capitalist path of development in agricultural sector by the national bourgeoisie. It is due to the contradictions of the capitalist path of development. Independent

capitalist path of development is apparently and basically opposed to the interests of imperialism and feudalism. Independent capitalist path of India's national bourgeoisie is opposed to the imperialist interest mainly on grounds that the national bourgeoisie opted for "economic independence and establishment of basic industries"⁸⁶. It wants to "mobilise capital resources and to expand the internal market"⁸⁷. Since this is against the interests of the feudal elements, the national bourgeoisie is against feudalism. At the same time, the CPI programme seeks to show that it is inevitable for the national bourgeoisie to "rely heavily on foreign monopoly capital"⁸⁸ and internally to compromise with "feudal landlords"⁸⁹. A contradiction within a contradiction, that is, the growth of "monopoly groups in the ranks of the Indian bourgeoisie"⁹⁰ by the end of Second World War and "concentration of capital and economic power in the hands of a few big monopolists"⁹¹ has come into conflict with the vital interest of the people and has harmed the interest of broad sections of the national bourgeoisie.

In spite of contradictions with the foreign monopoly capital and feudal interests, the ruling national bourgeoisie are obliged to go hand-in-hand with both of them. So the agrarian policy and approach to agrarian relations have resulted in a retention of strong survivals of semifeudal relations. Sharecropping, concealed leasing, and

concentration of land in a few hands are glaring features which exist with the growing capitalist relations of production as interpenetration or interpolation of both the factors. For example, the programme clearly cited,

"Concentration of land in a few hands (10 per cent of agricultural families possessing 58 per cent of land under cultivation) is a peculiar product of this interpenetration. Land so concentrated is partly cultivated by wage labour with improved techniques and partly sublet in disguised form"⁹².

Dichotomous policy in agrarian sector of the ruling bourgeoisie is explicit, because it pursued the aim of fostering capitalism in the country-side, not on the basis of an all-out offensive against the semifeudal vested interests but through a process of compromise with and concession to them. The Congress agrarian reforms did not bring about a radical transformation of the agrarian set-up in the interests of the mass of the peasantry. The main productive force in agriculture, the toiling peasant, was not set free from multifarious forms of semifeudal exploitation and he lives in abject poverty. A tremendous eviction offensive was launched against the peasantry in the name of resumption of lands by landlords for the purpose of self cultivation. On the other side, the huge compensation to landlords was thrust upon the peasantry. Subletting and share-cropping continue as classic examples of semifeudal exploitation. Moreover ceiling laws made by the Congress

government were reduced to a total farce⁹³.

The dominant character of socio-economic life in India's countryside is the inter-penetration of strong survivals of feudalism and growing capitalist relations of production. The survival of semifeudal modes of exploitation combined with the growth of the commercialisation of agriculture has produced a new set of reactionary vested interests. Landlords, usurers and wholesale dealers, often combined in the same person, constitute the modern parasites holding up the progress of agriculture and supporting right reaction. So it is said by the CPI in defining the class character of the Indian State that the national bourgeois "class rule has strong links with the landlords"⁹⁴ it also gives rise to reactionary pulls on the state power.

It should be noted that the stronghold of commercial and financial interests over the rural markets during the last several years has been tightened enormously. The price mechanism and market manipulation, sharp fluctuations in price and the fleecing of the bulk of the peasants both as producer and consumer also act as strong depressors of agricultural production⁹⁵.

The combined result of all these policies for the agrarian sector has been a very slow rate of growth in agricultural production. Besides, vagaries of the monsoon,

basic dependence on destiny still persist in this sector. Although, side by side, some irrigation projects and the programme like 'green revolution' have been launched to tackle the situation in pursuance of the capitalist path of development with an odd admixture of semifeudal production relation. All these have led to the accentuation of inequality in the agrarian sector. The CPI's programme summed up the conditions of agriculture during the Congress rule, thus,

"No wonder that in the totality the gains of agrarian legislation under Congress rule have been partial and limited, being confined mainly to the upper strata of the rural population, while a large section of the toiling peasantry still lives in conditions of gross poverty and subject to multifarious forms of semifeudal exploitation"⁹⁶.

So the solution of the agrarian problem, according to the CPI, is of utmost importance for the national regeneration of India. Without a radical agrarian reform and a conscious movement to increase productivity in agriculture, it is impossible to solve the food problem and accelerate the economic growth of the country. Hence a clear break has to be made with the past by recognising the vast agricultural sector⁹⁷. In order to achieve this aim the following measures must be carried out in this moment.

"First, elimination of all feudal and semifeudal survivals by breaking the

concentration of land through the imposition of real ceilings and the distribution of surplus land to the landless and land-hungry peasants;

Second, abundant state aid to the peasants for (a) expanding producers' and consumers' cooperatives, and for (b) using modern technique for the speedy development of production;

Third, nationalisation of banks⁹⁸ and other credit Institutions to ensure the supply of cheap long-term credit to the tillers;

Fourth, nationalisation of whole-sale trade in agricultural produce and the introduction of supply of price-support to ensure stable and remunerative prices for the peasant producers and the supply of all essential commodities to them at fair price; state trading in food-grains by taking over the whole-sale trade;

Fifth, adequate living wage to the agricultural workers⁹⁹.

It further pledged that it will bend all its energies for bringing about these radical transformations in the agrarian life of the country. Basing itself on agricultural labourers and poor peasantry the CPI claims to follow the policy of uniting all sections of the peasantry in their struggles, in putting the toiling millions of the countryside on the road to a new life of prosperity and freedom¹⁰⁰.

For agrarian reform in this present context of India, CPI thinks National Democratic Revolution is the only solution. The central slogan of this stage is for the National Democratic Revolution which aims to "... implement the Programme of National development in a non-capitalist way,

i.e. eliminating foreign monopoly, breaking Indian monopoly combines, carrying through agrarian reform, extending democracy to ensure the active participation of the working class in the economic and political life of the country. In this process the balance continuously shifts in favour of the working class and the worker-peasant alliance, paving the way for the leadership of the working class in the state, thereby creating the conditions for transition to socialism¹⁰¹ [emphasis added].

The central slogan will be raised by the National Democratic Front for replacement of the Congress by the forces composed of anti-imperialist, antifeudal and anti-monopoly classes by a government of national democracy determined to direct the country's development along the non-capitalist path¹⁰².

This National Democratic Front will be composed of working class, national bourgeoisie urban and rural intelligentsia and also "the broad masses of the cultivating peasants, including the rich peasants and the agricultural labourers. The completion of the radical agrarian reforms in the interest of the peasantry, as well as other democratic reforms given in the program, will unshackle the productive forces of the cultivating peasantry and enable fuller employment of the labour power of the landless peasants and agricultural workers, ensuring steady rise of

agricultural production and of the living standards of the rural masses"¹⁰³.

After successful launching of National Democratic Revolution by the National Democratic Front a National Democratic Government will emerge to implement some specific programmes including the following agrarian programme.

According to the CPI,

"The national democratic government will take the following effective measures for the radical reorganisation of agrarian economy and the solution of peasant problems :

a) Concentration of land will be broken by abolishing all forms of landlordism, by imposing effective ceilings on landholdings and by distributing surplus land to agricultural labourers and poor peasants free of cost. The interests of the small landholders will be fully protected.

b) All types of fallow land, other than those required for common village purposes, in the hands of the state will be distributed to agricultural labourers and poor peasants. Long-term development loans will be advanced for the reclamation of fallow land.

c) All land reform measures will be implemented with the help of popular committees composed of accredited

representatives of peasants and agricultural labourers. Financial and technical aid will be distributed similarly.

d) The still remaining unpaid portion of compensation to big zamindars and jagirdars will be stopped.

All progressive debts which the peasants and agricultural labourers owe to the landlords and usurers will be cancelled.

e) The present iniquitous system of land revenue shall be abolished and a new system of graded land tax based on income shall be introduced, exempting all uneconomic holdings from taxation.

f) All facilities will be provided to the cultivators of land so as to encourage them to produce enough food for people and raw materials for industries.

Multipurpose cooperatives shall be organised which will provide cheap credit, seed, manure, pesticides, etc. to the peasants, and remunerative prices assured for their products. Care shall be taken to prevent these cooperatives [from] becoming the instruments for the enrichment of the rich peasants and landlords.

Cheap irrigation facilities will be provided through the construction of irrigation dams and through providing cheap electricity on a wide scale.

Agro-industries and cold storages for the processing and preservation of such food products as milk, fruit, eggs, fish, potatoes, etc. will be started so that the income of cultivators is increased through these subsidiary occupations.

The cultivators will be assured of remunerative prices for their products.

g) Adequate wages and living conditions will be ensured to the agricultural labourers.

Wage Boards will be set up with representatives of agricultural labourers in order to implement relevant laws and settle disputes.

They will be encouraged and helped to set up, with necessary state aid, cooperative farming societies vested with government land.

They will be provided with free house sites and financial help to build houses.

The problem of under-employment of the agricultural labourers will be solved by starting rural industries and providing them with alternative jobs in the off-seasons.

h) State farms run on mechanized and modern lines like the Suratgarh farm in Rajasthan will be started where vast

tracts of land are available as models to the cultivators on how modern collective agriculture will increase income while reducing the load of hard labour from the backs of the cultivators.

The cultivators will be encouraged to form cooperative farming societies on a voluntary basis and carry on cultivation through the aid of machinery and other modern methods.

Effective measures of flood control will be undertaken"¹⁰⁴.

This is the agrarian programme of the CPI. The CPI places this agrarian programme with other programmes before the people of India and sets forth the principal urgent tasks of the day in order that the people have a clear picture of the objective of national democratic revolution they are fighting for.

In fine, the CPI's programme declares that this programme is "... a correct guide and a reliable compass for charting the revolutionary course to the victory of the national democratic front and the establishment of national democracy"¹⁰⁵ for the present stage and which will advance to the desired goal of socialism in near future.

CPI(M)'s Programme on Agrarian Reforms

The programme of the CPI(M) characterises the present stage of India's revolution as the second stage (agrarian)¹⁰⁶ which was to be directed against the landlords, imperialists and bourgeoisie headed by the big bourgeoisie. The first stage of Indian revolution according to the CPI(M) was the stage of general national united front directed against foreign imperialist rule which came to an end on 15th August 1947. The power was transferred to the Congress Party, the party of the bourgeoisie and landlords. Thus the programme states,

"The second stage of the Indian revolution demanded ... the complete abolition of feudal and semifeudal landlordism and the distribution of land to the agricultural labourers and poor peasants gratis ... Abolition of landlordism and a thorough-going agrarian revolution would have at once shattered the age-old shackles on our agricultural production, and enable it to take a major forward stride ..."¹⁰⁷

The second stage of India's revolution, according to CPI(M), is People's Democratic Revolution, in which abolition of feudal and semi-feudal landlordism is mainly to be accomplished. Because of the prevalence of precapitalist production relations in the vast agrarian sector India can not march forward to the desired goal of socialist revolution. So CPI(M) considers that this People's Democratic stage of revolution will do away with all the

legacies of pre-capitalist agrarian system and will prepare the peasantry and agricultural labourers to have a major stride along with all strata of working people towards the third stage of revolution, i.e., socialism.

The CPI(M) programme assessed the agrarian policies of the Congress Government i.e., landlord bourgeois government to conclude that several decades of its rule and a number of legislations have been adopted for the agrarian sector but these do not make any considerable change in the plight of the vast peasant and agricultural labourer sections. Following is the balance-sheet of the agrarian policies of the Congress government, according to the CPI(M), that after independence, the -

"... Congress rule with all its multitude of agrarian reform laws, land concentration remains intact and five per cent of the top households in the rural side possess as much as 37.29 per cent of the total land under cultivation whereas 70 per cent of the peasant families hardly possess 20 per cent of the land.

... ..

Moreover, with the present agrarian relations over a thousand crores of rupees find their way annually into the hands of the landlords and moneylenders by way of rent and interest which again is used not for productive purposes but for speculative trading and usurious money lending"¹⁰⁸.

If this monopoly of land is broken up and is distributed to the agricultural labourers and poor peasants and if this heavy debt burdens are abolished which are

pre-requisites for releasing the creative energy and labour enthusiasm of the millions of peasants, then these alone can form the foundation for a tremendous expansion of agricultural production and solve the problem of capital in agriculture.

The CPI(M) pointed to another aspect of the bourgeois-landlord government's agrarian policies in the following manner :

"The abolition of princely feudal states was carried out with the assurance of paying ... of several crores of rupees annually¹⁰⁹... The legislative measures for abolishing intermediaries such as zamindars, jagirdars, inamdars, etc., deliberately permits them to retain big landed estates ... and guarantee colossal amounts of compensation to be paid to them"¹¹⁰.

As a result, abolition of these intermediaries has not been followed by a free and automatic transfer of property rights to the actual peasants, rather colossal burden of compensation has been loaded on them. So the plight of the tenants has had no change.

"The tenancy laws enacted for the ryotwari areas provided first and foremost for the so-called right of resumption of land under the pretext of self-cultivating tenants ... with large number of loopholes deliberately left in the legislations on the one hand and their implementation by bureaucratic authorities dominated by the landlord element ..."¹¹¹.

Naturally, these have led to the eviction and uprooting of millions of cultivating tenants and throwing them

into the ranks of pauperised peasants and agricultural labourers. Again,

"Coming to the much-talked of legislations regarding ceiling on land holdings, these acts have been so framed as to enable the big landholders either to preserve their holdings untouched or to merily split them up through fictitious partition among their family members in such a manner as to make the ceiling law inapplicable to them. ... No wonder ... very little land has been acquired by applying these laws for distribution among the toiling peasantry"¹¹².

In order to increase agricultural production the Congress government enacted another law and wherever it is implemented it bore a very painful result to the poor peasants. The programme cited this, as following :

"Consolidation of land-holding is another measure which seeks to increase agricultural production ... Wherever it is implemented, the major gains have gone to the richer strata of land owning classes. They have been enabled to manoeuver and secure the best available lands and the best sites at the expense of the poor and middle peasants"¹¹³.

Again, land for distribution to the tiller of the soil is the law of the statute book, rather vested and surplus land and cultivable waste land has either been acquired by the influential persons on the landlords who imposed heavy taxes or levies collected from the cultivating peasants.

"Millions of acres of such lands are found in several states. Here again, several influential landlords in different states occupy them, depriving the deserving peasant from cultivating these lands. Wherever

the poor peasant doggedly stick [sic] on to the cultivation of these waste lands ... heavy penalties are levied and collected from them year after year"¹¹⁴.

The programme further referred to the plight of the agricultural labourers, who with either no land or with a small piece of land and whose main livelihood is derived from selling of their labour power, now are the single biggest section in the countryside.

"Thanks to the agrarian and other policies of the government their ranks have been swelled with millions of evicted tenants, ruined peasants and uprooted artisans. On all-India scale they form 30 to 35 per cent ... of the peasant households in our rural areas"¹¹⁵.

Their type of work has been assessed.

"From amongst them, thousands work as farm servants under landlords and rich peasants on annual basis ... [and] practically nothing effective has been done as far to improve their living conditions and protect them from the brutal exploitation of the landlords"¹¹⁶.
(emphasis added)

It is clear from the above quotations that the farm labourers are in direct feudal and semifeudal bondage. The programme further mentioned that other portions of the agricultural labourers are seasonally employed or under-employed and their scale of wages and other conditions of work prescribed from time to time by the ruling Congress

government and the wages actually paid are lower than with what a human being can barely lead his life. With much concern the programme states,

"without a radical change in their living conditions, it is unthinkable to change the face of our degraded rural life and unleash the productive forces in the agrarian sector"¹¹⁷.

The agricultural labourers are the worst exploited masses in India's countryside. They are employed somewhere as bonded servant and somewhere else as seasonally employed worker having no prospect of life under the bourgeois-landlord government.

The party takes note of some economic measures which have been taken in the avowed name of upliftment of the general rural people, but notes that actually all these measures in the ultimate analysis have helped and strengthened only the hands of the landlords and the rich peasants who formed the base of ruling class in the rural area. Measures of this kind are community development project, panchayat raj, extension schemes, etc.

"The bulk of the expenditure ... flows into the pocket of landlords and rich peasants. Large sums are advanced to them as taccavi loans. Special agricultural loans are granted to them for the purchase of tractors, pump-sets, oil-engines and for sinking tube wells. It is they who grab the lion's share of

the chemical manures and good quality seeds distributed by the government"¹¹⁸.

The outcome of these measures are absorbed by the landlords and the rich peasants due to their position of greatest strength in the village governance. Their influence on bureaucratic administration make them develop themselves and deprive the lower strata.

The condition and impact of money market which is entering into the rural areas aggravate, as a result,

"The peasant is fleeced both as a seller of agricultural produce and as a purchaser of industrial goods"¹¹⁹.

The rapid expansion of money economy in the rural areas helps forward trading and speculative hoarding of food grains and other agricultural commodities. Bank credits help the trading interests over agricultural produce in the hands of Indian and foreign monopolistic market which intensify the exploitation of the lower strata of the peasants because the latter are bound to sell their produce as distress sellers for purchasing industrial goods.

Moreover, cooperative credits, government loan, bank credit though not sufficient to boost agricultural production are absorbed by the landlords and rich peasants and also by the trading interests in turn adversely affecting poor peasants from whose hands land therefore passes out. The poor peasants are bound to take loan from the usurious

money-lenders whose rate of interest doubles the principal within a year and the loan trap is the worst of its kind running through generations reducing the peasants to a pauperised peasantry or to agricultural labourers. It can be placed thus categorically for better understanding :

- 1) Public Credit System : The existing government has initiated some schemes and projects although these are not sufficient, capital investment which can be termed as public credit through bank, cooperatives, panchayat, bloc panchayat samities and zila parishad. But these credits only help to extent and consolidate the rich peasants' and landlords' base of the ruling class in the rural side because they are directly administering the affairs of the ruling government; hence they are utilising these opportunities of monopolising the agricultural credits. Consistent with its class policies, the government has been giving the richer section of the peasants and landholders direct financial, technical and other aids almost to the exclusion of the lower strata of cultivators.
- 2) Public credit available to peasants is totally insufficient; again these insufficient credit is being monopolised by a handful of big landholders. So in the ultimate analysis poor peasants have no opportunity but to borrow usurious capital from the moneylenders, whose rate of interest doubles the principal within a year, and loan trap.

is the worst of its kind running through generations.

3) Dearth of public credit helps credit from usurious capital to spread its loan trap as an irremovable burden on the heads of the poor peasants. Due to the intensification of exploitation of the peasants through unequal exchange and violent fluctuations of price the peasant is fleeced both as a seller of agricultural produce and as a purchaser of industrial goods. Again, distress sale of the agricultural produce by the poor peasants brings price of the commodity down and is also the cause of peasants being pauperised. This compels, in the ultimate analysis, land-transfer from poor peasants to the upper sections of the peasantry.

4) For more production in agriculture in solving food problem and steady supply of raw materials for industries it is imperative to invest more capital in agriculture, but dearth of public credit investment leads to stagnation of agricultural production.

The programme states,

"This dearth of credit is leading not only to deterioration in agricultural production, but also to the passing of land out of the hands of the poor peasants. Government has consistently refused to scale down the burden of rural indebtedness"¹²⁰.

All these steps which are surely against the interests of the peasantry particularly the poor peasants and

agricultural labourers, culminate into bankruptcy of agrarian policies.

"The bankruptcy of these agrarian policies is revealed in the failure to solve the chronic food crisis ... The result has been that India continues to import heavily from the USA under PL 480 food grains and raw materials"¹²¹.

The programme of the CPI(M) takes a serious note of the agrarian policy of the ruling government which is responsible for shortage of food-grain in the country. Though India has a great potentiality for food production and there is a high degree of agrarian development possible in view of the vast area of cultivable land and irrigation potentials, besides, adequate forces of agricultural peasants and labourers, still the country hinges on perennial food crisis.

The CPI(M) in its party programme has assessed the agrarian policies of the existing ruling bourgeois-landlord government with an utter dissatisfaction. It states,

"In no field is the utter failure of the bourgeois-landlord government's policies so markedly revealed as in the case of agrarian question ... Congress rule has proved ... that the aim and direction of its agrarian policies is not to smash the feudal and semi-feudal fetters on our land relations and thus liberate the peasantry from age-old bondage, but to transform the feudal land lords into capitalist landlords and develop a stratum of rich peasants"¹²².

Agrarian policies of the Congress government are not intended to smash the feudal and semi-feudal interests because the very landlords are also sharing the state power with the bourgeoisie as a whole but led by the big bourgeoisie. So it is not possible for this government to wage an all-out confrontation with the feudal landlords but to compromise; and for its contradiction with feudalism the bourgeoisie is wooing the rich peasants as its future alternative base in the rural economy. However, the rich peasants are now not so very strong as to be able to avoid the landlord interest. So any governmental decision of the existing government will never considerably jeopardise the interest of its power partner i.e. the landlord when no effective alternative support-base is built in this vacuum. The present government of India has its own contradiction. It is due to the fact of the share of power between the bourgeoisie and the landlords. Their respective nature, aims and ambitions are quite different. The bourgeoisie has an objective interest in spreading capitalist economy in the countryside by reorganising rural economy and mechanisation of cultivation. Obviously these measures are opposed to the interest of the feudal landlords. The feudal landlords like to see that they are fully allowed to mop up all surplus in the sphere of agriculture. This tussle is being continued at the cost of rural populace. The existing bourgeoisie, particularly the big bourgeoisie, which is

leading the Indian state, according to the CPI(M) programme, has consistently pursuing the policy of keeping peasants and agricultural labourers under the heaviest pressure of exploitation and oppression and at the same time has been inducing the feudal landlords to grow into capitalist landlords. In this policy the bourgeoisie hopes to succeed only by creating in the countryside a section of rich peasantry who would eagerly pursue capitalist agricultural enterprises and extend support to the government in the implementation of its policies. The CPI(M)'s programme refers to the dichotomous nature of the class which shows its instability in the pursuit of any democratic agrarian reform or in developing capitalism by overthrowing the feudal elements which are the historical obstacles to such revolution. So the programme mentions :

"They [Congress rulers] want to depend upon the landlord and rich peasant section to produce the surplus of agricultural products to meet the requirements of capitalist development. They also want to make these sections the main political base of the ruling class in the countryside"¹²⁹. [Emphasis added].

The fact is that the Indian bourgeoisie is not capable of transforming the total agrarian sector from feudal and semi-feudal strangleholds to capitalist relations of production. On the contrary, they have desperately built an alliance by sharing of power with the landlords for maintaining the status quo. So any radical land reforms are actually impossible for them to pursue. Only whatever

they aim at is to check any popular peasant movement which is initiated to fight the vested interest in Indian agriculture. For example, various land reform acts have enabled the landlords to divide their large estates among their close relations; sometime they sell a little portion of their estate and the remaining part is directly managed to cultivate by employing annually or perennially bonded labourers (servants), sometime employing hired labourers and by use of some mechanised appliances.

The rural economy is under the direct grip of landlords and rich peasants and also moneylenders because their ownership of maximum highest quality of land and its produce make them the reliable pillars of the pro-establishment sections in the countryside. The CPI(M) programme indicated that this unholy alliance of the bourgeoisie and the landlords and rich peasants stand against the interest of the agricultural labourers and poor peasantry.

The result is that the Congress rule since independence is guided to consolidate its hegemony over the political and economic affairs of the state. The agricultural economy remains under the power pressure of the landlords and rich peasants who constitute the power pillar of the ruling class in the countryside. So this rule can not develop agriculture to provide the country with adequate food and raw materials, and it can not afford to develop the national

industries and industrialise in a big way because the peasantry is unable to buy even a minimum quantity of manufactured goods.

For these faulty policies pursued in the agrarian sector the hundreds of thousands of hungry people forced by poverty to leave the countryside for towns swarm the labour-market and increase the number of unemployed and they lead their lives in an abject poverty. This culminates in moral degradation and cultural backwardness of the poor sections of the people in the country as a whole and they are being left behind from the privileged few. These sections of India's population are bound to seek their livelihood by following ignominious ways and some time in organised ways (violence such as, dacoity, robbery etc.) which are treated by the existing government as law and order problem from its view-point and without mitigating the problem at the root¹²⁴.

The condition of the poor peasantry and agricultural labourers and artisans during the last few decades of Congress rule is becoming bad to worse, because the bourgeois-landlord government has been practising all these years since independence a systematic denial of the legitimate rights of the people and a policy of letting the exploiting classes to flourish at the expense of the toiling millions of the country. In spite of the limited growth in production both

in agriculture and in industry the condition of the poorer sections - namely, the poor peasantry and agricultural labourers and workers has not been improved by any standard from their earlier position; besides, most of the increasing wealth has been concentrated in the hands of the patrons and partners of the existing bourgeois-landlord government under Congress rule. The condition of the whole peasantry during the existing Congress rule has been portrayed in the programme as :-

"Millions of our peasantry live in abject poverty and backwardness. Three-fourths of the peasantry have practically no land of their own and many millions live as paupers. The plunder of the peasantry through exorbitant rents and interests, through high taxes and manipulations of the capitalist market continues. Agricultural labourers and poor peasants have to work without any subsistence wage for the family. Want of employment, hunger indebtedness and destitution - in short, the ruination of our peasantry is what we see in the countryside today"¹²⁵.

Considering these facts the CPI(M)'s programme has given priority to the agrarian question; it is also vividly clear from another statement.

"Thus the agricultural and peasant problems are of primary importance to the life of our country and stand as the foremost national question"¹²⁶.

This stage of revolution is considered as the 'people's democratic revolution' which is specifically

directed to the agrarian revolution for changing the existing mode of production in agriculture which affects the life of major portions of India's population. Especially the 'people's democratic revolution' will perform two fundamental tasks in the sphere of economy. The first and foremost is the task of carrying out radical agrarian reforms in the interest of the peasantry so as to sweep away all the remnants of feudal and semifeudal fetters on production relations in agriculture. The second urgent task of the 'people's democratic revolution' is the total eradication and summary expulsion of foreign monopoly capital from the national economy and thus free the economic, political and social life of the people from all its disastrous influences¹²⁷.

It is evident from the foregoing discussion that 'people's democratic revolution' is the pre-condition of any effective change in the agrarian system. And in that revolution the poor peasantry and the agricultural labourers come eagerly to the forefront to cooperate with the working class-led-movement, where the middle and rich peasants, the intelligentsia and also the national bourgeoisie will take part¹²⁸.

The demand of the time is stated to be the call for setting up a wide-ranging 'people's democratic front' under the guidance of the working class with the poor

peasantry and agricultural labourers as its closest ally against the policies of the bourgeois-landlord state so that monopoly capital may be uprooted and the feudal and semi-feudal fetters on agriculture may be smashed. The Programme claims that it correctly reads the minds of the people that disillusionment of and discontent with the policies and attempts of the bourgeois - landlord government grow rapidly. Material condition itself teaches them that there is no hope of emancipation from backwardness, poverty, hunger and exploitation under this government. It claims this awakening is seen in the growing attraction to the ideas of democracy and socialism among the toiling masses¹²⁹. Faced with this understanding the Communist Party of India (Marxist) feels, it is the duty to place before the people of India some practical tasks and programme as the only correct way out of the deadlock which they have been forced by the present bourgeois-landlord government¹³⁰.

In order to find a way out of the deadlock the 'people's democratic revolution' is a must. After the successful launching of 'people's democratic revolution' by the 'people's democratic front' the 'people's democratic government' will take place by replacing the bourgeois-landlord state. The working class constitutes the head of this government with a broad alliance with other sections which are mainly composed of the poor peasantry and agricultural labourers. Some other sections of the peasantry, the intelligentsia and the

national bourgeoisie are also expected to be partners of the people's democratic front. The people's democratic front is expected to adopt the following agrarian policies, which were earlier hindered by the bourgeois-landlord government. Following are the agrarian policies of the 'people's democratic government' :

"In the field of agriculture and the peasant problem :

- 1) Abolish landlordism without compensation and give land gratis to the agricultural labourers and poor peasants.
- 2) Cancel debts of peasants, agricultural labourers and small artisans to money lenders and landlords.
- 3) Ensure long-term and cheap credit for the peasants and artisans and fair prices for agricultural produce, assist the peasants to improve methods of farming by the use of improved seeds and modern implements and technique.
- 4) Provide guaranteed irrigation facilities.
- 5) Ensure adequate wages and living conditions to agricultural labourers.
- 6) Encourage cooperatives of peasants and artisans on a voluntary basis for farming and for agricultural services and other purposes¹³¹.

During the pre-split period the Communist Party of India had adopted at the All India Party Conference in October 1951 a 'Statement of Policy'. The CPI(M) reiterated this Statement of Policy at its Eighth Congress. In this Statement the policy of agrarian movement and leadership question of the movement and the role of the working class had been outlined in the following way :

"The working class, relying on agricultural workers and poor peasants, in firm alliance with the peasantry, together with the whole people, leads the battles in towns and rural areas to liberation, to land and bread, to work and peace". It further stated, "The leadership of the working class is not realised only through the party and its leadership of the peasant struggle but actually, in deeds, through the working class boldly championing the demands of the peasantry and coming to the assistance of the peasant struggles through its own action. The alliance must function in deed and fact, and not only in theory. The working class is the friend in action, that must help the fighting peasants and must ensure victory of the common enemy"¹³².

This comprehensive programme, of the 'people's democratic government' in agrarian section for the peasantry and agricultural labourers will herald the total banishment of feudal and semi-feudal land relations, concentration of land in a few hands, speculative trading of agricultural produce and fleecing out of the poor peasantry both as a producer and as a consumer by the capitalist market mechanism, usurious money lending, uncertainty in the life of the poor peasants, agricultural labourers and artisans. On the basis of a government led by the working class with a firm worker-peasant alliance and in solving the unfinished basic democratic tasks in this second stage of the Indian revolution,

it will pave the way for putting the country on the road towards socialism. The programmes of the 'people's democratic government' including the agrarian programme are the pre-requisites to the building of socialism-the desired goal. The 'people's democratic revolution' is meant for the abolition of the present agrarian relations of production. So 'people's democratic revolution' is synonymous to agrarian revolution. The agrarian revolution in this sense seeks to abolish feudal and semi-feudal land relations and also the concentration of land in few hands. The CPI(M) considers this stage of agrarian revolution as the most urgent and immediate task in the march of the country on to the socialist revolution.

Section 7

Programme on the Rural Democracy

Besides the radical agrarian reform in the democratic stage of revolution, the rural democracy or self-government as another important task of this stage which has been considered by both the communist parties of India seriously according to their respective line of thinking. However, these two tasks are corollaries, one without the other cannot be successful, because they together constitute the base and superstructure according to the Marxian sense. The concept of self government or rural democracy serves as the superstructure. The subject of 'rural democracy'

i.e., the democratic organisation of rural life is important in the views, policy formulation as well as policy persuasion of both the communist parties of India. Both these parties consider the vast sections of people residing in the rural areas as they have so far been subjected to the oppressions of the stronger sections or the upper-strata namely, landlords, rich peasants and bureaucratic circle of rural areas who constitute a minority among the rural people. The communist parties are keen to remodel the existing power structure of the rural area. They consider it necessary to ensure a thorough change of the oppressive instrument in the hands of the vested interests. They want instead a democratic institution which will serve the interest of the vast weaker sections and protect their interest vigilantly in any circumstances. Both the parties are dissatisfied with the existing policies of the ruling government in matters relating to rural democracy or self-government of the rural people. For them, basically, there is no change in the rural power structure which may be said to have extended the democratic content in rural government in India at all since independence. Both the communist parties deal with this subject very carefully in their respective party programmes. They have suggested measures in their own line of thinking so that these measures could improve the position of the lowest strata of village population, namely, the poor peasantry and the agricultural

labourers. These measures are not only to improve the economic position of these vast sections of the lowest strata but also to strengthen their role in finding a solution for India's basic economic weaknesses, such as, backwardness of the economy, lack of adequate industrialization, the problem of stagnant agriculture, the problem of food supply, the problem of poverty among the masses, etc. Thus the two parties project their respective democratic revolutions as having a pivotal relevance to the question of rural democracy. They consider that any measures which fail to release the initiative and vigour of the vastly large lower strata of village population, cannot also help solving the basic economic problem of the country.

Section 7.1

CPI's Programme on Rural Democracy

In the programme of the CPI, the question of rural democracy is treated very carefully. The following is the assessment of the CPI on the existing Indian condition under the Congress rule.

"Local organs of self-government which are supposed to draw the masses into direct administration of local affairs and development and thereby provide a democratic correction to bureaucratic centralization and which can be utilised to a certain extent in favour of the people by forging

broad democratic unity, are themselves made subject to the dictates of high officials with their control over revenues, advances and loans for the work of the panchayats and their constructive activities"¹³³.

Local organs of self-government are thus subjected to the domination of the agents of the ruling class in the countryside. Bureaucrats who are by nature elites or who become elites in course of time tend to act for the vested interests because they mostly come from the middle and upper strata of the rural and urban population and they can not hope to prosper in life except by protecting and serving the interests of the richer sections of the rural areas. While performing their work on revenue control, advances of loans and the work of the panchayats, these bureaucrats take the side of the richer sections. The Panchayats are not people's institutions so long as the vested class can have its own interest protected through them. Virtually, they become the main impediment to any pro-poor and pro-people democratic work as also to any scheme for the economic uplift of the masses.

These local self-governments are easy prey in the hands of rural vested interests who are close to the bourgeois government.

"The powers to remove and supersede elected bodies of local self-government are used at will in order to suppress the growth of democratic forces. The so-called

panchayati raj of the people thus becomes an instrument of the bourgeoisie seeking to consolidate its power in the countryside"¹³⁴.

The so-called panchayati system which can offer a bit of democratic advancement in this prevalent situation is under the continuous threat of suppression if it does not serve the interests of the bureaucrats and the counterpart of the bourgeoisie in the rural areas, the landlords and the rich peasants, i.e. the stronger sections of the rural people. Again, the programme of the CPI categorically states that the so-called panchayati raj of the people now becomes an instrument of the bourgeoisie who is ruling the state seeking to consolidate its power over the whole of panchayati system by using its rural partners, the landlords & the rich peasants. It marks the increasing penetration of bourgeois rule into the panchayati system which is supposed to be the raj of the people or the democracy of the people rather than a raj of a minority, a privileged section (like landlords and rich peasant section) of the rural population.

Bureaucracy and judiciary are the two main agents of the ruling bourgeoisie which are highly centralised and purposefully motivated to serve the interest of the ruling classes in the name of independent judiciary and impartial bureaucracy in the name of democracy. The programme states about the role of bureaucracy in this regard.

"The administrative system being based on a highly centralised bureaucracy, power is concentrated at the top and exercised through privileged bureaucrats who are divorced from the masses and who obediently serve the interests of the exploiting classes"135.

The power of money and competition among the exploiting classes to influence the administrative organs for their private gain made corruption to permeate into the highest circles of administrative authority including the officials top to bottom, and this becomes "a serious danger to public life"136.

The judiciary which is shown by the bourgeoisie and their champions of ideology as independent of class character, according to the CPI programme it actually acts in favour of the vested interests. Thus it states, the existing bureaucracy-

"... is weighted against workers, peasants and other sections of the working people. The laws, procedures and the system of justice, though holding the rich and poor equal and alike in principle, eventually serve the interests of the exploiting classes and uphold their class rule"137.

The separation of judiciary from executive and legislative organs as propounded by the bourgeois ideologists and democrats is a principle that remains only in the statute book, and far from actual work. The judiciary is actually

subject to the influence and control of the executive, in other words, of the ruling class's representatives.

These are the limitations which prevail over the existing rural areas hindering the fuller implementation of rural democracy. Besides, the weaker sections particularly the backward communities most of whom reside in the rural areas are not provided ample chance of upliftment. A thimbleful fund is allocated for their well-being and the same is not properly used and mostly syphoned off to the bureaucratic lords of the area concerned. Hence such a fund proves fruitless in the real sense. Even the law for the abolition of untouchability remains yet to be enforced and fails to ensure the complete eradication of this evil¹³⁸. Barring the backward and minority people rural democracy in the real sense is impossible according to the programme of the CPI.

The CPI programme has assessed the role played by the existing ruling classes whose objective interest is to maintain their hegemony which is utterly contrary to the interest of the toiling people living both in the urban areas and the vast countryside. In the countryside the ruling national bourgeoisie has built strong links with the landlords which serve the interests of the national bourgeoisie in the central and provincial governments. Naturally the rule of the national bourgeoisie is to serve and protect the interests of the landlord class, its hegemony over the rural

economy and rural institutions instead of that for real transfer of power to the peasantry and agricultural labourers which constitute the majority of the rural populace.

To remove all these existing problems persisting because not alone the ruling national bourgeoisie, but the big bourgeoisie holds powerful influence and landlord class has link, it is necessary to place the slogan for National Democratic Revolution by forming National Democratic Government by replacing the present Congress regime which represents the interest of national bourgeoisie and its allies. One of the main slogans raised by the NDF for NDR is "... carrying through radical agrarian reform, extending democracy to ensure the active participation of working class in the economic and political life of the country. In this process the balance continuously shifts in favour of the working class and the worker peasant alliance ..."¹³⁹ The programme holds the view that after successful national democratic revolution and government at the hands of NDF will refashion the rural democracy in its true shape. This has been revealed in the programme document of the CPI.

"The national democratic government will put an end to the present bureaucratic set up ... in such a way as to make ... [it] subordinate and responsible to popularly-elected state organs at all levels"¹⁴⁰.

The bureaucracy at present is an effective tool at the hands of the ruling classes in the sphere of administration.

The programme sternly denounces the present bureaucratic set-up and says that the bureaucracy in collusion with the exploiting classes has put up one of the main impediments to establishing democracy at all levels. It is held that the bureaucracy and the common people have a wide gulf of difference of class interests. In a class divided society the total set up of bureaucracy is composed of persons mostly hailing from middle and the big propertied classes. Again they hope to thrive on the existing set-up and, therefore, in no case they oppose the prevailing conditions of society. Rather they faithfully serve state and government which firmly oppose the interests of the common people. Therefore, the bureaucracy will never be a friend of the toiling people in their forward march to oust the existing classes in power. The programme further declares,

"The principle of proportional representation will be adopted in all elections and the right to recall of elected representatives by the majority of electors will be established"¹⁴¹.

The principle of proportional representation and right to recall of elected representatives are the two salient features of democracy. If these two features are provided, enthusiastic mass participation will be possible; and such participation is expected to create enthusiasm and initiatives even among much neglected backward communities which may then

come forward to ward-off social, political and economical injustice and exploitation imposed by the advanced classes on them.

The programme further states,

"It will extend and strengthen elected local organs, enhance their powers and give them more resources to fulfil their responsibilities"¹⁴².

By this statement the programme pledges that the National Democratic Government will extend to local governments more power and resources to enable them to fulfil the needs and aspirations of the people. A democratically elected body without required power and resources is a travesty of the much declared democratic ideal. Particularly the fair access to resources should be assured to the common people and lower stratum of the rural folk. This has been blocked by the bourgeoisie and their contingents who monopolise all the resources and put the toiling people in a perpetual vicious circle of poverty and social and cultural backwardness.

The programme of the CPI puts stress first on the replacement of the existing unreal democratic set up of the ruling classes by a real democracy from the grassroot level where all common and backward people can find themselves in power. Secondly, the democratic bodies of all levels should

be endowed with adequate power and resources, that is, economic opportunities should be guaranteed without which democracy will be meaningless to them. Radical agrarian reform in the countryside and the non-capitalist path of economic development are the guarantee to supply adequate resources for the real well-being of the weaker sections of the country at the hands of the national democratic government after the National Democratic Revolution in this stage.

Besides, the programme upholds some general duties of the National Democratic Government which will considerably help the effective establishment of democracy at the grassroot level.

"It will correctly enforce ... [and] operate legislative and administrative measures, particularly, the right to work, living wage, free education, social security etc.

It will abolish social and economic oppression of one caste by another, as also all social and personal bans and prohibitions imposed by the so called upper castes on lower castes, specially the scheduled castes, in the name of custom, tradition or religion"¹⁴³.

The programme of the CPI expressed its concern for the landless peasants and agricultural labourers. The CPI thinks that "the struggles of the landless peasants and

agricultural labourers for fallow and surplus land, for minimum living wage, for setting up state farms and other rehabilitation schemes for scheduled caste and adivasi landless - all these struggles of the broad masses have a national significance"¹⁴⁴ [emphasis added].

The CPI is determined to fight for minimum wages of the agricultural labourers to raise their living standard from the existing stage of abject poverty. It is also determined to fight for distribution of fallow and surplus land for the landless peasants and to demand the rehabilitation of the scheduled caste and adivasi landless people. The programme encourages the establishment of state farms as a good start for socialist agriculture in the next socialist stage.

Steps for economic and social security, such as freedom from unemployment, guarantee of minimum living wage to every worker, free education to young children constitute the basic duties of the National Democratic Government at the hands of the National Democratic Front. Moreover, the programme thought it most urgent to eradicate the age-old practice of casteism. Casteism involves social difference between so-called upper castes and lower and backward castes and also economic privations which need complete prohibition. The Caste-ridden Indian society, particularly the rural society, puts up a great a hindrance to the unity of the

oppressed people in their fight with their common class enemies for their emancipation. So it is suicidal for the backward communities to let casteism play any role in their life. Religious bigotry, unscientific customs and prejudices of medieval age keep them divided in relation to their common enemy. Particularly the rural areas are the most fertile ground for past prejudices to breed, linger and flourish. The so called secular democratic Congress rule over the last few decades has done pretty little to eradicate these prejudices. The programme of the CPI seeks to fight these evils very vehemently.

The present state of Indian judiciary serves the interests of the ruling class and there is no scope for the attainment of real justice by the weaker sections of the population. Virtually they are denied real justice by the economically powerful sections of the existing society. Fair justice can be within the access of the weaker sections only if there is guarantee that in spite of their economic handicap, their cases will be taken up and fairly dealt with by the judiciary. In this connection, the programme states,

"It will ensure simpler, cheaper and speedier justice, which will be within the reach of the common man. The poorer sections of the population will be provided with free legal aid by the state"¹⁴⁵.

Under the existing rule, justice becomes a luxurious commodity for only the rich people to enjoy. They can exert influence on the judiciary and motivate adjudications in favour of their own interests. The Judiciary becomes the place of mockery of the rich people though it is held sometimes by the bourgeois press that it is fairly independent and a safeguard of the interest of everyone. However, there is little or no scope in the judiciary for weaker sections to expect security against their better-off adversaries. Judicial redress is a precious commodity which again involves a lengthy process. As a result, judicial redress can very scarcely be expected by the common and poor people. The programme declares it essential to provide with free legal aid from the state to the economically weaker people.

These above mentioned concepts of the programme of the CPI help to build up its notions of rural democracy. Democracy in the rural areas is the rural people's longfelt demand. Earlier British Colonial rule and existing Congress rule, i.e., the rule of the bourgeoisie completely disregarded the actual needs of the masses who reside in the countryside. The CPI tries to make this reality well understood by people, and voices the demands of real democracy at the grassroot level to make the masses free from domination of the bourgeoisie and their rural contingents.

However, the National Democratic Front is to be formed to raise these issues like rural democracy and ultimately to replace this existing ruling class by launching a successful National Democratic Revolution. Indeed, the programme of the CPI seeks to project democracy as an objective to be realised in the interest of so far neglected rural, common and weaker sections. The programme again firmly declares its belief that the socio-political and economic change for the benefit of the rural people (at the hands of ND Government) will advance the country towards socialism.

Section 7.2

CPI(M) 's Programme on Rural Democracy

Besides the task of agrarian reform, the establishment of rural democracy is another most important and concomitant task declared by the programme of the CPI(M) in this people's Democratic Revolutionary stage. The CPI(M), while organising and working for people's Democratic Revolution, has also definite plans for rural democracy. Rural democracy being an integral part of People's Democracy has been given much importance in the programme of the CPI(M).

It states,

"The Communist Party of India (Marxist) is opposed to the drive of the ruling classes for centralisation denying autonomy and is also opposed to all disruptionist secessionist movements"¹⁴⁶.

The CPI(M) in its programme accuses the existing ruling classes as they centralise power denying the actual dues of the rural people who constitute the largest percentage of the population. Centralisation tendency is natural for the ruling bourgeoisie.

The landlord class, in this respect, is in favour of diffusion of power so that they can enjoy power in their own area, because they possess immovable property and that does not need national market. So, regarding the centralisation of political power they have natural differences with the bourgeoisie. But their interests converge when they oppose the political consciousness and mass participation in the political process of the country because they fear the entry of conscious people into the arena of politics. Besides, the existing ruling classes reserve the right to overpower all the lower level bodies whenever they would need it in the interest of protecting the vested interests, this autocratic tendency and that of centralisation are, however, the two aspects of the same process. Again, whatever limited power and responsibilities are given to the local bodies in the name of extension of democracy to the grass-root level, the same is sought to be monopolised by the rural contingents of the bourgeois landlord classes. So the autonomy of the local bodies, the programme thinks, is the right approach in this context which can ensure mass participation. In

this way they expect to pursue their own class interests and only then the meaning of autonomy, i.e., the rightful authority over the local bodies by the majority of common and poor people, can be realised.

In the same statement the programme calls for opposition to any sort of disruptionist and secessionist movements. Mere disruption and secession are vague concepts which are not at all ways for redress of the age-long oppression of the common people, namely, the poor peasants and artisans and agricultural labourers in the countryside. The programme denounces the disruptionists and secessionists simply because they blur the real cause of existing malady created by the bourgeois-landlord government. So the programme thinks that an effective rural democracy will not and can not come through any disruptionist or secessionist movements.

While the programme is sincerely upholding the aim of autonomy of all the elected bodies from the grass-root level at the same time it claims to follow also another principle, i.e., "democratic centralism"¹⁴⁷ which apparently may be seen as contradictory. But, for the Marxists the concept of democratic centralism has a wide-ranging meaning¹⁴⁸. In short and in this context, 'centralism' means the successive lower bodies whether in party organisation or in government must follow the direction of the higher bodies, and in no case the particular body can refuse to follow the order of the immediately higher

body. Again, the word 'democratic' signifies that each and every organization howsoever small it may be, should be formed through election so that constituent electors can choose and hope to be elected therein. The programme of the CPI(M) pledges to follow this principle even in the case of the extension of rural democracy.

Measures for rural democracy have been enunciated in the following manner in the programme of the CPI(M) :

"The People's Democratic State, in the field of local administration shall ensure a wide network of local bodies from village upward, directly elected by the people and vested with power and responsibility and provided with adequate finance"¹⁴⁹.

The programme pledges that the party will ensure, after successful establishment of People's Democratic State, that local, i.e., village administration should be administered by the elected bodies of the concerned village people. These democratic bodies will be spread over all the villages of the country, so that all the people living in the countryside can enjoy the right of being governed by themselves. Again all these local bodies will be vested with adequate power and responsibility.

The programme of the CPI(M) declares that,

"The people are sovereign. All organs of state power shall be answerable to the

people. The supreme authority in exercising state power shall be the people's representatives elected on the basis of adult franchise and the principle of proportional representation, and subject to recall"¹⁵⁰.

By this statement the programme seeks to emphasise that absolute 'sovereignty' will be in the hands of the people. 'All organs of state power' from top to bottom will be answerable to the people. The people will exercise their power in the various legislative bodies through their elected representatives on the basis of adult franchise. The programme further states that the People's Democratic Government will ensure the 'Principle of proportional representation' of its front partners in all the legislative bodies on the basis of valid votes secured by the parties participating in the elections.

The scope of 'right to recall' is another important aspect of the Peoples' Democratic Government to make the people really sovereign and powerful, fully responsible and enthusiastic which are a far cry in the existing bourgeois - landlord government. This bourgeois-landlord government never hesitates to take recourse to unfair means in the time-bound election without giving any chance to the people to cast their votes in favour of favoured candidates and also without giving any chance to appraise the activities of these representatives and to terminate their tenure, if

needed, through the exercise of the right to recall.

Responsible membership of the constituent body will lay the foundation of democracy, because, here, the electors enjoy the right to recall whenever there arises any dissatisfaction with the performance of their representatives. Adequate power and responsibility of the village bodies make the granite foundation of rural democracy. The existing bourgeois-landlord government often run the election in the name of democratic power to the people and always seek to uphold and project this system by putting the high sounding adjective, i.e., the largest democracy in the world; and the same is trying to popularise through the indigenous and Western presses. However, the programme of the CPI(M) alleges the hollowness of the democracy preached by the existing bourgeois-landlord government.

The programme further states,

"The People's Democratic state shall strive to infuse in all ... social and political institutions the spirit of democracy. It extends democratic forms of initiative and control over every aspect of national life. A key role in this will be played by the trade unions, peasant and agricultural workers' associations and class and mass organisations of the working people"¹⁵¹. [Emphasis added]

To explain this above statement it may be said that political bodies of the rural areas will be composed of the

agricultural workers and the peasants. Their enthusiastic participation and leadership will usher in a new era of rural democracy because these classes and sections of the people constitute a majority in rural India. These village level bodies are expected also to cease to be the machine of oppression at the hands of the landlords, so called upper castes and the money lenders. Conscious organisations of agricultural labourers, artisans and peasants may therefore revolutionise rural democracy. What at present prevails is that the village panchayats are under the domination of the landlords, money lenders and upper castes because they have formed the rural contingents of the bourgeois-landlord government and they are helped by the judicial and administrative organs for this purpose. These panchayats are again elected sometimes once in a decade or more when they deem it fit not to face any further time-bound election. Thus they ignore the interests of the common people. Their sole motto is to keep the common people and peasants and agricultural labourers away from the panchayats, so that they can grab all the political, economic and social gains.

So the programme not only attaches importance to the active participation of the agricultural labourers but also sets this as a precondition for the elimination of the present bureaucracy. The programme reads that the People's Democratic State,

"... will take steps to make the legislature and executive machinery of the country continuously responsive to the

democratic wishes of the people, and will ensure that the masses and their organisations are drawn into active participation in the administration ... It works for the elimination of bureaucracy and bureaucratic practices in ... the administration"¹⁵²..

Responsible legislative and executive machineries constitute salient features of the concept of rural democracy in the CPI(M) 's programme. In the case of legislative bodies the participation of the agricultural workers and peasants must change the motive of these bodies and these bodies will cease to pursue reactionary aims. But in the case of bureaucracy which has a credit of its own to serve as a stooge the interest of its master from the legacies of the British colonial days and in the decades of Congress rule, i.e., the rule of the bourgeoisie and landlords under which it has thrived must be eliminated. The programme seeks to explain that the existing bureaucracy has been created by the ruling bourgeoisie and landlords, and in a partisan struggle this bureaucracy will take the side of their masters because they are also helped by allowing a share of exploitation over the common people. Besides, the bureaucrat can hope to thrive, achieve their gains and fulfil their personal ambitions. The ruling classes pamper corruption in them because they share the booty in different ways. So the programme suspects the integrity of the so called impartial administration in the present regime. Successful rural democracy can not

thrive with this corrupted bureaucracy remaining entrenched. What is essentially needed is the elimination of them and vigilant organisations of the agricultural labourers, artisans and peasants and their participation in day to day affairs of the village bodies. These alone will minimise the dependence on bureaucracy.

In the field of administering justice, the programme states,

"The appointment of judges will be subject to approval of ... people's organs at different levels"¹⁵³.

So the programme does not believe in the concept of an independent judiciary which is often acclaimed by bourgeois philosophers for its impartial stand. Rather the CPI(M) programme seeks to criticise this and hold that the judiciary at present is a pillar to protect the interests of the ruling bourgeois-landlord classes. Both the laws and the adjudicating process are made to suit the interest of the ruling classes. So these require a thorough change. Common people will be drawn into the process of making laws by ensuring their participation in the legislature at all levels and by allowing them to look after the process of adjudication is a duty and responsibility. So they should be given the authority of approval of the appointment of judges at different levels of judiciary. In the people's

Democratic state the people and their various organisations are not the passive recipients of justice but they have an active role to play in different ways.

There are also other measures which are vital for the effective implementation of rural democracy. Some of these mentioned in the programme are ; the first is the legal rights,

"Free legal aid ... for the people in order to make legal redress easily available to all citizens.

Right of persons to sue any official before a court of law shall be ensured"¹⁵⁴.

The judicial system run by the bourgeois landlord government is in no way beneficial to the common people, mostly to the rural people, those who are economically weaker. The programme entails the People's Democratic Government to provide full legal aid to the economically weaker people so that they can get judicial redress, and that must be less time-consuming than the existing lengthy adjudicating process. The programme expresses doubt not only about the impartiality of the existing judicial system as such, but also about its impartial stand in the case of the right of the economically weaker people. Law is said to be a commodity which can be bought by the rich and the weaker sections go to the wall in judicial battles. Again laws are made to suit the vital interests of the ruling classes in a class divided society. In India, according

to the programme, it is no exception. So the entire legal system is to be overhauled in order to turn it in favour of a economically weaker people.

Then about economic rights the programme holds;

"Right to work as fundamental right to every citizen shall be guaranteed; equal right for all citizens and equal pay for equal work irrespective of religion, caste, sex, race and nationality shall be ensured".

"Wide disparities in salaries and incomes will be abolished"¹⁵⁵.

Bourgeois-landlord government can do nothing, the programme of the CPI(M) seeks to assert, in regard to the 'right to work' of every citizen. 'Right to work' is fundamentally a part of the 'right to live'. Guarantee of the 'right to work' is absolutely against the interests of the bourgeois-landlord government, because the existing reservoir of unemployed persons is the chief source of cheap labour in the urban industries and various kinds of bonded labour and landless peasants in the countryside. Moreover, the programme pledges that the people's Democratic Government which will replace the existing bourgeois landlord government, shall ensure equal pay for equal work irrespective of sex, race, caste, religion, etc. Besides, it pledges to abolish the wide disparities of income and salaries which are sanctified by the existing bourgeois-landlord government. The amassing of wealth through the means of exploitation has also been guaranteed in the constitution of the existing ruling classes.

The programme of the CPI(M) stated that in the state of people's democratic stage the party will fight to "Ensure adequate wages and living conditions of agricultural labourers"¹⁵⁶ [Emphasis added]. Struggle for adequate wage is urgently required to improve their living conditions to get rid of old prejudices and ideas of subservience and superstition.

In its declared people's democratic stage it will "Encourage cooperatives of peasants and artisans on a voluntary basis for farming and for agricultural services of other purposes"¹⁵⁷. Cooperative farming will act as a good start in this stage for socialist agriculture in the socialist stage.

About the civil, social and cultural rights, the programme states :

"Full civil rights shall be guaranteed ..."¹⁵⁸
 "Abolition of social oppression of one caste by another and untouchability to be punished by law"¹⁵⁹.

"Removal of social inequalities and disabilities from which women suffer ..."¹⁶⁰

"The state shall take over education ... free and compulsory education up to secondary stage shall be guaranteed"¹⁶¹.

"The People's Democratic State and Government will undertake the important task of ... extending the new progressive people's culture which is anti-feudal, anti-imperialist and democratic in character ... [and also] help the people to get rid of caste and communal hatred and prejudices and ideas of subservience and superstitions"¹⁶².

Untouchability, proceeding from a relation of hatred of the upper castes towards the lower castes, is an age-long practice in the Indian society and it is more stringent in the rural society because of the feudal and semi-feudal economy. To the upper castes, due to their advantageous position in the stratified rural society, all the facilities in the existing bourgeois-landlord rule are easily accessible. Mainly, the economic and cultural supremacy is enjoyed by the upper castes. The programme of the CPI(M) is very critical of the existing caste system. Sometimes, this caste system is an obstacle to the unity of all the economically poor people on the basis of class line. The CPI(M) therefore, wants a complete ban on the practice of untouchability. The existing bourgeois landlord government has provided some articles in the constitution prohibiting the practice of untouchability but in practice, it pampers this system and gives it a base of life. These ruling classes help the landlords in the rural areas to maintain the ancestral grandeur and put the lower castes in perpetual negligence in the name of religious prescription due to their so called low birth. However, the bourgeoisie is reluctant to openly admit of this fact. Therefore, the programme concludes that only the people's Democratic Government can sincerely and completely banish the social disease of untouchability.

Removal of social inequalities which afflict the women-folk, for instance through the dowary system, is also the

motto of the People's Democratic Government. These inequalities can never be removed by the existing rulers.

Free and compulsory education to the young children and cultural upliftment are also important steps for the People's Democratic Govt. to take. These steps have been neglected wilfully by the bourgeois-landlord government.

About the political rights, the programme indicates :

"Secular character of the state shall be guaranteed ..."¹⁶³

"Universal, equal and direct suffrage for all citizens who have attained the age of 18 to be implemented in all elections ... [including those too] local self-government bodies"¹⁶⁴.

The programme upholds the view that the People's Democratic Government will secularise the state and its activities in view of the fact that communalism, is a basic malady of the Indian sub-continent due to the factors of religious bigotry and dogmatism of rival religious followers. Although secularism has been preached by the existing government, still it sometimes woos one sect against another for its narrow class interest. Complete segregation of religion from politics and complete curb on religious fundamentalism are essential aspects of the ideal of secularism. The People's Democratic Government pledges to maintain the secular character of the state in this way.

The programme of the CPI(M) considers it necessary to uphold the safeguards of the democratisation of national life and the life of the rural people in particular. It insists on the successful launching of the anti-feudal, anti-imperialist People's Democratic Revolution which, first and foremost, will carry out radical agrarian reforms in the interests of the whole of peasantry and agricultural labourers who constitute the majority in the countryside and thus sweep away feudalism and feudalistic (mediaval or pre-capitalistic) backwardness governing rural life now.

"The task of making such sweeping reforms in the social system, however, as inextricably bound up with the completion of the agrarian revolution which in fact is the axis of the democratic revolution"¹⁶⁵.

Rural democracy, backed by agrarian reforms and vice versa, agrarian reforms under rural democracy, constituted a work which is complementary in nature. The CPI(M)'s party programme calls for the completion of this work within the periphery of People's Democratic Revolution.

From the foregoing discussion of the programmatic contents of both the communist parties of India, namely, the CPI and the CPI(M), regarding i) agrarian reforms' and ii) 'rural democracy' which constitute the main area of the present study, we find some common or similar issues on the one hand, and some notable differences on specific issues on the other. To be more explicit, their differences lie not in basically organisational but in strategical and

and tactical issues; although their ultimate aim is the same,¹⁶⁶ i.e., socialism and communism. Consequently there arises the necessity to study their divergences particularly on the questions of 'agrarian reforms' and 'rural democracy'.

On the strategical point of view, they have their differences on the analysis of the character of the existing Indian state, particularly on the place and share of landlords in the state power. Secondly, although both of them have accepted two stages of revolution, but the differences lie in the content of the immediate 'democratic revolution'. Whereas the CPI urges mainly, for a non-capitalist democratic path¹⁶⁷, the CPI(M) urges an out and out people's democracy for the completion of agrarian revolution.¹⁶⁸ Again they differ on the question of class leadership in their respective democratic revolutions although the combination of class forces necessary for this revolution, is basically the same. CPI(M) does not consider that feudal and semifeudal landlordism have been substantially curbed from the vast countryside during the Congress rule. It utters grave concern that the rural life is still under the dictates of the semi-feudal and landlord supremacy. Bonded labourer, subletting, share cropping, leaseing are some of the signs of semi-feudal land relations in the vast agricultural sector. Though it does not overlook the continuous penetrating of capitalist market economy and

capitalistic landlordism which take inroad into the agrarian sector still it thinks the dominant position of the rural life is dictated by the landlords. Therefore, it pledges for end of existing semi-feudal landlordism. The programme of the CPI(M) is more radical in the sense it directs its democratic revolution to revolutionarise the agrarian sector. Where as the CPI programme thinks agrarian sector is under the heavy pressure of capitalistic penetration and it has successful during the Congress rule, it cites the legislation like - Abolition of Zamindari Act, Land Ceiling Act and so on. Therefore, its main aim is not to concentrate all the energies for agrarian reform but to steer this democratic revolution on the non-capitalist path of economic development. But it does not minimise the task of agrarian reform in this stage. The programme of the CPI considers that landlords are not sharing the power with the national bourgeoisie but they have links with the bourgeoisie. The programme assesses the weakness of the landlords. Therefore it is necessary to wipe out the residual forces of semi-feudal landlords rule from the countryside during the 'national democratic revolution' and thereby solve the problem of poor peasants and agricultural labourers & food problem in this stage by forging alliance with and combined leadership of working class, the whole section of the peasantry, national bourgeoisie & the middle class urban intelligentsia.

On the issues of 'agrarian reforms' and 'rural democracy' in the programmes of the C.P.I and CPI(M) there are important similarities and differences too.

Similarities

Marked similarities are found in their respective programmes in the field of 'agrarian reforms'. These are demands like - abolition of landlordism, distribution of surplus land among the poor peasantry, protection of the interest of the poor peasantry, distribution of wasteland, cancellation of debts of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers owe to the landlords and moneylenders, guarantee of increase of wages to a desired level (because they think the existing wage is not enough), and decent living conditions for the agricultural labourers, fixing of price of agricultural produce, setting up of agricultural cooperatives, improvement of irrigation facilities; and so on. The programmes of CPI and CPI(M) hopefully assert that if all these are realised then the condition of the poor people living in the vast Indian countryside will have a major stride in their forward march for changing the existing mode of production in agricultural and end semi-feudal system and concentration of land.

The similarities in the two programmes regarding the extension of rural democracy include the demands such as, increasing the power of local bodies by decentralisation, ending of existing bureaucratic supremacy, implementation of rights like freedom from unemployment, decent living wage to all sections of workers, free education, social security,

ending of inequalities and oppression of people in the name of caste, sex, religion, etc., equal status for women, complete prohibition of untouchabilities, secular character of local administration, easy access of poor people to judicial redress, ensuring participation of common and poor people in the affairs of the local bodies, introduction of proportional representation and the right to recall of the elected representatives, etc. Both the parties call for unity of all the progressive forces interested in rapid completion of the democratic revolution and preparation of the ground for transition to socialism¹⁶⁹.

Dissimilarities

While studying the programmes of the CPI and the CPI(M) the main points of difference in agrarian question and rural democracy may be summarised here. The CPI(M) programme has emphasised the point that its declared people's democratic stage of revolution was nothing but an agrarian revolution against the bourgeois-landlord class rule whereas the CPI programme had emphasised on non-capitalist path in its declared national democratic revolution. The CPI programme also highlighted the issue of elimination of the residual features of the semi-feudal landlordism but it did not consider it as a dominant force in rural sector. It observed that capitalist penetration into rural economy sponsored by the national bourgeoisie had done havoc to change the

mode of production. Therefore, the programme of the CPI sought to assemble and mobilise all rural classes including the rural bourgeoisie to take part in its declared ensuing national democratic revolution. Naturally, it did not consider any radical peasant revolution to be essential as the CPI(M) vigorously did.

Another important point to note that the CPI(M) programme is categorical of its stand about the leadership of this peasant revolution resting with the working class who had heavily to depend on the agricultural labourers landless and poor peasants in the countryside. The CPI does not deny the role and importance of the other rural class forces which need to be mobilised against the remnants of those of feudalism and semi-feudalism. This mobilisation should include the national bourgeoisie and all patriotic people against the big and monopoly capitalists and their foreign collaborators. Therefore, in the mobilisation of rural forces the CPI and the CPI(M) moved in different directions. The CPI(M) wanted it for its agrarian revolution in the people's democratic stage, and the CPI wanted it for non-capitalist path of the Indian economy in the national democratic stage.

Differences on the question of 'rural democracy' lies in the fact that for the CPI, it is a part of National Democracy, and for the CPI(M), it is a part of people's Democracy. To the CPI, rural democracy is an instrument for changing the existing functioning of the rural bodies into an actual democratic orientation, to the CPI(M), it is an instrument for agrarian revolution and an actual

democratic orientation of the local bodies, therefore, there is a difference of opinion on the leadership question in the rural democratic front.

Another important case of dissimilarity lies in the fact that the CPI(M) programme rejects very strongly the possibility of any alliance with the Congress Party¹⁷⁰ where the CPI is interested to bring the progressive democratic section of the Congress party in its declared National democratic state¹⁷¹. Although both these parties share the view that the existing rate of wages for the agricultural labourers are much below expectation and these labourers are leading subhuman life under the existing class rule, still these two parties differ on the point of demand for wages for the agricultural labourers. The CPI demands minimum wages to live and the CPI(M) demands adequate wages to live, in their declared respective democratic revolution.

However, all these discussions centre round the programmatic positions of the CPI and CPI(M). Being communist parties as they claim to be, each of them denounces the other as having deviated from scientific Marxist principles. It is a paradox that their understandings of the Indian condition differ widely. Hence the necessity of an objective study of their actual practice.

Notes and References

1. Lenin, V.I. "Our Programme", Collected Works, Vol.4. Progress Publishers, Moscow : 1965, p.211, "To The Rural Poor", Collected Works, Vol.6. Progress Publishers, Moscow:1965, p.396; "Eighth Congress of the RCP(B), March 18-23, 1919. Speech Closing the Debate on the Party Programme, March 19" Collected Works, Vol.29, Progress Publishers, Moscow:1965, p.190-191.

Lenin made an elaborate discussion of the programme of the Communist Party on the occasion of the adoption of the programme for RSDLP in its Second Congress convened in secrecy in August 1903 first in Brussels and then in London, and criticism against Karl Kautsky, and also at the time of adoption of the programme for the RCP(B) in 1919.

Mao Tse-tung, Selected Works, Vol.III. "The Policy of the Chinese Communist Party" section IV under sub heading "Our General Programme" Pergamon Press, Oxford/New York:1967, p.229.

Mao Tse-tung, made an analysis of the programme of the Communist party of China in its Seventh Congress in May 14, 1945.

2. Programme of the Communist Party of India, Amended by the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of India. Patna:1968. Section VI under subheading "Bourgeoisie And The State", p.31.

This programme was first adopted in 1964, just after division of the party, in Bombay in its Seventh Congress as is said.

3. Communist Party of India, Party Education Series, Grade I Course. New Delhi:1972. p.38, N.Rajsekhar Reddi, Bharater Communist Partier Karmasuchi Ki ? [a Bengali pamphlet approved by the Central Committee of the CPI], Manisha, Calcutta:1974. p.17.

4. Communist Party of India (Marxist), Programme, Adopted at the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of India at Calcutta, October 31 to November 7, 1964. With the amendment by the 9th Congress in Madurai June 27 to July 2, 1972. [With another document Statement of Policy, Adopted at the All India Conference of the Communist Party of India 1951. Calcutta:November 1971], para 56, p.23.

This programme was circulated to all the party units, as early as April 1964, amended and endorsed by the Tenali Convention in June 1964, and finally adopted at the Party Congress held between October 31 and November 7, 1964. For this note see M. Basavapunnaiah, On the Programme of the CPI(M) [and] E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Party Line on Current Tactics, Communist Party of India (Marxist), New Delhi: October 1985, Second Impression March 1986, p.13.

At that time (in 1964) in the programme the "Communist Party of India" was written, though soon after it, the Central Committee changed the name of the party to 'Communist Party of India (Marxist)' and later necessary change was made. This has been indicated in the 'Publishers' Note' of this programme.

5. Ranadive, B.T. "Character of the State", People's Democracy, March 27, 1966.
6. Programme of the CPI, op.cit., introductory section under subheading "Programme of the Communist Party of India". p.9.
7. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 3, p.2.
8. Mao Tse-tung, 'On the People's Democratic Dictatorship'. Selected Works. National Book Agency (P) Ltd, Calcutta, 1967, p.103.
9. _____, 'On New Democracy' Selected Works, op.cit., p.65.
10. Programme of the CPI, op.cit., p.48.
11. Ibid., p.49.
12. Marx, K. and Engels, F. Manifesto of the Communist Party, Progress, Moscow, 1977, pp.96-97.
13. Lenin, V.I. 'Two Tactics of Social Democracy in Democratic Revolution' see Marx, Engels and Lenin On Historical Materialism. Progress, Mosco, 1984, p.404.
14. Programme of the CPI, section VIII under subheading "National Democratic Revolution And The Path Forward". p.41.
15. Programme of the CPI(M), section VII under subheading "Programme of People's Democracy", p.32.
16. Programme of the CPI, op.cit., section VIII under subheading "National Democratic Revolution And the Path Forward", p.42.

17. Ibid., p.41.
18. Communist Party of India, Party Education Series, Grade I Course. op.cit., p.23.
19. CPI Prog. op.cit., p.42.
20. Ibid., 43.
21. Idem.
22. Idem.
23. Reddi, N.Rajsekhar, op.cit., p.27.
24. CPI Prog. op.cit., p.44.
25. Programme of the CPI, op.cit., section VIII under subheading "National Democratic Revolution And the Path Forward", pp.44-45.
26. Prog. of the CPI, op.cit., p.45.
27. Programme of the CPI, op.cit. p.45.
28. Programme of the CPI, op.cit., p.42.
29. Ibid., p.14.
30. Ibid., p.16.
31. Ibid., p.17.
32. Idem.
33. Ibid., p.18.
34. Ibid., p.29.
35. Ibid., pp.47-48.
36. Communist Party of India, Party Education Series, op.cit., p.49.
37. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 87, p.34.
38. Ranadive, B.T., "On Right-Revisionism", Selected Writings, Vol.II, National Book Centre, New Delhi:1985, p.43.
39. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 10, p.4, (para 10).
40. Ibid., p.42. (para 96).
41. Ranadive, op.cit., p.43.
42. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 87, p.34.
43. Ibid., para 97, p.42.
44. Ibid., para 97, p.43.
45. Ibid., para 56, p.23.

46. Ibid., para 105, p.45.
47. Ibid., para 106, p.46.
48. Ibid., para 101, p.44.
49. Ibid., para 102, p.44.
50. Ibid., para 103, p.44-45.
51. Ibid., para 104, p.45.
52. Ibid., para 105, p.46.
53. Ibid., para 110, p.48.
54. Ranadive, op.cit., p.49.
55. Ibid., p.45.
56. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 105.
57. Ibid., para 12, p.4.
58. Ibid., para 15, p.6.
59. Programme of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) / and / Statement of Policy. p.63. (This Statement of Policy was first adopted in 1951 when the party was united. Much later in its Seventh and Eighth Congresses the CPI(M) readopted it with necessary correction. See Note of the Statement of Policy).
60. Ranadive, op.cit., p.47.
61. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 106. p.46.
62. Ranadive, op.cit., p.47.
63. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 106, p.46.
64. Ibid., para 106, p.46.
65. Ibid., para 106., p.46.
66. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 96, p.42.
67. Ibid., para 86, p.33.
68. Ibid., para 12, p.4.
69. Ibid., para 98, p.43.
70. Ibid., para 86, p.33.
71. Ibid., para 87, p.34.
72. Ibid., para 100, p.44.
73. Programme of the CPI, op.cit., section VIII under subheading "National Democratic Revolution And The Path Forward", p.45.
74. Ibid., section X under subheading "For Peaceful Path And Its Possibilities", p.61.

75. Ibid., pp.61-62.
76. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 113, p.49.
77. Ibid., para 112, pp.48-49.
78. Ibid., para 113, p.49.
79. Programme of the CPI, op.cit., section V under subheading "Agrarian Question", pp.21-22. All accounts are placed here are probably based on the account of 1968, at the time of its adoption.
80. Ibid., p.22.
81. Ibid., p.22.
82. Ibid., pp.22-23.
83. Ibid., pp.27-29.
84. In this connection one could refer to the 'Green Revolution' during the Congress rule in 1960's.
85. Party Education Series, Grade I Course, op.cit., p.26.
86. Programme of the CPI, op.cit., section II under subheading "Towards Independent Development". p.11.
87. Ibid., p.11.
88. Ibid., section III under subheading "Contradiction Of The Capitalist Path", p.15.
89. Ibid., p.14.
90. Ibid., section II under subheading "Towards Independent Development", p.10.
91. Ibid., section III under subheading "Contradiction Of The Capitalist Path", p.18.
92. Ibid., section V under subheading "Agrarian Question", p.28.
93. Party Education Series, Grade I Course, op.cit., p.28.
94. Programme of the CPI, op.cit., section VI under subheading "Bourgeoisie And The State", p.31.
95. Party Education Series, Grade I Course, op.cit., pp.28-29.
96. Programme of the CPI, op.cit., section V under subheading "Agrarian Question", p.23.
97. Ibid., p.30.
98. The programme of the CPI was adopted after amendments in 1968 now requires to be updated due to the fact that in July 19, 1969 fourteen large banks

were nationalised and in the next phase in April 15, 1980 another six banks were nationalised by the ruling Congress at the Centre.

99. Programme of the CPI, op.cit., section V under subheading "Agrarian Question", pp.30-31.
100. Ibid., p.31.
101. Ibid., section VII under subheading "National Democratic Revolution And The Path Forward", p.49.
102. Ibid., p.43.
103. Ibid., pp.43-44.
104. Ibid., section IX under subheading "Programme of The National Democratic Government," pp.56-58.
105. Ibid., section XI, p.64.
106. Prog. of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 99, p.43.
107. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 8, p.3.
108. Ibid., para 45, p.17.
109. Princely states were statutorily abolished by an act of Parliament during the Congress rule headed by J.Nehru on the assurance of payment of heavy compensation and annual honorarium to the princes. This honorarium and the Privy Purse were abolished by the Congress headed by Smt. Indira Gandhi in 1969.
110. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 35, pp.13-14.
111. Ibid., para 36, p.14.
112. Ibid., para 37, p.14.
113. Ibid., para 38, p.15.
114. Ibid., para 39, p.15.
115. Ibid., para 40, p.15.
116. Ibid., para 40, p.15.
117. Ibid., para 40, p.16.
118. Ibid., para 40, p.16.
119. Ibid., para 42, p.17.
120. Ibid., para 43, p.17.
121. Ibid., para 44, p.17.
122. Ibid., para 34, p.13.
123. Idem.
124. Ibid., section III under subheading "Balance-sheet of Bourgeois Agrarian Policies," para 46, p.18.

125. Ibid., para 77, p.30.
126. Ibid., para 46, p.18.
127. Ibid., para 97, pp.42-43.
128. Ibid., para 85, p.33.
129. Ibid., para 83, p.32.
130. Ibid., para 87, p.33.
131. Ibid., para 89, pp.38-39.
132. Vide paragraphs 31 and 32 of the Statement of Policy appended to the Programme of the CPI(M), Ibid., p.69.
- 133.
- Programme of the CPI,
op.cit., section VI under subheading "Bourgeoisie
And The State", p.36.
134. Idem.
135. Idem.
136. Idem.
137. Ibid., p.37.
138. Ibid., p.36.
139. Ibid., section VIII under subheading "National Democratic Revolution And The Path Forward", p.49.
140. Ibid., section IX under subheading "Programme Of The National Democratic Government", p.51.
141. Programme of the CPI, op.cit., section IX "Programme Of The National Democratic Government", p.52.
142. Ibid., p.52.
143. Ibid., p.51.
144. Ibid., p.45.
145. Ibid., p.52. Legal aid as a measure to help the weaker section in getting judicial redress has been incorporated in 1984-85 in a very limited way. The Supreme Court of India has taken initiatives in this regard.
146. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 88, p.34.

147. Ibid., para 88(1), p.35.
148. In Marxist literature it bears wide meaning. "Democratic Centralism implies combining democratisation (i.e. full power of the working people, their independent activity and initiative, elected ruling bodies and their accountability to the masses) with centralism, i.e. leadership from a single centre, subordination of the minority to the majority and strict discipline"
See - Dictionary of Scientific Communism, Progress, Moscow, 1984, pp.62-63.
149. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 88(8), p.36.
150. Ibid., para 88(2), p.35.
151. Ibid., para 88(9), p.36.
152. Ibid., para 88(9), pp.36-37.
153. Ibid., para 88(10), p.37.
154. Idem.
155. Ibid., para 88(13), p.37.
156. Ibid., para 89(5), p.39.
157. Idem.
158. Ibid., para 88(12), p.37.
159. Ibid., para 88(15), p.37.
160. Ibid., para 88(16), p.37.
161. Ibid., para 88(18), p.38.
162. Ibid., para 88(20), p.38.
163. Ibid., para 88(17), p.38.
164. Ibid., para 88(2), p.35. However the lowering of voting age to 18 from 21 was the continuous demand of the Communist Parties. Now, very recently the Congress Party which is in the power has lowered the voting age to 18 in 1988-89. So this statement requires to be updated.
165. Ibid., para 97, p.42.
166. 'Their ultimate goal being the same' means the CPI and the CPI(M) pledge for socialism as their goal which is embodied in their respective party programmes. Specific mention may be made in this connection that CPI declares its sole aim is to transform "... the existing social-political order and lay the foundations for building of socialism". Programme of the CPI, op.cit., section IX under subheading "Programme

Of The National Democratic Government", pp.49-50]. Similarly, the CPI(M) declares that "The Communist Party of India [Marxist] firmly adheres to its main aim of building socialism and communism" [Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 87, p.34].

167. Programme of the CPI, op.cit., section VIII under subheading 'National Democratic Revolution And the Path Forward', pp.42-43.
168. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 97, p.42.
169. op.cit., para 36, p.33 and Programme of the CPI, op.cit., p.45.
170. Programme of the CPI(M), op.cit., para 108, p.47.
171. Programme of the CPI., op.cit., p.45.

Chapter IV

Contents

Views of the CPI and the CPI(M) on Agrarian Reforms and Rural Democracy.

Section 1(i) CPI's Views on Agrarian Reforms,

" 1(ii) CPI's Views on Rural Democracy.

Section 2(i) CPI(M)'s Views on Agrarian Reforms,

" 2(ii) CPI(M)'s Views on Rural Democracy.

The foregoing chapter has highlighted the programmatic positions of the CPI and the CPI(M) over the issues of agrarian reforms and rural democracy in the democratic stage of revolution in India.

It is noted that the CPI wants to achieve these tasks through its 'national democratic revolution' by building "a national democratic front, bringing together ... the working class, the entire peasantry the intelligentsia and the non-monopolist bourgeoisie. The worker-peasant alliance will be the basis and prior of the front"¹. "The leadership of this alliance belongs to firm anti-imperialist, anti feudal, anti-monopoly forces"². The main task of this national democratic revolution is to direct the national economy along the non-capitalist path of development³ and other important tasks are agrarian reforms for the vast sections of the peasantry and democracy to the rural people.

For the CPI(M), it is the stage of 'people's democratic revolution' which is nothing but an 'agrarian revolutionary stage'⁴. The CPI(M) strives to fulfil its 'people's democratic revolution' by making alliance of the working class, the agricultural labourers, the poor, middle and rich peasants, the urban and other middle classes and the national bourgeoisie led by the 'working class'⁵ based on the 'unshakable worker-peasant alliance'. The programme of the CPI(M) takes the 'democratic agrarian stage' and the

people's democracy to coincide⁶.

Since 1964, their debates are directed to defend their individual parties strategic and tactical policies. Now the discussion is centered round the views of the CPI and the CPI(M) on the subject of agrarian reforms and rural democracy. The respective views of the CPI and the CPI(M) discussed below are nothing but the ideas emanating from the practice of the programmatic pledges by the respective political parties since 1964 to the late 1980's.

Section 1(i) CPI's Views on Agrarian Reforms

The views expressed by the party and its leaders in different times since 1964 on agrarian reforms have been outlined here.

Indradeep Sinha, one of the CPI leaders, stated that the CPI continues to regard the present stage of the Indian revolution as essentially democratic - and not socialist - whose main task is the liquidation of imperialist, feudal and monopoly exploitation and whose strategic class alliance is a united front of the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie prepared to join the struggle against imperialism⁷. [Emphasis added]

For him the whole agrarian economy is in the grip of a deep structural crisis, under the juggernaut of the crisis-ridden capitalist path in India pursued by the ruling bourgeoisie⁸.

The Political Resolution of the Eighth Congress of the CPI assessed the situation and stated that from the very beginning the capitalist path of development pursued by the Congress leadership contained an inherent contradiction which was bound to thwart the rapid development of our backward economy to an advanced stage. The need for rapid industrialization and increase in production and food and raw materials demanded the establishment of a democratically-run state sector in commanding position in the economy, a firm curb on monopoly development and eradication of the remnants of feudal interests in agriculture.

It has further stated that, in order to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie, whose representative it is, the Congress government failed to take these steps. It allowed the monopolies to grow to unprecedented heights, and encouraged foreign capital to enter the country in ever growing proportions. It failed to carry out land reform, to give liberal assistance to agriculture to grow food and raw materials in a planned manner and to protect agriculture from the inroads of foreign imports and monopoly trading finance⁹.

For the CPI, the capitalist path pursued by the ruling Congress party is the root cause of allround national crisis. "The capitalist path has failed to solve the problem of economic independence of India. The economy of independent India is not an independent economy. The development has been a slow and halting process, extremely painful for the masses and resulting in a miserably low rate of growth. The obstacles that stand in the way of India's achieving full economic independence can not be swept aside precisely because of the capitalist path pursued by the national bourgeoisie"¹⁰.

It assessed the agricultural policy of the Congress rule since independence. The Congress rule has substantially curbed feudal vested interests through various legislative measures. This has been done with a conscious effort to develop and foster a class of rich peasants and capitalist landlords who could become the backbone of the new capitalist agrarian setup and who with state aid could expand production, adopt modern techniques, develop money crops as raw materials for industries, build and sustain cooperative credit institutions, etc.¹¹

Indradeep Sinha has observed that despite certain measures of industrial development during the post-independence period and despite the growth in the share of industry, construction, mining and productive infrastructure in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 18.8

per cent in 1950-51 to 29.9 per cent in 1978-79, nearly three-fourths of Indian population has continued to remain dependent on agriculture. He noted the recommendations in the Draft Sixth Five Year Plan (1978-83) prepared by the Planning Commission, Government of India : "It is a historically unique fact that over the last six decennial census, inspite of impressive development of the large scale manufacturing and infra-structure sectors, the share of agriculture in the workforce has not diminished at all. It was 73 per cent in 1921, 73 per cent again in 1961 and 73.8 per cent in 1971"¹².

Behind this apparent stagnation in the composition of the work force lies the deep-rooted structural crisis of the Indian economy. For, although the national income has grown at the compound annual rate of 3.5 per cent during 1950-51 to 1978-79, as against a mere 1.2 per cent during 1900-01 to 1945-46 for undivided colonial India, the pace of industrial development has been too slow and too slow lopsided to relieve the pressure of agrarian overpopulation which was an evil legacy of the British colonial rule. Since modern industries have been able to absorb only 10 to 11 per cent of the annual addition to the work force and the rest had to fall back on agriculture and the unorganised sector, the work force dependent on agriculture has actually increased from 101.92 millions in 1951 to

167.33 millions in 1971, or from 72.8 per cent to 73.8 per cent or by approximately 65 millions¹³.

For him the peasantry does not remain a homogeneous class under capitalism. He quoted Lenin, "The power of money not only crushed the peasantry but split it up. An enormous number of peasants were steadily ruined and turned into proletarians; from the minority arose a small group of grasping Kulaks and enterprising muzhiks, who laid hands upon the peasant farms and peasant lands, and who formed the kernel of the rising rural bourgeoisie. The forty years since the reform have been marked [describing the conditions of Russia nearly forty years after the Reforms of 1861] by this constant process of 'depeasantising' the peasants, a process of slow and painful 'extinction'"¹⁴.

Indradeep Sinha stated, in India capitalism was super-imposed on a feudal-colonial base by the foreign imperialist rulers. Moreover, there was a huge disproportion between the destruction of the old and the construction of the new. Consequently, the dominant features of 'depeasantisation' under the colonial rule was pauperization of the lower layers of the peasantry. The policies of the capitalist path pursued by the national bourgeoisie in the post-independence period, have compounded the evils of 'depeasantisation' manifold¹⁵.

In justification of his above statement, he cited information from various sources. Thus he stated, that under the British rule, agricultural labourers constituted 17.4 per cent of the work force in 1921 and 19.7 per cent in 1951. During the first two decades of independence (1951-71), the proportion of agricultural labourers increased from 19.7 to 26.3 per cent while that of cultivating peasants declined from 50 to 43.4 per cent. In other words, one-seventh of the peasants during these two decades lost their land, and were pushed down into the ranks of landless agricultural labourers¹⁶. Reports of the two Rural Labour Enquiries have shown that while the number of agricultural labourers increased from 35.3 millions in 1964-65 to 54.6 millions in 1974-75, an increase by 54.7 per cent. Thus employment as well as real earnings declined during the same period¹⁷.

He stated, the degree of pauperization of the lower layers of the Indian peasantry can be judged from the figures of persons officially admitted as living 'below the poverty line'. The 'All India poverty line' was assumed to lie below the per-capita monthly consumption expenditure of Rs. 65 in 1977-78 prices, corresponding to a minimum daily calorie intake of 2400 in the rural areas. As many as 50.82 per cent of the total population or nearly 350 millions were found to fall below 'the poverty line' thus defined¹⁸.

He further stated, this appalling poverty of nearly half the rural population is partly a legacy of nearly centuries' long rule of British imperialism. But, it is also the inevitable result of the policies of the capitalist path pursued by the national bourgeoisie in the post independence period. During the three decades of bourgeois rule, this poverty has not only not diminished but has actually increased.

The national bourgeoisie which headed the freedom movement, despite certain radical declarations under pressure of the rising peasant movement, have never really committed itself to any genuinely radical agrarian programme of abolition of all forms of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation and distribution of land among the tillers of the soil. Hence, in the post independence period, it pursued the narrow, selfish and conservative class policy of curbing some of the worst forms of feudal exploitation and, then, gradually transforming feudal landlords into capitalist landlords and, simultaneously, developing the economy of rich peasants so as to increase agricultural production and create a stable class base for its rule in the rural areas¹⁹.

It was in pursuance of this policy that the 'princely states' were 'integrated' into the Indian Union and Statutory landlordism was 'abolished', of course, with the payment of fat compensation. Consequently, 20 million protected

tenants acquired ownership right over 54 million acre of land, again after payment of 'purchase price', which only the well-to-do peasants could do. But the condition of the unprotected tenants and sharecroppers worsened; because, simultaneously, feudal and semi-feudal landlords were granted legal right to 'resume' land for 'self-cultivation' by evicting tenants with the connivance or even active help of the police and the magistracy. Various types of capitalist measures were also adopted for 'modernizing' farming by landlords and well-to-do peasants²⁰.

This bourgeois policy of reforming and modernizing agriculture along the capitalist path proved extremely costly to the nation and extremely painful to the masses of the toiling peasantry and the landless labourers. Growth in agricultural production is a very slow and halting process. Till recently India had to spend more than Rs. 100 billions in valuable foreign exchange on the import of foodgrains under the humiliating conditions from the imperialist forces. Growing poverty of the masses hampered expansion of the home market and even the planning commission had to admit ruefully 'that the further expansion of industry is limited by the narrowness of the market'²¹. This situation was seized by imperialist financial agencies like the World Bank (IBRD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to presurize India to gradually shift towards a policy of 'export-led growth', thereby tying Indian economy still

more firmly to the international capitalist chain²².

A logical corollary of this reactionary policy has been the calculated sabotage of all further measures of land reforms - particularly those relating to the imposition of statutory ceilings on the holdings of the big landlords and distribution of the 'surplus' land thus made available among the landless and 'land-poor peasants'²³.

Indradeep Sinha quoted Gunnar Myrdal that "neither the political will nor the administrative resources for a radical or for that matter, any fairly effective land reforms were present"²⁴ in India so far.

For Sinha, surplus land under the amended ceiling laws was estimated at 215 lakh acres and out of even this sparingly calculated surplus of 215 lakh acres barely 17 lakh acres of land, or less than 8 per cent of the potential surplus, has been distributed so far.

Consequently, the ownership of land as well as of other rural assets remains highly skewed. Indradeep Sinha opined that despite large scale benami transfers with a view to evade 'ceilings' data provided by the 26th Round of National Sample Survey (NSS) (1970-71), present a picture of gross inequality in the distribution of operational holdings²⁵.

Table 1

Distribution of Operational Holdings in India in 1970-71

Types of peasantry	Amount of operational holdings per household (in Acre)	% of the house-hold	% of total amount of operational holdings cultivated by this stratum
Agricultural Labourers	Nil	27.41	Nil
Agricultural Labourers (having a small piece of land)	Less than 1 acre	14.93	1.69
Poor-peasants	1 to 2.5 acres	18.00	7.60
Small-peasants	2.5 to 5 acres	16.40	14.90
Middle peasants	5 to 10 acres	12.94	22.61
Rich peasants	10 to 25 acres	8.10	30.40
Landlords	More than 25 acres	2.24	22.83
		100.02	100.03

While 27.41 per cent of the households operate no land, another 14.93 per cent operate less than one acre each, and together they operate as little as 1.69 per cent of the cultivated land. These 42.34 per cent of the rural households, undoubtedly, constitute the class of agricultural labourers. Thus, landless labourers and poor peasants,

though constituting more than 60 per cent of the households, operate less than 10 per cent of the land. But, at the other end, landlords and rich peasants, though constituting little more than 10 per cent of the households, together operate more than 53 per cent of the land.

Similarly the figures supplied by the All India Rural Debt and Investment Survey conducted by the Rural Bank of India in 1961 and 1971 show that while the share of the lowest 10 per cent in the rural assets remained stationary at 0.1 per cent and of the top 10 per cent also remained virtually stationary at 51.4 and 51 per cent respectively, the share of the lower middle 30 per cent declined from 2.5 to 2 per cent while that of the upper middle 20 per cent increased from 79 per cent to 81.9 per cent or by 2.9 per cent. The number of 'poor' households (with assets of Rs. 1000 each at 1961 prices) increased from 30 per cent in 1961 to 34 per cent in 1971²⁶.

By citing the above facts, Indradeep Sinha stated that "This extremely skewed distribution of land, capital and other productive assets in the rural areas is the basic cause of the poverty, unemployment, pauperization and destitution of the majority of the rural toiling masses. It is also the basic cause of stagnation and crisis in the national economy. Furthermore, monopoly of land, capital and other productive assets in the hand of a tiny group of

landlords is the basic cause of social political reaction, obscurantism and communalism in our national life"²⁷.

According to the CPI programme, the fundamental characterization of the agrarian sector is that the, "Inter-penetration of the strong survival of feudalism and growing capitalist relations are the dominant characters of socio-economic life in India's countryside"²⁸. And "according to this formulation the dominant character of Indian agrarian economy is not the strong survivals of feudalism but their inter-penetration with growing capitalist relations of production. This is a description of the transitional, multi-structural character of the Indian agrarian economy"²⁹. It is explained that the "programmatic formulation ... is broad enough to cover the entire period of transition from semi-feudal to capitalist or dominantly capitalist agriculture"³⁰.

It is suggested by the programme of the CPI that inspite of these changes towards capitalist agriculture the survival of semifeudal land relations continue to prevail. Semifeudal subletting in the form of sharecropping and various other correlated forms of leasing, such as joint partnership cultivation, etc. continue to exist in a sizeable proportion of the land. Usually constitutes a strong survival of the semi-feudal mode of exploitation and is still predominant³¹.

It further pointed out as to how the survival of semi-feudal modes of exploitation combined with the growth of commercialisation of agriculture have produced a new set of reactionary vested interests in the vast Indian countryside. It states "landlords, and wholesale dealers, often combined in the same person, constitute the modern parasites holding up the progress of agriculture and supporting right reaction"³².

To sum up, the existing condition of the Indian agriculture in the post independence period is that "The national bourgeoisie which assumed power in 1947 compromised with the landlord forces sacrificing the interests of the tenants and other poor sections of the people. This is the basic underlying reason for the large scale sabotage of land reforms. In implementation, the landlords and bureaucracy nexus could successfully sabotage the land reform legislations, particularly the tenancy legislations, more so the ceiling acts. The judiciary also played a very constructive role and aided the landlord class"³³.

Therefore, "Transition to self-cultivation by the feudal and semifeudal landlords meant the transformation of the feudal mode of production based on appropriation of surplus product in the form of rent into capitalist mode of production based on the appropriation of surplus product in the form of surplus value (profit). In other words, it meant the transformation of the tenant or sharecropper into

an agricultural labourer, ready to sell his labour power to his landlord now turning into a capitalist entrepreneur"³⁴.

The Minimum Wages Act, 1948 had been enacted for time to time fixation and revision of minimum wages in employment in which the labour is vulnerable to exploitation on account of its lack of organisation and weak bargaining power. The CPI observed with much concern since agricultural labourers are unorganised, the prevailing wages are not fair to the workers. The minimum wages in agriculture should be linked to the Consumer Price Index Number. Moreover the law enforcing authority is reluctant and the employers of the agricultural labourers are often powerful enough to impose self-fixation about the wages which are always below the rate fixed by the government. There are exceptions in a few states where left parties are strong enough to organise them. However the agricultural labourers are the worst victims of the natural vagaries and seasonal unemployment. The CPI is in favour of social security benefit to the agricultural workers. It thinks, a fairly substantial financial expenditure from the government exchequer should be provided for employment in the dull season. Besides that, old age pension, workers education should be provided, and there should be timely revision and implementation of minimum wages act and domestic and vested land should be provided them free of cost³⁵.

Although there has been enacted the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act in 1976 which has empowered the concerned authorities to implement the ban on bonded labour and to ensure the rehabilitation of such labour, still "the condition of agricultural workers and bonded labourers continues to remain deplorable. Not all bonded labourers have yet been released nor those released been rehabilitated. Agricultural workers do not get fair wage nor is there any all-India legislation to comprehensively tackle their problems. These sections of our people also suffer from widespread social oppression. To fight against these is a major task"³⁶.

Since feudalism was not abolished root and branch, feudal exploitation continued to exist side by side with capitalist exploitation and got intertwined with it. Hence, usury bondage, sharecropping, caste and social oppression often characterised the sale of labourpower by the agricultural labourers³⁷.

But the CPI thinks, the feudal and semi-feudal exploitation is one of fast declining features due to the fact that the abolition of statutory landlordism and of the princely states turned the protected tenants into self-owning peasant proprietors and removed all legal hurdles to the free penetration of capital in land. The spontaneous process of 'depeasantisation', in the context of calculated sabotage of radical land reforms, helped to consolidate more

than half the cultivated land in the hands of the just ten per cent of the households who were landlords and rich peasants. Various state capitalist measures [like green revolution i.e. high yielding crop production through the help of mechanised agricultural implements] which serve to raise the technological level of agriculture, and to strengthen these same elements still further by increasing their command over land, water, seeds, fertilizers, implements, credit, marketable surpluses of food grains and, last but not the least, political leverage over the administration. Even the 37.5 per cent of the cultivated area that continued to be operated by the small and middle peasants, become largely market-oriented; and the high cost energy-intensive technology of the "green revolution" made the small and the middle peasantry extremely cost-conscious. In the majority of cases even their farming ceased to be subsistence farming³⁸.

The net result of these changes in the agrarian economy is that the old stagnant feudal-colonial economy has been replaced by a transitional multi-structural economy in which the capitalist, the small peasant and the semi-feudal modes of production coexist and contend against one another. Though the capitalist mode of production has become the leading structure, it has not yet conquered the entire field of agriculture. Similarly though the feudal mode of production has rapidly declined, it has not yet **vanished** and

continues to exist in the form of strong remnants which interpenetrate the growing capitalist relations. And, finally, the disintegration of the feudal mode of production has given birth to a sizeable small peasant sector, which though based on the small commodity production, is no longer feudal nor yet capitalist, and is yet subject to the laws of capitalist market³⁹.

Just as the bourgeoisie sought to deceive the agricultural labourers and poor peasants with false promise about 'removal of poverty', similarly it sought to dupe the small and middle peasants with the false propaganda that under the new technology of the 'green revolution' even the small farm can become 'viable'. On the contrary the Marxist logic is that - capitalism leads to the ruination of the small peasantry or to the depeasantisation of the peasantry. Therefore, the new technology is irrelevant to the small and middle peasants⁴⁰.

Therefore, the basic contradiction in the post independence period, more particularly from the late 1960s, is the contradiction between manufacturers and agriculturists in the Indian agrarian economy. It is the contradiction between the big industrial and commercial bourgeoisie on the one hand and the mass of the peasantry on the other.

Merchant capital was an exploiter of the Indian peasantry even during the pre-independence period. But

it acted as the comprador agent of British Capital and, as such, played a comparatively minor role in the exploitation of the peasantry. But things have changed in the post independence period. Merchant capital has now attached itself to the big industrial and commercial bourgeoisie which have become more and more dominant in the Indian economy. At the head of the big bourgeoisie stand the 75 monopoly houses who, together control about two-thirds of Indian industry and trade. Some of the monopoly houses are Indian subsidiaries of big multinational corporations who control the commodity trade in several agricultural products, agricultural inputs and essential consumer goods⁴¹.

That is why the 'Twenty Second National Conference' of the CPI's 'All India Kisan Sabha' had declared in 1979 "one major change, brought about by the economic development of the post-independence period, is that the big industrial and commercial bourgeoisie headed by the monopolists and multinationals, have emerged as the main exploiters of the peasantry, leaving the old feudal landlord far behind, whose capacity to exploit the peasantry has rapidly declined"⁴².

Monopolists and multi-nationals are the main link through which the burden of unequal commodity exchange in the international capitalist market is passed on to the

Indian peasantry. And this burden has very sharply increased since the outbreak of the recessionary crises of world capitalism.

The rapid deterioration in the terms of trade between India and the imperialist countries was passed on to the peasantry in the form of a still more rapid deterioration in international terms of trade between agriculture and the other sectors of the Indian economy. The small and middle peasants were the worst victims of this deterioration, because their unit cost of production was higher, market price realization was lower and holding power was smaller than that of the capitalist landlords and rich peasants. No wonder that the small and the middle peasantry constituted the main force of the mighty peasant upsurge at the present time⁴³.

The CPI opposes this bourgeois policy because it will further aggravate the structural crisis of not only the agrarian economy but also the entire national economy. Hence, the CPI demands defence of the small peasant, liquidation of semifeudal and semicapitalist landlordism, distribution of land among the tillers and then, gradual transition to socialist agriculture based on voluntary co-operatives of equal associate producers.

The following tasks⁴⁴ occupy the central place on agrarian front, in addition to some other national and

regional problems. The tasks and tactics will vary from state to state.

i) Elimination of all feudal and semi-feudal survivals through the implementation of genuine land reforms and distribution of ceiling surplus lands to the landless and land hungry, and carrying out democratic reforms in other sectors also.

ii) Abundant preferential state aid to the small, marginal and middle peasants.

iii) Removal of glaring inter-regional disparities by concentrating on the development of backward states and areas.

iv) Ensuring remunerative price for the agricultural produce, removal of the grip of monopolies on the rural market and supply of all essential commodities to the peasants and agricultural labourers through effective public distribution system with supervision of popular committees.

v) Cancellation of debt burden of the small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers and scaling down the other debts, and supply of cheap adequate credit to them, and lowering the tax burdens on the peasants and agricultural workers.

vi) Adequate living wage to the agricultural labourers

and providing guarantees of employment and social security and peaceful life, free from the atrocities of the landlords and the rich peasants. Consumer and other industries should be started in rural areas to provide employment to the rural labour.

vii) Democratisation of local power structure, removal of the domination of vested interests and passing of local power into the hands of the toiling masses.

viii) Effective and urgent steps to be initiated to eliminate backwardness and illiteracy among the people and to start a big renaissance movement.

Land to the tiller, fair wage to the agricultural worker, remunerative price to the peasant and cheap food to the people are the main slogans round which the battle is being fought - the battle for the rejection of the capitalist path and the adoption of the non-capitalist path of development.

The CPI claims that it is pursuing an integrated policy of diversified mass movement embracing all sections of the peasantry and agricultural labourers and directed equally against the survivals of feudalism and the growing exploitation of the capitalist and the imperialist monopolies.

The CPI calls for a tactics in this stage of revolution to rely on agricultural labourers and poor peasants, unite solidly with the small and middle peasants and try to win over or neutralize the rich peasants in order to isolate and defeat the landlords, the usurers, the monopolists and the multinationals in alliance with the industrial working class and other democratic classes and strata⁴⁵.

The CPI visualises, the Indian agrarian economy is multidimensional, multi-structural with inter-regional inequalities and the agrarian economy is changing towards the capitalist mode of production. But the process of change is slow and painful for the cultivating peasantry.

As such agrarian capitalism in India is not 'pure' capitalism but was characterised by the combination of capitalist forms of exploitation with the remnants of feudal forms of exploitation, thereby subjecting the rural masses to the worst feature of both feudal and capitalist exploitation⁴⁶. But the land reforms of the national bourgeois government and the use of modern technology and modern farming, credit system and the commodity market have facilitated the growth of capitalist relations and capitalism in agriculture. The new agricultural strategy of the national bourgeois government is to provide modern input like provision of infrastructural facilities of irrigation, electricity, communications, community development projects etc., mainly with the financial assistance of the World

Bank and other international institutions, for bringing about an increase in agricultural production. And it has done nothing more than to pass a few land reform laws, but has carefully bypassed the radical agrarian reform for the interest of the vast Indian peasantry. As a result, capitalist landlords and rich peasants are steadily emerging under the aegis of bourgeois rule and serving the latter as faithful contingents.

The national and big bourgeoisie have exposed the Indian agriculture to the international financial institutions. From the mid-1960's they are financing the projects for the development of infrastructural facilities for agricultural development with a twofold objective :

- 1) Such a development will create a big market for the multinationals and agro-business and also facilitate their entrance into the country's economy.

- 2) These imperialist forces meant to develop capitalism in agriculture, thus integrating it with world capitalism. It has further developed and expanded credit cooperatives, marketing federation and promoted technological changes. A large network of research, education and extension centres was established for the growth of agriculture, animal husbandry etc. though all those measures have contributed to the development of productive forces, the main benefits flowing from them have been reaped by the upper

strata, particularly the rich peasants and landlords who dominate the village panchayats, credit societies and other local developmental organisations.

However, in the short-run this strategy was responsible for the large marketable surpluses in food grains not only to supply to the urban consumers, but also to build buffer stocks. The country achieved near self-sufficiency in foodgrains, as large sections of the people are below the poverty line having no purchasing power and leading a miserable life⁴⁷.

Because of the capitalist penetration the inequalities of income and distribution have risen to an unprecedented height. Agricultural labourers, poor and small peasants who constitute the majority in the countryside are leading a miserable life and living below the subsistence level. But the capitalist farmers and rich peasants are engaged in investing their surplus in business, transport, industry, money-lending and speculative activities⁴⁸. The following criteria provided by Lenin are relevant to the position and facts of Indian agriculture. They are - 1) Employment of wage-labour and extraction of surplus value.

2) General commoditisation.

3) Reinvestment of surplus production for extended reproduction i.e., capital producing capital.

Y.V.Krishna Rao (General Secretary of the CPI-AIKS) stated that "Basing on these criteria, our conclusion is that capitalist relations have made much headway in the large parts of the country's [agrarian economy], though the level of these relations differ state to state, from area to area"⁴⁹.

For the CPI, the Indian agrarian economy is significantly marching towards the grip of capital - both national, big and monopoly and also imperialist capital since 1960s. The situation is more aggravated as the days are passing by. Consequently the age-old feudal grip over the agrarian economy has occupied the rear seat. Therefore, the fight in the agrarian front is mainly oriented to the big and monopoly and their foreign counter part - the imperialist capital. The non-capitalist path declared by the CPI in its programme in the stage of national democratic revolution is the desired path with which the remnants of feudal oppression will also be fought. In this struggle the party will mobilise the agricultural labourers, poor, small and middle peasants, even the rich peasants will be brought into the fold along with the other working people in the industrial sector and other democratic minded strata. The CPI programme does not rule out the possibility of forging alliance with the national bourgeoisie. Therefore, besides the goal of non-capitalist path and other significant goals are radical land reform, wiping out the remnants of

feudalism, democratisation in all spheres of life and activities of the people in this national democratic stage.

Besides the formation of the programmatic policy about the party's stand for radical land reform in the democratic stage of revolution, the CPI has also put all its energy for launching movements through its peasant organisation and agricultural labourers' organisation. The party has constantly fought in the parliament and state legislatures to enact and enforce the actual land reform for the interest of the vast peasant community. From the beginning the party's rural organisation has fully devoted itself for enforcing the land reforms and the establishment of the democratic rights of the under-privileged sections. However, that too depends upon the organisational power of the party and the party's position in the state governments.

Y.V.Krishna Rao, claimed "The Communist Party of India, the All India Kisan Sabha and the Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union have launched mighty militant nationwide struggles during 1969-72 for occupation of lands of big landlords and industrialists, demanding radical land reforms. Thus, under the direct impact of these powerful struggles, the ruling class was forced to take up the question of land reforms and revision of ceiling enactments. It has formulated national guidelines drastically revising the ceiling laws, lowering the ceiling limit, making the family a unit and

removing all the exemptions that were given earlier. The states have enacted revised ceiling laws, mostly based on the national guidelines⁵⁰. Krishna Rao claimed that the party played an active role in Kerala during Achutha Menon Ministry, West Bengal during the Left Front Government and partially in Maharashtra, Gujrat and Karnataka for land reform and for reorganisation of agriculture⁵¹.

Section 1 (ii) CPI's Views on Rural Democracy

The work for rural democracy is another important task to be performed with the radical agrarian reform in this national democratic stage. However, the programme of the CPI is very insistent on the democratisation of the rural sector along with that of the national political, social and economic life of the Indian people. And this task should be performed, the CPI thinks, immediately in this declared National Democratic stage.

The possible combination of classforce required for ensuring rural democracy in the countryside can be traced from the programme of the CPI. But conceptually rural democracy as a part of national democracy should be highlighted here to provide the context with which the idea of rural democracy is linked.

The programme of the CPI has stated that the class forces interested in carrying through the programme of

National Democratic revolution are : "First and foremost, the working class"; "Second, the broad masses of the cultivating peasants, including the rich peasants and agricultural labourers"; "Third, the rising class of urban and rural intelligentsia"; "Finally the national bourgeoisie, excluding the monopoly section"⁵². [Emphasis added].

It further stated "... in order to create the instrument for implementing the programme we will have to build a national democratic front, bringing together all the patriotic forces of the country, viz. the working class, the entire peasantry including the rich peasants and agricultural labourers, the intelligentsia and the non-monopolist bourgeoisie. The worker-peasant alliance will be the basis and pivot of the front"⁵³. The programme admitted "such a front is not in existence today because the democratic masses are divided into a number of political parties, including the Congress party itself"⁵⁴. Therefore, the programme stressed the need of "Developing out of the joint actions of the mass organisations of workers, peasants, employees and agricultural workers, as well as the Communist Party and other left and socialist parties, the national democratic front will draw its ranks not only the masses following the Congress but also its progressive section"⁵⁵. [Emphasis added].

According to the programmatic formulations of class-forces for the national democratic revolution, the participants from the countryside are the "broad masses of the cultivating peasants, including the rich peasants and agricultural labourers", and the "rural intelligentsia". It includes, in its declared national democratic front the following political parties and sections : "other left and socialist parties", "the masses following the Congress" and "also its progressive section" if they exist in the countryside.

According to the CPI, these rural class forces can be taken into confidence for establishing rural democracy and the left and socialist parties including the masses and the progressive section of the ruling Congress party should be brought within the fold of the front in the countryside to fulfil the requirements for the attainment of national democratic revolution and its success.

The programme has highlighted some of the aims for which democratic movements should be launched in the rural areas as a part of the national democratic movement. The programme stated :

"This national movement will attain its countrywide sweep and striking force when it embraces the broad masses of peasantry and the agricultural labourers in the vast rural areas. The struggle of the broad masses of the

cultivating peasantry, for consistent and thorough completion of agrarian reform eliminating feudal survivals, for putting peasant economy on a sound footing, for ensuring protection from the exploitation by trading and usury capital, for the expansion of credit facilities and the increasing use of modern technique, as well as the struggle of the landless peasants and agricultural labourers for fallow and surplus land, for minimum living wage, for setting up state farms and other rehabilitation schemes for scheduled caste and adivasi landless - all these struggles of the broad rural masses have a national significance"⁵⁶.

The programme of the CPI has stated that the existing local self-governments under the Congress rule are running the administration in the name of the rural people but actually they have become the reliable instrument in the hands of the vested interests in the rural areas. The programme thus observed :

"Local organs of self-government, which are supposed to draw the masses into direct administration of local affairs and development and thereby provide a democratic correction to bureaucratic centralisation and which can be utilised to a certain extent in favour of the people by forging broad democratic unity, are themselves made subject to the dictates of high officials with their control over revenues, advances and loans for the work of the panchayats

and their constructive activities. The powers to remove and supersede elected bodies of local self-government are used at will in order to suppress the growth of democratic forces. The so called panchayati Raj of the people thus becomes an instrument of the bourgeoisie seeking to consolidate its power in the countryside"⁵⁷. [Emphasis added].

The programme of the CPI thus suggested with concern that the bourgeoisie has usurped the rural administration for fleecing the vast majority of the rural people. The existing panchayati raj thus becomes an instrument of oppression over the agricultural labourers, poor and small peasants who constitute the majority in the Indian countryside.

Y.V.Krishna Rao has observed :

"The landlords and rich peasants who have become powerful, are dominating the rural life, economic, social, political and cultural. They are dominating the village panchayats, co-operative societies, and local developmental organizations and are fully utilising these institutions in collusion with the bureaucracy to their benefit. They are trying to perpetuate their hold on the rural masses, and for their narrow selfish ends are dividing the masses on castes and scheduled tribes people and agricultural labourers"⁵⁸.

Rural democracy can not be considered in isolation from radical land reforms in the vast Indian countryside. In Rao's view, two types of contradiction have been accentuated in the countryside in the rural economic front and so also in the correlation of the rural classforces. He stated, the existing situation is leading to the accentuation of two types of contradictions : between a handful of substantial landowners on the one hand and the mass of the agricultural labourers and poor and pauperised peasants on the other hand; and between the big industrialist, commercial bourgeoisie and the multinationals and their stooges on the one side and the mass of the peasantry on the other⁵⁹.

Indradeep Sinha has stated, "Experience of more than a decade of the independent class movement and class organisation of the rural proletariat has brought the lesson home that only a radical re-structuring of the entire agrarian economy can liberate the agricultural labourers and poor peasants, indeed, all working peasants, and rural artisans, from the vicious grip of class and caste oppression and unshackle their vast productive energies for rapidly rebuilding not only the rural economy and the rural society but the national economy and national polity as well"⁵⁰.

"Work of the party branch in the villages should not be viewed in narrow economic or electoral terms. Party

work in the village is emancipatory in the broad sense. We are party fighting for a democratic revolution and in the village we must fight for democratic changes. Our party branch should initiate and lead all struggles and movements for the democratic changes in the village on the economic, political, social and ideological plane. Not only landlords as a class but feudal and prefeudal ideas, traditions, prejudices etc. have to be fought"⁶¹ [Emphasis added].

For example, untouchability is a remnant of prefeudal days. Emancipation of the village is incomplete unless at least this most cruel and humiliating manifestation of the pernicious relic is ended⁶². The root cause of all these ills was within the age-old economic disparity unfavourable to the weaker section all along, even in the post-independence period. Thus it is stated : "social indignities emanating from the practice of untouchability and acute economic disparity arising out of landlessness, wage labour, bondage, etc. present a total picture of exploitation and injustice and any attempt to shake off any of these forms of exploitation easily invites the wrath of the vested interests"⁶³.

It is stated that illiteracy too is a heritage of our feudal and colonial past. Fight against the remnants of feudalism is incomplete unless we fight against its legacy.

Therefore, the CPI should consider eradication of illiteracy as a part of democratic transformation of the village. In fact this section is the basic mass for the communist party. Therefore, eradication of illiteracy is not a reformist work or a work to be undertaken only after the assumption of power. All liberation movements have taken it up along with the struggle⁶⁴.

The plight of women in the Indian villages is another manifestation of feudal culture. The emancipation of the village can not be real until and unless the outlook of the villagers (including women) to the women changes. It is a difficult thing to do but an indispensable thing also. If the party does not take work among women as a part of its job, it will keep out 50 per cent of the population from the purview⁶⁵.

The programme of the party calls for a movement in the countryside for wiping out "Casteism, communalism, religious obscurantism and all sorts of reactionary ideas"⁶⁶.

Fights against, ignorance caste prejudices, superstition are all parts of the emancipatory work. Anything that concerns the welfare of the village people should be a matter of interest where the CPI should come forward. It may be an elementary school or the matter of panchayat or cooperative society where the party should stand beside the toiling people and the peasantry to foil the ill will of

the vested interests in the countryside⁶⁷.

To ensure democratic results for the rural weaker section it is necessary to resist and stop atrocities and caste evils on harijans, adivasis and other rural poor, defend civil rights and promote social equality⁶⁸.

The CPI programme stated that the national democratic government after the national democratic revolution "... will abolish social and economic oppression of one caste by another, as also all social and personal bans and prohibitions imposed by the so called upper castes on lower castes, specially the scheduled castes, in the name of custom, tradition or religion. Such oppression shall be made punishable by law. It will pursue a policy of giving financial and other assistance for the educational and cultural advancement of the people belonging to scheduled and socially oppressed castes, to eradicate these inequalities⁶⁹."

Furthermore, "It will extend and strengthen elected local organs, enhancing their powers and give them more resources to fulfil their responsibilities"⁷⁰.

In fine, the aim of the CPI regarding rural democracy has been very precisely stated thus : "Democratisation of local power structure, removal of the domination of vested interests and passing of local power into the hands of the toiling masses"⁷¹.

The party has taken steps by participating in the panchayat election and in the election of the various societies, associations and organisations as a policy to ensure democracy for the toiling rural people.

Particularly in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura the CPI is actively participating with the other left forces (since 1983) to ensure the implementation of its programmatic policies. It aims to make the local bodies (Panchayats) an instrument of expediting land reform, democratic reform and social justice by drawing the class forces into a solid alliance for the ensuing national democratic revolution.

Section 2 (i) CPI(M)'s Views on Agrarian Reforms

Beside the strategic formulations on agrarian reforms and rural democracy in the programme of the CPI(M) a wide range of views have been expressed in some other documents. These views are of great importance for determining tactics leading to the desired aim of it's declared People's Democratic Revolution in this stage.

In 1967, the CPI(M) adopted one of the most important documents regarding agrarian matters. It was entitled Tasks on the Kisan Front-1967. This has been considered

as the basic document explaining the programmatic understanding in very clear terms on the question of agrarian reforms. It was admitted that the activities of the agrarian reforms were guided by a revisionist line even after the period of the split of the party till 1967. Therefore, it was felt necessary to have a proper guideline of tactics on the basis of the party's programme. The CPI(M) thought that the cause of old revisionist line in the agrarian front was due to the fact that All India Kisan Sabha was jointly led and guided by both the CPI and the CPI(M) till August, 1967,⁷² even after the split. Another important cause was the growing discontent among members within the party about the very strategy and tactics of the revolution in the country like India which in the immediate past was ruled by imperialists and whose economy was basically agrarian. On the eve of another split (a group known as Naxalites from the CPI-M) over the question of Indian revolution particularly on the importance of agrarian revolution the CPI(M) leadership came forward to explain its actual stand on the agrarian front very clearly before the party men and the mass following the party. Naturally, the document entitled Tasks on the Kisan Front (1967) has a wider significance.

This document stated that the party was gripped by revisionist views about the role of the different strata of the peasantry in the agrarian revolution and its role

in the context of anti-imperialist, anti-feudal people's democratic revolution in the democratic stage. This was due to the failure to properly comprehend the tasks in the agrarian front. It was admitted that a sheer revisionist view dominated work in this front. The revisionist view permeated into the following matters, in particular :

i) regarding the actual nature of the prevailing feudal oppression in the countryside; (ii) regarding the type of feudal relationships still remaining in the country; (iii) regarding the inner-strata differences within the peasantry; (iv) regarding the penetration of capitalist relationship into agriculture and the nature and depth of the problem; and (v) regarding the actual understanding of the peasant problem, and real demands of the peasantry.

These assessments till 1967 in the agrarian front were found to be wrong and very suicidal in nature for a proletarian party. These were : (i) there was a compromise of the demands of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers - the semi-proletariat and proletariat sections in the countryside - for drawing the support of the middle peasants and rich peasants there was an undue dependence upon the rich peasants, (ii) there was a dangerous negligence of the demands of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants considering that these demands might create problem to the party in securing the support of the upper ranks and capitalist farmers, (iii) distortions were

caused in the movement against feudal landlords because in an attempt to mobilise all sections of the peasantry there was an excessive dependance on the middle and rich peasants rather than on the rural proletariat and poor peasants, and (iv) weaknesses of revisionism and opportunism were exhibited while making even just demands for subsistent wages and better working conditions for the rural proletariat because there was the fear of breaking the unity of the peasantry if the demand for land and democratic rights of the agricultural labourers would have been placed. The document frankly admitted that the party had failed to inculcate the necessary class consciousness in the peasant front⁷³.

The document stated, all these movements against feudalism and capitalism were carried out on the basis of the non-Marxist concept of all-in unity of the peasantry against feudalism and capitalism, and in this struggle the motive forces of the movement - the poor peasants and agricultural labourers - were given lesser role to play lest their revolutionary role would break the unity in the peasant front. Firstly, this kind of tendency left the entire peasant movement on the mercy of the rich and middle peasants, and secondly, this revisionist leadership as it was a vacillating force within the peasantry, naturally put obstacles to any and every radical peasant movement. The rural proletariat (the agricultural labourers and

small artisans) and poor peasants, were put outside the movement, though for whom the peasant movement should have been organised; and in place of rural poor the rich and middle peasants were given prominence both in the organisation and in the leadership. This was a movement led and organised by the rich and middle peasants, the most privileged sections within the peasantry - which the poor peasants and agricultural labourers were asked to follow.

The document stated, it was a bourgeois revisionist out-look over the working class and peasant unity against feudalism and imperialism. It further stated, this kind of revisionism can only be avoided if the working class leadership over the peasant movement is established and if this leadership depends much on the rural proletariat and poor peasants who constitute 70 per cent of the total rural population. Other subsidiary tasks are to organise the middle and rich peasants so that they may be kept away from joining the feudal and capitalist landlords. The specific slogans in the agrarian sector should be put forward on the basis of the demands of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers and other sections of the peasantry should be brought nearer to this movement. In doing so the poor peasants and the agricultural labourers should be made conscious and active so that they can work with the working class leadership in the peasant movement for the restoration of land from the feudal and capitalist

landlords. In the agrarian front the real force of the peasant movement is constituted with the poor peasants and agricultural labourers. However, the party had actually failed to organise, educate, and provide them the actual role in the revolutionary movement against feudal and capitalist landlords in the country side⁷⁴.

The document has stated that the revisionist outlook in the peasant front in the past has made the peasant movement virtually defunct. The first attempt to rectify these ills in the peasant front has been made through the party programme. The programme was claimed to have put the correct ideological and political outlook against the revisionist view. The document further stated in pursuing revolutionary movement in the agrarian front in this democratic stage of the revolution class consciousness should be the basis of the struggle for land; all the work of the party should be revamped anew. In order to do so, it is an utmost necessity to recruit and educate members from the poor peasants and agricultural labourers, which was actually neglected so far. At present the peasant front of the party is dominated by members from the middle and rich peasant sections. Unless members are properly educated in the ideological points of view, unless they are declassified from their environment and upbringing it is certain that they can never serve the cause of revolution. Only the interest of the class from where they hail will be served by them.

The document has severely attacked the revisionist outlook of the leaders of the peasant movement. Therefore, the need of the time was to recast the forces of peasant movement, to bring the rural proletariat in the first row and let them lead the struggle for land to a success⁷⁵.

The document while treating the revisionist outlook in the peasant front stated, another aberration was due to the party's continuous and persistent emphasis on the parliamentary forms of struggle undermining the mass movement for the genuine demands of the people. This was evident from the first general elections in 1952 onwards. The sheer dependence on parliamentary measures had created an impression among the activists in the peasant front that outstanding problems in the agrarian front could be solved if the power both at the states and the centre were captured through elections. All these revisionist elements in the outlook, and other accompanying weaknesses in the practice actually incapacitated the revolutionary movement in the agrarian front⁷⁶.

After analysing the nature and character of revisionism in the agrarian front of the party, it calls for immediate re-organisation of the entire peasant front on the basis of a revolutionary ideology. Every member of the party in rural areas should work either in the Kisan Sabha (peasant front) or in the agricultural labour's union and give

prominence to the political education of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers so that they became able workers and leaders in the radical peasant movement. By class character they are the most dependable and sincere workers in this front and any negligence of them or of their cause will be purely anti-revolutionary and revisionist in outlook⁷⁷.

Having examined the revisionist outlook in the work of the peasant front by the party leadership since independence, the document had taken stock of the bourgeois landlord governments' so called radical measures in the name of land reform.

The document stated, that the existing bourgeois -landlord government can not do anything radical to change the agrarian sector, because the landlords themselves are in the helm of power in the entire countryside and they constitute the main allies of the bourgeoisie. Therefore, any change even the capitalistic change of the entire agricultural sphere is not possible by this government. Therefore, any land reform measure of the bourgeois -landlord government is one of compromise with the feudal, semi-feudal and capitalist landlords for the obvious class interests of the existing government. It is a false hope that this government will come down to look after the genuine demands of the poor peasants and agricultural

labourers by cutting down the interests of the landlords. As the external and internal crises deepen the bourgeois-landlord government will try to pass the burden on to the general people and the greatest sufferers in this case are the peasantry and the rural proletariat⁷⁸.

The CPI(M) noted that the bourgeois-landlord state has been compelled to take certain measures but these measures in no way injure their own class interest. The document stated "However, the bourgeois agrarian programme aims at achieving certain limited objectives, it seeks, in the main, to reform the old-type feudal landlordism by inducing the landlords to break up and partition their big estates among their kith and kin, to sell some of their 'surplus' lands to the peasants and take to personal cultivation and supervision of their farms more and more though employing hired labour and farm servants, instead of unrestricted renting out of their lands to the tenants as practised earlier. It also attempts at creating a narrow stratum of rich peasantry who, together with the new-type of landlords, can become not only the new political base of the bourgeoisie in the countryside but can also produce the limited surplus of food grains to supply the government of feeding urban centres"⁷⁹.

The document, analysed the intention behind the tall claims of land reform of the bourgeois-landlord government

since independence. "They [the bourgeois-landlords] do not aim at transforming our agriculture into a modern capitalist enterprise, but intend only to modify the reform the earlier forms of crude feudal exploitation, and super-impose on it capitalist forms and relations"⁸⁰.

The document further explained, that the new type of landlords and rich peasants are enjoying the surplus value for their ownership over the land but not for their capital investment over the land. The agricultural labourers who are actually landless peasants are not independent wage labourers in the true sense of the term. They are not yet so organised as to demand standard wages for their livelihood. Barring a few places, such as, places nearer to the cities and towns, places where cash-crops are produced and where intensive cultivation has taken place, a common agricultural labourer receives less wage than the industrial labourer. The wage difference between them is too much. On the one hand, 37 per cent cultivable land is owned by the 5 per cent rural households and on the other hand a large number of peasants who constitute 70 per cent of the labour force in agriculture have little or no amount of land. This situation binds and compels them either to sell their labour power at a lower wage or to die in deprivation. Another effect of this situation is that it has created a stratum of peasants who are tenants-at-will who have no legal rights over the land they cultivate⁸¹.

The document stated, "The congress agrarian reforms created and extended a new-type of landlordism which combines in itself both the features of capitalism as well as feudalism, they created a 'tenant' who combines in himself the features of the serf and the wage workers, and they created a rural wage-labour, who, as a pauperised peasant, forced by circumstances, is tied to the village and farming and has no other go than to accept any miserable wage rate his rural employer is willing to pay. His struggle for better wages is inseparably linked with the struggle for the abolition of landlordism and for land to the tiller, because of no appreciable improvement in the way of securing better wages is possible without breaking the land monopoly and drastically reducing the huge number of the pauperised peasant army. All these aspects will have to be borne in mind while formulating the programme on the agrarian front and building the revolutionary Kisan movement, which strives to unite the entire peasantry in the fight against landlordism⁸².

The document has assessed the result of the land reforms of the bourgeois landlord government since independence in its continuous rule. It stated that in the class structure of the rural sector government has brought about some changes by the penetration of capitalism and land reform measures:

(i) the old feudal landlords have sold a portion of their property to cope up with the ceiling of land, or (ii) they have created partition of their landed property among the family members and sometimes in fictitious names, (iii) many of them have taken the land by evicting the peasants in the name of self-cultivation, and (iv) many of them cultivate their huge amount of land by hiring wage labour. However, these have existed with some variation from one state to another but the very exploitation remains the same. This stratum bears the features of both feudalism and capitalism. Their control over rural economic and social life and their relationship with the rich peasants made them the basis of the bourgeois-landlord rule in the Indian countryside. Now they constitute the oppressor and exploiter class of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers in the countryside⁸³.

The CPI(M) goes back to the Leninist formulations in the analysis of the rural class structure and types of exploitation. It stated, "the present countryside somewhat resembles, in a way, what was described by Lenin in the year 1901, regarding Russia. He observed that in the modern Russian countryside 'two kinds of class antagonism exist side by side : First, the antagonism between the rural workers and employers and the second, between the peasantry as a whole and the landlord class as a whole. The first antagonism is developing and becoming acute, the second to a considerable degree already belongs to the past. And yet, in spite of this, it is the second antagonism that has the

most practical significance for Russian social Democratic at the present time'. It is on this line our party was called upon to make a concrete study of the class changes brought about in the countryside, assess them, properly, and work out its agrarian strategy and tactics"⁸⁴.

M. Basavapunnaiiah stated, "This does not by any means imply that the present day conditions in our rural areas are exactly the same as in Russia of 1901. But, at the same time, the contradiction between the peasantry as a whole and landlordism continues in our agrarian conditions"⁸⁵. He further commented that the land reform of the bourgeois-landlord government is not and never will be the radical step but to adjust with the situation as demanded. The power of rural economy and society remains the same in the hands of a few who were erstwhile feudal landlords. He stated "the Congress government with its pressure tactics on landlords, through the enactment of new land ceiling laws, by the introduction of some amendments to the old land ceiling and tenancy legislations and by repeatedly raising the slogan of land reforms, has enabled the landlords to evict tenants more and more to further partition the land among their kith and kin, to sell some portion of their land at good prices, and to increasingly take to 'personal cultivation' and intensive agriculture and modern farming"⁸⁶.

He stated, there has been a further rise in the percentage of agricultural labourers among the rural households. Millions of tenants, protected and tenants-at-will, have either been evicted outright and thrown into the army of landless or forced to purchase the land rights, paying varying prices to the landlords. The so-called 'Green Revolution' has helped the landlords and the rich peasants in the main to benefit from the loans granted, the fertilisers supplied, the high-yielding varieties of the seed provided, and several other so called rural development programmes⁸⁷.

For him, the changes effected in the agrarian set-up under Congress rule since 1947 can thus be summed up : Reduction in the old form of land-concentration in the hands of zamindars, jagirdars and big landlords, even though 35 to 40 per cent of the land still concentrated in the hands of five to six per cent of the top landlords and the eviction of millions of tenants thrown into the army of agricultural labourers and tenants-at-will due to the plea of self-cultivation, partition of land among the family members or sale of a portion of land if necessary by the landlords. Today's tenants are mostly 'tenants-at-will' with no legal rights, and neither so conscious and organised as to demand ownership of the lands they are cultivating, or to enforce even the legally fixed rent, viz. one third, one fourth or one fifth of the

produce, as the case may be. Nearly 50 per cent or so of the rural households today own no land at all, or only tiny pieces of land which are totally inadequate for making out a livelihood, and have to hire themselves out of others like rich peasants and landlords. They fall into the category of agricultural labourers, handicraftsmen and those engaged in village services⁸⁸.

Another 15 per cent or so of the rural families come under the category of middle peasants who own from two to five acres of wet land, or ten to twelve acres of dry land. They and their families do manual labour on their land, employ a cowherd for tending cattle and hire some agricultural labourers in seasons when there is pressure of work in agricultural operations⁸⁹.

Those who own five to ten acres of wet land or ten to twenty acres of dry land constitute some ten per cent of our rural households and are to be defined as rich peasants. They and their families do manual labour on their farms, but also employ a considerable number of wage labourers and farm servants. They normally not only have enough for their consumption needs but are also able to secure some surplus which can be converted into capital⁹⁰.

This is the basic division of the class differentiation with some variation occurring from state to state, and region to region.

In this given structure, it is evident that the middle and rich peasant households which constitute 25 per cent of the total rural households, will not be moved by the slogans of abolition of landlordism and the distribution of their land among the agricultural workers and poor peasants, though the slogan remains the central slogan of the agrarian revolution, not only because it is in the interest of the agricultural workers and poor peasants but also because it is in the objective interest of the peasants in general and the country as a whole.

The agricultural labourers and poor peasants who are land hungry and respond to the slogan of land distribution wherever they are organised and led, have not felt the confidence to go into action for the expropriation of landlords' land and its distribution among the agricultural labourers and poor peasants. They are mostly moved into action for the occupation of waste lands, government lands and forest lands. Even the occupation of the so-called surplus lands of the landlords, over and above the ceiling laws, could be undertaken by mobilising the agricultural labourers and poor peasants. Some success has been achieved in West Bengal, and in Kerala where left and democratic parties are strong and they have formed state governments at different times⁹¹.

It is a fact that the ruling Congress party, utilising its hold over the state and government during the period

since independence, has been able to draw a sizable section of the peasantry into its political fold and disrupt peasant unity and has been trying to incapacitate the strong peasant movement. There are many other parties which are equally interested in mobilising the peasantry for their instant electoral gain, but they try to build the peasant movement on the basis of rich and middle peasants, unlike the peasant unity on the basis of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants. These parties are not at all interested in translating into practice the central slogan of abolition of landlordism and land to the actual tiller⁹².

The phenomenal increase in the number of landless, which has nearly doubled under the Congress rule, the continued concentration of 35 to 40 per cent of the land in **the hands of** five to six per cent landlord households, the growing and **large** percentage of the people as high as 50 per cent - in the category that falls below the poverty line, poverty, hunger and misery of the great majority of our people and the consequent **fall** in the purchasing capacity of the people, the deepening economic crisis and, above all, the aggravation of the agrarian crisis, additionally emphasise the urgency of the agrarian revolution.

But this task can not be fulfilled unless the revolutionary working class and its Communist Party undertake sustained and deep-going work among the peasant masses.

It requires the creation of a new awakening and awareness on the part of the peasants in general, and the toiling and exploited in particular, to build peasant unity, united organisation and a united movement, on the basis of a new heightened class consciousness. It demands intense efforts on the part of the proletariat and its political party to dislodge the bourgeois - landlord political and ideological hold on the peasantry, and win it as its firm and reliable ally in the struggle for the people's democratic revolution⁹³.

Though the slogan of the complete abolition of landlordism and distribution of land gratis among the agricultural labourers and poor peasants, continues to be the central slogan of the agrarian revolution for the entire stage of the People's Democratic Revolution, taking into account the structural changes effected by the Congress agrarian reforms, taking serious note of the existing state of organisation, level of consciousness and degree of unity among the peasantry, this central slogan remains to day still a propaganda slogan⁹⁴.

Until and unless the basic slogan of abolition of landlordism and distribution of land among the landless and the poor peasantry becomes a slogan of action, the peasant movement will not be able to reach the level of partisan struggles on such a scale and intensity as to enforce partial demands such as reduction of rent, stopping evictions, abolition of forced labour.

in the Tactical Line, even the partial demands have serious limitations under the present changed conditions, viz. when tenancy, rents, forced labour etc. no longer exist in the old form, scale and intensity⁷⁵.

In the light of all these developments, the Kisan movement led by the CPI(M), while projecting the slogan of seizure of landlords' land and its redistribution as the central propaganda slogan, and while organising struggles for waste lands, forest lands, so-called surplus lands under the ceiling acts will have to be channelised into other agrarian currents. These concern the question of wages for rural workers, the issues of rent reduction, cancellation of peasant indebtedness, fair price for agricultural produce, reduction of tax burdens, stopping landlords' oppression, and their police hooliganism, removing corruption, etc. so that all these currents can be harnessed into one powerful agrarian movement. Otherwise, the maximum peasant unity, isolating the handful of landlords and their hirelings cannot be achieved, nor peasant partisan forces be able to move among the peasantry. The guerilla areas will not be able to survive and liberation areas and liberation forces cannot be created⁹⁶.

In this context, reference may be made to what the programme of the CPI(M) has stated : "The different

sections of the peasantry play different role in the revolution. The agricultural labourers and poor peasants who constitute 70 per cent of the rural households and are subjected to ruthless exploitation by landlords, by their very class position in present day society, will be basic allies of the working class. The middle peasantry, too, are the victims of the depredations of usurious capital of feudal and capitalist landlords in the countryside and of the capitalist market, and landlord domination in rural life so affects their social position in innumerable ways as to make them reliable allies in the democratic front⁹⁷.

The programme of the CPI(M) very clearly analysed its views on the rich peasant stratum which is helpful for determination of the tactical relationship between this stratum and the middle, poor peasants and agricultural labourers. The programme states : "The rich peasants are another influential section among the peasantry. The Congress agrarian reforms have undoubtedly benefited certain sections of them and to some extent they have gained under the rule of the new post-independence regime. They aspire to join the ranks of capitalist landlords and by virtue of their engaging agricultural labour on hire for work in their farms, they entertain hostility to them. Nonetheless heavy taxation, high prices for industrial goods and inflation constantly harass them so as to make their future uncertain. Subjected to the ravages of the market under the grip of

the monopolist traders, both foreign and Indian, they came up often against the oppressive policies pursued by the bourgeois-landlord government. By and large, they can also, therefore, be brought into the democratic front and retained as allies in the people's democratic revolution"⁹⁸.

It states that, "the core and the basis of the people's democratic front is the firm alliance of the working class and the peasantry"⁹⁹.

The programme of the CPI(M) has clearly spelt out the ultimate leadership of the people's Democratic Revolution. It has stated, "The peoples' democratic front cannot successfully be built and the revolution cannot attain victory except under the leadership of the working class of India and its political party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Historically no other class except the class is destined to play this role ..."¹⁰⁰.

The document Tasks on the Kisan Front has highlighted the party programme regarding the enemy of the radical agrarian reform, against whom the very struggle should be launched. It stated that the slogans of the people's democratic revolution have been rightly incorporated in the party programme and these are sufficient in the present situation for the whole rural poor in their just movement. As the land reform policy of the Congress government is to strengthen the landlords and bourgeois' class alliance, so

the duty of the working class party is to mobilise the rural proletariat and peasantry against the monopoly over land and different types of landlordism¹⁰¹.

This document candidly confessed that the struggle in the agrarian front is one of complex nature : Firstly, due to the complexities of relationships within the sections of the peasantry and between them and the agricultural labourers, the most deprived section of the lot, secondly, varied types of exploitation where some of them are feudalistic, some are purely capitalistic and some others are mixed in nature. The document stated, the agrarian system of India is a unique combination of feudalistic, semi-feudalistic and capitalistic features, actually the capitalistic features have been interpolated in the feudal and semifeudal landlordism. Therefore, the struggle against all these features of exploitation has got a complex character.

Although the struggle is against all reactionaries in the agrarian front including the capitalist landlords, still the main edge of the struggle should be launched for wiping out the residues of feudal and the semi-feudal oppression. Notable feudalistic features, still existed in various ways in various places; these are - monopoly ownership of land, imposition of the high rate of tax over - the peasants, severe exploitation over the agricultural labourers by taking the scope of their miserable poverty, very low rate of wage to the agricultural labourers, usurious money

agrarian front. While exposing the Congress land ceiling and emphasizing the need to unite different sections of the peasantry on different issues facing them, it stated, "Experience has proved that the efforts to solve the problem of redistribution of land through legislations, fixing ceiling on landholdings, are totally ineffective. The landlords and their hangers-on are clever enough to bypass all such legislations to keep with themselves the bulk of their lands. Our party and the Kisan and agricultural labour organisations should not, therefore, allow themselves to be fooled by the idea that the basic slogan of 'land to the tiller' can be realised through adopt and implementation of legislation fixing ceilings on land holdings. Our party should ceaselessly educate the peasant and agricultural labour masses that the basic slogan of 'abolition of landlordism without compensation and giving land to the agriculture labourers and poor peasants free of cost', is to be realised through the mass action of the entire peasantry. In fact, these struggles for the realisation of their basic demands are a part of the main revolutionary struggle, the struggle for the establishment of a peoples' democratic state"¹⁰⁴.

"It is however, possible, for strong, militant and well organised movements of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers to force the unwilling government and landlords to distribute fallow lands to some extent.

It is also possible, through effective mass struggle, to prevent the eviction of tenants from the land they are cultivating, and to achieve land for house-sites for the rural poor, free of cost, to a limited extent. Such struggle against eviction and for the distribution of fallow lands will also strengthen the forces of agrarian revolution that the revolutionary redistribution of land will be possible at a subsequent stage. These struggles, therefore, are of particular interest to the agricultural labourers and poor peasants. Directed as they are against the landlords and the government, no stratum of the peasantry, is opposed to it. Those middle peasants who are holding lands under landlords as tenants are, in fact, interested in the anti-eviction struggles. There is, therefore, every possibility of making these struggles the united struggles of the entire peasantry. It is, however, the agricultural labourers and poor peasants who are immediately and directly interested in them. These struggles, therefore, can succeed only if the mass of agricultural labourers and poor peasants are actively drawn into them and the widest democratic support is built for them"¹⁰⁵.

It further stated, "It should also be realised that, while the agricultural labourers, poor peasants, middle peasants and rich peasants have their different (and sometimes even conflicting) interests, there is something

which unites them all - unity against landlord oppression and the anti-peasant policies of the bourgeois - landlord state, led by the big bourgeoisie. On a series of questions like taxation, prices, allocation of finance for projects and so on. conflicts develop between the urban and rural sectors of the economy, conflicts also develop between the landlords and the rich peasants and the big bourgeoisie, on a number of issues. All these conflicts being within the framework of the class alliance of the bourgeoisie and landlords, they invariably attempt to resolve them 'peacefully', i.e. within the framework of their solidarity as against the proletarian strata. Undue emphasis on these conflicts would, therefore, lead the party to right - opportunist mistakes. It would, however, be equally wrong to dismiss these conflicts within the class alliance of the ruling classes as of no significance. Occassions may, in fact, arise when these conflicts among the various strata of the ruling classes can be so utilised as to isolate the big monopolist bourgeoisie - the strongest partner of the ruling class alliance, the most ruthless enemy of the proletariat and semi-proletarian strata. This, however, depends on the extent to which the agricultural labourers and poor peasants are organised and brought into action, both on their own specific slogans and on the general slogans of the peasantry as whole"¹⁰⁶. [Emphasis original].

P. Sundarayya, General Secretary of the CPI(M) (1964-76), had summed up the strategic views of the party on agrarian reforms for formulating tactics from the programme of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (1964) and from the most important document, the Tasks on the Kisan Front (April, 1967).

He stated, the agrarian relationship in the present context of bourgeois - landlord rule in India is neither purely feudalistic nor purely developed capitalistic but is one of feudalistic and semi-feudalistic. It means capitalistic exploitation has been superimposed over the old feudalistic system. Therefore, what is needed is both the capitalistic and feudalistic and semi-feudalistic exploitation should be fought against without hesitation. He further explained, that one should not misconstrue that the CPI(M) is fighting for the abolition only of feudalistic and semi-feudalistic exploitations and not against the capitalistic exploitation, that will be a wrong understanding of the programme of the party and the later document on agrarian question.

He further explained, in the present day the democratic revolution is not the old type of bourgeois-democratic revolution. In the age of socialist revolution, the very monopoly capitalism should be fought by the leadership of the working class. Accordingly, the agrarian revolution in this age will be performed by launching struggle against

both the feudal and semi-feudal and capitalist landlordisms at a time because these are intermixed in the Indian condition. Therefore, the party calls for revolutionary change of all types of landlordism whether feudalistic or capitalistic as early as possible. These two types of landlordisms are equally oppressive in nature over the vast sections of the peasantry and agricultural labourers in the Indian countryside. He has further cautioned, if these tasks are neglected or avoided no substantial change is expected for the poor peasants and the rural proletariat¹⁰⁷.

Mention may be made in this connection that the CPI(M) like the CPI, has set the record to fight for the causes of the peasantry and agricultural labourers. In the post-emergency Legislative Assembly election in some states the CPI(M) emerged stronger, therefore, it was capable of forming state governments in West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala with the alliance of other left parties (excluding the CPI - 1977-82). Significantly the question of land reform and establishment of rural democracy came to the fore. It has set a noticeable record regarding the land-reform activities, specially in cases of reclamation of vest and benami land from the hands of the landlords, distribution of the same among the poor peasants and agricultural labourers, recording the rights of share-croppers through a special drive known as 'operation barga' & successful movement for revision of wage for the

agricultural labourers are some of the important ones.

The CPI(M)-led state governments, after coming to power, had instituted the panchayat system which was virtually defunct for decades under the Congress rule. The CPI(M) has claimed that panchayats will expedite the unfinished land reform and will keep holding the result of land reforms achieved so far, only because, the present panchayats are the truly democratic body due to the wide participation of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers who constitute the majority in the countryside. It claimed that the strong hold of the vested interests has been curbed. The CPI(M) has claimed, that the peasant organisations and agricultural workers' associations have been entrusted to look after the land reform activities and democratisation of rural institutions which constitute the main tasks embodied in the party programme for the completion of its declared 'People's Democratic Revolution'. The CPI has entered into the alliance led by the CPI(M) after 1982 and is carrying out its activities on the above issues. Now they equally claim the records set by the left front governments of these states, as an example before the oppressed peasantry and the agricultural labourers of other states of India.

Section 2(ii) CPI(M)'s Views on Rural Democracy

The CPI(M) thinks that in the stage of people's democratic revolution another most important task, after the radical agrarian reform, is the establishment of fullest democracy at the rural level. It considers the enormity of the problem, that in the country's vast rural sector where more than seventy per cent of the population reside, they have no real power to govern themselves. The vested interests - the landlords moneylenders and the propertied sections who constitute a minority in the rural population have monopolised the largest share of the rural economy and the power over rural administrative institutions. To redress the age-old oppression economically, socially and politically the programme of the CPI(M) has stressed upon agrarian revolution with first priority and as a concomitant factor the next importance is on the establishment of rural democracy in the people's democratic stage.

The programme of the party clearly stated its aims in the sphere of rural administration. The local bodies provided with power, responsibility and financial support, should be governed by the democratically elected representatives of the people. These bodies are now under the clutches of vested interests in the vast Indian countryside¹⁰⁸.

About the existing situation under the Congress rule in the sphere of rural administration the party programme has stated :

"The administrative system being based on a highly centralised bureaucracy, ... who are divorced from the masses and who obediently serve the interests of the exploiting classes. The so called panchayati raj of the people thus becomes an instrument of the ruling classes seeking to consolidate their power in the countryside. Real democracy of the people can have no place in such a bourgeois democracy run by the exploiters and their bureaucrats"¹⁰⁹.
(Emphasis added).

Although there is a panchayati raj for the rural administration, still it has become an instrument in the hands of ruling classes. Particularly landlords and propertied sections are on top of the rural administration in collusion with the bureaucracy and judiciary. Persons holding higher positions in bureaucracy and judiciary are mostly "drawn from the bourgeois - landlord classes and get their education in exclusive institutions"¹¹⁰ and they "essentially serve the interests of the exploiting classes"¹¹¹.

Actually the system of bureaucracy independent India inherited has not been serving the interests of the toiling mass of people, rural or urban. Relation between the people and the bureaucracy is that of the exploited and the agency of the exploiters. No basic change has taken place in the existing bourgeois-landlord rule¹¹².

During the freedom movement, the often-raised demands were those of abolition of landlordism; radical land reform, decentralisation of power and power to the people so that the people of independent India could enjoy the fruits of democracy economically, socially and politically. After independence, the bourgeois-landlord government wilfully avoided the decentralisation of power through the establishment of panchayati raj. In lieu, Community Development Project was started in some selected areas on the advice of American advisors. With the advice of the American advisors, American help like the use of pesticides, use of modern agricultural implements made a headway for American market in India in the post-Second World War economic situation. After the passing of a couple years the Community Development Project yielded good result for the upper stratum of the peasantry and landlords and it had nothing to do for the upliftment of the rural poor, poor peasants including the middle peasants. Later, Balwantraj Mehta (1958) committee assessed the efficacy of the Community Development Project and recommended Panchayati Raj system. As a result, Panchayati system was adopted by the ruling Congress government at the end of Second Five Year Plan period. But it very soon became defunct, because the ruling party was not interested in decentralizing power or in placing power at the hands of the people. Therefore, the Panchayati raj was handicapped from the birth of this institution. In some

states elections were held once or twice in the beginning but later for a period of more than one or two decades no election was held. This state of affairs existed all over India. Elections were held on the non-party basis but that did not mean non-class character of the Panchayati Raj. The landlords, the rich peasants and their stooges were mostly elected and remained in power over decades without any further election. There was no programmes for the upliftment of the rural poor, agricultural labourers and poor peasants. Rather the Panchayati Raj Institution became an instrument of oppression in the hands of the landlords and rich peasants. These institutions were not at all used for the execution of land reforms, alleviation of the appalling condition of the rural poor, relieving destitution due to the vagaries of natural calamities, spread of elementary education, abolition of caste differences and scorce of other social evils. Actually the panchayati raj became the raj of the few - the landlord, the peasants, the moneylenders and rural businessmen and dealers. The participation of the common people is totally discouraged in most of all the states even today except a few states where left and democratic parties are in power since 1977 in the post emergency period¹¹³.

The programme of the party observed thus, "The community development schemes and panchayati raj (panchayats, block samities and zilla parishads) the government has

Initiated, despite the limited social amenities, and benefits the people can derive from them, are in the final analysis another device to extend and consolidate the rich peasant and landlord base of the ruling class in the rural side¹¹⁴.

Panchayati raj was instituted by the ruling Congress Party as it had passed a legislation for it with a propaganda that it had provided for the decentralisation of power, poverty alleviation of the rural poor - poor peasants, artisans and agricultural labourers, distribution of vested lands among the poor peasants and improvement of agricultural production with the help of modern agricultural implements, seeds and manures. But the ruling Congress party constantly encouraged the landlords and rich peasants to extend and perpetuate its rural base. Therefore, it did not pay any attention to the poorest of the poor in the vast Indian countryside, the poor peasants and agricultural labourers.

The so called minimum wages legislation which was enacted in some states after years of promise and waiting was nothing but a piece of decoration for the statute book. The scale of wages and other conditions of work prescribed in these legislations are such that they are either much below the wage rate prevailing in the concerned areas and where higher rate had been fixed, they had not been enforced. The vast bulk of these labourers neither possess small house-site nor a hut to live in. Six months in the

year they are either completely unemployed or under-employed. Several reports of the government and semi-governmental agencies clearly point out that their real wages are falling, their employment days are decreasing and their indebtedness is growing. Therefore the programme of the CPI(M) asserts, "without a radical change in their living condition, it is unthinkable to change the face of our degraded rural life ..."¹¹⁵.

Democracy at the grass-root level is meaningless if the majority of the people living in the vast countryside - the poor peasants, agricultural labourers and artisans, the lower castes and backward communities are not rescued primarily from their economic penury. Social oppression of caste by caste, a legacy of the feudal society is still prevalent. Communal hatred and sex bias are other important evils affecting the existing society. These age-old social evils are so deep-rooted that a thorough economic reform through radical agrarian re-organisation is the binding necessity. The various poverty alleviation programmes (like '20-points programme' 'Garibi Hatao' NREP (National Rural Employment Programme), IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Project), RLEGP (Rural Labour Employment Guarantee Programme), 'Food For Work', etc.) which were drawn up from time to time proved to be inadequate measures, having little practical efficacy due to the political ill will of the ruling class. The existing ruling Congress party is not at all interested

in decentralising power despite the use of the name of Mahatma Gandhi for building self-sufficient villages with provision for compulsory primary education, encouragement of rural industries, abolition of untouchabilities and power to the people, etc.¹¹⁶.

The CPI(M) has concentrated all its energy for its declared People's Democratic revolution. This party has in this context emphasised the radical agrarian reform. Thus it is eager to bring about a thorough revolutionary change of the life of the rural masses in general and poor peasants and agricultural labourers in particular who constitute the majority section of the rural population. These sections are the beneficiaries of the party's land reform efforts. Therefore, the party has been very keenly interested in organising and mobilising them for its desired aims. In the partisan struggle the CPI(M) is interested in forging a unity of all the rural classes interested in the radical landreform and democratisation firmly basing on the agricultural labourers and poor peasants who constitute the rural proletariat but it reserves the ultimate power to guide all these movements at the hands of the working class leadership, the most farsighted section of the people. The programme states,

"The agricultural labourers and poor peasant who constitute 70 per cent of the rural households and are subjected to ruthless exploitation by landlords, by

their very class position in present day society, will be basic allies of the working class"¹¹⁷.

The programme visualises that for the establishment of rural democracy the following sections of the rural mass will come forward : the agricultural labourers and poor peasants, the middle peasants, the rural middle class intelligentsia and the 'patriotic and democratic forces'¹¹⁸. The programme observed that the agricultural labourers and poor peasants are out and out revolutionary for their class position and that they are the 'basic allies of the working class'¹¹⁹. Therefore, they will be the basis of the rural democracy. The middle peasants too will be the 'reliable allies in the democratic front', because they are the victims of the depredations of usurious capital of feudal and capitalist landlords¹²⁰. The rich peasants engage agricultural labour on hire for work in their farms and they exploit the agricultural labourers. Therefore, there is a hostility between them. The rich peasants aspire to join the ranks of capitalist landlords and they are the gainer to some extent for the Congress agrarian reforms. But they are worried about heavy taxation, high prices for industrial goods, ravages of market under the grip of the monopolist traders and the policy of the bourgeois-landlord government. The programme visualises that, by and large, they also be brought into the democratic front and retained as allies for the people's democratic revolution¹²¹.

These sections are to be mobilized for ensuring agrarian reform and also rural democracy; and the poor -peasants and agricultural labourers provide the leadership as they constitute the "basic allies of the working class"¹²².

In the people's democratic stage the following most important activities are to be performed : (1) ensuring a wide network of local bodies from village upward, directly elected by the people and vested with power; (2) striving to infuse in all the social and political institutions the spirit of democracy, extending democratic forms of initiative and control over every aspect of national life; (3) ensuring democracy by entrusting a key role to the peasant and agricultural workers' associations; (4) abolition of social oppression on one caste by another and untouchability being punished by law; (5) granting special facilities to scheduled castes, tribes, and other backward communities; (6) removal of social inequalities and disabilities from which women suffer; (7) ensuring adequate wages and living conditions to agricultural labourers; (8) eradication of cultural backwardness of the poor and hungry peasants by providing material means to give education to their children; (9) taking steps to make the legislative and executive machinery more responsible to the democratic wishes of the people, etc.¹²³

Mention may be made that CPI(M) is keenly interested in establishing rural democracy which is otherwise known as

Panchayati raj as seen in its party programme. However, it has sought to materialise the programmatic policies by infusing in all social and political institutions the spirit of democracy¹²⁴. Therefore it has taken practical steps in the field of local administration; a wide network of local bodies from village upward has been created with directly elected representatives of the people and by vesting them with real power and responsibility¹²⁵.

In the post-emergency election the ruling Congress party was ousted from the Central government and so also in some states. The CPI(M) emerged with the other leftist allies as strong electoral force in the state of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. Coming to the state power, the CPI(M) put its primary task in the agrarian front and in the panchayat election. In West Bengal the election of Panchayat bodies was not held since 1964 to 1978.

In 1978 panchayat election in West Bengal and in other CPI(M)-led state governments, CPI was not a frontal ally of the CPI(M)-led front governments. But in the Panchayat elections of 1983 and 1988 in West Bengal the CPI participated as a partner in the Left front.

However, the CPI(M) led Left front partners initiated the Panchayat system in West Bengal. This was the first case where political party based election was held.

The CPI(M) leadership has claimed that the three-tier panchayati system in West Bengal is a form of rural democracy and unique in nature. It has thus served as an example before the people of other states. Decentralisation of power through the panchayat system has a great significance to the exploiting sections of the rural people¹²⁶.

It is claimed that the CPI(M)-led Left Front Government in West Bengal has fully pursued the programmatic policy of decentralisation of power. The panchayati system is the best example for rural democracy and rural development and it has ensured the active participation of the poorer section of the rural mass¹²⁷.

Citing the remark of the Development and Planning Department, Government of West Bengal, Dr. Asim Dasgupta a member of the CPI(M) has stated that the members of the Panchayats in West Bengal (1978) by a significant majority, are representing the interests of the poorer sections in the villages¹²⁸. The Panchayats have been entrusted with the responsibility of effective work for rural employment, rural development through some civic measures, like provision of drinking water, roads etc., distribution of ceiling surplus land both for dwelling and cultivation to the agricultural labourers and poor peasants, advancing loans to the poor and above all the responsibility of land

reform and increase of wages of the agricultural labourers¹²⁹.

Panchayat as an institution in the hands of the rural people particularly, the majority section the rural poor, that has been mobilised not only for establishing democracy so that they can fight against the vested interests in the rural areas but also became an instrument for radical land reform. In this connection Dr. Asim Dasgupta has stated, that the involvement of the common people, of the potential beneficiaries, is considered to be very important. For instance, the evidence of recorded bargadars, among others, has played a crucial role in detecting the ceiling surplus land¹³⁰. The Panchayats, the peasant and agriculturists' organisations are the important pillars of land reform and rural development which was so far neglected by the congress government.

Biplab Dasgupta of the CPI(M) has stated that the CPI(M) participates in the parliamentary, state legislative and panchayat elections with a definitely different stand point. It always judges things from the point of view of class basis. The panchayat system (though originally popularised by Mahatma Gandhi) acquired a different class character under the guidance of a communist party. It functions as a tool for ensuring democracy and land reform only because the CPI(M) has been able to ensure the participation of the agricultural

labourers, poor and middle peasants, rural educated middle class in it¹³¹. Therefore, the panchayat system under the CPI(M) leadership becomes an agent for ensuring rural development and rural democracy.

The CPI(M) claims that the West Bengal experiment of panchayati raj under the leadership of the party has been able to move a marked step forward for rural democracy. It has been a living example before the enslaved people of vast rural India.

The views of the CPI on agrarian reforms and rural democracy differ widely from the CPI(M)'s. Although any simple reading of their demands over the two issues are punched with the same slogans uttered in scores of times still their main difference lies in the individual appreciation of the problem and the urge for implementation of programmes for its solution. The CPI(M) since its formation has gone for a radical framing of the agrarian policy of the country on the basis of its assessment that semi-feudal land relations and concentration of land are the two existing dominant features in the agrarian front. Therefore, it has put in its maximum and persistent effort for radical land reforms. On the contrary, the CPI has visualized that the agrarian situation of the country has been changed to a large extent the capitalist policies of the Congress rule since independence. For it, the dominant

character of the Indian agrarian economy is the growing capitalist relations of production in place of feudal and semi-feudal land relations which are one of the objectives of the democratic stage. This understanding of the CPI directed it to expedite the struggle against the remnants of semifeudal land relations and struggle for the increased wages of the agricultural labourers. But it does not see any justification for concentrating all its energy achieve this aim, rather it pledges to fight the main battle against the big and monopoly reactions and imperialist penetration into the national economy. However the forthcoming chapter will analyse their respective practices and track-records to realise their respective programmatic policies on agrarian reforms and rural democracy with special reference to West Bengal.

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Chapter V

Content

Efforts of the CPI and the CPI(M) to implement their respective programmatic policies on agrarian reforms and rural democracy with reference to West Bengal.

Section 1 Peasant organisation.

Section 2 Political Position of the CPI and the CPI(M) in West Bengal.

Section 3 (a) Policies pursued by them during 1964 to 1977 (specially when they were in government in 1967 and 1969); and
(b) Respective organisational steps pursued by them in this period.

Section 4 (a) Policy pursued by them during 1977 to 1985; and
(b) Respective organisational steps pursued by them in this period.

Tactical efforts to realise the programmatic policies of the CPI and the CPI(M) on agrarian reforms and rural democracy will be analysed here with reference to West Bengal. Their practice in respective peasant organisations and their individual policy pursuits in the state politics of West Bengal will also be analysed.

Section 1 Peasant Organisation

The credit of organised peasant movement both in the pre-and post-independence periods goes to the Indian communists. They started working through the All-Indian Kisan Sabha (AIKS) formed in 1936. The Communist Party of India used this peasant front and led a sustained and potential struggle against the imperialist rulers and native zamindars in the pre-independence days and against the Indian ruling class and landlords in the post-independence period. But this sustained movement faced a major split just after the emergence in 1964 of the CPI(M). The All-India Kisan Sabha was split in 1967 into AIKS-CPI and AIKS-CPI(M). Here this study is designed to explore how the CPI and the CPI(M) led their respective peasant fronts for realisation of their respective programmatic aims with reference to West Bengal.

It may be recalled that the Sino-Soviet ideological rift left a chain reaction which was not limited to the

functioning of the party but also penetrated into the frontal organisation soon and united work for the common cause was becoming impossible. "Certain important political differences were reflected in the thinking of the leadership of the All-India Kisan Sabha, constituted mostly of important members of the CPI, as a result of sharp political division in that party in the late fifties"¹. The differences clearly manifested in 1962, at the time of the armed border conflict between India and China. Afraid of prevailing discontent and growing democratic movements, Government took advantage of the war to use repressive measures against the pro-Chinese CPI members. A section of the CPI members who are believed to have sided with the Congress government in this matter escaped Government fury. Most of the Kisan Sabha members of the Left CPI were detained under Defence of India Act/Rules (1962). The Left CPI criticized that the Rightists of the Kisan Sabha lost no time in taking undue advantage of the absence of the large number of Kisan Sabha leaders and workers who were in jail, and planned to 'capture' the AIKS units at the state level. With that aim in view they organised 'special conferences' of the state and district Kisan Sabha units².

While the CPI was split in 1964 the AIKS was broken into AIKS-CPI and AIKS-CPI(M) in August 1967. The CPI(M)-dominated AIKS held its annual session at Madurai in 1968 which had 971,473 members; in 1969 its next annual session

at Barsul (Burdwan) was attended by 449 delegates representing 964,430 members of which West Bengal accounted for 589,893 members³. The AIKS-CPI held its annual session at Barasat (W.B.) in the summer of 1970; its next session was held at Bhatinda in Punjab in September, 1973 and it had 722,222 members⁴.

Hereafter, both the rival peasant organisations started bitterly criticising each other. Hare Krishna Konar, General Secretary, AIKS-CPI(M) (newly elected at Barsul annual session) stated : "Dr. Z.A.Ahmed as President of the rival organisation approached Kisan Sabha for united movements and formation of coordination committees at all levels. That this proposal lacked sincerity was proved by the fact that they slandered Kisan Sabha for the disruption they created ... Their Central Council reiterated the proposal for coordination committees and on that basis Dr. Z.A. Ahmed and Tej Singh Swatantra met H.K.Konar and H.S.Surjeet. While rejecting their slanderous charges ... we replied that we are for united movements ... But formation of coordination committees at all-India level just now will be unreal ... Objective pre-requisites will have to be created by developing joint movements at the lowest levels"⁵. In that session Konar also reacted sharply to the other split of the AIKS-CPI(M) that came in the wake of Naxalbari movement :

"We have seen how the adventurists harmed the peasant movement at Naxalbari in West Bengal. Instead of taking up

the trouble of building peasant struggles step by step they raise the cheap slogan of armed liberation struggle ... this adventurist trend created considerable disruption in Andhra, U.P. and Jammua and Kashmir"⁶. However, the Naxalites decided not to pursue the parliamentary path but to mobilize peasants for armed revolution primarily for seizing state power. They built up their armed peasant organisation in many parts of W.B., Andhra, Bihar, U.P and Jammu and Kashmir within a very short time^{*}.

The President of the AIKS-CPI reported in 1979 that : "Despite our persistent efforts to reach understanding with the CPI(M)-led Kisan Sabha on all-India scale, such agreement has not materialized ... Even the joint committees set up in few states by the two Kisan Sabhas are either anaemic or have ceased to exist"⁷.

Thus, the AIKS had ceased to be the uniting body of the Indian peasants. Their outstanding difference can be attributed to their respective understanding of the Indian ruling class and agrarian question of the country which have been embodied in their respective party-programmes.

Sunil Sen stated "In the 1960 's the CPI-led Kisan Sabha came to the conclusion that capitalist relations had

* A brief study of the agrarian policy of the Naxalites i.e. CPI(M-L) is in Chapter VII.

developed in Indian agriculture; between 1966 and 1968 strikes of agricultural workers for enhanced wages broke out almost spontaneously in Tanjor, Allepy, Broach, East Godabari, Nellore and Guntur"⁸. He further stated "Gangadhar Adhikari ... drew attention to the changes in peasant economy from the decay of village communities to the growth of capitalist relations in Indian agriculture"⁹. Therefore the CPI-led AIKS expedited the formation of Akhil Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union (known as All-India Agricultural Workers' Union) in 1968 fulfilling a long pending demand.

The CPI(M)-led Kisan Sabha, as noted by Hare Krishna Konar in his report to the Barsul session in Oct-Nov. 1969, conceded that large scale farms had developed mainly in Punjab, Andhra and some other states but maintained that even in these states "feudal exploitation" continued unabated¹⁰. Four years later he pointed out that the policy of the Congress government "has been to develop capitalism without doing away with semi-feudal land relations"; the agricultural labourers were mostly "pauperised peasants" whose struggle for "better wages is intimately connected with the demand for work and land"¹¹. The AIKS-CPI(M) launched several struggles for the agricultural labourers as a part and parcel of the Kisan Sabha movement since 1967; these struggles were mainly concentrated on the demand for enhanced wages and distribution of vest and benami land.

The CPI(M) also formed later its agricultural labourers' front known as All-India Agricultural Workers' Union (AIAWU-CPI-M). It held its first all-India conference, together with the AIKS conference, at Midnapore (West Bengal) in 1982. These two allied organisations have since been functioning in close cooperation with each other consolidating their positions in their respective spheres. A resolution adopted there condemned the capitalist path of development of the Congress(I)-led governments which was driving millions of peasants into pauperisation. The conference demanded a central legislation to ensure living wages, security of service and better service conditions, distribution of surplus and waste land, provision of house-sites, restoration of alienated land to the tribals, and provision of monthly pension to agricultural workers above sixty.

The AIKS led adopted its resolution on agricultural labourers at the Moga session held in 1954. A section of the delegates vigorously opposed the formation of separate unions of agricultural labourers. Namboodiwipad writes : "Com. Abdullah Rasul of Bengal moves an amendment saying that efforts should be made to affiliate them (the agricultural labour unions) to the Kisan Sabha in all those cases where such efforts of affiliation would not harm the cause of organising the agricultural labourers, Com. Sundarayya opposes it saying that making such efforts at the present stage will do more harm than good, he is of the opinion that such

efforts at affiliation should be made only at a stage of development when agricultural labourers themselves feel it necessary and ask for affiliation. Rasul's amendment was pressed to vote and is defeated by 115 votes against 50. Twenty remained neutral"¹².

The silver jubilee session of the AIKS in 1961 (Trichur) noted : "the AIKS realizes that the agricultural labour movement is still weak and disorganised in many regions and states"¹³. The provincial Kisan Sabha organisations discussed it time and again between 1951 and 1967, but no agricultural labour union came into existence.

In 1962 Bhowani Sen argued that "the chief features of capitalism" lay in the disintegration of the peasantry, employment of wage labour and the changes in technique of production. Although merchant capital and usury "strengthened semi-feudal exploitation", commercialization of agriculture laid the basis of capitalist development. There had been the emergence of agricultural wage-labour at one pole and that of rich peasants, mainly employing wage labour for cultivation, at the other". Feudal relations which were "in a state of decline" could still "obstruct the growth of the productive forces"; the "common interests of the entire peasantry are still of considerable importance". Capitalist relations were developing on a weak technical base as was evident from the employment of agricultural machinery and

implements between 1951 and 1956. Furthermore, employment of agricultural machinery was confined mostly to Punjab, Andhra and Western U.P. last but not the least, the "elimination of feudal landlordism is, therefore, in the interest of capitalist development"¹⁴.

The question was often asked whether the agricultural labourer could be regarded as a separate category. It was argued that capitalist relations had not yet developed in agriculture; the agricultural labourer was a ruined peasant whose main demands centered on land and employment throughout the year. The casual agricultural labourers found work for about 172 days in a year in 1956-57, whereas attached workers were employed for about 248 days in the year. What needs to be noted is that the immediate interests of the agricultural labourers could be different from those of the peasants. The rich peasants, for instance, would clamour for unrestricted prices for their crops, while the agricultural labourer would benefit from a fall of prices; he would be interested in a rise of the wage-rate, while the rich peasants and landlords would try to keep wages down. The rich and middle peasants who had different aims and ambitions were not likely to give their blessing to the movement of the agricultural labourers for higher wages. It is noteworthy that the agricultural labourers, who were mostly Harijans, were raged against the upper-caste landlords and rich peasants. As Danial Thorner observed : "The Kisans are drawn primarily from cultivating and artisan castes; the

mazdoor-log, primarily from Harijans, scheduled, depressed or backward classes ... he is up against the deeply entrenched tradition of rural inequality - a tradition which goes back to centuries if not millennia"¹⁵. Indeed, the agricultural labourer enjoyed a lower status in society than even a share-cropper who was regarded as grihastha owning plough and cattle¹⁶.

The demand for setting up of a separate union for the agricultural labourers thus under deliberation figured in almost all sessions of provincial Kisan Sabha and in the sessions of AIKS. The issue was always combined with the debate within the CPI on the development of capitalist relations in Indian agriculture. After the split, the CPI mentioned in its new party programme that capitalist economy becomes dominant in the agrarian front by expelling semi-feudal landlordism. It organised the agricultural labour union in 1968. But the CPI(M) programme and its other main document the Tasks in the Agrarian Front do not deny the penetration of capitalism into agriculture in a few areas but find semi-feudal landlordism still dominant in Indian agriculture. For it, agricultural labourers should be brought to the fold of peasant movement for radical land reform in India. However, later in 1982 the CPI(M) organised the agricultural labourers' union (AIAWU-CPI-M) as a part of Kisan Sabha. The CPI(M) seeks to mobilise all forces against the bourgeois-landlord rule where as the CPI seeks

to strengthen the fight against capitalist path of development in India. Their views are illustrated by their activities of the post 1967 periods.

The demand for setting up of a democratic body, representative in character, for the administration of local bodies and co-operatives is as old as the peasant organisation.

Revolutionary peasants in their liberated areas in Telengana established Gram Raj committees which included "men, women and leaders of village squades". These committees tried to cope with the problems of village administration. In the liberated areas, agricultural labourers were organised, and their daily wages increased; the monthly wages of farm servants, paid in kind, also increased. It is significant that women were elected to the Gram Raj Committees¹⁷. However, this was the Telengana experience of rural democracy practised by the peasant activists on the line of Chinese experience of liberated areas. The CPI leadership in the **Third Congress in 1953** discarded this line¹⁸.

In view of the rising peasant movement, the Congress rule at the Centre and states took the steps for the abolition of Statutory landlordism and establishment of Panchayati System, National Extension Service and Community Development Project inspired by the American counsel. The CPI and its

Kisan Sabha saw these institutions as means to provide the support base in the rural areas for the bourgeois and landlord rule. At the end of the First Plan appointed Balwantrai Mehta Committee recommended Panchayati system with actual power to the rural people.

The All-India Kisan Sabha in its Fifteenth Session held in Bongaon (W.B) in November 1957 observed that the existing rural administration was nothing but pro-landlord. In its resolution it stated that "no lasting improvement in the condition of the peasantry can be brought about without a thorough democratisation" of the machinery responsible for the enforcement of the laws; and that "despite ten years of freedom, the bureaucracy continues to function in an irresponsible and authoritarian manner" and displays "indifference and callousness towards the legitimate demands of the peasant masses".

It further states "All institutions and organisations set up by the government in connection with agricultural development and rural welfare such as Development Blocks, Panchayati, and co-operatives are getting increasingly bureaucratised and subjected more and more to official intervention and control. The inevitable result is that they function in isolation from, and very often in open conflict with the interests of the common people in the village ...

"The pro-landlord character of the entire administrative machinery is seen in every aspect of rural life from the manner in which land records are maintained by the village officials to the methods adopted by the police and the magistracy ...

"The prevailing system of justice is so expensive, inefficient and corrupt that the common peasants are subjected to all types of harrassment even in the most ordinary civil and criminal cases .

Measures were proposed by the Sabha, "for the democratisation of the administration and the protection of popular interests"¹⁹.

In the next session held at Mayavaram, Tamilnad, in April 1959, the AIKS reiterated its sustained demand for truly democratic Panchayat system and cooperative organisations for the rural administration and development. The Resolution wanted all state Panchayat Acts to be uniform as far as possible, the system of nomination to be abolished, overriding and arbitrary power for executive officers and other administrative officials over the development and nationbuilding activity at the village level to be entrusted to panchayats²⁰. As regards rural cooperative societies, a resolution stated that "one of the most objectionable features of the present administration is its utilization by the ruling party to strengthen its own position"²¹.

where both these parties have considerable political base in the state both in the pre-and post-split periods.

Section 2 Political Position of the CPI and the CPI(M) in West Bengal

In the foregoing chapters the programmatic positions and the views of the CPI and the CPI(M) on agrarian reforms and rural democracy have been analysed in their broad perspective. Here, the study will analyse their individual practices for realising their respective programmatic demands with reference to West Bengal within the period mentioned.

To communists strategic goals once formulated remain valid for the entire stage of revolution. These strategic goals are realised through the judicious selection and pursuit of day to day tactics. The use of government machineries while in power and the constant mobilisation of the strength of the party and mass organisations constitute tactical means. This chapter will deal purely with the tactical aspects of these two communist parties over the said issues with reference to the state of West Bengal where they have been able to form the state government through elections at different times.

Bengal was always one of the focal points for the development of modern Indian political movements since the

British colonial rule due to its earlier exposure to Western education, urbanisation and industrialization. However, Bengal's prominence early in the nationalist movement and over the Indian National Congress declined with the advent of Mahatma Gandhi as its leader. Therefore, an alternative course of nationalism was becoming stronger. The split of the Congress Party and the Swarajya Party formed in 1923, headed by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das was opposed to the all-India leadership of the Congress party in this state. The politics of Bengal since 1920's was dominated by Swarajya Party, Krishak Praja Party of Fazlul Haque, Muslim League, Communist Party of India and a good number of terrorist outfits.

After the death of C.R. Das his mantle fell on Subhas Chandra Bose. He rose to all-India eminence specially since 1928 when in association with Pandit J. Nehru, he moved a resolution for complete independence as the goal of Indian National Congress. Bose also dominated the scene in Bengal Congress till 1939 when facing a total non-cooperation from Gandhi and most other all-India leaders, he had to resign from the office of the President of the Congress. Even Rabindra Nath Tagore complained of serious injustice done to Bengal by this attitude of the all-India leadership of the Congress. Bose then organised his Forward Bloc and pursued a challenging alternative to the Congress from Bengal.

The Communists on the other hand were relatively more popular in Bengal than in many other places of the country. This strength was utilised by them heroically in 1945 in a wide spread Tebhaga Movement.

The Congress leadership in their eagerness to get power from the British rulers agreed not only to the partition of the country but also to the partition of Bengal and Punjab on the basis of religious identity of their populations. The Bengal Congress felt very deeply the pangs of this partition. Most factions within it were unhappy about the all India leadership's acquiescence to the British plans in this matter.

These events clearly show that the all-India leadership of the Congress party did not enjoy the same kind of allegiance in Bengal as they did elsewhere in the country.

From the beginning, the Communist Party of India (CPI) participated wholeheartedly and fought for national independence generally in line with the Indian National Congress using its broad platform. But the CPI stayed away from the Quit India movement in August, 1942 and when the Congress leaders were released at the end of the World War II, on October 5, 1945 a charge-sheet was issued against the CPI for acting against Congress decisions. The CPI General Secretary P.C.Joshi asked all members of the Party to sever connections with the Congress. Only AICC members of CPI were asked to answer the charge-sheet.

The CPI from the beginning always favoured the electoral means as one of the principal tactics and participated in the provincial elections under the Government of India Act, 1935. In the provincial election of Bengal (before partition) in 1946 three CPI candidates independently of the Congress were elected to the Bengal Provincial Legislative Assembly. They were Ratan Lal Brahman from Darjeeling, Rupnarayan Roy from Dinajpur (now in Bangladesh) and Jyoti Basu from Kanchrapara (Railway) constituencies²².

The electoral position of the CPI (before its split into the CPI and the CPI(M) in 1964) in the state legislature in West Bengal can be seen from Table 1

Figures in the Table 1 indicate the extent to which the CPI and left parties had come to dominate the opposition in West Bengal Legislative Assembly. Like the Congress Party, the Communist Party of India had steadily increased the number of seats in the successive elections in the State. Similarly, the percentage of votes received by the CPI also rising from 10.76 per cent in 1952 to 17.82 per cent in 1957 and to 24.96 per cent in 1962.

Moreover, the CPI had been able to unite, at least for electoral purposes, with other left groups to form leftist - electoral fronts. In 1952, the CPI-dominated electoral front included the CPI, the RSP, the Marxist Forward Bloc, the Revolutionary Republican Party and the Bolshevik Party.

Table 1 : Electoral Position of the Political Parties in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly²³

Parties	Number of seats won			Percentage of votes polled		
	1952	1957	1962	1952	1957	1962
Congress	150	152	157	38.93	46.14	47.29
CPI	28	46	50	10.76	17.82	24.96
Forward Bloc	11	8	13	5.29	3.84	4.61
PSP*	15	20	5	11.87	9.86	4.99
Jan Sangh	9	0	0	5.61	0.98	0.45
Hindu Mahasabha	4	0	0	2.37	2.04	0.80
Others	21	26	26	25.17	19.32	16.90

*In 1952 West Bengal Assembly election the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) was not there. It was Krishak Praja Majdur Party (KPMP) which fought this election. Later in 1953 it was renamed Praja Socialist Party (PSP).

In 1957 the leftist front called the United Left Election Committee consisted of the same group with the addition of the Praja Socialist Party. In 1962, the leftist coalition was known as United Left Front and the PSP remained outside the coalition. The tally of elected candidates and percentage of votes polled increased for these fronts from 42 and 27.5 in 1952 to 75 and 36.8 in 1957. There was a fall in respective figures to 63 and 36.1 in 1962. The decline was attributed to the anti-China hysteria and calumny against the Indian communists as Chinese agents.

In the state of Kerala the CPI captured state power through the popular electoral battle in 1957. It was a mark in the history not only in India but also within the world where communists rose to power through election. However, this government was toppled by the Central Congress government in 1959.

In the West Bengal political scenario in the later 1960's, the communists and their allies became a strong electoral and organisational force in the state. They had jointly organised numerous mass movements against the ruling Congress party. In spite of the split of the CPI in 1964 they put up a mighty challenge to the ruling Congress party in the state on ground of mounting food and economic crises. About the condition immediately, before the Fourth General Election (1967) in West Bengal, one description is : "the state was convulsed by a series of food riots a year before the election. Many opposition leaders were in jail at that time and most of the demonstrations against the scarcity of food and essential articles were spontaneous"²⁴. Police firing on a demonstration which claimed lives of a few students sparked the movement spontaneously against the Congress rule in the state. Besides, sporadic bandh (general strike) calls rocked the state. At one time it seemed that the state of West Bengal had become ungovernable²⁵. By working together in these movements the Marxist and Leftist parties were fast moving towards electoral understanding for the ensuing Fourth General Elections in this state.

In the pre-election electoral adjustment, the CPI and the CPI(M) brought forth two rival electoral fronts - PULF and ULF respectively. The People's United Left Front (PULF) was composed of four parties namely the CPI, Bangla Congress (a faction of the Indian National Congress formed in 1966 in this state), F.B and Bolshevic party. The Left Front (ULF) consisted of seven parties, namely, CPI(M), RSP, SSP, SUC, Workers' Party, FB(M) and RCPI.

In this election, the Congress was reduced to a minority and no front alone could come to power. The two Fronts, PULF and ULF, decided to forge a United Front and to end the continuous Congress rule. In this election, the CPI got 16 Assembly seats, the CPI(M) 43 and the Bangla Congress 34. The UF secured in total 146 Assembly seats out of 280 and it secured 54.6 per cent of votes; the Congress got 127 seats and 41.3 per cent votes in that election.

The United Front of the left and democratic parties formed the first ever state government in the state of West Bengal on 3rd March 1967. The CPI staked the claim in favour of its ally, Bangla Congress for the post of Chief Ministership. As a result the CPI(M) with the largest number of seats among the UF partners was allowed the second important post in the ministry. The veteran Congress leader Shri Ajoy Mukherjee now representing Bangla Congress became the Chief Minister. However internal squabbles, more

particularly between the CPI and the CPI(M), led to the premature end of the U.F. government on 21 November, 1967.

However in the next interim Fifth Assembly Election held on 9th February, 1969 the electorate of the state favoured the Front of the left and democratic parties. In this election the United Front of the left and democratic parties composed of fourteen parties and won 218 Assembly seats out of 280, and the Congress party got only 55 seats. In this election the Congress party received 40.42 per cent of the total votes polled and the remaining went in favour of the United Front. The electoral position of the individual front partners was : the CPI(M) won 80 seats with 19.55 per cent of votes, the CPI won 30 seats and 6.78 per cent votes, and the Bangla Congress won 33 seats and 8.00 per cent votes. Table 2 shows the electoral position of the political parties of West Bengal in the interim Fifth Assembly election for the state. But immediately after the declaration of the election results there was a controversy regarding the claim for Chief-Ministership²⁷. The CPI(M) claimed it. The CPI supported the claim of Bangla Congress. However, at the end the Front decided in favour of Ajoy Mukherjee, the Bangla Congress leader and the CPI(M) was to have the post of Deputy Chief-Minister.

To be brief, the internal squabbles and commotions among the front partners particularly between the CPI and

Table 2 : Electoral Positions in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly, 1967 and 1969²⁶

Parties	Assembly seats secured		Percentage of votes secured	
	1967	1969	1967	1969
Congress	127	55	41.13	40.42
CPI(M)	44	80	11.11	19.55
CPI	16	30	6.33	6.78
Bangla Congress	34	33	10.44	8.00
FB	13	21	3.87	5.40
RSP	6	12	2.14	2.75
FB(M)	1	1	0.21	0.19
RCPI	-	2	0.31	0.37
SUCI	4	7	0.72	1.48
Gorkha League	2	4	0.45	0.52
Progressive Muslim League	-	3	-	1.50
Others (including UF partners and independents)	33	32	23.01	13.04
	280	280	100.00%	100.00%

*In 1967, the United Front of the 11 Left and Democratic parties secured 146 seats and received 54.6% of the total votes.

**In 1969, the United Front of the 14 Left and Democratic parties secured 218 seats and received more than 50% of the total votes.

the CPI(M) had begun to increase steadily. The CPI all along tried to cut CPI(M) to size both in the government and in the organisational field. Some other smaller partners were also unhappy with the CPI(M)'s strength. There was failure or lack of effort to establish a proper coordination among the front partners. Therefore, the second U.F. government was handicapped from its very birth day. The emergence of the third communist party later known as the Communist Party of India (Marxist -Leninist) aggravated the situation when the latter took recourse to radical armed peasant struggles in some areas of the state. It created a lot of law and order problem in the state.

In the meantime, the CPI, in its Eighth Congress, 1968, had hinted a change in the national politics. It favoured a broad democratic alliance with the Congress led by Indira Gandhi. In Kerala the CPI(M) was excluded from the United front and CPI initially built-up a Mini-Front with the Kerala Congress and later entered into an alliance with the Congress. The already strained relation between the CPI and the CPI(M) reached a critical point. In West Bengal the CPI alleged that the big party dictatorship or bossism and sectarianism of the CPI(M) were the causes of tension in the Front Government.

On the other hand, the Bangla Congress which was close to CPI took the position that the front should continue but

radical movements launched by the CPI(M) in agrarian and industrial sectors should be stopped. It also criticised the CPI(M)'s hegemonism over the U.F. The Bangla Congress, therefore, organised a protest rally in Nov. 1969 in support of its stand and launched a three day satyagraha followed by a fast of its leaders. The CPI followed suit. A massive demonstration in Calcutta Maidan in Nov. 1969 was organised by the CPI to demonstrate the strength of the party as an indication of support for its policy during the U.F. period.²⁸

The difference among the coalition partners reached its apex on 19th March 1970 when the Chief Minister Ajoy Mukherjee resigned and the Second United Front Government fell prematurely.

But the electoral unity among the left parties broke in Kerala in 1969 and in West Bengal in 1970. The CPI in its Ninth Congress held in Cochin in 1971 endorsed the new tactical line to form an all India alliance with the progressive Congress led by Smt. Indira Gandhi for the immediate completion of its declared 'national democratic revolution'.

In the Sixth interim Assembly election in West Bengal, the CPI did not participate in the election-front led by

the CPI(M). The Bangla Congress, in the meantime forged an alliance with the Congress party. No political party or group could secure majority in the Assembly. The CPI(M) scored 113 seats. The CPI, 13 seats, and the Congress finished second with 105 seats. At the end, the CPI(M)'s call upon the CPI and the F.B. to form a post-election United Front was turned down by the CPI. Ajoy Mukherjee became the Chief Minister with the support of the Congress but that ministry too lasted for a few months.

In the next mid-term Seventh Assembly election in West Bengal in 1972, the CPI joined hands with the Congress and it bagged 34 seats, an all-time record so far and the Congress formed the ministry. In this election the CPI(M) had lost nearly 100 seats though its share of the vote fell only by 4 per cent. The party's allegation was that Congress had rigged the polls. This allegation widely supported by many impartial observers. The CPI(M) boycotted the Assembly. However, the CPI-Congress bonhomie remained intact till 1978.

The political positions of the CPI and the CPI(M) immediately after the Internal Emergency period could be attributed to their relationship with Congress(I) which was responsible for the declaration of Emergency. In the post-emergency elections in 1977 the Congress(I) was routed both from the Centre and from many states. The CPI

-Congress(I) alliance in the 1970 's pushed the CPI into an identity crisis in Indian politics. Its policy of collaboration with the Congress exposed it to guilt by association²⁹. In West Bengal it contested the election independently and brought a very poor electoral result. Only 2 seats in the Eighth Assembly election were secured by the CPI.

The CPI(M) 's position in the national level politics and state politics of West Bengal appeared less problematic during 1970 to 1977. Its mighty challenge in West Bengal to the State Congress particularly in the period of Emergency brought a good electoral dividend in the post-emergency election. CPI(M) found this time Forward Bloc, and RSP as allies. The table below shows the electoral positions of the parties in West Bengal Legislative Assembly elections of 1977, 1982 and 1987.

Table 3 : West Bengal Assembly Elections³⁰

Parties	1977	1982	1987
CPI(M)	177	174	187
FB	27	28	26
RSP	20	29	18
CPI	2	7	11
Cong (I)	20	53*	40
SUC	4	2	2
Janata Party	29	-	-
+Others	15	11	10
Total	294	294	294

* Cong (I) 49 + Cong (S) 4 = 53.

+These included some partners and supported independent candidates of LF.

The CPI(M) led first Left Front consisted of six parties namely CPI(M), F.B., RSP, Revolutionary Bangla Congress, RCPI and Marxist Forward Bloc. They together won 230 seats with 46.1 per cent votes. The CPI(M) alone received 177 seats with 35.8 per cent votes. Sri Jyoti Basu became the Chief Minister from the CPI(M). The Congress(I) secured only 20 seats with 23.4 per cent votes. The anti-Congress feelings in West Bengal also benefited the newly built Janata Party which received 29 seats with 20.5 per cent votes. Though the Panchayat elections held in 1978 in the state the CPI(M) consolidated its position in the rural areas of West Bengal³¹.

Table 4 : Electoral position of the following political parties in the parliamentary seats in West Bengal.

Parties	1977	1980	1984	1989
CPI(M)	17	28	18	27
CPI	-	3	3	3
FB	3	3	2	3
RSP	3	4	3	4
Cong.	3	4	16	4
BLD	15	-	-	
Independent (L.F. supported)	1			
Other	-	-	-	1

Source : Election Recorder by Dilip Banerjee, Calcutta, Book Front Pub. 1990.

* G.N.L.F. supported by Congress.

In the parliamentary election held in 1977, the CPI(M) and its allies secured 39 seats out of 42 seats in the state of West Bengal. The principal contender, the Congress party secured only 3 seats and the CPI could not achieve any seat. In this election the CPI(M) itself secured 17 seats which was highest score of any political party in the state and its ally the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD) secured 17 seats. However, the Congress party was routed in this parliamentary election and the first non-Congress Ministry was formed led by the Janata Party at the Centre.

In the next parliamentary election in the state the CPI(M) led L.F. parties maintained their steady victory. They supported 3 candidates of the CPI which secured 3 seats and ultimately became a coalition partner of the L.F. thereafter. Another significant matter, the BLD was disappeared from the electoral position and the Congress was marginally improved its position by securing 4 seats.

The next parliamentary election (1984) was held in a somewhat different political situation in the country. The assassination of the Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi in 1984, evoked widespread sympathy in the country and brought the Congress party with an ever largest majority to the parliament. In this situation CPI(M) secured 18 seats and the Congress party 16 seats. However, this position of the two parties changed in the next 1989 parliamentary election

in the state of W. Bengal. The L.F. parties won ... most of the seats and the Congress party won only ... seats in the state.

In the Ninth West Bengal Assembly Election of 1982, the L.F. recorded a steady electoral achievement. In this election the L.F. was composed of nine parties led by the CPI(M). The three new parties, CPI, the DSP and the West Bengal Socialist Party joined the L.F. The CPI had changed its earlier stand in its Eleventh Congress in Bhatinda in 1978 and entered into the L.F. coalition in the state in 1980.

In the 1982 state legislative assembly election the Left Front secured 238 seats with 52.65 per cent votes. The CPI(M) got 174 seats with 36.55 per cent votes. The Congress(I) tally of seats was 49 and its percentage of votes was 35.67. The Congress(I) led electoral coalition was composed of Congress(S), Muslim League, AICP, Jharkhand and Christen Democratic Party. The CPI secured 7 seats³². That the CPI(M) led coalition came to power.

Eighth Lok Sabha election were held on 6th January 1980. The CPI(M) led Left Front in West Bengal was approached by the state CPI leaders for 4 seats. But the CPI(M) conceded 3 seats. However in this election the L.F. won over 37 seats out of 41. The other at that time went later in favour of the CPI(M).

The Tenth Legislative Assembly elections in 1987 in West Bengal repeated more or less the position of 1972 and 1982. The CPI(M) led Left Front secured 251 seats with 52.94 per cent votes. The CPI(M) bagged 187 seats with 39.29 per cent votes. The CPI secured 11 seats with 1.92 per cent votes. The other front partners did better results in this election. On the other side the main opposition the Congress Party secured only 40 seats with 41.83 per cent of votes³³.

In the 8th Lok Sabha elections held after the assassination of the Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi on Oct 31, 1984 Congress received 16 and the Left Front 26 Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal.

The CPI(M)-led L.F. thought of reorganising the panchayat system with certain amendments of the Panchayat Act, 1973. After necessary amendments of this Act, the L.F. held the three-tier Panchayat Election in the state. In the Panchayat elections the L.F. partners failed to arrive at seat adjustments in a number of seats.

The Table 5 show the electoral positions of the contesting parties in the consecutive three panchayat elections during the L.F. Govt. in West Bengal.

The electoral position of the Left Front in West Bengal since 1977 has remained steady. Congress(I), the principal opponent remained in second position. But the

Table 5 : Party-wise Electoral Position in Three-Tier Panchayat Elections (1978, 1983, 1988) in West Bengal (excluding Darjeeling).³⁷

Party		Gram Panchayat	Panchayat Samiti	Zilla Parishad	Total in all three tiers
CPI(M)	1978	27886	5555	482	33923
	1983	24171	5023	453	29647
	1988	33918	6549	530	40997
CPI	1978	815	131	5	952
	1983	701	94	1	796
	1988	896	114	7	1017
R.S.P.	1978	1665	349	30	2044
	1983	1232	248	17	1497
	1988	1572	276	25	1873
F.B.	1978	1528	320	43	1891
	1983	1080	192	25	1297
	1988	1405	222	23	1650
Cong (I)	*1978	14156	2025	65	16246
	1983	14641	2526	151	17318
	1988	12298	1712	61	14071

* Cong (I) + Cong (R + Supported Ind.)

Table 5 contd ...

Table 5 contd ...

Independent and others					
	1978	444	227	11	2638
	1983	2708	307	10	3025
	* 1988	2400	227	11	2638

* Independent candidates supported by the L.F. or any L.F. constituent party secured 168, 9 and 4 seats respectively in the Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad. Their total tally in all three tiers together was 181.

Table 6 : Party-wise Percentage of Votes Polled in the Three-tier Panchayat Election (1978, 1983, 1988) in West Bengal (excluding Darjeeling)³⁵

Party		Gram Panchayat	Panchayat Samiti	Zilla Parishad	Total in all three-tiers
CPI(M)	1978	59.98	66.10	76.75	61.09
	1983	54.28	59.87	68.95	55.33
	1988	64.62	71.97	80.67	65.86
CPI	1978	1.75	1.56	0.80	1.71
	1983	1.57	1.12	0.15	1.49
	1988	1.71	1.25	1.06	1.63
R.S.P.	1978	3.58	4.15	4.78	3.68
	1983	2.77	2.96	2.59	2.79
	1988	2.99	3.03	3.81	3.01

contd ...

Table 6 contd ...

F.B.	1978	3.29	3.81	6.85	3.41
	1983	2.43	2.29	3.80	2.42
	1988	2.68	2.44	3.50	2.55
Congress I	*1978	30.45	24.10	10.35	29.25
	1983	32.88	30.11	22.98	32.32
	1988	23.43	18.81	9.28	22.61
* [Cong (I) + Cong (R) + Supported Independent]					
Independent and Others	1978	0.95	0.28	0.47	0.85
	1983	5.07	3.65	1.53	5.65
	*1988	4.57	2.50	1.68	4.24

* In the Gram Panchayat 0.32%, in the Panchayat Samiti 0.10% and in the Zilla Parishad 0.61% (total in these three -tier 0.29%). seats were won by independents supported by the other L.F. Partners.

place of CPI was less significant, though its entry into the L.F. in 1982 helped it to recover itself to a large extent.

The panchayat elections were encouraging for the L.F. partners. The rural vote bank remained during this period favourable to the L.F.

Section 3 (a) Policy Pursued by them During 1964 to 1977

In the first and second United Front governments (of 1967 and 1969) in West Bengal, the Communists in the CPI and the CPI(M) dominated the scene. They had their vast experience in launching movements as an opposition to the foreign rulers and the ruling Congress both at the States and the Centre. Important among them were Tebhaga movement (1945-46) in Bengal, Telengana armed peasant revolution (1948-51) in Andhra Pradesh and the Kerala experience in 1957-59 in forming the state government by the communists.

Through their participation in the two United Front governments in West Bengal, both the CPI and the CPI(M) got an immediate scope of practising their individual programmatic understanding formulated after their split. To repeat, the CPI(M) put the agrarian question in the forefront of its strategic and tactical politics. In its analysis it explained the present state structure and democracy under the Congress rule as one of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and feudal landlords led by the big bourgeoisie³⁶. Therefore, according to the party's programme maximum emphasis had been laid on radical land reform as it understood that the basic contradiction in this people's democratic stage remains between the landlords and the peasantry particularly of its poor and landless sections in the vast Indian countryside.

On the other hand the CPI in its newly adopted programme understood the nature of the existing Indian state as the organ of class rule of the national bourgeoisie as a whole in which the big bourgeoisie holds powerful influence and this classrule has strong links with the landlords³⁷. Therefore, to the CPI, the landlords did not have a place in the seat of power in the state. The power of the state is fully monopolised by the national bourgeoisie which was being constantly influenced by the big bourgeoisie so that the policies of the government could be tilted along the capitalist path. Therefore, the basic contradiction in this national democratic stage is between the big and monopoly bourgeoisie and its imperialist allies on the one hand, and the national bourgeoisie and the democratic classes and people on the other.

Besides, the CPI(M) understood that though statutorily landlordism had been abolished still semi-feudal landlordism existed vigorously as it enjoyed the power of the state; and it assessed that the capitalist penetration into agriculture had been super-imposed upon semi-feudal landlordism³⁸. Therefore, the existence of the old and the new made a situation which did not herald a change in favour of the vast peasant masses of India. On the other hand, the CPI was convinced that "The curbing of the semi-feudal land relations together with independent capitalist development of the national economy has given an impetus to the growing

commercialisation of agriculture, production for the market and increasing replacement of tenants-at-will by wage labour"³⁹. For it, furthermore, "capitalist relations of production have made significant inroads into the agrarian set-up"⁴⁰.

Their separate understanding of the agrarian problem embodied in their respective party-programmes have led them to formulate their tactics on land reforms in all the situations whether they were in power or in the opposition. However, the manifestation of their individual tactics would have to be judged from their practices in the state of West Bengal where they have been in power for a considerable period of time.

Besides, according to the CPI(M), all powers were virtually concentrated at the hands of the Central government and the possibility of independent action by the state governments was, in reality, minimum. The purpose of participating in electoral contest was if voted to power, to publicize and highlight that reality. The CPI(M) expected to use the administrative machinery for the support of class struggle. But on the contrary the CPI did not categorically estimate the limitation of the autonomy of the state government and had more flexibility than the CPI(M)'s "text book revolutionaries"⁴¹ as a CPI leader said. This was because the CPI had altogether a different

reading about the class character of the Indian society⁴². The assessment of the Congress rule at the Central government was basically different for the CPI and the CPI(M) though they had built an electoral understanding in many states in the 1950's including West Bengal and Kerala.

The radical construction of the views of the CPI(M) about the ruling Congress was not only based on its programme but also on its past experience. The CPI(M) leadership felt that people's democratic government at the state level could give the revolutionary movement a fillip and strengthened the mass movement but could not solve any of the fundamental economic and political problems of the nation. All they could hope to achieve was immediate relief to the people on the basis of consensual minimum programme that would include agrarian reform and popular participation in state and lower level administration⁴³.

After the installation of the U.F. governments in West Bengal and Kerala, the Central Committee of the (CPI(M) decided that the new governments should be utilized as 'instruments of struggle' in the hands of the working people rather than as agents with real power to give substantial benefits to the people⁴⁴. From the CPI(M)'s formulation, participation in the government as instrument of struggle could be interpreted in three ways : the use of state patronage to strengthen the party; class

struggle through direct action against the propertied interests; substantive conflict with the Central Congress government⁴⁵.

As a result what was naturally expected, there occurred a combination of agitation and administration which constituted the central strategy of the U.F. government. However, many researchers noticed that there were administrative measures for providing relief to the people and the agitation the front partners launched was only to mobilise the popular support in favour of the contending partners in the U.F. Agitation basically was on two subjects : immediate radical land reforms, and change in the centre-state relation in order to secure more autonomy and powers for the state. In the 18 points U.F. programmes these subjects found little explicit mention. In the 32-points programme of the second U.F. government adequate importance was given to land reforms. Therefore, in regard to the policy matter the second U.F. government was more methodical in formulating its policy. Regarding land reform, the manifesto embodied that : "The U.F. government will undertake a thorough programme of land reforms so as to ensure : a) suitable amendments to the present Estates Acquisition and Land Reforms' Acts in the interests of the peasantry; b) exemption of Land Revenue for peasants holding not more than 3 acres of land; c) detection, recovery and distribution of all Benami land held in excess

of ceiling; d) acquisition of unutilised land in plantation; bringing of tank fisheries, land comprised in orchards, dairy, poultry etc., then excluded from the operation of land ceiling, under E.A. Act; e) distribution of surplus and Khas land among landless and poor peasants on a permanent basis; f) speedy payment of compensation to small intermediaries; g) hereditary right of share-croppers to cultivate Barga land; h) suspension for three years of eviction of share-croppers from land pending comprehensive legislation; i) free distribution of land upto 5 cottas for dwelling houses in rural areas to those who have no homestead; tenancy rights of homestead land upto 5 cottas to those who are in occupation without such right and who have no other homestead; j) removal of jurisdiction of civil courts in matters concerning ceiling, malafide transfers, vested land etc. and setting up of special land tribunals to deal with these matters; k) a new survey of land for the purpose of settlement and cancellation of all malafide records made in the past; l) moratorium on four year old existing debts of peasants holding land upto 3 acres to the Government and settlement of other debts and m) return of land to the original sellers sold due to distress"⁴⁶.

The manifesto expected : "It will help the peasants in their struggle for detection, recovery, acquisition and distribution of Benami land and the realisation of other legitimate democratic demands"⁴⁷.

It is generally assumed that the landed class is more politically articulated than the peasantry. Besides being susceptible to the influence of big landlords the bureaucracy could hardly be expected to show impartiality and eagerness in discharging its pro-peasant responsibilities. The Congress leadership and the governments it ran both at the state and at the centre did not develop strong peasant organisations to complement the governmental bureaucratic machinery for actual land reform. "As a result the enforcement of land reform programmes, which, if genuinely carried out, would be a revolutionary transformation of rural India - falls entirely on the shoulders of the reluctant bureaucrats"⁴⁸.

However, the United Front government wanted to retain these legislations subject to suitable amendments in favour of peasants⁴⁹. In none of the two terms of U.F. government any effective and comprehensive legislative measure on land reform was taken up. The communist dominated U.F. governments (1967, 1969) were determined to utilise the existing land reform legislations which were left unutilised due to the Congress's political dependence on the landed gentry. The West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act 1953 provided for a ceiling of 25 Acres on land holdings. Besides, there were legal prescriptions for exceeding the limit. Under section 6 of the Act, the land owner was entitled to hold more than 25 acres of land for certain enumerated purposes⁵⁰. Among these purposes were included

fisheries, tea gardens and orchards, mills and factories, cooperative firms, etc.

These provisions of law were criticised by the communists as being the reform of the zamindari system and not agrarian reform⁵¹. Additionally the law prescribed for adequate compensation to the landlords for the ceiling surplus land vested. Nevertheless, till 1967 roughly four and a half lakh acres of cultivable land were vested in the government and about a lakh acre of land was held by the landowners through litigation. Infact, the allegation was that a huge amount of surplus land was not transferred by land owners till 1969⁵². This huge amount of land was either held forcibly by the erstwhile zamindars or locked in multiple litigations⁵³. Therefore, to take into possession this land the U.F government required to organise the landless and poor peasant masses against the forcible occupation of excess lands by landlords and side by side a suitable legislative measure was necessary in amendment of the previous land laws. However, the latter measure was not taken seriously, perhaps because the situation was not conducive for legislative deliberation. Rather the Front partners preferred the first method which could bring them their immediately desired electoral gains. During the next term of Left Front government (since 1977) the communist and left parties attempted legislative action.

In the election manifesto published before the fifth mid-term Assembly election, the U.F partners a programme of setting up progressive local administrative bodies. The manifesto stated that it "will introduce progressive change in the present system of local-self government and democratic Municipalities and Panchayat bodies and give them power and finance with a view to ensure their proper functioning"⁵⁴.

However, the programme was not implemented. For the purpose of implementing the land distribution programme, a series of Advisory Committees were formed in 1967 consisting of local government, party leaders, lawyers and leaders from various peasant groups for going into a maze of consequences that would flow from the implementation of land reforms⁵⁵. But in 1968 these committees were reshuffled at the time when the U.F was out of power⁵⁶.

With the U.F's second coming in 1969, H.K.Konar, the main architect of the Land polity of the U.F government toured extensively all the districts and ordered the Land Reform Officers to act in close consultation with 'leaders of local government bodies' and 'representatives of local peasant organisations'. He instructed the local officers to give due consideration to the suggestions placed by the representatives of the political parties. He felt, with an amount of sincerity of officials, local governmental bodies and peasant organisations, better results in the

field of land reforms would be attained⁵⁷.

In the beginning the U.F constituents suggested the formation of local 'People's Committees' consisting of representatives of all constituent political parties and representatives of their peasant organisations. Initially, the CPI(M) resisted the formation of such committees on the plea that such committees would emerge out of the mass movements. Subsequently, such committees were formed. These were composed largely of the CPI(M) members and supporters and representatives of its peasant organisations due to the party's wider political base. The CPI ranked second in this move. In this row, all constituent parties particularly the big five came to the field. But later fearing the strength of the CPI(M) the other partners opposed the move and wanted the People's committees raised by the CPI(M) to be dissolved⁵⁸.

The establishment of rural democracy through the decentralisation of power was actually expedited during the return of the left parties in 1977 to power in West Bengal. The progress made after 1977 will be reviewed in the next section.

Section 3b) Organisational Steps Taken During the U.F Government :

On the land question the U.F government set before itself a two fold programme : recovery of vest and benami land; and redistribution of land among the landless poor. This programme had wider ramifications which were not foreseen in the beginning. Some among the front partners which did not think of land reform in their past political activities also came forward to take part in the peasant movement obviously for strengthening their competitive political base in the rural population.

The Land and Land Revenue Ministry was presided over by Hare Krishna Konar, a veteran CPI(M) leader in both terms of U.F govt in West Bengal. For him, the new policy of the government would be to "recover land involved in benami and other transactions with popular cooperation" and "the police in the rural areas were instructed not to suppress the democratic and legitimate struggles of the people"⁵⁹.

The Minister instructed his ministry to start a series of investigations for tracing benami and other holdings in excess of 25 acres. Besides, peasant organisations of the constituent parties began to organise movements. Within a very short period with the help of peasant organisations the U.F government brought a radical change in the

implementation of the existing land reform laws. This was done by way of mobilisation mainly of the agricultural labourers, landless and poor peasants and making the police virtually ineffective. As a result of radical change in the implementation of land reform legislations in West Bengal by the middle of 1967 about 4.5 lakh acres of surplus agricultural land were vested in the state, most of which were allowed by the previous Congress government to remain in the possession of zamindars and intermediaries. In this period about one lakh acres of land were locked in court cases. The U.F government in 1967 distributed 2.30 lakh acres of land to about 2.38 lakh landless and poor peasants⁶⁰. By April 1969, H.K.Konar claimed that the government traced 1,53,000 acres of benami holdings. In his speech the Minister informed the Legislative Assembly in 1969 that another 4,00,000 acres of land in excess of the 25 acres limit were still held by the erstwhile zamindars and jotdars⁶¹. The success of U.F government in the recovery of vest and benami land brought the issue relating to land reforms fruitfully to the lime light in national politics.

The peasants started a big movement to occupy surplus and benami lands. Occupation of such lands by hoisting red flags became a common practice. The landlords tried to frustrate government steps by going to law courts and obtaining ex-parte injunctions. More than 2 lakh acres were hit by such court orders and H.K.Konar stated that in this

matter the government and its bureaucracy could do little, but the peasant movement defeated to a considerable extent this design of the landlords⁶².

The mobilization of peasant fronts by the U.F partners constituted thus the main plank of the Government's success in the sphere of land reforms. Such mobilization generated consciousness, militancy and a sense of organisation among the peasants. This was evident from the increasing urge for enrolling as primary members for Kisan Sabha and its volunteers. Thus there was the emergence of a large number of Kisan Sabha Workers at the grass root level. Admittedly, there had been a significant rise in the membership of peasant organisations in West Bengal. The AIKS-CPI(M) membership in West Bengal was 5,21,694 in 1967, and 5,89,833 in 1969⁶³. The AIKS-CPI membership also rose to 76,000 in 1970⁶⁴. In 1968, the CPI in the state raised an Agricultural Workers organisation.

Beside the drive for recovery of vest and benami lands through peasant mobilization, the U.F. partners took the next step to distribute land to poor peasants and agricultural labourers. For this purpose, the Minister of Land and Land Revenue instructed in 1967 to establish Land Advisory Committees consisting of lawyers, local government and party leaders and leaders from various peasants organisations and to press them into action. But they soon became dysfunctional because the first U.F

of 1969 reconstituted these bodies and instructed the local officers to give due consideration to the suggestions placed by the representatives of the local bodies. To Konar, the primary consideration was to enlist the support of rural mass organisations for the purpose of ensuring "prompt action, instead of allowing time to jotdars to go for court injunctions which delay distribution of vested land"⁶⁵.

Thus the U.F government departed from the practice of relying on the revenue officials for the implementation of land reform. The U.F government had thought of land reform as a means to achieve two goals : to promote equitable sharing of resources of agricultural income by undoing the landlord-economy and to improve productive capacity and, perhaps the more important, to strengthen the power-base in the countryside by organising the mass of peasants and agricultural labourers on their class line. Efforts were made to achieve these goals by removing the subservience of poor peasants and agricultural labourers to the landlord-jotdar-money lender combine through the creation of separate organisations for these reform beneficiaries. By organising the beneficiaries and mobilising them in the process of implementing land reforms, the U.F government took an effective step, as revealed through results indicated above.

The invitation to different political parties of the U.F for organising the peasants brought a competition among the big five parties in the U.F. Their competition was mainly centred on the aim of expansion of their respective support-base in the countryside. Inter-party clashes that followed this drive would show that the CPI(M) was the principal contender in most of the cases. The State Secretariat of the CPI(M) issued a directive to its party workers "to recover benami lands and distribute them among the landless peasants"⁶⁶. Jyoti Basu, Deputy Chief Minister, assured his party workers that the "government would support all forms of legitimate struggles of the people"⁶⁷. The CPI(M) played a leading role in implementing the Govt. policy on land reform through its peasant organisation. It would be evident that the CPI(M) was engaged in 'forcible' occupation of agricultural land and fisheries alleged to have been illegally held by zamindars and jotdars. The CPI too in its strongholds did not hesitate to press its peasant organisation into action and other U.F partners too did likewise. With the spurt of political activity in the countryside there was disquiet in rural parts of the state and in many cases the seizure of land and fisheries led to a maze of court cases and counter cases were filed by landlords, tenants, government and political parties while administrative machinery and the police by and large remained ineffective. The backwash of inter-party clashes began to be felt also in the working of the U.F government in 1969⁶⁸.

To eradicate discords among the front partners People's committees were raised which consisted of representatives of various U.F constituent parties. Representatives from the CPI(M) were recruited more in number and they mostly dominated the committees. Other front partners subsequently raised their rural volunteers and different U.F parties were set against each other. In spite of intra-Front commotion, the struggles for recovery of vest and benami land continued and eviction of tenants was resisted. This movement had faced somewhere stiff opposition from the landlords and the rural rich. Middle peasants were also frightened in view of the regimented attack of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers. To retain the unity among the cultivating peasantry, H.K. Konar assured to protect the interests of the small and middle peasants and stated that, "everything would be done to protect the farmers' interests"⁶⁹.

The recording of rights of bargadars was not stepped up immediately which had to be done through land settlement.

Although the U.F governments did not adopt comprehensive amendments of the existing land laws, it adopted certain interim measures and enacted some legislations. It passed legislations banning all evictions for one year, conferring rights of ownership of homestead lands upto one twelfth of an acre on poor peasants and agricultural labourers free of

cost, requisitioning fallow cultivable land and changing the flat rate of land revenue system into a graded system making family holdings upto 3 acres of agricultural land rent-free, keeping unaltered the revenue on holdings from 3 acres to 7 acres, increasing it to 1.25 times for 7 to 10 acres, 2 times for 10 to 15 acres, 3 times for 15 to 20 acres and 4 times for beyond 20 acres. Regarding the distribution of recovered vest and benami land, the tillers who own less than 2 acres were preferred. Illegal eviction of share-croppers was banned.

It was for the first time, the peasantry saw that the left government was actually interested in changing their plight and in establishing the peasant rule in the countryside.

In the next period (since 1972 to 1977) when the CPI entered an alliance with the Congress party both in the centre and state legislatures the struggle for land virtually stopped. However, the AIKS-CPI recorded its achievement during this period in its AIKS Report that in West Bengal 27,800 acres of land had been recovered and 14 members of its peasant organisation had been killed in the land struggle between 1970 and 1973. Its all India activity was said to have been more successful in land reform⁷⁰.

Section 4a) Policy Pursued by Them During 1977 to 1985.

In 1977, the communists and leftists came to dominate the political situation of the state once again. During the period of internal emergency and immediately after its withdrawal they invigorated their campaign against the ruling Congress. The electorate of this state remarkably favoured them in the State Assembly and Parliamentary elections held in 1977. Only the CPI being in alliance with the Congress suffered in these hustings.

The Left Front (L.F) which emerged in 1977 was led by the CPI(M). The L.F partners brought out a 36 point common minimum programme (election manifesto) where the issue of land reform received a fair attention but the question of rural democracy did not find any explicit mention.

With the coming of Left Front government primary importance was given to the implementation of land reforms policy in West Bengal. The basic areas of the reform were: (a) recovery of vest land and benami land above the ceiling in clandestine manner; and distribution of the same among the landless, poor peasants and agricultural labourers free of price; abolition of all scope of concentration of land through a suitable amendment of the existing land reform laws, and recording of the names of the bargadars to secure their interests; b) abolition of all financial debts of the

peasantry and steps to provide them with cheap and timely credit to eliminate their dependence on rural moneylenders and usurers; c) exemption of poor peasant from rent on land; d) to increase wages of agricultural labourers and creation of additional employment opportunities for them during the lean period in the year; and e) provision for seeds, manure, agricultural implements at a subsidised rate and for irrigation facilities⁷¹.

Steps taken to implement this programme may be classified in the following way : 1) enactment of legislation, 2) administrative measures for restructuring of land settlement and land management, 3) mobilisation of rural masses, 4) recording of bargadars, 5) distribution of the recovered land among the landless, poor and agricultural labourers. Recognising the limits to bureaucratic actions, the Left Front Government strongly felt that unless the beneficiaries of the land reform were organised themselves, the steps suggested for the alleviation of their misery would never succeed.

Major amendments to the West Bengal Land Reforms Act of 1955 were passed by the State Assembly on September 29, 1977 and the assent of the President received on February 1978⁷². The Act provided for a) eviction of bargadars as a punishable offence; b) exemption of the payment of land revenue upto 4 acres of land in irrigated and 6 acres of

land in non-irrigated areas; c) compulsory grant of receipt of a bargadar for delivery of his share; d) elevation of the status of bargadars as a kind of owner of the land by which they could mortgage the property to secure loan advances. The West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act was also suitably amended in 1977. A wide legal-cover was provided thus for the interests of the landless, bargadars and poor peasants in the countryside. A political commitment to genuine land reforms has by and large been reflected in these enactments.

New departments were also created in 1978 within the Land and Land Revenue Ministry for the purpose of different activities of the department and ensuring the speedy implementation of land reform schemes. Besides a significant shift was made in implementation of land reforms by involving the Panchayats. After necessary changes in the W.B. Panchayat Act of 1973 three-tier Panchayat elections were held in 1978 on the basis of party nomination. Immediately after the Panchayat elections, the Panchayat bodies were associated with the task of land reforms in the state. The emphasis on Panchayat bodies for land reform was due to the fact that the representatives of the rural people were in the know of facts about vested and benami land and about deserving poor among whom these lands should be distributed. A sample survey conducted by the Planning Department,

Government of West Bengal found that 80 per cent of the Gram Panchayat (lowest tier) members were drawn from the cultivators and poor occupational groups such as teachers, unemployed, landless labourer, bargadars and artisans⁷³.

The L.F found it necessary to organise the rural poor and weaker sections and to bring them in the rural orientation camps. A group of 30 to 40 agricultural labourers, new assignees of vested lands and landless share-croppers were selected from a cluster of villages in consultation with the peasant organisations working in the area in order "to gather first hand knowledge and understand the problems and difficulties of the rural poor as also to encourage them to come forward with their legitimate demands notwithstanding the threat and intimidation, economic as well as social pressure of vested interest groups in the rural areas"⁷⁴. This device helped the fulfilment of twin aims - mobilisation of rural poor and minimisation of inter-party clashes which vitiated the countryside during the U.F periods in the 1960's.

Another landmark in the land reform activities during the first L.F government was in the field of the recording of the names of share croppers, popularly known as 'operation barga'⁷⁵ in a revolutionary speed. The entire work of recording of bargadars under an intensive drive involved five distinct operations, namely, (1) identification of areas with the priority where there were large concentration of bargadars; (2) convening meetings of both

owners and sharecroppers by issuing legally valid notices and by beat of drums; (3) hearing of facts from both the parties and examining the documents, if any; 4) field verification; and 5) issuing certificates to sharecroppers whose names have been recorded.

Another important work of the first L.F government was to wage a massive movement for the increase of the wages of the agricultural workers. In this movement, the government, the parties of L.F and various peasant organisations were apprised and pressed into action through organising the rural agricultural labourers who were mostly unorganised for decades. In many places, these agricultural labourers were provided with vested lands, additional employment and other kinds of financial support. The demands of the agricultural labourers were fully realized at par with the rate fixed by the govt.⁷⁶.

The L.F government introduced the West Bengal Land Reforms (Amendment) Act 1981 (which received the President's assent in March 1986) for the abolition of intermediaries and imposition of ceiling limit for certain types of non-agricultural land which remained outside the ceiling limit in the previous ceiling Act (1955 Act as amended upto 1971). As the statement of objects and reasons mentioned. This amendment sought "to advance the cause of land reforms by breaking the concentration of land" and "by distributing

the ceiling surplus among the landless and landpoor people"⁷⁷.

Another provision was "for setting up land corporation to alleviate the difficulties faced by rai-yats holding small quantities of land ... A common service cooperative society is proposed in the Bill for catering to the needs of bargadars and patta-holders under section 49 for aiding them with implements and inputs for improved methods of cultivation. This is intended to free the poorest sections of the cultivators from the clutches of usurious money-lenders, and other vested interests"⁷⁸.

In the 1980 's, the political configuration of the L.F appeared to be much stronger after the entry of the CPI into the fold of the L.F in this state. By joining hands with the CPI(M), the CPI strengthened the left unity and simultaneously it repudiated its past policy of alliance with the Congress party. Some leaders who were now recognised as responsible for 1970-77 policies of collaboration with the Congress and still stuck to those policies were expelled.

For the 9th West Bengal Assembly elections (1982) the election manifesto⁷⁹ stressed more on the implementation of the land reform laws enacted by the first L.F government and early completion of the work of survey and settlement of Land records. Recording-of-rights to bargadars, enhancing wages of the agricultural labourers, protection

of the economic interests of the raiylats and bargadars if needed by exemption of their loan advances, extending irrigation facilities and storage facilities of agricultural products were among the most important measures. The manifesto called for ensuring active participation of the rural people to make the panchayat institutions agencies for sustained rural development particularly in the interest of the lower strata of the rural people.

The Left Front parties in West Bengal pursued in a sustained manner their policy of land reform and democratic decentralisation of power for the rural people through the panchayat bodies. They also pursued the policy of keeping a constant watch for preserving the results already achieved in these regards against their confirmed political opponents in the state and in the centre. The manifesto of the 10th Assembly election (1987) on policy of land reform and rural democracy emphasised practical tasks rather than carrying on polemics against the opponents. It pledged for planning at the district level for around rural development through land reform, additional employment of the agricultural labourers, irrigation through the use of under-ground water resources and new dams, flood control, intensive agriculture for more production, rearing of livestock better communication facilities and mass education, etc.⁸⁰.

The Land Reform Policy of the L.F for complete

abolition of landlordism and concentration of land and the establishment of democratic Panchayati system has received much attention. However, this is an alternative approach for India's vast rural development. Many committees and commissions and many state governments run by the non-left political parties also came to acknowledge the progress made in the states ruled by the left and communist parties.

Now the study will highlight the actual efforts by the major L.F parties particularly by the CPI(M) and CPI in the state of West Bengal and the success achieved thereby.

Section 4b) Respective Organisational Steps Pursued by Them in This Period

Resumption of power by the left parties in West Bengal in 1977 and their continuation till today is a noticeable event in the politics of this state. For immediate radical agrarian reforms and establishment of rural democracy, the L.F took a three-pronged strategy - legislative, administrative and organisational actions. The L.F parties activated their respective frontal organisations particularly at the local level for proper realisation of legislative and administrative measures. The initiatives of the CPI(M) among the front partners were more important in this regard as it considered radical land reform by abolition of

landlordism to be the central strategy of this stage of revolution.

Here the study will analyse the organisational steps since 1977 in the state of West Bengal.

The mobilisation of peasantry particularly its lower strata - small and marginal farmers, bargadars, landless agricultural labourers and poor artisans who constitute more than 80 per cent was the target of the Left Front parties to implement their land reform policy. Under the AIKS -CPI(M) there was an unprecedented upsurge in 1977 among all sections of peasantry in the shape of a big movement on the country-wide demand for recovery of vest and benami land, distribution of these lands among the poor peasantry and agricultural labourers, recording of rights of bargadars, increase of wages for the agricultural labourers, remunerative price for the agricultural produce etc. Within a very short period the countryside of West Bengal witnessed a different balance of power. The landlords' influence was shattered by poorer strata of the rural people and this time the bureaucracy and police administration remained neutral all along as directed by the L.F parties. Forcible occupation of land and crops of the landlords, mass procession in the village roads, social boycott of the landlords who had carried on repression during the previous Congress rule were the most important organisational activities of the

peasant organisations. Actually the CPI(M)-led L.F could impress upon the poorer strata that the Left Front Government could be used as their own instrument of struggle for land in the state. Therefore, they rallied round the peasant organisations of the L.F parties.

Table 7 shows the recovery of vest land and distribution and recording of rights of sharecroppers during the first five years of the L.F rule in the state of West Bengal*.

Table 7 : Distribution of Surplus Agricultural Land in Different States of India (in Acres)

State	Surplus land	Land taken possession by the govt.	Distribut-ed land	No. of benefi-ciaries
Andhra Pradesh	767753	484798	362798	308756
Assam	604172	527023	389164	358697
Bihar	411698	305372	225553	254386
Gujarat	239977	145184	107667	24719
Haryana	119239	110701	110521	37106
Himachal Pradesh	284053	381462	3340	4400
Jammu-Kashmir	456000	450000	450000	450000
Karnatak	293809	114344	116885	26869
Kerala	126195	89587	59651	118403
Madhya Pradesh	298919	209174	136839	49584
Maharashtra	708705	607484	508501	126215

contd ...

Table 7 contd ...

Manipur	1652	1632	1632	326
Orissa	173856	156215	144773	121384
Punjab	307810	103474	100171	25788
Rajsthan	613192	544061	396782	72871
Tamilnadu	167979	158214	125984	99623
Tripura	2012	1929	1521	1317
U.P	508869	483466	346697	290290
W.B*	1239887	1111665	836865	1726361
Dadra-Nagar Haveli	8953	7507	4850	1290
Delhi	1153	1141	312	654
Pondicheri	2353	1195	956	1165
All India	7337836	5935625	4431572	4101204

Source : Lok Sabha Question-answer, 7th March, 1988.

* Note : Of the total agricultural land distributed through land reforms in India, nearly 20 per cent has been contributed by West Bengal, although in the total agricultural land in our country, the State's share is less than 4 per cent.

[see - A Collection of Selected Speeches of Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister, West Bengal, Calcutta: Deptt. of Information and Cultural Affairs, Govt. of W.B. 1991, p.78].

Table 8 : Reclamation of vested agricultural land and its distribution by the L.F Government of West Bengal. (All figures are cumulative in the successive years)

Reclaimed upto	Amount of land vested (in acres)	Amount of land distributed (in acres)
31.12.1978	11,22,576.68	6,12,505.38
31.12.1979	11,77,180.16	6,14,060.22
31.12.1980	12,11,616.75	6,73,452.63
31.12.1981	12,49,177.76	7,16,916.22
31.12.1982	12,57,337.44	7,50,398.44

Source : Land Reforms in West Bengal - Statistical Reports, 1978-1982. Compiled by the combines Statistical Cell of the Deptt. of the Board of Revenue and Deptt. of the Land and Land Reforms, Govt. of West Bengal, Writers' Buildings, Calcutta-1.

Table 9 : Number of Sharecropper whose names were recorded over their possession under the drive of 'operation barga' in West Bengal during 1978-1982

Recording of Rights upto	Numbers of Share-cropper recorded			
	Midnapor District*	Burdwan District*	West Dinajpur District*	Total in W.B. including all other Districts
31.12.1978	88,678	36,805	55,164	5,72,694
31.12.1979	1,41,395	60,767	70,292	7,85,117
31.12.1980	2,13,698	79,825	84,955	10,01,986

contd ...

Table 9 contd ...

31.12.1981	2,57,984	87,225	90,116	11,25,826
31.12.1982	2,78,382	93,504	92,617	12,06,529

*These three districts in W.B are specifically shown because field survey has been conducted in some areas in these three districts. Details of the survey are in the forthcoming Chapter VI.

Source : As above.

The progress of land reform during the first Left Front government was appreciable. Recovery of vest lands and their distribution among the beneficiaries showed an encouraging trend. So also the distribution of vest land among the beneficiaries increased.

Share cropping is the legacy of the semi-feudal land relation. More than 35 per cent of agricultural land was cultivated in this way. And the share-croppers were easy prey of eviction by the owner of the land. Peasant organisations demanded recording of the rights of the share-croppers since the pre-independence days. The Congress rule in the state made a legislative progress which lacked proper implementation. It was L.F which vigorously promoted this task in the state through "Operation Barga". An important step for this operation was of organising intensive group meetings near the place of share-cropping land, involving the panchayat bodies,

peasants organisations, the concerned bargadars and the officials concerned with a view to speedy recording of rights of bargadars. After the introduction of "operation barga" recording had increased from 2.5 lakh in June 1977 to more than 12 lakh at the end of 1982.

The demand for increasing wages for the agricultural labourers was another major step against rural poverty. The peasants' organisations, particularly their lower strata brought forward the demand for increasing wages for the agricultural labourers. Therefore, organised movement for improving the economic conditions of the agricultural labourers became stronger in the countryside in West Bengal since 1977. The daily average wage rates, cash and kind combined together, are shown in Table 10 for the different districts of W.B for the years 1976-77 and 1979-80.

Table 10 : Average daily wage rates of agricultural labourers in West Bengal in 1976-77 and 1979-80
(in rupees)

District	1976-77	1979-80
1. Darjeeling	5.90	7.25
2. Jalpaiguri	5.20	6.95
3. Cooch Behar	5.05	6.25
4. West Dinajpur	4.70	4.95
5. Malda	4.50	4.35

contd ...

Table 10 contd ...

6. Murshidabad	5.80	7.80
7. Nadia	4.80	5.40
8. 24-Parganas	5.75	7.63
9. Howrah	6.50	8.15
10. Hooghly	5.60	7.55
11. Burdwan	5.70	7.15
12. Birbhum	5.55	7.30
13. Bankura	7.10	8.00
14. Purulia	8.00	5.15
15. Midnapore	5.40	7.15
West Bengal	5.65	6.75

Source : Socio-Economic Evaluation Branch, Deptt. of Agriculture, Govt. of West Bengal. Collected from - Rural Development and Planning Under the L.F.Govt. in W.B. by Dr. Asim Dasgupta, Govt. of W.B. 1981, p.12.

This improvement in wage rate has been a result of an increase in the bargaining power of the agricultural labourers. It is also related to the active role played by the Panchayats, alongwith the peasants' organisations, in protecting the interests of the agricultural labourers.

With the revitalisation of the Panchayati system in the state of West Bengal which assumed office in 1978 was associated the tasks of land reform and rural development. The elected panchayats were given wide powers and

responsibilities in relation to rural development and were provided with substantial finances⁸¹. This was a unique experiment in the decentralisation of power and these steps together could serve as an alternative approach for rural development in India.

The CPI(M) led L.F government decided to provide, step by step an increasing responsibility to the elected rural bodies in the decision-making and implementation of various rural programmes. These have been manifested in the second and subsequent terms of the CPI(M) led L.F in the state of West Bengal.

Activities on land reform and establishment of rural democracy were the persistent policies of the CPI(M) led L.F in West Bengal. In the West Bengal Assembly elections in 1982 and in the Panchayat elections in 1983 the L.F recorded a better electoral performance in the state. The Left coalition partners in Kerala and Tripura, were also elected to form a majority in these state assemblies. Actually the return of the Congress party at the Centre did not affect the political scene of the left-ruled states in this period. In the state of West Bengal, the CPI's entry into the fold of the L.F actually helped the left front enormously as the latter had a considerable political base.

Another significant fact was that for the first time the CPI(M) acknowledged the need for a separate organisation of the agricultural labourers. Regarding the CPI(M)'s shift from the earlier policy of refusing to set up such an organisation, M.A.Rasul stated that "The rapid numerical growth of this section in recent years has led to the formation of a separate all-India organisation ... The All-India Agricultural Workers' Union (AIAWU) [of the CPI(M)] was formed. It held its first all-India conference, together with the AIKS conference at Midnapore (West Bengal) in 1982. These two allied organisations have since been functioning in close cooperation with each other, consolidating their positions in their respective spheres"⁸². Simultaneously, in each area of the land reforms programmes, cooperation of the peasant organisations and active participation of the Panchayat bodies was sought. The direct participation of the people and their representatives in the application of Land Reform Programme was a new example in the country.

All along the objective of land reforms programme pursued by the L.F was to reduce, as far as possible the disparity and irregularities in the rural economic structure by bringing about a change in the ownership of land and land tenancy system. The L.F undertook a comprehensive multipurpose programme to distribute surplus land among the landless and to safeguard the rights of the sharecroppers.

The continuing policy was to vest as much surplus land above land ceiling in the state as possible within the existing legal framework and pressing peasant organisations, administration and the panchayat bodies into service for the purpose⁸³. Table 11 shows the progress of recovery of vest land and distribution in the period from December 1983 to December, 1990.

Table 11 : Reclamation of vested agricultural land and its distribution by the L.F government of W.B (All figures are cumulative in the successive years)

Reclaimed upto	Amount of land vested (in acres)	Amount of land distributed (in acres)
31.12.1983	12,53,259.03	7,73,919.13
31.12.1984	12,33,270.12 *	7,99,224.86
31.12.1985	12,43,309.00	8,13,054.17
31.12.1986	12,54,863.89	8,33,190.64
31.12.1987	12,56,173.57	— **
31.12.1988	12,57,491.96	8,50,474.22
31.12.1989	12,60,942.68	8,79,225.00
31.12.1990	12,61,141.83	9,10,809.22

Source : As Table 7 above.

Note : * Since 1984 Khasmahal Land vested in the hands of the Government has been excluded as such land did not fall in the category of agricultural land and could not be distributed.

** In this year distribution work was not undertaken.

Till the end of second L.F rule in the state, 12.54 lakh acres of agricultural land had been vested in the government. In the next term the L.F continued its policy on land reforms. At the end of 1990, 12.61 acres of land have been vested in the hands of the government.

Regarding distribution of vested lands the L.F's continuing policy was to distribute at least a fraction of land to each landless rural household. Side by side, the government provided minimum agricultural equipments and credit to these peasants. Sometimes a small plot of land was used for secondary purposes like animal rearing, fishing and planting trees. At the end of the second term of the L.F government in West Bengal in 1986, 8.33 lakh acres have been distributed to the poor peasants and landless agricultural labourers. The figure rose to 9.1 lakh in 1990. This record of land reform to help the rural poor in improving their economic condition has no parallel in the country.

Another landmark achievement of this land reform policy during the CPI(M) led L.F rule in West Bengal was to safeguard the right of the sharecroppers and to ensure safe cultivation by them. Table 12 shows the progress of recording of rights of sharecroppers in the state.

Table 12 : Number of share-croppers whose names were recorded over their possession under the drive of 'Operation Barga' in West Bengal during 1983-90

Recording or rights upto	Number of Sharecroppers Recorded			
	Midnapore District*	Burdwan District*	West Dinajpur District*	Total in West Bengal including all other Districts
31.12.1983	2,88,433	99,282	93,887	12,71,218
31.12.1984	2,92,140	1,04,399	95,105	13,11,482
31.12.1985	2,96,411	1,08,546	95,972	13,37,533
31.12.1986	2,99,127	1,11,096	96,745	13,61,680
31.12.1987	3,01,016	1,13,588	97,146	13,79,134
31.12.1988	3,02,914	1,15,182	98,162	13,94,753
31.12.1989	3,03,652	1,17,411	98,195	14,05,442
31.12.1990	3,03,857	1,19,417	98,195	14,29,319

Source : As Table 8 above.

* These three districts have been specifically shown as they have been covered in the field survey results of which has been placed in Ch. VI.

At the end of 1986, the names of 13.61 lakh bargadars have been recorded and at the end of 1990 this figure rose to 14.29 lakh.

For the increase of wages of the agricultural labourers movements by the peasants' and agricultural workers' organisations of the CPI(M) and the CPI have

been strengthened since 1983. The CPI(M) in its Reports of Frontal Activities-1985, stated "Every year in the two sessions of cultivations and harvesting, the movement is directed by and large in an organised manner. Both centrally and districtwise, regular efforts are being made to issue pamphlets, hold meetings, small conventions, mass meetings in order to strengthen the campaign and movement and an organised form given to the movement through taken strives in the state and in the districts. Efforts are constantly being made to organise these movements jointly with other left peasants' organisations"⁸⁴.

The Report stated with satisfaction that "the minimum daily wage as determined by the government*" has been achieved"⁸⁵. The CPI(M) led L.F stressed more on the poorest strata of the peasantry and agricultural labourers. Particularly, the CPI(M) whose political base in the state is wide ranging brought the Party's 10th Congress (held at Jullundher in 1978) Resolution into practice. For CPI(M) "basing agricultural labourers, poor peasants emphasis be given on the importance of building up unity of agricultural labourers, poor peasants and the rich peasants, and not on the old pattern of peasants' unity on the basis of middle and rich peasants"⁸⁶. It further called for isolating the handful of landlords and for expediting the thorough land reform movement for its early completion.

*Rate of Minimum Wages has been appended as Appendix III.

Regarding the extension of rural democracy, the panchayat-system in the state of West Bengal established by the L.F marked a steady progress in the sphere of the extension of social justice since 1978. During the L.F rule as the Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu said, "The Panchayat institutions working as vital instruments of rural development are entrusted with the execution of all important schemes and programmes relating to the ameliorative action in the villages. It has been proved beyond doubt, that these institutions can really go a long way in mitigating various problems of the country-side"⁸⁷. "The performance of the Panchayats in all these programmes has been noteworthy. In the field of land reforms ... [West Bengal] occupies a special position of price in the country, and this has been made possible in no small measure by the participation of local people through the Panchayats ... In the Final Report of Evaluation Organisation of the Planning Commission, it has observed that the involvement of Panchayats had led to much better coordination in the implementation of the programme in West Bengal"⁸⁸.

The Panchayat institutions were made responsible to the rural people. The amended Panchayat Act "made obligatory to call a public meeting every six months and twice a year and to place everything before it in order to build up a close relation and contact with the people. The statement of accounts of grants received from the government

has to be hung up in the office; the list of the recipients has also to be hung up - so that people may know everything and keep which ... Besides, arrangements have been made for keeping watch upon the tiers of the Panchayat by the Party Committees, Kisan organisations of the respective level"⁸⁹.

The L.F parties made the Panchayat bodies representative in character, reflecting the interests of poor classes in the rural areas by reducing the domination of the rural affluent over the panchayat bodies in West Bengal.

The introduction of the decentralized planning upto the block level during the L.F rule heralded a new beginning in the planning process in the state. This experiment has been recognised everywhere as a bold step to involve the people with the entire planning set-up⁹⁰. Land reform and rejuvenation of the Panchayat system in West Bengal under the CPI(M) led-L.F rule are two big successes.

It may be concluded that the CPI(M)-led L.F rule including the CPI since 1980, has been successfully undermining feudal and semi-feudal land relations and reducing concentration of land in the countryside. The panchayat system instituted and run here since 1978 has also been strengthening democracy in the rural areas of the state⁹¹.

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Chapter VI

Contents

Practical political activities of the CPI and the CPI(M) on their respective programmatic issues of agrarian reforms and rural democracy : An empirical study :

- Section 1 (i) Methodology; and
 (ii) The Questionnaire and the Profile of
 the Respondents
- Section 2 Compilation and Analysis of Data.

Section 1 (i) Methodology

To study the programmatic differences between the two communist parties it is imperative to examine their respective actual political practices. Therefore, this study is designed to explore areas of differences on two important programmatic issues—agrarian reforms and rural democracy by looking into the actual practices of the two communist parties, namely, the CPI and the CPI(M). To explore their differences the methodology applied for the purpose may be stated below.

The State of West Bengal has been taken as the universe of this study. Three distinct regions have been selected from three parts : northern part, middle part and western part of West Bengal. These are West Dinajpur district, Burdwan district and Midnapore district respectively. The specific areas where this survey has been conducted are : Itahar Assembly Constituency in West Dinajpur district, Bhatar Assembly Constituency in Burdwan district and Panskura-West Assembly Constituency in Midnapore district. Only predominantly rural areas have been chosen so that in the context of agricultural economy there the two parties' practices for agrarian economy may be studied. It has also been taken care of that in the areas selected both the communist parties have considerable political influence or base since 1964. Besides, the undivided communist party

had political influence in these three areas both in the pre-and post-independence periods. Their respective political influence can justifiably be shown in the table below from their election records for the State Legislative Assembly elections since 1964. This study covers the period

Pre-split CPI's position in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly Elections in the following Assembly Constituency in West Bengal

	Panskura-West (in Midnapore District)	Bhatar (in Burdwan district)	Itahar (in West Dinajpur district)
1952	Haripada Bhowmik CPI. 9,654	In this election Bhatar was a part of Kanksa Assemb- ly Constituency and from 1957 it became an Assemb- ly Constituency	*Banamali Das Cong. 11,779 Basanta Lal Chatterjee CPI. 6,020
1957	Smt. Geeta Mukherjee CPI. 19,134	*Smt. Abhalata Kundu Cong. 14,922	Banamali Das Cong. 8,443 *Basanta Lal Chatterjee CPI. 8,887
	*Shyamdas Bhattacharyya Cong. 26,303 (It was then Panskura-South)	Sundar Gopal Mitra CPI. 10,274	

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1962	Omar Ali	*Aswani Roy	Basanta Lal Chatterjee
	<u>CPI.</u> 27,228	<u>CPI.</u> 21,301	<u>CPI.</u> 19,542
	*Shyamdas Bhattacharyya	Saradindu Sekhar Gupta	*Joynal Abedin
	<u>Cong.</u> 31,849	<u>Cong.</u> 15,407	<u>Cong.</u> 22,276

*Candidates elected.

since 1964 when the Communist Party of India was divided into the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) and the Communist Party of India (CPI).

The post-split electoral position of CPI and CPI(M) in the three Constituencies since the Fourth Assembly Elections (1967) has been shown in the table below.

	Panskura - West (in Midnapore district)	Bhatar (in Burdwan district)	Itahar (in West Dinajpur District)
1967	*Rajani Kanta Pramanik	Aswani Roy	Basanta Lal Chatterjee
	<u>B. Cong.</u> 36,132	<u>CPI.</u> 11,638	<u>Ind.</u> 10,529
	Shyamdas Bhattacharjee	*Santimoy Hazra	*Joynal Abedin
	<u>Cong.</u> 21,949	<u>Cong.</u> 12,291	<u>Cong.</u> 25,620
			[Chatterjee was officially not nominated but supported by CPI]

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1969	*Ahindra Mishra B. Cong. 32,070 Harekrishna Pattanayak Cong. 25,029	*Aswani Roy CPI. 26,357 Santimoy Hazra Cong. 10,808	Basanta Lal Chatterjee CPI. 24,447 *Joynal Abedin Cong. 26,461
1971	Chitta Ranjan Chakraborty Cong. (R) 12,448 *Omar Ali CPI. 20,984	*Anath Bandhu Ghosh CPI(M). 18,516 Aswani Roy CPI. 5,391	Haricharan Debnath CPI(M). 12,541 *Joynal Abedin Cong. R. 30,221 Sachindu Chakraborty CPI. 6,308
1972	Manaranjan Roy CPIM. 9,209 *Omar Ali CPI. 28,090	Anath Bandhu Ghosh CPIM. 11,974 *Bholanath Sen Cong. 31,822	*Joynal Abedin Cong. 37,810 Shanti Sarkar CPIM. 10,543
1977	*Omar Ali CPI. 15,497 Sk. Fayez Ali CPIM. 9,533	*Bholanath Sen Cong. 29,324 Saktipada Chattopadhyay F.B. 28,587	*Joynal Abedin Cong. 26,747 Salil Kr. Gupta CPIM. 16,384

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1982	*Omar Ali	Bholanath Sen	Basanta Lal Chatterjee
	<u>CPI.</u> 46,399	<u>Cong.</u> 37,016	<u>CPI.</u> 35,339
	Jyoti Kr. Roy	*Sayad Md. Masih	*Joynal Abedin
	<u>Cong (I)</u> 26,407	<u>CPIM.</u> 44,045	<u>Cong (S)</u> 42,496
1987	Asit Baran Samanta	Banamali Hazra	Joynal Abedin
	<u>Cong (I)</u> 30,974	<u>Cong (I)</u> 38,493	<u>Cong-I</u> 43,021
	*Omar Ali	*Sayd Md. Masih	*Swadesh Chaki
	<u>CPI.</u> 52,416	<u>CPIM.</u> 55,958	<u>CPI.</u> 47,542

Section 1 (ii) The Questionnaire and the Profile of the Respondents.

The questionnaire has been designed for a field survey to explore the individual political aspects and areas of activities of the two parties in respect of agrarian reforms and rural democracy and to examine their differences.

Basic features of the questionnaire : (1) Queries were directed to demands for agrarian reform and rural democracy made by CPI and CPI(M); nature and forms of struggle for these demands; participation, leadership and opposition. (2) Queries were also designed to get information for the periods separately for 1947-1964 and 1964-1985. (3) Emphasis has been laid more on the latter period (1964-1985) which is

relevant to this study. (4) Another important query was on the inter-relationship between the two communist parties as to how one party assessed the other at the lowest layer of their respective party-organisations. This examination will be indicative of the programmatic criticism of one against the other. (5) The questionnaire has been as far as possible structured.

However, this is an attempt to examine the practical positions of the two contending parties beside their respective programmatic assertions for India's revolution and their difference of approach studied earlier.

The specific lay-out of the questionnaire consists of the three main sections, namely, agrarian reforms, rural democracy and practical aspects of CPI and CPI(M).

First, the questionnaire on agrarian reforms has been subdivided into (i) leadership of the movement during both the pre-split and post-split periods; (ii) approaches to agrarian reforms particularly after the split of the party, and (iii) role of CPI and CPI(M) in the movement for the economic rights for the agricultural labourers.

Second, the questionnaire on rural democracy covers the movement for democracy and the class forces required for ensuring democratic measures.

The last important aspect is the political inter-relationship (difference) between the two contending communist parties for joint movement at the lower level.

A profile of the respondents necessary on the basis of their independent characteristics. For this purpose, the questionnaire was designed to elicit information about the respondents' age, occupational identity, education and class origin.

An equal number of respondents have been chosen from the two parties in each of the three selected areas. In each Assembly Constituency 8 respondents from the CPI and 8 respondents from the CPI(M) have been chosen. Thus their total number is 48 in the three constituencies. Care has been taken to choose the respondents with a minimum organisational experience in their respective parties at the lowest level like Local Committee Membership (LCM) of the CPI(M) and the Local Council Membership of the CPI.

Data collected from the three selected areas of West Bengal on the above issues relating to CPI and CPI(M) are presented in the next Section for detailed study.

The Questionnaire has been included as Appendix II.

Independent Characteristics of Respondents :

The profile of respondents has been drawn up showing their independent characteristics. The following tables are prepared on this basis.

Table 1 : Existing occupation of the respondents (rural level leaders from both the CPI and the CPI-M)

Name of professions	Itahar		Bhatar		Panskura		Total		Grand Total
	CPI	CPI-M	CPI	CPI-M	CPI	CPI-M	CPI	CPI-M	
Ag.L.	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6
Poor peasants/ Share -croppers	1	1	1	-	1	1	3	2	5
Middle peasants	3	1	2	1	2	-	7	2	9
Educā- (Teac- ted)hers	2	4	2	4	1	3	5	11	16
Middle (Doct- class)ors	-	-	1	-	2*	-	3	-	3
Full time politicians (whole- timer)	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	6
Unemployed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Landlords	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others (Business men)	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	3	3
Total	8	8	8	8	8	8	24	24	48

*One is a homeopath and another, unlicensed practitioner of medicine.

It may be noted that CPI respondents have a larger representation from middle peasants (i.e., 29.1%) whereas the corresponding figure for CPI-M is 8.3%. Certainly,

CPI-M respondents have larger representation from educated middle class (45.8%), the corresponding figure for CPI being 20.8%. If, however, these two groups are added together, there is not much of a difference.

Table 2 : Average age-group of the respondents

Average age group (in years)	Itahar		Bhatar		Panskura - West		Total		Grand Total
	CPI	CPI-M	CPI	CPI-M	CPI	CPI-M	CPI	CPI-M	
Below 40	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Between 41-50	2	6	1	5	2	3	5	14	19
51-60	4	2	2	2	3	5	9	9	18
61-70	1	-	4	1	2	-	7	1	8
71 and above	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	-	2
Total	8	8	8	8	8	8	24	24	48

It may be noted that age-group 41-50 years has largest representation from CPIM respondents (58.3%), the CPI figure being 20.8%. On the otherhand, 61-70 years age group has much larger representation in CPI (29.1%) whereas the CPI-M corresponding figure is 4.1% only.

Table 3 : Institutional educational standard of the respondents

Educational standard	Itahar		Bhatar		Panskura - West		Total		Grand Total
	CPI	CPI-M	CPI	CPI-M	CPI	CPI-M	CPI	CPI-M	
No education	1	-	-	1	1	1	2	2	4
Upto primary	1	1	2	-	1	1	4	2	6
Upto Matriculation	4	6	2	2	2	3	8	11	19
Graduation	2	1	3	5	3	3	8	9	17
Post-graduation	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	1
vocational or professional graduation	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
Total	8	8	8	8	8	8	24	24	48

If those reading upto primary level are alone considered, the CPI respondents have 16.6% representation, the CPI-M figure being 8.3% only. Again, taking those reading upto Matriculation alone, CPI-M has 45.3% respondents of this category, but CPI figure is 33.3%. If these categories are put together, there is no significant difference between CPI and CPIM.

Table 4 : Class origin of the Respondents (among the different rural classes)

Class origin	Itahar		Bhatar		Panskura - West		Total		Grand Total
	CPI	CPI-M	CPI	CPI-M	CPI	CPI-M	CPI	CPI-M	
Agricultural labourers	2	2	1	2	2	1	5	5	10
Poor -peasants share -croppers	2	3	1	3	2	2	5	8	13
Middle peasants	3	2	1	2	3	4	7	8	15
Educated Middle Class	1	1	2	1	1	1	4	3	7
Erstwhile landlords	-	-	3	-	-	-	3	-	3
Others (Rural Businessmen)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	8	8	8	8	8	8	24	24	48

It has been found that agricultural labourers and poor peasants and share-croppers, the lowest category of rural residents constitute 54.16% of respondents from CPIM and 41.5% from CPI. The percentages of middle peasants and educated middle class together constitute 45.8% respondents from each CPI-M and CPI. Erstwhile landlords constitute 12.5% of respondents from CPI, but no such respondent was found from CPIM.

Section 2 Compilation and Analysis of Data

A field survey has been conducted to enquire about the practical political approaches of the CPI and the CPI(M) on the two basic programmatic issues, agrarian reforms and rural democracy and to examine whether their respective programmatic assertions have been translated into practice. Here below the discussion will be concentrated on compilation and analysis of data collected through field survey from the selected areas and from the selected respondents mentioned earlier.

It is evident that agrarian unrest was a continual feature of rural life in the period(1947-54). Main slogans in the agrarian front under the leadership of the undivided CPI during the period was for complete abolition of landlordism, distribution of the surplus land among the landless peasants, security of share-croppers and a proper tenancy legislation, etc. The CPI and its peasant front fought for these aims and mobilized the rural poor and landless peasants against the stiff opposition of the landlords and vested interests. The following tables would throw light on the methods and means of movement, opposition from the vested interests, pattern of participation of the rural people and the class origin of the leadership for the agrarian movement. The respondents of both the parties responded almost in the same fashion about the state of

affairs of the pre-split CPI in these regards during the period between 1947 and 1964.

Table 5 : Methods and means of struggle for land under the leadership of the (undivided) CPI and its peasant front during 1947 to 1964

Methods and means of movement		Itahar		Bhatar		Panskura - West		Total
		CPI	CPI-M	CPI	CPI-M	CPI	CPI-M	
1. Meeting/ Protest Procession/ memoranda	Yes	8	8	8	8	8	7	47
	No	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
2. Strike/ Demonstra- tions	Yes	2	1	5	2	5	1	16
	No	6	7	3	6	3	7	32
3. Forcible acquisition of vested and benami lands	Yes	7	8	5	5	5	7	37
	No	1	-	3	3	3	1	11
4. Others, Legal battles	Yes	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
	No	7	8	8	8	7	8	46

The above table shows that the methods and means stated in the item no. (1) (meeting, protest procession and memoranda) were pursued in most of the cases for agrarian movement followed by the method of forcible acquisition (stated in the item no.3) took the next place in the struggle for land during this movement. The application of force was a pointer to the threat of opposition of the

landed interests during the struggle for land. A third of the respondents have indicated that strike and demonstrations were also means pursued during this period but double that number denied this.

The survey result shows that the nature and means of opposition by the landed interest in the rural areas during this period were principally of five categories; these were - armed attacks, repression through police administration, harassment through court-cases, economic boycott and social persecution. From the answers of the respondents it is evident that barring a few, almost all respondent held that vested interest in the rural areas was far stronger to meet any challenge of the landless and the poor peasants led by the CPI and its peasant front during this period.

The pattern of participation among the different rural sections in the struggle for land during this period would show that the landless and poor peasants participated, rather provided the basic force, in the struggle for land led by the CPI and its peasant front. The participation of the middle peasants always remained insignificant. The CPI did not hesitate to bring them into the movement for land reform but their lack of interest in this movement was obvious due to the fact that this land reform movement was not directly gainful to them. However, the middle peasants did not oppose it either.

Respondents were asked each to name five leaders who led the movement for acquisition of the surplus land illegally held by the landlords in their areas during the period mentioned. The following table indicates the class of origin of these leaders. Mention may be made that a few names of leaders came up repeatedly as they were more influential in this respect. These names have been added up even when repeated.

Table 6 : Class of origin of the leaders in the struggle for during the period between 1947-64

Class origin	Itahar	Bhatar	Panskura - West	Total
Ag.L/Poor peasants	25	17	38	80
Middle peasants	35	38	32	105
Educated middle class	4	4	3	11
Rich peasants	13	18	4	35
Landlords	3	3	3	9
Others	0	0	0	0
	80	80	80	240

The above table shows that the largest number of leaders (43.75%) came from middle peasants followed by the stratum of agricultural labourers and poor peasants (33.3%).

From rich peasants came the next batch of leaders (14.58%). However in the case of Panskura - West the number of leaders from the agricultural labourers & poor peasants was more than that of the middle peasants. Landlords and educated middle class provided no significant number of leaders.

Table 7 : Methods and means of opposition used by the landed interests against the agrarian movement led by the CPI during the pre-split period (1947-1964)

Methods and means of opposition		Itahar	Bhatar	Panskura - West	Total	%
1. With arms	Yes	11	16	12	39	81.25
	No	5	0	4	9	18.75
2. By the help of police	Yes	10	8	13	31	64.58
	No	6	8	3	17	35.42
3. Harassment through litigation	Yes	4	5	8	17	35.42
	No	12	11	8	31	64.58
4. Economic boycott	Yes	3	1	2	6	12.50
	No	13	15	14	42	87.50
5. Social persecution	Yes	14	8	3	25	52.08
	No	2	8	13	23	47.92
6. Others including eviction	Yes	16	16	14	46	95.83
	No	0	0	2	2	4.17

In the relevant period (1947-64) the united CPI carried on agrarian movements and noticed some typical forms of opposition thereto from the landed interests. The above table gives an idea of the methods and means of such opposition. All the 48 respondents were asked about six types of means and methods. It is found that direct eviction of tenants was found by respondents with greatest amount of unanimity (95.8%) to be a means.

Among the other means armed attack on tenants and resort to the help of police were also affirmed largely 81.25% and 64.58% respectively. Social persecution was affirmed by 52% of the respondents. However, economic boycott and legal harassment were denied as means by a majority of the respondents, 87.5% and 64.5% respectively. Thus the means and methods widely used by landed interests for their opposition to agrarian movement were mostly direct such as eviction, armed attack and the use of police help.

In the next stage when the party was divided into the CPI(M) and CPI in 1964 the issue of radical land reform and rural democracy got different treatment in their rival programmes. The following analysis from the data available could highlight the most debated issues of land reform and rural democracy in the countryside during the period between 1964 and 1985.

Equal number of respondents from both the parties (namely, the CPI and the CPI-M) were asked what were the important aims of land reform movement during the period between 1964 and 1985 for which their respective local party-organisations fought for. They equally emphasised that the main slogans for the agrarian movement were same. There were - (1) acquisition of vest and benami land from the grip of landlords, (2) distribution of the same among the land poor peasants and landless agricultural labourers, (3) recording of rights of share-croppers, and (4) protection of the economic rights of the agricultural labourers.

Table 8 : Class position of leaders named by the respondents of CPI and CPI(M) who led the agrarian movement during 1964-85.

Class positions	Itahar		Bhatar		Panskura - West		Total	
	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM
Ag.L/Poor peasants	9	9	10	20	12	13	31	32
Middle peasants	11	6	8	7	7	10	26	23
Educated middle class	14	22	12	18	20	17	46	57
Rich peasants	4	2	9	4	1	0	14	6
Landlords	2	1	1	1	-	0	3	2
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
Total	40	40	40	40	40	40	120	120

All the 48 respondents were asked to name 5 leaders each who were in the forefront in the agrarian movement during 1964 - 1985 period in their areas. Though some of the names were repeated, we have added up such names in the totals. The above table indicates the class position as mentioned by the respondents for such leaders. It is found that the order in which leaders from different classes were found by CPI and CPI(M) respondents have a similar distribution. Both groups of respondents agreed that the largest number of leaders came from the educated middle class. CPI(M) respondents found 47.5% and CPI respondents 38.33% of leaders coming from this class. This class was followed by agricultural labourers/poor peasants. CPI(M) respondents found 26.56% and CPI respondents 25.83% of leaders coming from this category. Respondents from CPI(M) and CPI found leaders from the middle peasantry 19.16% and 21.66% respectively.

From both the parties respondents found leaders from rich peasantry to have the next position but CPI(M) placed them only 5% whereas CPI found 11.66% for this section. Only from among landlords came the rest of the leaders. There percentages found by CPI(M) and CPI respondents were 1.66 and 2.5 respectively.

Table 9 : Methods and means used by the respective peasant organisations of CPI and CPI(M) in the following areas during the struggle for agrarian movement (1964-1977).

Methods and means of movement		Itahar		Bhatar		Panskura - West		Total	
		CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM
1. Meeting/ protest procession	Yes	8	8	8	8	8	8	24	24
	No	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. Strike/ Demonstration	Yes	3	4	1	8	6	2	10	14
	No	5	4	7	0	2	6	14	10
3. Forcible acquisition	Yes	2	8	1	8	4	4	7	20
	No	6	0	7	0	4	4	17	4
4. Others, including legal battles	Yes	1	0	0	1	1	1	2	2
	No	7	8	8	7	7	7	22	22

As we have earlier noted, after their split CPI and CPI(M) continued in their rivalry upto 1977 with only very brief period of 1967 and 1969 expected. Therefore we thought it advisable to study the methods and means adopted by the peasant organisations of the two parties during this period separately. It is also to be noted that both the parties claimed to have carried on agrarian movements in this period. In the above table we have shown the methods and means which, in the opinion of respondents from the two

parties were used in their areas for this movement.

Respondents were asked about four methods of their movements. It is found that in some cases there are hardly any difference between the two groups of respondents. The two parties claimed to use meetings/protest procession in all cases. In the case of strike demonstration, the affirmative responses from CPI and CPI(M) respondents being 10 and 14 respectively. It is also found that both the parties showed little interest in legal battles as effective means for which negative replies were 22 each for CPI and CPI(M).

But it is a remarkable fact that there is a great difference between the responses of CPI and CPI(M) respondents in using the method of forcible acquisition. In this case the affirmative responses from CPI and CPI(M) respondents being 7 and 20 respectively. It clearly indicates that the CPI did not consider this means as much important and necessary. However, what the total figures miss is that in the first two Assembly constituencies the CPI(M) has far outnumbered the CPI, but in the case of Panskura - West Assembly constituency, responses from CPI respondents are quite similar with the CPI(M) 's.

Table 10 : Methods and means of opposition used by the landed interests against the agrarian movement led by CPI and CPI(M) during 1964-77.

Methods and means of opposition		Itahar		Bhatar		Panskura - West		Total		Grand Total
		CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	
1. With arms	Yes	5	4	8	8	3	2	16	14	30
	No	3	4	0	0	5	6	8	10	18
2. By the help of police	Yes	5	2	8	8	2	1	15	11	26
	No	3	6	0	0	6	7	9	13	22
3. Harassment through litigation	Yes	4	4	3	4	6	3	13	11	24
	No	4	4	5	4	2	5	11	13	24
4. Economic boycott	Yes	2	1	2	3	0	0	4	4	8
	No	6	7	6	5	8	8	20	20	40
5. Social persecution	Yes	5	2	2	4	1	0	8	6	14
	No	3	6	6	4	7	8	16	18	34
6. Others including eviction	Yes	8	7	8	8	3	2	19	17	36
	No	0	1	0	0	5	6	5	7	12

In the period 1964-77 the methods and means used by the landed interests against agrarian movement were asked about from respondents of the two parties. It is found that armed attack, use of police help and others including evictions of

tenants evoked affirmative responses more than negative ones. Among them eviction of tenants received largest number of affirmative responses (75%), followed by armed attack (62.5%) and resort to police help (54.16%) while for legal harassment affirmation and negation were evenly divided, for social persecution and economic boycott affirmative responses were 29.16% and for economic boycott 16.66%.

Between the CPI and the CPI(M) responses there was some difference on the use of two methods, namely, use of police help and legal harassment. For both these methods the CPI respondents offered more affirmative than negative responses while the CPI(M) respondents did the opposite.

It is significant to note that in Bhatar Constituency all the CPI and CPI(M) respondents affirmed the use of armed attacks, police action and eviction of tenants. Many of the respondents were eloquent of the dastardly attacks by the landed interests and the police particularly in the period from 1972 to 1977.

Respondents of both the parties were asked about the methods and means of movement used by them and their local leadership of their respective party and peasant organisations during the period between 1964 and 1985. The tables below can highlight over this question.

Table 11 : Methods and means used by the respective peasant organisations of CPI and CPI(M) in the following areas during the struggle for agrarian movement (1977-1985).

Methods and means of movement		Itahar		Bhatar		Panskura - West		Total		Grand Total
		CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	
1. Meeting/ Protest procession memoranda	Yes	8	8	8	8	8	8	24	24	48
	No	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. Strike/ Demonstration	Yes	5	8	4	8	6	8	15	24	39
	No	3	0	4	0	2	0	9	0	9
3. Forcible acquisition of vest and Benami lands	Yes	1	8	0	8	2	4	3	20	23
	No	7	0	8	0	6	4	21	4	25
4. Others including legal battles	Yes	0	2	0	4	3	1	3	7	10
	No	8	6	8	4	5	7	21	17	38

For the period 1977 to 1985, we have tried to find the nature of movement in agrarian issues by the CPI and the CPI(M). The CPI changed its earlier positions in relation to the Congress and the CPI(M) in 1978 though it joined the Left Front of West Bengal in 1980. However, this study of

the period, 1977-85, does not focus on differences if any between the periods 1977-80 and 1980-85.

In the table above, we have tabulated responses of respondent of the two parties regarding four types of methods and means used by their respective peasant organisations for agrarian movement. It is found that except for legal battles the other three types of methods and means evoked more affirmative than negative responses. The most widely used according to the total of affirmative replies were meeting/protest processions, etc. (100%), strike/demonstration (81% 25) and forcible acquisition of vest and benami lands (47.91%).

In regard to forcible acquisition of vest and benami land the CPI respondents gave 21 negative responses against 3 affirmative responses only. On the other hand, the CPI(M) respondents indicated 20 affirmative against 4 negative responses for this method of their movement. This shows a clear difference of perception of the two parties in respect of means employed. Though any similar opposite responses were not noticed between CPI and CPI(M) respondents about two other methods, namely, strike/demonstrations and legal battles, the numerical variations in their affirmative and negative responses may also be noted.

Table 12 : Methods and means of opposition by the landed interests against the agrarian movement led by CPI and CPI(M) during 1977-1985.

Methods and means of opposition		Itahar		Bhatar		Panskura - West		Total		Grand Total
		CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	
1. With arms	Yes	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	3
	No	7	7	8	7	8	8	23	22	45
2. By the help of police	Yes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	No	8	8	8	8	8	8	24	24	48
3. Harassment through litigation	Yes	6	4	5	8	5	2	16	14	30
	No	2	4	3	0	3	6	8	10	18
4. Economic boycott	Yes	2	1	0	2	1	1	3	4	7
	No	6	7	8	6	7	7	21	20	41
5. Social persecution	Yes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	No	8	8	8	8	8	8	24	24	48
6. Others including eviction	Yes	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	2
	No	8	7	8	8	7	8	23	23	46

About the means and methods used by landed interests against agrarian movement during 1977-1985 respondents were asked about six types of methods. The replies in the grand

total more or less reflect the same pattern as for the two individual parties. In this period only legal harassment were affirmed more in number. About all the five other types of methods negative replies far outnumbered affirmative replies. This may be due to the fact that the Left Front having been in power in the state neither allowed police help to the landed interests nor did they allow any armed attack or eviction of tenants during this period. Also the left parties in West Bengal were more united in this period and particularly there was greater cohesion between CPI and CPI(M) which has wider rural base than other parties. It is also noteworthy that through the Panchayat election since 1978 the rural government machinery was democratised and so much strengthened that the balance of forces in the countryside changed in favour of poorer sections of the people and against the landed interests. All these might also explain the fact that the landed interests were unable to use economic boycott or social persecution in the countryside.

Regarding the movement of the agricultural labourers for their economic rights, only the CPI and the CPI(M) were active among all political parties. Respondents of one party admitted the activity of the other party in this regard. However, when they took recourse to movement for this issue the respondents of the two parties varied significantly.

Table 13 : Methods and means of movement of the agricultural labourers for their economic rights during 1964-85.

Methods and means	Itahar		Bhatar		Paskura - West		Total	
	CPI	CPI(M)	CPI	CPI(M)	CPI	CPI(M)	CPI	CPI(M)
Boycott	1	6	0	8	0	8	1	22
Strike	6	8	4	8	4	8	14	24
Meeting/protest/ procession	8	8	8	8	8	8	24	24
Bargaining	8	8	8	8	8	8	24	24
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

8 respondents each from CPI and CPI(M) in each of the three assembly Constituencies was asked about the methods and means of movement of the agricultural labourers. The numbers given in each box except for the total is out of 8. The number for each of the boxes of the last two columns are out of 24.

While about meeting/protest procession and about bargaining there is no difference at all between the two parties. They all admitted the use of these means. But about boycott and strike they differed considerably. Their difference is not significant between different constituencies taking the total from CPI and CPI(M). We find that while 1 out of 24 (0.4%) of CPI respondents affirmed the use of boycott, the

corresponding figure for CPI(M) was 22 out of 24 (91.56%). Similarly, 14 out of 24 (58.3%) of CPI respondents affirmed the use of strike, the corresponding figure for CPI(M) was 24 out of 24 (100%).

Another important information is received that no party is keenly interested in abolishing this age old discrepancy in wage against female workers rather they accepted it as quite natural.

Respondents of the two parties were of the opinion that the direct feudalism has taken back seat in their areas but they disagreed over the question of main danger before the peasants and agricultural labourers in the rural areas.

Table 14 shows their opinions.

Table 14 shows that there are marked differences about the question of main danger before the poorer sections of the rural people. 15 out of 24 (62.5%) respondents from the CPI agreed that capitalist market is the main danger.

Corresponding number for CPI(M) was 5 out of 24 (20.83%).

On the contrary landlordism was considered as the main danger by the respondents from the CPI(M). 14 out of 24 respondents (58.33%) from CPI(M) considered this view.

Corresponding number from CPI was 5 out of 24 (20.83%). No other group included in the table was identified by either CPI and CPI(M) as a significant danger. It seems that their perceptions of the main danger are consistent with their respective parties' programmatic assertions.

Table 14

Enemies of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants	Respondents of CPI and CPIM from -							
	Itahar		Bhatar		Panskura - West		Total	
	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM
1. Remaining features of feudalism	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. Landlordism	2	5	2	5	1	4	5	14
3. Jotdar/Rich peasantry	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	2
4. Capitalist market	4	2	5	1	6	2	15	5
5. Local business- men, M.R. Dealers, Rice Mill owners, etc.	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3

To benefit the agricultural labourers and poor peasants through radical land reforms, 20 out of 24 respondents of the CPI(M) (83.33%) claimed that the CPI(M) is the leading party while other left partners like CPI, F.B., R.S.P etc. are helpful and reliable allies. The Congress party has been considered by them as the principal force of opposition as the latter has served as a reliable agent of the landed interests in the rural areas. On the other

hand, 10 out of 16 respondents from the CPI from Itahar and Bhatar (together 62.5%) admitted the leading role of the CPI(M) in launching radical landreform in these two areas whereas the 4 out of 8 respondents from the CPIM from the Panskura- West (50%) claimed the leadership of the CPI in doing so. However, all of them marked, like the respondents of the CPI(M), the Congress party as the enemy of radical land reform in their areas.

On the question of rural democracy the most important issues were -

establishment of democratic set-up,
spread of education,
abolition of casteism and caste privileges,
protection of weaker sections,
protection of scheduled tribes,
protection of the rights of women,
movement for the economic rights of the
labourers, peasants, etc.

Respondents of both the parties claimed that they have launched a persistent movement on these issues. But the respondents of the CPI(M) claimed that they are the front-runners who for the first time established and ensured democratic rural administrative bodies by encouraging the mass participation of the rural downtrodden. Though the

CPI respondents did not refute the claim of the CPI(M), they claimed that their party also always stood for democratically organised rural decision-making bodies.

Another important highlight from the survey is that the above mentioned issues of rural democracy have been fully supported and carried forward by the three sections of the rural populace, namely the agricultural labourers, the poor peasants and rural artisans and the educated middle class. But opinion slightly differed on the question of the role of different rural classes protecting and enlarging the scope of rural democracy in the villages. The respondents from the CPI and the CPI(M) observed the issue in the following way.

Table 15 : Opinion of 24 respondents each of the CPI and CPI(M) of the three areas surveyed on the role of rural classes in ensuring rural democracy.

Rural classes	Roles											
	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		(6)	
	Principal and Reliable		Helping force		Potentially helpful		Neutral		Opposing force			
	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM	CPI	CPIM
Ag.L.	24	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poor peasants/ share-croppers and artisans	24	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Middle peasants	13	-	10	19	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	-

contd ...

Table 15 contd ...

Educated middle class	9	10	15	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rich peasants	-	-	20	-	2	14	2	7	-	3
Landlords	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	24
Rural Businessman	-	-	18	8	6	14	-	1	-	1
Others, unemployed, students, etc.	-	-	24	24	-	-	-	-	-	-

24 respondents from each party tried to divide the various rural classes included in column 1 among five categories of roles included in Column 2 to 6. It is found that both the parties agreed about the role of the agricultural labourers, poor peasants/sharecroppers and artisans. There were believed to be the principal and reliable force. The middle peasants were also put in the same category by 13 out of 24 respondents of CPI (54.16%). Among CPI(M) respondents 19 out of 24 (79.16%) placed the middle peasants in the category of helping force. It is significant that among CPI respondents 10 out of 24 (41.66%) agreed with the CPI(M)'s view.

About the role of the educated middle class there was disagreement among the respondents of both CPI and CPI(M).

While 9 out of 24 (37.5%) respondents of CPI placed them in the category of principal and reliable force another 15 out of 24 (62.5%) respondents of CPI recognised them as helping force only. Among CPI(M)'s respondents 10 out of 24 (41.66%) considered this class to be a principal and reliable force, but 14 out of 24 (58.33%) identified them as only helping force.

There is significant difference between the two parties also about the role of rich peasants and rural business-men. The CPI respondents identified 20 out of 24 (83.33%) and 18 out of 24 (75%) of rich peasants and rural business-men respectively to be helping forces. Of the CPI(M)'s respondents, however, 14 out of 24 (58.33%) agreed about potentially helpful role of the rich peasants though none of these respondents actually found them to be a helping force. About the role of the rural business-men 14 out of 24 respondents (58.33%) again identified them to be potentially helpful, while 8 out of 24 respondents (33.33%) identified them as actually a helping force.

The typical nature of any Marxist political party is to educate its activists and supporters about the political and ideological position of the party in a regular manner. More particularly this means is used for the purpose of orientation of the new recruits. The following tables could show the frequency of political education carried on by the respective parties in the periods mentioned below.

A comparative analysis between the two periods indicates that regular orientation was pursued by both the parties in the first case. 25% respondents of each CPI and CPI(M) affirmed this position for the first period (1964-80). However, occasional orientation was also held more important in the first period compared to the next period. The explicit trend for both the parties in the second period has gone in favour of orientation only once in a year. The CPI(M) is fairly consistent than the CPI in regard to the orientation of its activists in both the periods. But the CPI has shifted its policy of regular orientation to other frequencies whereas the drift of CPI(M) is not total but partial in this regard.

The most significant question is as to where lies the basic disagreement in the lower level political activities for launching joint movement though they held the common view of building democratic & socialist revolutions in India. The table below presents their typical subjective views in the following way.

Table 18 : Main Questions of disagreement between CPI and CPI(M).

On the Question of	Respondents from			
	CPI		CPIM	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Building broad democratic unity of all sections (including the rich peasants) of the rural people	0	24	14	10

contd ...

Table 18 contd ...

2. Depending mainly on the Ag.L. and poor peasants	0	24	0	24
3. CPI's attitude to the ruling Congress party in the past (1969-1980)	0	24	21	3
4. Over emphasis on land reforms rather than on national and international issues	5	19	0	24
5. Reluctance of the rival party for radical land reforms	0	24	7	17
6. Organisational disbelief and rivalry	24	0	24	0
7. Sectarian outlook	24	0	0	24
8. Revisionist outlook	0	24	24	0
9. Hegemonism of the rival party	20	4	0	24
10. Others, specify				

We tried to find how did respondents from the two parties working at the grass-root level for their respective party's avowed political and ideological objectives perceive the differences between the two parties. The table above was prepared on the basis of these replies. From the table it is clear that these perceptions are fairly consistent with

the assertions of the leadership of the two parties. We may note that responses on item numbers 2, 6, 7 and 8 are entirely consistent without any division among the respondents of the two parties. However, we find some disagreement among the respondents from the CPI on two items, namely, 4 and 9. A small minority of CPI respondents affirmed that over emphasis on land reform rather than on the struggle against capitalist market economy, and its evils like unemployment, price rise, penetration of foreign monopoly, etc. was a point of disagreement between the CPI and CPI(M).

Again, while a large majority of the CPI respondents asserted that the hegemonic behaviour of the CPI(M) was responsible for disagreement between the two parties, a small minority of CPI respondents disagreed with this view.

On the other hand we find that among the CPI(M) respondents a majority agreed that a crucial point of disagreement between the two parties related to the question of building a broad democratic unity of all sections of rural people including rich peasants. Another group of respondents though a minority but considerable section (41.66%) did not agree with this view.

With regard to the question whether the CPI was reluctant to bring about radical land reforms and thus there was disagreement between CPI and CPI(M) a good majority (70.83%) negative reply. But a minority of some strength (29.16%) asserted

that this was a cause of disagreement.

Lastly, while a very large majority of CPI(M) respondents (87.5%) asserted that a cause of disagreement between the two parties was the CPI's attitude towards the Congress Party in the past, a very small minority (12.5%) disagreed with this view.

With regard to the question whether there should be unification of CPI and CPI(M) into one party, respondents of both side shied away from giving any clear answer without, however, emphatically denying the necessity and desirability of such unification. In these circumstances Question No. 5.01.1 was a little reformulated for administration thus : supposing such unification is attempted would you agree about the following steps ?

Responses have been tabulated in Table 19 accordingly.

Table 19 : Responses on the issue of probable unification of both the parties.

Possible steps	Respondents from					
	CPI			CPIM		
	Yes	No	Refused to answer	Yes	No	Refused to answer
1. By changing your party programme only	-	-	24	-	-	24

contd ...

Table 19 contd ...

2. By changing the party programme of the opposite party only	24	-	-	24	-	-
3. By changing of party programmes of both the parties'	12	9	3	6	14	4
4. By resolving leadership battle in the top level	20	2	2	7	9	8
5. Continuous persuasion of common tactics by both the rival parties	21	3	-	18	6	-

As followers of typical Marxist parties, their respondents refused to answer if such unification could be attempted by changing their respective party programme only. At the same time they all were favourable to such unification by changing the programme of the opposite party only. However, about the other three steps there was disagreement in both groups of respondents. Of CPI respondents 12 out of 24 (50%) were favourable to changes of programme of both parties for unification, 9 out of 24 (37.5%) could not agree to such a step. From the CPI(M), however, 14 out of 24 (58.33%) opposed even this step of changing the programme of the two parties. Only 6 out of 24 (25%) agreed to this step.

Resolving the leadership battle at the top between the top between the two parties as a means of unification was

favoured by 20 out of 24 (83.33%) respondents of the CPI. From the CPI(M) not more than 7 out of 24 (29.16%) would even consider this one as a possible step.

However respondents from both the parties in large number, 21 out of 24 from CPI (87.5%) and 18 out of 24 (75%) from CPI(M) agreed about the desirability of continuously pursuing common tactics by both the parties as a possible means of unification though they consider such unification hypothetical.

Another significant question asked, although it is beyond the focus of our study, whether present downfall of socialism in the East European countries and Soviet Russia has harmed their respective party organisations or they feel for any requirement of changes of political path of activity for this country. However, two groups of respondents of the two communist parties have negated the question and reiterated their faith in Marxism and Leninism as the path for India's socialist revolution.

Chapter VII

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Views of Other Political Parties on Agrarian Reforms and Rural Democracy

Section 1 Views of the Indian National Congress (INC) on Agrarian Reforms and Rural Democracy.

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Section 2 Views of the Communist of India (Marxist -Leninist) (CPIM-L) on Agrarian Question and Rural Democracy.

2.1 Views of the CPIM-L on Agrarian Question.

2.2 Views of the CPIM-L on Rural Democracy.

Political environment is a texture of criss -cross views manifest particularly where multiparty functioning exists to represent definitely the rival class or group interests. Therefore, any views of a particular political party or parties is a relative view and only could be properly understood if that is analysed side by side of the others. In the foregoing chapters this study has solely and extensively dealt with the programmatic policy and practical activities of the CPI and the CPI(M) on two basic issues, namely, agrarian reforms and rural democracy. Here an attempt has been made to highlight the views of other political parties in India over the issues under study. It has been carried out to mark the relative position of the CPI and the CPI(M) on the question of agrarian reforms and rural democracy.

Here 'other parties' means other two political parties, namely, the Indian National Congress Party (INC, which is also popularly called as Congress) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPIM-L). They have been chosen as they could provide the representative views from the two entirely opposite corners. These two parties are unique in many respects. Besides, they have concrete programmes on the issues involved here.

1. Views of the Indian National Congress (INC) on Agrarian Reforms and Rural Democracy

Here the study will focus on the agrarian policy of the Indian National Congress & this study also examine its efforts for the establishment of rural democracy. For this analysis, the study will cover also in brief the pre-independence period as the basic philosophy of the party regarding the land & rural democracy had been developed in this period under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Due emphasis has also been given to study the land policy and measures of rural democracy when Jawaharlal Nehru took the reins of the party & the Government.

Besides the party's approach to the agrarian reforms and rural democracy, the actual activities can be examined if the analysis covers the legal and administrative measures of the state governments. Since land reform is not a Central but State subject under the Constitution of India, this study will cover the measures of the Congress government of the state of West Bengal for outlining the basic features of agrarian reforms and its activities for extending democracy to the rural people.

1.1 Views of the Indian National Congress (INC) on Agrarian Reforms

The Indian National Congress (INC) is the oldest political party in India which served as a platform in the anti-British nationalist struggles during the period of direct colonial rule over India. After independence this party came to power both at the central and state levels. All communists and communist parties while framing their alternative political programmes took the INC as a confirmed opponent against which their main struggles should be launched. Therefore, it seems very necessary to cite the INC's views on agrarian problem and democracy for the rural people.

The INC has the distinction of continuing in power in the central government barring a few years and in most of the state governments for decades. Therefore, in order to present a concrete view of the INC's position over the issues indicated here one has to go through the landmarks of the INC's policy both of the pre-independence period and after.

The earliest reference to the agrarian problem can be traced back to the 4th Session of the INC held at Allahabad in 1938 at which a committee was appointed to enquire into the misery caused to the ryots by the periodical revision of land settlement. Also the leaders of the early Congress took the view that the extension of the Permanent Settlement

would ensure security of tenure and bring some improvement in the condition of the landlords as well as the cultivators.

At its next session (1890) the Congress decided to urge the government :

"... to take up this question of Permanent Settlement without further delay, with a view to practical action there on such that fixity and permanency may be given to the Government Land Revenue demand, as explicitly promised by Her Majesty's Secretary of State more than a quarter of a century ago"¹.

The emergence of Gandhiji's leadership signified a turning point in the history of INC who for the first time took the nationalist politics to the multitude in the villages. The two peasant struggles led by Gandhiji - one in Champaran (Bihar) in 1917 against the foreign indigo planters and the other in Kheda (Gujrat) in 1918 during the same year against exorbitant land revenue, could be regarded as the forerunners of the new era of mass struggles in India. Although he wanted to involve the peasants and the working class in the struggle for political independence, he did not support their cause against the Zamindars and the industrialists on the ground that such a step would divide the nationalist forces².

The spread of socialist ideology inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1917 emerged as a powerful factor in Indian political life and began to influence the youth and

radical sections inside the Congress, giving to the national movement a new life, energy and wider horizon. This resulted in the birth of a new left wing inside the Indian National Congress. Under pressure of the Left Wing, the Congress was forced to adopt more radical programmes of agrarian reforms during the thirties. However, the Congress at this stage, while committed to limited agrarian reforms, was not inclined to do harm to or antagonise the feudal landlords.

The Congress Working Committee Resolutions of 1932 reiterated its assurance to the zaminders - stating :

"In-as-much as some misapprehension has been created in the minds of the zamindars of U.P. [United Provinces now Uttar Pradesh] in particular and others in general, that in the discussion of the proposals for non-payment of rent or taxes under given circumstances, the Congress was contemplating a class war, the Working Committee assures the zamindars concerned that no rent proposals referred to were in no way aimed at them, but they represented an economic necessity for the peasantry which is known to be half-starved at present and suffering from unprecedented economic distress. The Working Committee has no design upon any interests legitimately acquired and not in conflict with national well being. The Working Committee, therefore, appeals to all landed and moneyed classes to help the Congress to the best of their ability in its fight for freedom of the country"³.

However, the national leaders of the INC would emphasise the need for greater unity of the peasants and the landlords, and the pressing agrarian issues would always be swept under carpet. Dr. S. Gopal writes about Jawaharlal Nehru's attitude to the peasant upsurges in U.P. during 1921-22. "Jawaharlal glamorized the Kisans ... but he was not deeply moved by their economic wretchedness. He asked to enlist them wholly for the political struggle as was being waged by the Congress; but he did not envisage the co-ordination of these scattered outbursts against the local misery and the development of a large scale peasant revolt and even perhaps a revolution. He agreed with Gandhi and the other leaders of the Congress that the Kisans should pay their rents and devote their full attention to the non-violent struggle for Swaraj"⁴.

Nevertheless, the influence of the Left wing inside the INC grew along with the rise of the independent Kisan movement in the vast Indian countryside. In 1931, the Karachi session of the Congress, under the influence of the Left wing, was forced to formulate a distinctly progressive agrarian programme. The salient features of the programme⁵ were : 1) abolition of serfdom, 2) reduction of rent or revenue and exemption thereof for uneconomic holdings, 3) progressive agricultural income tax, and 4) control of usury.

Here it is seen from the above programme that there is no reference in it to the abolition of zamindari. Then came the agrarian programme adopted by the Faizpur session in 1936⁶. This session reiterated the demands raised at Karachi in 1931 and add a few more demands, such as lowering of irrigation rates, abolition of feudal levies, fixing tenure with heritable rights, fixing a living wage for agricultural workers, etc.

Regarding the formation of the All India Kisan Congress or Sabha, M.A.Rasul stated "On the Occasion of the National Conference of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) held at Meerut (U.P) in January 1936 a number of left minded political workers including leading members of the CSP met there specially on 16 January 1936 to discuss the question of the peasantry and the horrible situation created for them by the great depression. They decided to form an organising committee, with N.G.Ranga and Jaiprakash Narayan as joint conveners, to convene All India Kisan Congress"⁷.

He further stated, "the matter was followed up with enthusiasm and culminated in the holding of a conference of representatives of Kisan organisations in different provinces of India at Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress. The All India Kisan Sabha was thus formally brought into existence and the conference of the representatives was recorded as the first session of the Sabha or its first all-India Conference"⁸.

The organisation was first officially called the All India Kisan Congress. Later it was changed. The conference elected the All India Kisan Committee (AIKC) with its office-bearers and also the Central Kisan Council (CKC) as the executives of that committee. Swami Sahajananda was elected as the president and N.G.Ranga, General Secretary.

The conference adopted the following main resolution⁹:

1. The object of the All India Kisan Congress is to secure complete freedom from economic exploitation of the peasantry and the achievement of full economic and political power for the peasants and workers and all other exploited classes.
2. Whereas the present system of Zamindari instituted and supported by the British government in India, is inequitable, unjust, burdensome and oppressive to the Kisans (peasants), all such systems of landlordism shall be abolished and all the rights over land be vested in the cultivators.
3. Whereas the present system in ryotwari areas has proved too oppressive and resulted in pauperisation of the peasant, this system be abolished.

Though the formation of the All India Kisan Sabh in 1936 was initiated by the Congress Socialists, soon it was taken over by the Communists, as their party was banned by

the Government in 1934, they began to show considerable interest in the Kisan Sabha. During the war years, the kisan Sabha followed the CPI's party line particularly from 1942¹⁰.

In the Election Manifesto in 1936, the INC reiterated most of the demands of the Faizpur agrarian resolution and it pledged itself to the abolition of all kinds of landlordism¹¹. Yet the Congress ministries which assumed office in many provinces under the Government of India Act 1935, failed to fulfil most of the measures it had promised in its manifesto¹².

In 1938, the Congress appointed a national Planning Committee on Land Policy under the Chairmanship of Prof. K.T. Shah. Radhakamal Mukherjee was appointed Secretary of the Committee. The committee enunciated the following general principles as the basis of land policy in India after independence¹³ :

1) Ownership of agricultural land, mines, quarries, rivers and forests should vest in the people of India collectively. 2) Developing collective and co-operative farms. 3) No intermediaries of the type of talukdars, zamindars, etc. should be recognised. The right and the title possessed by these classes should be progressively bought out by granting such compensation as may be considered necessary and desirable. [Emphasis added]. 4) The

practice of sub-infeudation and subletting of land should not be permitted.

It was only in 1945, that the Congress officially proclaimed abolition of zamindari as its objective.

The Congress Economic Programme Committee¹⁴ set up soon after independence (1947-48) by the Congress Party under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru brought out a report containing radical proposals for changing the agrarian structure. It recommended that land should be held for use (as opposed to profit) and as a source of employment. The use of lands of non-cultivating landlords or those otherwise unable for any period to cultivate them must vest in the village cooperative community subject to the condition that the original holder or his successor could come back to the land for genuine cultivation¹⁵.

The committee also wanted fixing a land ceiling, the surplus over which should be acquired and given to the village cooperatives¹⁶.

Another landmark was the Report of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee set up in Dec. 1947, under the chairmanship of Shri J.C. Kumarappa¹⁷. The report was submitted in 1949. Its main proposals¹⁸ were : 1) removal of intermediaries, 2) land to be given to the tiller, 3) subletting to be restricted, 4) those cultivating for six continuous years

to be given occupancy rights, 5) only one who puts in physical labour should be recognised as a cultivator 6) resumption of holdings to be permitted to making one's holding economic and 7) tenant to be given the right to purchase a holding on payment of price determined by a land tribunal. The Committee laid "special emphasis on immediate prevention of all eviction" and recommended prohibition of "rackrenting and illegal exactions"¹⁹. It stated, "... the optimum size of holding has to be fairly low"²⁰.

On the pattern of agrarian economy, the Committee recommended a composite pattern "of individual farming assisted by co-operative organisation, co-operative joint farming, collective and state farming"²¹.

However, the All-India Congress Committee did not endorse the proposals.

Under the Indian Constitution, land reform is left to the discretion of a particular state. So slow was, however, the government machinery in framing land legislations as could provide ample scope of flouting by the zamindars.

The First Five-Year Plan recommended expeditious abolition of intermediaries. The Plan had prescribed ceiling on land holdings by each state but wanted efficiently managed farms to be exempted from land ceiling, irrespective of the area commanded by them.

The Plan wanted occupancy right of tenant to be subject, to the owner's right to resume for personal cultivation. Thus, the plan proposal exposed the entire class of tenants to the danger of eviction.

The Second Five-Year Plan continued the earlier policy and developed the concept of reconstruction of the village community along co-operative lines²².

The Third Five-Year Plan stressed more on institutional changes in agriculture and emphasis was given more on making economy self-reliant in food production within the shortest period through better irrigation, supply of fertilisers, improved seeds and implements and education of farmers in better methods of cultivation²³.

The Fourth-Five-Year Plan continued the basic strategy started since the previous plan and basically relied on intensive agriculture taking into consideration the limitation of bringing of additional area under cultivation²⁴.

During the entire period since the mid 1960's, the Congress Party and its Government put its basic thrust for agricultural reforms than agrarian reforms. The Government was much worried over the chronic food crisis and rising unemployment in all sectors for which it all along encouraged packages like 'green revolution' garibi hatao (poverty alleviation) and other 20-points' programmes.

However, the Central Government and its various Committees had time and again provided some guidelines for land reforms. These are noteworthy. Here we may refer to the national guidelines on land reforms, particularly on ceiling on agricultural land enunciated in July, 1972 in the Chief Ministers' Conference at New Delhi by the Prime Minister. It provided for new ceiling within the range of 10 to 18 acres. The amended ceiling laws prescribed for retrospective effect from a date not later than 24th January 1971.

The Congress Government at the Centre enacted The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1967²⁵. It issued directives often regularly to the State Governments for implementation of the provisions of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

Entrusting the responsibility for implementation of land reform measures to the state, the Congress leadership created no special national agency to provide the necessary over-all guidance and supervision. Besides, the Congress leadership did not develop any strong peasant organisations to complement the government machinery. For the implementation of Acts and policies it had initiated, the Congress government at the Centre and the States depended too much on bureaucratic machinery.

In West Bengal, for instance, the Congress Party in

power had taken radical steps for land reform through its legislative measures, namely, the W.B.E.A. Act, 1953 and W.B.L.R. Act, 1955. But most of the reform measures were kept in abeyance for nearly 20 years of independence. It had admitted that this inordinate delay was due to "the delay in the preparation of the records-of-rights"²⁶.

The table appended below shows the progress of implementation of various land reform measures in West Bengal by the Congress Government in power from the beginning upto 1977.

Achievement on Land Reforms in West Bengal
(as in September, 1977)

Vesting and distribution of vested agricultural lands in West Bengal

(area in acres)

	Under W.B.E.A. Act (enforced since 1955-56)	Under W.B.L.R. Act (enforced since 1971)	TOTAL in West Bengal
Agricultural land vested	9,70,000	87,000	10,57,000
Area taken possession of by Government	8,52,000	64,000	9,16,000
Area distributed for agricultural purpose	5,93,000	39,000	6,32,000

Source : Land Utilisation and Land Reforms, Land and Land Revenue Deptt. Govt. of West Bengal, 1977.

Of 4 million acres of land vested in India upto 1977, only 2.1 million could be taken possession of and not more than 1.3 million acres could be distributed. The comparative figures for West Bengal were 1.05, .91 and .63 million acres respectively.

In an analysis of the Congress land reform activities S.K.Basu & S.K.Bhattacharya found in their study in 1963 that land reform in West Bengal present a dismal picture of tenurial conditions in the state. The study reveals that the W.B.E.A. Act of 1953 & the W.B.L.R. Act, 1955 have been ineffective in changing the bargadari system in matter of sharing of produce or recording-of-rights of bargadar which covers 25 to 30 per cent of land under cultivation. With regards to the programme of ceiling, it points out that malafide transfers that can more or less be identified with transfers by modes other than inheritance varied between districts from 10 to 25 per cent of the total transferred area and quite a number of these transfers were made in anticipation of the law for its undue delay during enactment²⁷.

"Land reform is certainly not to be equated with the Legislative measures touching on land reforms"²⁸. Since land reform "involves the most drastic change of the property structure and an attack on established interests"²⁹ a "certain degree of politicisation of the poor peasantry

on militant lines is a prerequisite for any successful legislative and administrative action for conferring rights and privileges on them. Otherwise, there is always the possibility of such conferment of rights not only becoming illusory but also turning to be positively harmful as the vast majority of the beneficiaries would succumb to the pressure of the landowners and relinquish their rights and privileges either voluntarily or through open or naked coercion. Even reform will not succeed unless it is accompanied by massive economic support to share-croppers through institutional sources"³⁰.

In West Bengal under the Congress rule, the two important land reform laws, namely, the W.B.E.A. Act, 1953 & the W.B.L.R. Act, 1955 initially did not bear any efficacy for the targetted peasants and agricultural labourers. This statement holds good upto the period of 1965. The inherent lacunas within the land reform laws were many. Before enactment of each of the laws, a long & time taken process of deliberation in the floor of the legislature were enough to make aware of landlords about the impending land reform laws. Therefore, there could be large scale benami, transfer avoiding ceiling laws. Actually benami transferred land was sold often for a higher price which provided the intermediary with finance adequate for purchase of land and property in urban areas. Besides, there was the scope for retaining land which without exception constituted the best

quality of cultivable land for self cultivation by the intermediaries. Land used for garden, fishery were kept outside from the perview of land ceiling laws, some time the ceiling rate or these types of land was far higher than expected. The Congress Party in the Government did not encourage peasant movement for application of the land reform laws. The excessive dependent on bureaucracy for reclamation of the vested land resulted in a situation where either vested land still directly occupied by landlords or occupied by them through multiple suits in the law courts over the excess amount of land. Actually the beneficiaries were not given any scope of involvement for the effective implementation of L.R. laws for themselves. Possession of the vested land & distribution of the same among the targetted peasantry were rather slow process. A huge compensation for the vested lands was paid to the intermediaries by the Government which ultimately dwindled the required agricultural finance. Therefore, the land reform laws could be questioned as they justified the right of the intermediaries over land through paying compensation as policy. Above all, the rich peasant economy was thoroughly encouraged through the community development project, blocks and cooperative institutions as directed by the policy of the successive five-year plans. As a result the lower strata of the peasantry were kept aside from any significant benefit.

But the land reform Amendment Acts of 1965, 1971 & 1972 were significant for providing the scope of preserving interests of the bargadars and other lower strata of the peasantry. However, the Congress government did not expedite the land reform measures beyond the legislative & bureaucratic boundaries as indicated earlier. Therefore, progress was doubtlessly limited & halting. Land reforms in the real sense, involves drastic changes in the existing property relations which require an organised attack on the established interest in the rural side. The Congress party in this state power always avoided this class confrontation due to its dependence on to the rural propertied. Land reform through class struggle was encouraged by the U.F. governments of 1967 & 1969 in West Bengal and since 1977 from an altogether different stand point. Performance of the latter has been elaborated in the foregoing Chapter V. In the eyes of Communists, the basic difference of outlook between the Congress and the left as a whole lies in "... the question of combining land reforms legislations with peasant organisation and mobilisation of non-peasant support"³¹. Whereas the Congress Party both in the centre and state is understood by communists to desire changes in the agrarian set-up slowly without bringing any radical change in the existing balance of class forces. The Congress Party has favoured the rich peasant economy with technology-intensive cultivation with a view to sort out the

stalking food problem & steady supply of raw materials to the industry. The left as a whole see the thing from the definite class points of view and encourage the struggle for land so that benefits could accrue to the rural have-nots. This is a step without which, according to the left, actual democracy based on economic right could not usher in the vast countryside.

1.2 Views of the INC on Rural Democracy

The Indian National Congress has stood all along in favour of Panchayati Raj (self-government in rural areas). After coming to power the INC has helped developing panchayat as a statutory institution for administering the local affairs and the implementation of developmental programmes in the rural areas.

The traditional village council (based on self-sufficient village economy which was typically the Indian system) was made defunct during the British period by interference of the agencies of the British Government.

The British Government in order to preserve and stabilise its political control over rural areas gradually adopted various measures for reorganising the village administration. The Royal Commission on Decentralisation of 1909 recommended a membership of five as a good average for the reconstitution of the village panchayat. The

village headman according to the Commission's recommendations was to be made ex-officio chairman of the panchayat. The members of the village council were to be informally elected by the village under the supervision of government officials. The commission also suggested that the work of the panchayats should be free from interference by the lower government subordinates and that a portion of the land revenue levied by the local boards should be assigned to the Panchayats.

Subsequently, various legislations like the Bengal Village Self-Government Act of 1919, Bombay and United Provinces Village Panchayat Act of 1920, Bihar and Orissa Village Administration Act, Assam Rural Self-Government Act of 1926, Punjab Village Panchayat Act of 1935 were passed to decide on their composition powers and functions. However, there was no uniform policy in regard to the establishment of village panchayats. One overriding recommendation of the commission that village panchayats should be under the control of the district authorities negated the value of all other suggested improvements.³²

The Gandhian approach for gram swaraj (independent village) emphasised rural reconstruction programme through economic reorganisation of rural society. The underlying implication of the programme of rural industries, including Khadi (hand-loom cloth) was thought to be the basis of

rural life. Gandhi sought to introduce his new plan of education which was known as Nai Talim. Harijan welfare or the social emancipation of the depressed section found an important place in the programme of rural reconstruction of the Mahatma³³.

In the Constitution of India the Directive principles (Article 40)³⁴, entrusted the states to organise village panchayats and to delegate to them powers and authority to function as units of self-government. The intended planned development recognised need of making the village panchayat an integral part of the decentralised administration.

Accordingly, the First Five-Year Plan (1951 - 1956) recommended that legislation should confer on the panchayats specific functions relating to village production programmes and the development of village lands³⁵. A Village Panchayat Committee of the All India Congress Party was formed and it submitted its recommendations in 1954. It, recommended that the states should provide full scope for the village panchayats to perform in the village society functions such as credit, marketing, supplies, etc. and that the functions should include also civic, social, economic and judicial activities³⁶.

The Second Plan (1956 - 1961) emphasised that the village panchayats should be organically linked with popular

organisations at a higher level³⁷. As regards finance, it was suggested that allocation to village panchayats by the states be in two parts : a basic proportion to 15 to 20 per cent of the land revenue and an additional grant extending upto 15 per additional amount by taxation or voluntary contribution³⁸.

A Study Team which is popularly known as Balwantrai Mehta Committee (1956)³⁹ appointed by the Congress Government at the Centre during the Second Plan period.

In the opinion of the Committee, the block administration functioned more bureaucratically and did not imbibe the spirit behind the rural development programmes. For generating people's enthusiasm for the programme, the Committee recommended that all developmental programmes in the bloc areas should be entrusted to representative institutions and the block staff and other officials should be placed at the disposal of these institutions.

The Committee also recommended for the provision of sufficient funds and sources of revenue for these local bodies. The Committee suggested a three-tier system of local government, consisting of directly elected panchayats at the village level, Panchayat Samiti at block and Zilla Parishad at district level with a term of five years.

It recommended the entrusting of entire rural

developmental work in the hands of the Panchayat bodies and suggested a number of sources of revenue for them. The Third Five-Year plan laid down the main objectives⁴⁰ of Panchayati Raj, such as increasing agricultural production, developing rural industries, fostering cooperative institutions, assisting weaker sections of the community etc.

In pursuence of the policy of the Central Congress Government the Congress Government in the state of West Bengal enacted the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1957 (W.B. Act I of 1957)⁴¹ and made the West Bengal Panchayat Rules, 1958⁴². These Act & Rules were obviously for extending democracy to the rural people.

However, these Panchayat Act & Rules came into force only in 1964⁴³. The State Government held Panchayat election in 1964 in W.B. on a non-party basis according to the W.B. Panchayat Act, 1957. The different layers of the Panchayat bodies were : (1) Anchal Panchayat composed of Gram Sabhas at the lower level, (2) Anchalik Parishad at the Block level and (3) Zilla Parishad at the District level.

The Anchalik Parishad (as elected body working at the Block level was constituted in 1964 but it became dysfunctional in 1967 by a State Government Order. The same order entrusted the Block Developmental Officer to look after the whole developmental work within the Block areas⁴⁴. Even the

Anchal Panchayats and their Gram Sabhas though not liquidated also became dysfunctional as the developmental work and financial powers were dealt by the Block Developmental offices. This was also the case of the Zilla Parishad.

Another important landmark in the drive for ensuring self-government in the rural areas of West Bengal by the ruling Congress Party was the enactment of Panchayati Act, 1973⁴⁵ afresh by total revision of the earlier Panchayat Act, 1957. The W.B. Panchayat (Election) Rules, 1974, was also issued immediately⁴⁶. According to this new Act of 1973 the Gram Panchayat did not have any Gram Sabha as provided in the Panchayat Act of 1957. The new Act (1973) also incorporated the provision for Nyaya Panchayat for administering justice in specified local disputes.

Whatever the merit of this Panchayat Act, 1973, it did not come into practice in the subsequent years of the Congress rule in the State. The Panchayati system of 1964 continued without any election till the end of Congress rule in 1977 with breaks of limited periods when left and other democratic parties ruled the State in 1967 and in 1969.

There were much criticisms of rural democracy as established by the Congress party in West Bengal, such as of overdependence on bureaucracy for developmental work and utilisation of Govt. funds, rural elite-leadership, and

discouragement of mass participation by avoiding regular election to the different levels of panchayat bodies.

In the next, this study will analyse, in brief, the views of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPIM-L) on agrarian reforms and rural democracy. The position of the CPI(M-L) is quite radical on these issues. The position of the CPI(M-L) on these issues may be considered as extreme left compared to the positions of the CPI and the CPI(M); while the position of the Indian National Congress has been held as on the right.

2. Views of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPIM-L) on agrarian question and rural democracy.

India's third communist party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPIM-L) was formed on 22nd April 1969 on the occasion of Lenin's hundredth birthday. The CPIM-L emerged from a split of the CPI(M). Mention may be made that the CPI(M) also emerged from the first split from the CPI in 1964. Unresolved inner-party contradictions resulted in successive splits in the communist organisations at different times on national and ideological issues. The issue of ideological position of the party was left open because the newly formed CPI(M) comprised moderate and extremist lefts who had serious differences and remained

unconvinced of the international general line. The CPI(M) leadership accepted neither the Soviet line nor the Chinese line unreservedly.

Within the ranks of the CPI(M) dissension took a turn while the party had decided to use parliamentary struggle to a great extent. The CPI(M)'s participation in the United Front Governments of Kerala and West Bengal was justified thus : "it is imperative that our party realizes that its immediate future, in no small way depends on how it plays its worthy part in running the two state governments of Kerala & West Bengal"⁴⁷ and " since the fortunes of the entire party, at the present stage of development, are closely linked with the successful running of these ministries and the role our party plays in them, the whole party throughout the country will have to be mobilized to back the argued programmes of these two non-Congress ministries and to see that they are earnestly implemented"⁴⁸. Being in power in two states and in opposition in the rest and in opposition at the centre imposed peculiar constraints on the party's style of functioning.

It was still believed, that the struggle of the democratic parties and groups "alone can pave the way for consolidating and widening the unity achieved by the democratic forces and open the prospects of realizing the slogan of a non-Congress democratic government at the Centre"⁴⁹.

The two ministries in Kerala and West Bengal were to be the principal instrument in the hands of the people in the revolution to come. For the extremists in the CPI(M), the party (CPI(M)) had settled for respectable parliamentarism by bringing its line in focus with that of the 'revisionist' CPI and they had settled for peaceful transition.

When the Central Committee of the CPI(M) was reviewing the election results of the states and drawing up its resolution, New Situation and Party's Tasks, the party's programme, political line, and its participation was coming under a two pronged attack - from the extreme left group of West Bengal within and from the Chinese party from without. The Central Committee decided to take action against the ultra left faction which had attacked the party leadership for participating in the coalition government in West Bengal. This phenomenon was not confined to West Bengal and similar extremist trends were present in Kerala, the Punjab & Uttar Pradesh⁵⁰.

Some left extremist elements in West Bengal, who had been defying the party had been guiding the local party units and organizing peasant movement in Naxalbari area for quite sometime. Soon after the United Front Ministry had assumed office in West Bengal in February 1967, the extremists called a peasant conference in March in Bagdogra (near Siliguri) and come to the conclusion that the United Front can

not solve any of the land problems and the new government could at best give some relief to the working class.⁵¹ They called for seizure of land, the setting up of liberated areas⁵². However, the Naxalbari peasant revolt was crushed in no time but the challenge from the extremist left within the CPI(M) grew.

As the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute intensified early in 1963, communist parties of the other countries were forced to take sides.⁵³ The CPI joined ranks with the CPSU and attacked the CPC's ideological positions, besides changing that the CPC was violating the 1957 Moscow declaration and the 1960 Moscow Statement⁵⁴. As early as October 1963, the CPC had outlined its thesis on which Lin-pio's Third World Strategy was based. India was central to Lin's Third World Strategy and just as the CPSU had to prove that non-capitalist development and peaceful transition was possible in India, the CPC had to prove that neither of these was possible and India's path to revolution lay in an agrarian revolution through a Maoist people's war⁵⁵.

The CPC's disapproval of the CPI(M)'s participation in the parliamentary system as a whole became unmistakable. The CPC commented : "These facts prove that without a people's revolution, without the seizure of political power by force and without the smashing of the old state apparatus

there can be no change in the social system in the nature of the political regime, and there can be no real social reform. There is no precedent in history, nor will there be any in the future"⁵⁶.

The CPC observed : "To fight for their liberation, the Indian people must resolutely smash this renegade clique and the revisionists of all forms and wage resolute revolutionary struggle"⁵⁷. For the CPC "revisionist of all forms" outside the "Dange clique" obviously meant the section of the CPI(M) leadership which according to the CPC, wanted to settle for parliamentarism.

The CPC read great revolutionary significance in the Naxalbari peasant revolt which called for the overthrow of the Indian government. In February 1967, Peking had seen the "storm" of the mass struggle "making a violent assault on the rule of the Indian reactionaries"⁵⁸.

In June, as the Naxalbari campaign was gaining momentum, Peking renewed its call for armed struggle to "overthrow" the government and "forcibly seize power". To call came through a People's Daily article credited to the "Red Guard", and repeatedly broadcast by the Radio Peking⁵⁹. This was followed by warm applause for the "revolutionaries of the CPI(M) who had deserted the united front government" in West Bengal. More elaborate exposition of the Maoist line for India was available in the People's Daily article on the

significance of Naxalbari, poetically captioned "Spring Thunder Over India". Naxalbari was the "Prelude to a violent revolution by hundreds of millions of people throughout India but to achieve it the Indian revolution must take the road of rallying on the peasants, establishing base areas in the countryside, persisting in protracted armed struggles and using the countryside to encircle and finally capture the cities"⁶⁰.

The climax was a call for a new party of genuine Marxism-Leninism guided by Mao's thought. A commentary titled "Let the Red Flag of Naxalbari Fly Still Higher" urged the "revolutionaries in Indian Communist Party" and the revolutionary people of India "to draw a line between themselves and the revisionist line politically, ideologically and organizationally" and to wage "a resolute struggle against modern revisionism centered on Soviet revisionist clique"⁶¹.

Though the CPI(M) leadership had not settled its own ideological issues, still it could not do without responding to the challenges of the left extremists within the party and the CPC's repeated attacks. The CPI(M) in its Central Committee Resolutions revealed serious differences with the CPC "on a number of issues connected with the Indian Revolution"⁶².

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) adopted a draft

on ideological issues in August 1967 and released it for discussion by the different state units of the party. Later in April 1968 this draft was adopted by the party plenum at Burdwan in the face of opposition from the left extremists. The draft called for simultaneous struggle against the Soviet revisionism and the China's left deviation. However, in the Andhra Pradesh plenum the majority ultra-leftists rejected it outright. T.Neggi Reddy, Pulla Reddy, and Kolla Venkiah placed two draft resolutions on the ideological issues. The Andhra document attacked the CPI(M) leadership and accused it of compromising with Soviet revisionism abroad and with Dange revisionism at home. In Sept. 1968, Andhra extremists formed 'Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Co-ordination Committee' (APRCC). It was said to have functioned as state unit of the All-India Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) formed in Nov. 1967, six month after the Naxalbari peasant revolt.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPIM-L) was formed in April 1969 by the expelled Left-extremists of the CPI(M). The CPIM-L is also known as the Naxalite Party. The name 'Naxalite' derived from the peasant revolt in Naxalbari village in Terai Darjeeling. The principal theoretician of the CPIM-L was Charu Majumdar. The tactics pursued in Naxalbari and in SriKakulam in Andhra Pradesh peasant movement were endorsed by the CPIM-L after its formation.

The Chinese Maoist leadership found encouraging trend within the CPI(M)'s extremists who were organising peasant movements in Naxalbari areas of West Bengal and in SriKakulam in Andhra Pradesh. These extremist-groups from the beginning were propagating Maoist strategy and peasant partisan war for achieving state power.

The CPIM-L in a political resolution extolled Mao's thoughts as guideline and declared Soviet Russia as 'social imperialist'. However, the party adopted the first party programme and political resolution in its first party congress in May 1970.

Actually the programme and political resolution of the CPIM-L was not acceptable by many in the party. Soon after, various groups came forward with their independent political understandings different from that of the official party. Prominent among these groups were Negi Reddi's group in Andhra Pradesh, Dakshin Desh group in West Bengal. However, this study will only focus here the views of the official CPIM-L.

2.1 Views of the CPIM-L on Agrarian Question

The CPIM-L considered the agrarian problem as central to the present stage of India's unfinished democratic revolution. It has considered the agrarian question as the

main issue in this people's democratic stage; therefore, it preferred to call it agrarian revolution rather than agrarian reforms.

The CPIM-L claimed, its programme was based on the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung. Its political resolution identified the principal contradiction in India as between feudalism and the masses of the peasantry. Comprador-bureaucratic capitalism and United States-Soviet imperialism were the main props of feudalism and had to be fought too. Its rejection of parliamentary methods demarcated the new party from the existing two communist parties. The Political Resolution of the CPIM-L strongly criticised the CPI and the CPI(M) as these were "lackeys of imperialism and domestic reaction" and were creating illusions among people about the united front governments in W.B. and Kerala "to blunt their revolutionary consciousness and divert them from the path of revolution"⁶³.

The Political Resolution of the CPI(M-L) had stated : "It is the responsibility of the working class as the leader of the revolution to unite with the peasantry - the main force of the revolution - and to advance towards seizure of power through armed struggle. It is on the basis of the worker - peasant alliance that a revolutionary united front of all revolutionary classes will be built up. The basic tactics of struggle of the revolutionary peasantry led by

the working class is guerrilla warfare.

As for the forms of struggle, there were three specific issues in debate : (i) Should the party be secret organisation ? (ii) Was there any need for mass organisation ? (iii) Was guerrilla warfare the only form of struggle ? Charu Majumdar answered these questions. He stated : a mass organisation cannot organise the agrarian revolution, only an underground party organisation can do it. The leadership of the poor and landless peasants over the peasant movement can be established only through underground party organisations among peasantry, and guerilla warfare was the only tactic for carrying on peasant revolutionary struggle. An advanced, class-conscious section of peasant masses could clear an area of class enemies by annihilating some of them and forcing others to flee the countryside⁶⁴.

Between January 1965 and May 1967, Charu Majumdar wrote eight documents to party comrades analysing the Indian situation and outlining his views on how to make revolution in this country. These formulations were grounded on his analysis of the basically feudal and semifeudal character of the Indian ruling class where Indian bourgeoisie had been considered as comprador agent to the international imperialist capital⁶⁵.

The Programme of the CPIM-L was adopted in its party congress held in May 1970. It read :

"Our country is the country of the peasant masses who constitute over 75 per cent of its population. They are the most exploited people of our country living in conditions of gemi-starvation and absolute pauperisation. In India's semi-feudal economy, 80 per cent of the land is concentrated in the hands of the 20 per cent landowners, i.e., rajas, landlords, and rich peasants, while the starving peasantry constituting 80 per cent of the rural population has no land or very little land"⁶⁶.

"The landless and poor peasants have to turn over 50 per cent to 90 per cent of their annual harvest in the form of rent to the landlords. The extortionate usurious capital continues to fleece the peasant. Eviction of peasant is the order of the day. Special oppression on scheduled castes, including the lynching of Harijans reminiscent of the middle ages, is continuing unabated"⁶⁷.

"The semifeudal land relations have transformed our country into a land of perpetual famine as a result of which millions of people die of starvation every year"⁶⁸.

The programme elaborated, its strategy thus : "the basic task of the Indian revolution is to overthrow, the rule of feudalism, comprador-bureaucrat capitalism, imperialism, and social-imperialism. This determines the stage of revolution. It is the stage of democratic revolution, the essence of which is agrarian revolution"⁶⁹.

people's war has been visualized as the main path in the semi-colonial, semi feudal countries like India. The programme stated : "The working class can wage a successful people's war by creating small bases of armed struggle all over the country and consolidating the political power of the people. This is possible only by developing guerrilla warfare which is and will remain the basic form of struggle throughout the entire period of our democratic revolution"⁷⁰.

It has further elaborated the agrarian programme thus : "Confiscation of all land belonging to the landlords and their redistribution among the landless and poor peasants on the principle of land to the tillers; cancellation of all debts of the peasantry and other toiling people. All facilities necessary for development of agriculture to be guaranteed"⁷¹.

In the field of national economy other measures are : "Confiscation of all the banks and enterprises of foreign capital and liquidation of all imperialist debt". And "Confiscation of all the enterprise of the comprador -bureaucratic capitalists"⁷². Comrade Charu Mazumdar, upheld Chairman Mao's great teaching : 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun ...'⁷³

Defending the tactics of annihilation as a higher form of class struggle, Charu Majumdar said that out of the process would emerge a people's army. He saw the possibility

of a big mass uprising in the country.

The CPIM-L equated agrarian revolution and seizure of power. For it, the mass should be made to understand that the gains of their agrarian struggle could be protected only by wresting political power, which was possible only through people's war.

But by the passage of time, Charu Majumdar's tactics of annihilation was questioned by some of the rank and file. Mao was quoted indiscriminately. But Mao specifically meant the annihilation - and not killing the enemy (that is Japanese occupation army) and not any class enemy. Mao asked his partymen "to wipe out landlord as a class not as individual"⁷⁴. As for killings, Mao had a very cautious approach : "To advocate killing more or killing without discrimination is entirely wrong; this would only cause our party to forfeit sympathy, become alienated from the masses and fall into isolation"⁷⁵.

However, the tactics pursued by the CPIM-L Organisation was not yielding desired results. The struggle was fast losing its mass character. The guerrilla squad dispersed over a wide area to escape the 'encirclement and suppression' by the police forces and the people had to bear burnt of the police repression with no guerrilla squad to protect them. Within a year (from the first Party Congress in 1970) SriKakulam, Debra-Gopiballabhpur and Naxalbari peasant

movements were decimated and the armed resistance of the peasant army and guerrilla squad did not get into the systematic raids and the party was isolated from the people and riven itself on the question of tactics it so far pursued.

The CPIM-L sees the agrarian question of the country from a different standpoint. As it visualises the principal contradiction in India to be between feudalism and the masses of peasantry. The party from the beginning neither encouraged peasants to fight for land nor for crops but for political power.

Later many groups doubted the tactics of the party. In the next, this study will highlight the views of the CPIM-L on the democratic set up in the rural areas (liberated areas).

2.2 Views of the CPIM-L on Rural Democracy

The CPIM-L's concern for the peasantry and for the agrarian economy is well known from its programme and practice. It considers "The main force of the democratic [people's democratic] revolution led by the working class is the peasantry"⁷⁶. [Emphasis added]. Therefore, necessarily it is a point of interest to study as to how

the CPIM-L has designed the policy to ensure democracy for the oppressed peasantry living in the vast rural areas in India.

To the CPIM-L, democracy at the rural or urban area is not an isolated phenomenon. The CPIM-L reckons the semi-feudal set-up, the big comprador-bureaucrat bourgeois and big landlords,⁷⁷ U.S. imperialists and Soviet social-imperialists are the confirmed enemies of actual democracy for the poor and landless peasantry and the toiling masses⁷⁸ and the basic task for establishing people's democracy "is to overthrow the rule of feudalism, comprador-bureaucrat capitalism, imperialism and social imperialism"⁷⁹.

The CPIM-L declares that this people's democratic revolution "will establish the dictatorship of the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and even a small and middle bourgeoisie under the leadership of the working class. They together constitute the overwhelming majority of the Indian people. It will be a state guaranteeing democracy for 90 per cent of the people and enforcing dictatorship over a handful of enemies. That is why it is people's democracy"⁸⁰.

The programme of the party stated that the people's democratic state after the revolution will carry some major tasks among which those relevant for democracy are quoted :

"People's political power to be exercised through revolutionary people's councils at all levels".⁸¹ / Emphasis added /

"Develop democratic culture in place of colonial and feudal culture".⁸²

"Abolish the caste system, remove all social inequalities and discrimination on the religious ground and guarantee equality of status of women".⁸³

"Enforce better living conditions of the people and remove unemployment".⁸⁴

From the above analysis it is presumed that the revolutionary people's council in the villages composed of landless and poor peasants are the main forces to establish democracy in the liberated areas. After annihilating the class enemies - the landlords, usurious money lenders, the distribution of the confiscated land, crop and property among the landless and poor peasants are the essential democratic activities. All these activities will be carried out by the revolutionary people's council which will hold the ultimate power in the countryside under the guidance of the working class and its party - the communist party. People's court will be organised to adjudicate the local disputes and trying of the oppressor landlords in the countryside.

Among the three liberated areas though temporarily, namely, SriKakulam, Naxalbari and Debra-Gopiballabhpur, SriKakulam experience was more methodical and it had

presented that the village committees attempted formal redistribution of land, control of village affairs including appropriation of crops. Seizure of lands, social and political power by annihilating the enemy or forcing him to flee and seizure of crops of the landlords, distribution of land and seized crops among the landless and poor peasants and adjudication by 'people's courts' were forming core of the agrarian and democratic programme in the liberated areas of Srikakulam⁸⁵. All these are due to the long experience of fighting in Telengana armed peasant movement in 1950's.

The concept of democracy i.e. people's democracy propagated by the CPIM-L appeared in more radical form than that of other two communist parties in India. However, the establishment of people's democracy by armed struggle did not take place. Failure of the tactics gradually came under criticism within the CPIM-L. Inner-party differences came over ground in 1970 but appeared more vigorously after the death of Charu Majumdar (28.7.1972). The party was broken up into various groups, some of which repudiated the Naxalbari line of Charu Majumdar.

However, contrasts were the areas where there was precedent of peasant mass struggle for land and crop. In these areas armed squads were formed mainly with the youths of landless and poor peasants. As has been mentioned earlier, in Srikakulam the nature of struggle was mainly mass struggle.

By now, many groups of the earlier CPIM-L have claimed to have corrected their tactics and have strongly criticised the stand of the earlier party as adventurist in nature. However, all shades of CPIM-L insisted on revolutionary solutions of the agrarian problem and establishment of democracy in India.

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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'.

APPENDIX I

Abstract of the Thesis

This study has been carried out to examine communist thinking in India on agrarian reforms and rural democracy. It has analysed these two aspects from the programmatic positions and practical activities of the two leading communist parties in India, namely, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M). More particularly this study has attempted to examine the programmatic differences between the two communist parties on agrarian reforms and rural democracy and their actual practices on the basis of data collected from the selected areas of West Bengal. For this appraisal this study has confined the period since 1964 to 1985. The year 1964 is significant in the history of Communist parties of India because it is in this year that there was the first split of Communist Party resulting in the emergence of the two communist parties. Moreover, it is since then that they adopted their individual programmes on the basis of their own assessment of the socio-economic and political condition of the country.

The two Communist Parties understand, as their programme reveal, that the democratic revolution has not been completed in India even to this day under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. Though they differ on the nomenclature of the

appropriate revolution which is due to be achieved at the present historical stage of the Indian society, both the parties emphasize that it has to be a democratic revolution - the National Democratic Revolution as the CPI stipulates and the People's Democratic Revolution the CPI(M) contemplates. They both hold the concern that agrarian relations in India remain dominated by the feudal, semifeudal sections and the bourgeoisie so largely that the country's economic social and political development can not proceed in the right direction. Again, both the parties emphasize the fact that in Indian society the rural masses constitute the largest segment and therefore, in their thinking the extension of rural democracy is an important element in their targetted democratic revolution. These two aspects - agrarian reform and rural democracy, constitute together a crucial area in the pursuit of their respective programme.

The treatment of agrarian question of the Asiatic countries and the necessary course of revolution aiming ultimately at socialism have an intense debate since the days of Marx himself. Several generations of Marxists from both Asia and outside have left a vast literature containing their thinking and lessons of experiments. Here this study has attempted to explore the communist thinking in India on agrarian question and necessary form of democracy for the vast majority of rural people in the present stage of democratic revolution - a preparatory stage towards the

socialist stage, as held by the communists.

In India the two communist parties think of the country's agrarian situation and its desired democratic setup with difference and they pursue policies according to their individual understanding, embodied in their respective party-programmes and other party-literature. The issue raised here and examined in this thesis, a brief abstract of which is here presented.

Chapter I explains the scope and objective of the study. It emphasises the need to begin with a study of the programmes of the communist parties included in this study because the ideology of a communist party finds concrete expression in a given historical context in its programme. The communist parties of India aim at a thorough democratic revolution. To understand their point of view it has been found necessary to explain the concept of democracy in Marxian literature and particularly to understand the concept of bourgeois - democracy, people's democracy and national democracy available in the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse-tung. This chapter also highlights the significance of agrarian reforms and rural democracy for democratic revolution as presented in Marxian literature. Finally this chapter explains in brief the Marxian method of historical analysis which has been taken as a basis for this study.

At the same time empirical study has been found necessary to examine the practice of the two parties in West Bengal. The

technique adopted therefor is also explained.

Chapter II traces the historical background of the adoption of a programme for the first time by the Communist Party of India in 1951, briefly indicating the treatment of agrarian reforms and rural democracy therein. This chapter also discusses the controversy over this programme leading to the emergence of CPI and CPI(M) through a split in 1964. Finally the adoption of two separate programmes by the two communist parties is discussed here.

Chapter III at first examines the assessment of the two communist parties about the class character of the Indian state and the nature of India's independence. Thereafter it examines the contents of their respective programmes particularly with reference to the nature of democratic revolution aimed at, the alliance of class forces necessary therefor, the forces opposing such revolution and the question of class leadership in the revolutionary alliance. The tactics indicated in their programmes are also briefly discussed. Finally this chapter analyses the policy of the two parties on agrarian reforms and rural democracy. This discussion in this chapter is based on the programmatic literature of the two parties.

Chapter IV is devoted more exclusively to the views of the two parties on agrarian reforms and rural democracy mainly concentrating on the debate between the two parties.

Chapter V studies the efforts of CPI and CPI(M) to implement their respective programmatic policies on agrarian reforms and rural democracy with reference to West Bengal. While it has been necessary to study the character of the peasant organisation and the political position of the two parties in the period from 1964 to 1985, it has been necessary also to find their policy pursuits separately for the periods of 1964 - 1977 and 1977 - 1985. The organisational steps taken by the two parties have also been discussed separately for these two periods.

A field study was undertaken in three representative districts of West Bengal to find out how the grass-root level activists of the two parties were pursuing their respective programmatic aims of agrarian reforms and rural democracy. Chapter VI explains the methodology of this empirical study and also the results thereof through an analysis of the data obtained. The questionnaire administered in this connection is however included as Appendix II.

Chapter VII studies the views of the Indian National Congress and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI-ML) on agrarian reform and rural democracy. The purpose of this chapter was to provide an understanding of the border line parties on the left and right in the context of which the position of the CPI and CPI(M) can be

better comprehended.

Chapter VIII provides a summary of the conclusions of this study particularly with reference to the following :

- (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.

In fine, it is necessary to point out that in the course of this study several Indian terms had to be used. A glossary of these terms has been included as Appendix IV.

Appendix II

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FIELD SURVEY : PART-I

0 PERSONAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Abbreviations : CPI = I; CPI-M
 = M; Burdwan = B; Midnapore
 = MID; West Dinajpur = WD;
 Agricultural Labourer = Ag.L.]

Code No.

Date

✓ Mark = Yes

X Mark = No

Blank = Unanswered

0.1 Name :

Age : Address :

Place of political activities :-

Village	Anchal/Block	Legislative Assembly Constituency

0.2 At present party's organisational post held :

0.21 For how many year(s) this post has been held ? :

Less than 5 years	More than 5 years	More than 10 years

0.22 For how many year(s) you are associated with your present political party/organisation ? :

.....

0.23 Are you associated with any other organisation(s) ? :

Political	Non-political

0.24 (a) Have you ever changed your loyalty from one party to another party ? : Yes No .

(b) If yes, : _____
 From which party To which party From which year

0.25 Whether you were or are wholetime^r of your party/organisation ? : Yes No

0.3 Institutional educational standard :

No edu- cation	Upto Pri- mary	Upto Matri- cula- tion	Gradua- tion	Post -Gradua- tion	Vocational or Professi- onal gra- duation
-------------------	----------------------	---------------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	---

0.4 To which of the following rural classes you belong by birth ?

Ag.L.	Poor pea- sant/ arti- san	Share -cro- pper	Middle peasâ- nt	Educated middle class	Rural busi- ness- man	Rich Pea- sants	Land- lord
-------	---------------------------------------	------------------------	------------------------	-----------------------------	--------------------------------	-----------------------	---------------

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FIELD SURVEY : PART-II

Abbreviations : CPI = I; CPI-M = M; Burdwan = B
 Midnapore = MID; West Dinajpore = WD; Agricultural
 Labourer = Ag.L.]

1 GENERAL POLITICAL INFORMATION

Code No.

1.01 Name of your

Date

(a) Village :

✓ Mark = Yes

(b) Anchal and Block:.....

X Mark = No

(c) State Legislative Assembly

Blank = Unanswered

Constituency in West Bengal

1.02 State the year of beginning of the organisation of your party in your area :

Before 1964	1964-1977	1977-1985

1.03 Among the political parties working in your area, which is the most influential and strong ?

Please name the other political parties according to their relative strength :

.....

1.04 Please name the elected parties in different elections for the State Assembly and for Panchayat bodies :

1962	1967	1969	1971	1977	1982	1987

State Legis-
 lative
 Assembly
 Election

	1964	1978	1983	1988
Panchayat elections				
Gram Panchayat				
Panchayat Samiti				
Zilla Parishad				

1.05 Please name the frontal organisations of your party in your area :

Name of the Frontal Organisations	From which year	Which is the strongest	Approximate numbers of membership	How many units are there of every frontal organisation

2 REGARDING AGRARIAN REFORMS :

2.01 Did any agrarian reform movement take place in your area between the year 1947 and 1964 ?

Yes No

2.01.1 If yes, what were the important aims of that movement ?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

2.01.2 Which political party/organisation was in the leadership ?

.....

2.01.3 Could you name five important leaders of that agrarian movement ?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

2.01.4 Class position of those five leaders (stated in 2.01.3 above) :

Class position	1	2	3	4	5
Ag.L/Poor peasants					
Middle peasant					
Educated Middle class					
Rich Peasant					
Landlord					
Others					

2.01.5 Methods and means of the movement :

Meeting/protest procession/
Memoranda

Strike/Demonstrations

Forcible Acquisition

Any other

2.01.6 Please mention the types of participation of the following rural classes in the movement

Rural classes	Extensive	Moderate	Small
---------------	-----------	----------	-------

Ag.L/Poor
peasants

Middle peasants

Educated Middle
class

Rich peasants

Landlords

Others

2.01.7 What were the results of these movements ?

A)	Yes	No
----	-----	----

Target achieved

Organisational strength
increased

People's support
increased

- B) _____

 What were the main aims

 Forcible acquisition of landlords'
 vest and benami land

 Government vest land acquired

 Distribution of the same among
 the landless and poor peasants

 Recording of rights as
 share-croppers

 Increase of the wages for the
 Ag.L.

 Others

2.01.8 A) In this agrarian movement what was the position
 of the following ?

	Opponent	Neutral
Feudal lord		
Landlord		
Rich peasant		
Middle peasant		

B) Methods and means of opposition :

With arms
By the help of police
Harassment through litigation
Economic boycott
Social persecution
Others

2.02 Did any agrarian reform movement take place in your area between the years 1964-1985 ?

Yes No

2.02.1 If yes, what were the important aims of that movement ?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

2.02.2 Which political party/organisation was in the leadership ?

.....

2.02.3 Could you name five important leaders of that agrarian movement ?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

2.02.4 Class position of those five leaders (stated in 2.02.3 above) :

Class position	1	2	3	4	5
Ag.L/poor peasant					
Middle peasant					
Educated Middle class					
Rich peasant					
Landlord					
Others					

2.02.5 Methods and means of the movement :

Methods and means	1964-1977	1977-85
Meeting/protest procession/ memoranda		
Strike/Demonstrations		
Forcible Acquisition		
Any other		

2.02.6 Please mention the types of participation of the following rural classes in that movement.

Rural classes	Extensive	Moderate	Small
Ag.L/Poor peasants			
Middle peasants			
Educated middle class			
Rich peasants			
Landlords			
Others			

2.02.7 What were the results of these movements ?

A)	Yes No		B)
	Target achieved		
Organisational strength increased			Forcible acquisition of landlords' vest and benami land
People's support increased			Government vest land acquired
			Distributed the same among the landless poor
			Recording of rights as share-croppers
			Increase of the wages for the Ag.L.
			Others

2.02.8 A) In this agrarian movement what was the position of the following ?

	Opponent	Neutral
Feudal lord		
Landlord		
Rich peasant		
Middle peasant		

B) Methods and means of opposition :

Methods and means	1964-77	1977-85
With arms		
By the help of police		
Harassment through litigation		
Economic boycott		
Social persecution		
Others		

2.03 REGARDING THE MOVEMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

2.03.1 In the movement for wage increase of the agricultural labourers a) which political party or parties are active in your area and, b) mention the year of beginning of this movement

A) Name of the party	Ac- tive	Neu- tral	Opp -os ed	B)	
				Before 1967	
				From 1967 to 1970	
CPI				From 1970 to 1977	
CPI(M)				From 1977 to 1982	
Congress				From 1982 to 1990	
CPIM-L					
Others					

2.03.2 The role of the different rural classes in this movement :

Rural classes	Active participation	Supported	Neutral	Opposed
Ag.L.				
poor peasantry				
Middle peasantry				
Educated Middle class				
Rich peasant				
Landlord				
Others				

2.03.3 What kind of steps your party/organisation used to take against those who opposed to this movement ? :
 Boycott Strike Meeting/protest procession
 Bargaining Others

2.03.4 Whether this movement achieved success ?
 Yes Partly No

2.03.5 Whether at present under the guidance of your party/organisation the rural ag.labourers and poor peasants can adopt the penal means of social boycott against their class enemies ? Yes No If yes :- from when ?

2.03.5 State the demand of your party/organisation in your area for the wage increase movement at different times and the achievement therein.

Demanded		Achieved	
Before 1970	Rs.	Rs.	
1970 - 1977	Rs.	Rs.	
1977 - 1982	Rs.	Rs.	
1982 - 1990	Rs.	Rs.	

2.03.7 Is there any difference in wages between Male Ag.Labourer and Female Ag.Labourer in your area ?
 Yes No . If the answer is yes, then, had your party organised any movement against this practice ? Yes No .

2.04 FORCES TO OPPOSE

2.04.1 At present which are the (a) residual features of feudalism still persisting in your area and (b) which are the most prominent ?

(a)

.....

(b)

.....

2.04.2 At present which among the following in your view, is the main enemy of the peasants, agricultural labourers in your area ?

Remaining features of feudalism	Land-lordism	Jotedar/Rich peasantry	Capitalist market	Local businessmen; Rice-Mill owners; M.R. Dealers etc.	Others
---------------------------------	--------------	------------------------	-------------------	--	--------

2.05 According to the view of your local party organisation what was the attitude of the following parties regarding the radical solution of land reform ?

Parties	Lead- ing	Princi- pal and reliable	Help -ful	Potentia- lly Helpful	Neutral	Opposing force
CPI						
CPI-M						
Congress						
CPI-ML						
F B						
RSP						
Others						

3 ON RURAL DEMOCRACY

3.01 For extending rural democracy what movements did the local organisation of your party organise for the sake of poor and oppressed sections of the rural people and against the privileged sections ?

- 1 Spread of education
- 2 Abolition of caste bias
- 3 Abolition of caste privileges
- 4 Protection of the weaker sections
- 5 Protection of the Scheduled tribes
- 6 Protection of the rights of women
- 7 Movement for economic rights of the Ag.L. and the poor
- 8 Establishment of democratic set-up in the rural areas
- 9 Others

3.02 Which among the rural sections in your area participated for above mentioned (in 3.01) steps ?

Sl. No.	Rural classes	Steps as in 3.01								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
A	Ag.L. and poor peasants *									
B	Middle peasants									
C	Educated middle class									
D	Rich peasants									
E	Landlords									
F	Others									

* Rural artisans are also included here

3.03 What was the role of the rural classes in the above mentioned steps (mentioned in 3.01) ?

Rural classes (mentioned in 3.02)	Opposed (mention step numbers)	Neutral (mention step numbers)
A		
B		
C		
D		
E		
F		

3.04 According to your local party organisation, what was the role of the following rural classes in protecting the interest of rural democracy ?

Rural classes	Roles				
	Principal and reliable force	Helping force	Potentially helpful	Neutral	Opposing force
Ag.L.					
Poor peasant/ share-croppers and Artisans					
Middle peasant					
Educated middle class					
Rich peasants					
Landlords					
Rural businessmen					
Others					

3.05 According to the view of your local party organisation what was the attitude of the following parties regarding the extension and protection of rural democracy ?

Parties	Leading	Principal and reliable	Helpful	Potentially helpful	Neutral	Opposing forces
CPI						
CPI-M						
Congress						
BJP						
Janata						
RSP						
FB						
CPIML						
Others						

3.06 Could you mention the most important activities of your party in your area as a partner in the L.F.Govt in West Bengal since 1980 ?

.....

.....

3.06.1 What are the demands of your area which are to be given importance right now ?

.....

3.06.2 Which kind of effort your local party is giving to take for these above mentioned demands (in 3.06.1) ?

.....

4 ON POLITICAL ASPECTS

4.01 Whether mass organisation of your party in your area has increased ? Yes No

If yes, then, mention the position of the participation of different rural classes.

Rural classes	Maximum	Moderate	Insignifi- cant
Ag.L.			
Poor peasant and artisans			
Middle peasants			
Educated middle class			
Rich peasants			
Landlords			
Others			

4.02 Could you mention the position of your party-membership among the following rural classes ?

Rural classes	Maximum	Moderate	Minimum	Nil
Ag.L				
Poor peasants				
Middle peasants				
Educated middle class				
Rich peasants				
Landlords				
Others				

4.03 Which of the following rural classes are in the leadership of your party in your area ?

Rural classes	Principal	Partly	Nil
Ag.L.			
Poor peasant			
Middle peasant			
Educated middle class			
Rich peasant			
Others			

4.04 The class position of your party's representatives in the panchayat bodies of your area (mention their numbers) :

Layers of Panchayat bodies	Ag.L.	Poor peasant	Middle peasant	Educated middle class	Rich peasant	Land-lord	Any other
Gram							
Panchayat							
Panchayat Samiti							
Zilla Parishad							

4.05 If the number of party membership is small or negligible among the agricultural labourers and poor peasants, could you explain why ?

.....

4.06 Does your party take initiative in discussing the political line of your party ? Yes No
 If yes, please specify the frequency :

Frequency	Regularly	Occasionally	Once in a year	Only before election
1964-1980				
1980-1985				

4.07 Whether joint movement in your area between the CPI and the CPI(M) has been organised :
 Yes No

4.08 Do you think that the disagreement between the CPI and the CPIM mainly lies on the following issues in your area ?

1) On the question of building broad democratic unity of all sections of the rural people (including the rich peasants and rural bourgeoisie)

Yes No

2) On the question of depending mainly on the Ag.L. and poor peasants : Yes No

3) On the question of attitude on the role of the ruling Congress : Yes No

4) On the question of emphasis ^{on} radical land reform rather capitalist market economy and its evils, like imperialist penetration, price rise, etc. Yes No

5) On organisational disbelief and rivalry :

Yes No

6) On revisionist/sectarian outlook of the CPI/CPI(M) :

Yes No

7) On hegemonism of the CPI/CPIM :

Yes No

8) Others, if any (specify) Yes No

4.0.9 What are the problems of joint movement of the CPI and the CPI(M) in your local level ?

.....

5.01 Do you think unification of the CPI and CPI(M) is required ? Yes No

5.01.1 If the answer of the above is 'yes' then how ?

a) Changing your party programme only

b) Changing the programme of the opposite party only

c) Changing both the parties' programmes

d) By resolving the leadership battle

e) Continuous persuasion of common tactics of both the parties

5.01.2 If the answer of the above is 'no' then why not ?

.....
.....

5.03 Any comments regarding your own party's programme, leadership, present tactics and style of functioning :

.....
.....

5.04 Mention sources of fund to meet the day to day expenditure of your local party organisation ?

Sources	Main	Moder- ate	Mini- mum	Insig- nifi- cant	Nil
Levey from the Party Members					
Regular contribution					
Periodic collection					
Fine					
From the central organisation					
Others					

6.01 Do you think that your party's local organisation has suffered due to the present downfall of socialism in the USSR and other European countries ?

Yes No

6.02 In view of this (above), is any change of political and ideological stand of your party required ?

Yes No

APPENDIX III

Rates of Minimum daily wages for the agricultural labourers prescribed by the Deptt. of Labour, Govt. of West Bengal.

Year(s)	Prescribed daily wages without principal meal and accomodation and 8 hours daily duty. Total wages (basic + D.A) in Rs. for an individual -	
	Adult	Child (above 14 years)
Oct1974 to Sept.1975	6.63	4.73
" 1975 - " 1976	8.10	5.82
" 1976 - " 1977	7.31	5.25
" 1977 - " 1978	7.84	5.63
" 1978 - " 1979	7.70	5.52
" 1979 - " 1980	7.91	5.68
" 1980 - " 1981	9.01	6.58
" 1981 - " 1982	9.58	6.89
" 1982 - " 1983	10.75	7.74
" 1983 - " 1984	13.91	10.16
" 1984 - " 1985	14.90	10.92
" 1985 - " 1986	14.71	10.77
" 1986 - " 1987	16.34	12.02
" 1987 - " 1988	18.02	13.29
" 1988 - " 1989	19.65	14.54
" 1989 - " 1990	21.17	15.70

Source : Information (Data) collected from, The Deptt. of Labour, Govt. of West Bengal, 6, Church Road, Calcutta-1.

APPENDIX IV

Glossary of Indian Terms

<u>Adhyaksha</u>	Headman of a <u>Gram Sabha</u>
<u>Bandh</u>	A form of general strike
<u>Bargadar</u>	Share-cropper
<u>Begar</u>	Bonded labour
<u>Benami</u>	Concealment of land holding in a fictitious name for avoiding ceiling law on land
<u>Bidhan Sabha</u>	State (provincial) Legislative Assembly
<u>Bigha</u>	Unit of one-third of an acre of land
<u>Crore</u>	Unit of ten million
<u>Dhanatantra</u>	Capitalism
<u>Ganatantra</u>	Democracy
<u>Gherao</u>	Literally encirclement; it is a kind of protest against an individual by surrounding him/her, usually accompanied by the chanting of slogans but without the use of actual physical violence
<u>Gram</u>	Village
<u>Gram Sabha</u>	A unit of local administrative body of one or two villages
<u>Grihastha</u>	Fairly rich cultivator
<u>Harijan</u>	A term introduced by M.K.Gandhi to denote the untouchables in Hindu Community
<u>Jotdar</u>	Owner of a large holding of agricultural land
<u>Khamar</u>	Threshing floor
<u>Khas</u>	Self-utilized land

<u>Krishak</u>		Peasant; Cultivator
<u>Kisan</u>		Peasant; Cultivator
<u>Kshet-majur</u>		Agricultural labourer
<u>Kshetmojur</u>		
<u>Lakh</u>		Unit of 100,000
<u>Lok Sabha</u>		Lower-house of the Indian Parliament
<u>Maharaja</u>		Indian King
<u>Munsif</u>		A judge of a lower court
<u>Nagar</u>		An urban centre; city
<u>Nirbachan</u>		Election
<u>Panchayat</u>		Originally a village council of five wisemen. Now the bottom tier of rural local government; A panchayat is composed of a small number of villages.
<u>Panchayat Samiti</u>		A body or council at the block level. Now the middle tier of local government
<u>Panchayati System</u>		See 'Panchayat'
<u>Paschim Banga</u>		West Bengal - a state or province of independent India.
<u>Paschim Bangla</u>		
<u>Pradesh</u>		Province or state
<u>Praja</u>		Tenant; subject
<u>Pauro Sabha</u>		Municipality
<u>Raiyat</u>		Cultivator or farmer
<u>Rayat</u>		
<u>Rayot</u>		
<u>Raja</u>		King, Lord. It is also used to mean landlord by his tenant cultivators
<u>Rajya Sabha</u>		Upper-house of the Indian Parliament

<u>Samajtantra</u>	Socialism
<u>Samiti</u>	Association; a body of members
<u>Samyabad</u>	Communism
<u>Satyagraha</u>	Literally, love for truth. The Gandhian technique of passive resistance or non-cooperation, and the application of moral pressure for political objectives
<u>Tebhaga</u>	A system of share-cropping to share the produce at the rate of 2:1 between the tenant and the landlord
<u>Zamindar</u>	An intermediary landholder paying permanently settled revenue directly to the government i.e., a feudal lord. Also used as landlord
<u>Zilla Parishad</u>	District Board or District Council. Now the highest tier of rural local government.

APPENDIX V

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