

Breaking the barriers to Unity

Draft Report presented by Comrade Lal Singh, General Secretary of the Communist Ghadar Party of India, in the enlarged plenum of the Central Committee convened in New Delhi on January 24-25, 1998.

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Publisher's Note

This document, *Breaking the Barriers to Unity*, is the product of the deliberations of the Enlarged Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Ghadar Party of India, convened on January 24-25, 1998. It consists of two discussion papers, on the objective and subjective conditions of the working class movement respectively, and the plan of action of the CGPI based on the analysis of these conditions which was approved by the Enlarged Plenum. This document is now being released for discussion by the decision of the Central Committee of the CGPI.

March 1998

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Preface

In the penultimate year of the twentieth century, Indian society continues to be gripped by an all-sided crisis, characterised by the acute governmental crisis. The resistance of the working class and other oppressed masses of people to the worsening conditions of life continues to be manipulated by the bourgeoisie and its collaborators, as the communist movement remains divided.

Since 1992, when the CGPI decided to address the problems of restoring the unity of the Indian communist movement in the post-Cold War period, and since 1993 when the Third Consultative Conference was held and *Whither India?* was released for discussion, a lot of work has been done to establish the General Line of the communist movement. And the work has met with key successes. Today, Indian communists are no more isolated from each other. Many communists belonging to different parties are having consultations and exchanges with one another on a constant basis. The necessity of restoring communist unity has entered the consciousness of the broad sections of the workers and progressive forces. This is a positive development. However, the Indian communist movement has not yet emerged as the leader of the Indian working class movement, and the working class is yet to emerge at the head of the movement of the Indian people for thoroughgoing transformations. The next step towards restoring the unity of the Indian communist movement must be taken.

With this in mind, we begin the discussion here to chart the form and content of the ideological struggle so that the entire party is fully prepared to engage all communists and progressive forces in taking the next step. We want that our party

puts the full force of its consciousness and organisation behind this work and wages the struggle in the communist movement. We want to set the work in a way such that we can measure our success by assessing the extent to which communists and advanced elements of the working class take up the aims we set here.

Our theory and ideology tell us that the transformation of India will be on the basis of a conscious movement of her people. There lies an entire process through which our Party as a part of the Indian communist movement, the Indian communist movement as the vanguard of the Indian working class, the class itself, and finally the people, acquire the consciousness and organisation to accomplish victory.

We will begin the discussion by assessing the present. An assessment of the present means to set the tasks to change the present. We will also discuss which social force must be called upon at this time to carry out this work and what methods will be used. In short, we want to emerge from here with a plan, a conscious and pro-active plan, to intervene in the present, so that the next step in the restoration of the unity of Indian communists is taken. The CC has convened this Enlarged Plenum to have maximum participation in arriving at the decisions, as a prelude to maximum mobilisation of the Party and all its reserves to complete the tasks that present themselves.

Part I.

**Where is the movement
and what are our tasks?**

Introduction

The question as to where the objective revolutionary process stands at any particular time has to be analyzed in order to bring the subjective conscious factor on par with the needs of the times. It is on the basis of answering the question as to where the movement is at this time that communists have to work out the tactics that are to be followed in order to achieve our strategic goal of socialism and communism.

The science of Marxism-Leninism has shown that the objective movement of human society is from capitalism to socialism and communism and that the working class spontaneously gravitates in this direction. It has also shown that the victory of socialism over capitalism cannot be achieved and defended without the most advanced revolutionary theory to guide the movement and without a party based on such theory at the head of the working class.

We are living in the epoch where capitalism is in its highest and last stage, the epoch of **imperialism and the proletarian revolution**, as characterised by Lenin. Within this epoch, we analyzed and concluded that the world is currently passing through a period of **retreat of revolution**, ushered in by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The fundamental contradiction remains that between capital and labour, between the capitalist system and the socialist system. The major contradictions remain those between the exploiters and the exploited within each country, between imperialism and the oppressed peoples, and the inter-imperialist and inter-monopoly contradictions. To analyze where the movement stands at this time is to analyze these contradictions in their motion and development, in other words, what the present is revealing.

The year 1998 opens with considerable uncertainty and division within the ranks of the Indian bourgeoisie. It opens with considerable uncertainty over the fate of the world capitalist system and its performance as well, even though the leading western banks have made windfall gains from the East Asian crisis by shifting the burden onto the backs of others. What do the national and international developments show – that the bourgeoisie is still on the offensive, or has this character of the period changed? What new features have emerged, if any, and what is their significance? What does it tell us communists about how we should intervene in the class struggle at this time?

What are the international developments revealing?

World capitalism gained an upper hand in its life and death contention with socialism at the beginning of this decade. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the signing of the Paris Charter in 1991, through which US and other western imperialist countries arrogantly declared that henceforth “free-market economy”, “pluralism” and “multi-party democracy” would be imposed on all countries of the world — these were the indications of the massive offensive of world capitalism against the proletariat and peoples and against socialism. US imperialism arrogantly announced its intention to fashion a “new world order” under its dictate through economic and military subjugation of other countries and peoples. The aggressive expansion of NATO to the borders of the Russian Federation, the military intervention in Bosnia, the repeated aggressions against Iraq, military interventions in Somalia, Haiti, and the great and continuing economic blockade of Cuba are clear indications of the aims of the US imperialists and their allies. In the economic sphere, the US and Western capitalism moved aggressively to capture the vast markets of the former Soviet Union

and the countries of Eastern Europe. The contention with Japan began to sharpen with trade wars. The WTO was rammed through to open the way to easier imperialist penetration of the markets of the whole world.

Beginning about two years ago, since around late 1995, signs have been indicating that world capitalism is having to adopt a different approach, to sing an adjusted tune to achieve the same economic and political aims. While threats and actual acts of military aggression continue, world capitalism is at the same time pushing “liberalisation with a human face” or “growth with equity” as the panacea for all countries. In many countries of the world, social democracy has been brought into play to run the governments and ensure “liberalisation with a human face” and “growth with equity”. The defeat of Lech Walesa in Poland at the hand of social-democrats, the rise of social-democrats to power in Albania following last year’s elections, the establishment of centre-left coalitions in some countries like Italy and India, the advance made by Zyuganov’s communist party in Russia, the coming to power of communists in Nepal, the victory of Labour party in Britain and the socialist party in France, are indications of this trend.

No hue and cry has been raised by the leading lights of world capitalism at these developments. In fact, far from the advances made by social democracy constituting any threat to the capitalist-imperialist system, any break on the aggressive drive of world capitalism, all the indications are that it is imperialism that has brought social democracy into positions of power. The marriage of liberalism and social democracy has been organised by world imperialism to ensure that social democracy does the job it is best suited for, the job it has been doing for an entire century. This is the job of confusing and paralyzing the working class and people, the job of creating illusions that capitalism, properly managed and with a human face, would be their salvation. This is the job of ensuring that the working class and working masses are not allowed to organise around a clear pro-

gram to stay the capitalist offensive and prepare the subjective conditions for revolution.

The signals of the change of tune of world capitalism are coming loud and clear from none other than the infamous Bretton Woods institutions - the World Bank and the IMF. The World Bank has been spending millions of dollars to train its staff in integrating "poverty alleviation" into the strategy of liberalisation and privatisation. Now immediately following the Southeast Asian currency crisis, Asia Week is trumpeting the urgent need to promote poverty alleviation programs in those crisis ridden countries so as to prevent social unrest. The IMF bail-out packages to South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia all integrate measures to ensure a "human face" alongside the further subjugation of these economies to the imperialist system of plunder.

What does this resurgence of social-democracy show? It shows that while the contradictions are intensifying, the opposition to the capitalist offensive continues to be spontaneous and the bourgeoisie continues to be able to manipulate this opposition. In none of the capitalist countries does one see a conscious popular movement as yet. In each case, the opposition to capitalist reforms ends up as a contest of social democratic forces to win the trust of the bourgeoisie to run the state, reconcile the struggles and implement the policies favouring the bourgeoisie. This is precisely what has happened in India in the last two years where the entire situation was manipulated by the bourgeoisie.

In objective terms, the contradictions are intensifying, both between the exploiters and the exploited and among the exploiters. The mass actions against various cutbacks in North America and in Europe, including the unprecedented shut-downs and general strikes of workers and teachers in Canada, the massive demonstrations of workers in South Korea, the worldwide opposition to World Trade Organisation (WTO), the opposition to the Helms-Burton Act and to Asia Pacific Eco-

conomic Co-operation (APEC), to the threatened US aggression against Iraq – all these are signs that the contradictions are intensifying. But the contradictions have not matured to a level where it can be said that the upper hand that the bourgeoisie has had in this post Cold War period is slipping away as yet. People's struggles are picking up, but as long as these are reactive and spontaneous, they are fair game for manipulation, diversion, division and disorientation, besides wrecking them through anarchy and violence. The international bourgeoisie is extremely active on all these fronts. The decisive difference to this situation can come only if the spontaneous outbursts will be replaced by conscious mass actions.

If we go by the experience of the twentieth century, social democracy is the trusted ally of imperialism to disarm people so that they do not wage a conscious struggle. In the past, it has paved the way for the rise of fascism. Right now, social democratic politics is deployed to get people to rally behind the aims set by the world bourgeoisie as well as the bourgeoisie of any country and give up their independent aims. In order to reconcile the interests of capital and labour, the social democratic politics has adopted the brand of "IMF-World Bank socialism" whose core prescription is "poverty alleviation" and core theory is "equitable distribution". For countries of Eastern Europe and Asia, social democracy is the main content of the program of the bourgeoisie. For Tony Blairs and Clintons, social-democratic politics and liberalism go hand in hand.

The international developments since 1995 suggest that the initial euphoria of imperialism after the disintegration of the Soviet Union has been replaced by a more calculated approach with the twin aim of (i) disarming people ideologically and (ii) deepening the liberalisation and privatisation measures. Social democracy has come to the fore to do for the world bourgeoisie what liberalism and the "free marketers" could not accomplish.

One of the features in recent years has been the sharpening

of inter-imperialist and inter-bourgeois contradictions. The contradictions between the US and the Russian Federation have sharpened over the past two years, with Russia showing signs that it will oppose the Eastward expansion of NATO. The US attempt to unilaterally bomb Iraq over the question of nuclear safeguards was aborted as a result of opposition by Russia and France among others. The US-Japan conflicts have been rising and the collapse of the Asian Tigers has further intensified inter-imperialist and inter-bourgeois contradictions. At the same time, it has also intensified the contradiction between the western imperialist powers and the peoples of Asia.

The collapse of the Asian tigers has been dramatic. These countries which were called success stories were nothing but outposts of imperialism and international finance capital, backed by the US military machine. Between May and November 1997, the exchange value of the national currencies of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and South Korea fell by 54%, 50%, 39% and 25% respectively. By January, there had been a further steep fall in these currencies, triggered by the collapse of the Indonesia Rupiah. While the economies of these countries had experienced rapid growth in the seventies and eighties, they had also accumulated a high level of foreign debt. Between 1994 and 1996, exports began to slow down and huge amounts of finance capital flowed into these countries, largely short-term funds that flowed from one bank to another, and flowed out even more rapidly when the currency crash occurred in 1997. The billions of dollars that IMF is now pumping into these economies as part of a bail out operation is only going to further increase the imperialist stranglehold.

The Asian Tigers were till yesterday considered the heroes of capitalist reforms. The World Bank and the IMF experts wrote books in praise of the so-called East Asian miracle. Now what has happened to their miracle and these heroes? Far from being tigers, they look more like kittens in front of the IMF bail out missions. What is being predicted is that as a re-

sult of the massive devaluation and its impact on domestic industry and agriculture, lakhs of workers will lose their jobs in these countries. At the same time, it has also become known that many international financial institutions and funds have literally made billions overnight by speculating on the currencies when they are in turmoil.

The crisis in South East Asia, as the crisis in Mexico and other countries of Latin America before it, is a grim signal to all the peoples who are faced with the prospect of capitalist reforms just what may be in store for them. The crisis is bound to lead to the further intensification of social contradictions. In the consciousness of the vast majority of peoples in Asia, the credibility of capitalism is taking a beating in its struggle against socialism.

The contradiction between India and the West on economic matters, such as over trade and markets, is less acute compared to the clash of Japanese or Korean conglomerates and their counterparts in the US. It is in the political, strategic and military spheres where India and the West are playing cat and mouse at this time. Taken as a whole, India and the US are colluding and colliding.

The Indian bourgeoisie is doing everything at this time to rally its people behind its aims to emerge as a big power. It is talking of “poverty alleviation” to convince people that they must tone down their opposition and become partners with the bourgeoisie. It is giving the call for defence of “national unity” in the manner of “defence of the fatherland” of the Third Reich and for “making India internationally competitive” in the manner of other imperialist countries.

The rise and recent collapse of the Asian Tiger economies is a reflection of the law of uneven development of capitalism. It shows that capitalism cannot develop without crises. And as the degree of monopoly rises and the mobility of finance capital is accelerated as a result of the technological revolution and the breaking down of national barriers to capital mobility,

the crises are more intense and create bigger disasters. The developments also show how the most powerful financial interests are able to impose the burden of the crisis on the dependent peoples and countries. The financial magnates of the west have used the crash in East Asia to further subjugate their economies and enhance their own clout in the world market.

International finance capital is trying to clear away all obstacles in the way to its rapid growth. In the process, the contradictions of capitalism are becoming extremely sharp. It is quite possible that as imperialism comes in for the kill in East and South East Asia, the inter-imperialist contradictions amongst the US and European imperialists, between the US and Europe on the one side and Japan on the other, between the US and China and the US and India could all sharpen. The possibility of the economic wars escalating into military wars cannot be ruled out. The bourgeoisie in Asian countries like Japan, India, China, Korea will strive to raise “nationalist” passions to line up the working class and people in “defence of the fatherland”, that is, in defence of its own aims.

The line of social democracy is to rally the working class of each country behind their “own” bourgeoisie under the slogan of “defence of the fatherland” from the “foreign threat”. The threat to freedom, independence and the well being of the peoples in each country comes from “one’s very own bourgeoisie”, which has in each case been the basis of increasing imperialist domination and plunder. The working class has to direct its fire against the “native” bourgeoisie, as well as the imperialists and all other reactionary forces that prop up the system of exploitation and oppression.

At the 19th Congress of the CPSU(B), in 1952, J.V. Stalin pointed out that the bourgeoisie had thrown the banner of national independence, freedom and sovereignty, which it had upheld as standard bearer in nineteenth century Europe, into the mud and trampled upon it. Henceforth, he said, it is the

proletariat to whom this banner belongs, and it is the proletariat that must discharge the sacred duty of defending national independence and sovereignty. The development of events in the world since the collapse of the Soviet Union has reinforced Stalin's assessment once again. Wherever socialism was overthrown, as in Albania, the people lost not only socialism, but also their freedom, independence and sovereignty. Communists need to utilise the unfolding situation to drive home the point to the proletariat and all freedom-loving peoples that socialism is the condition for freedom and independence of the nations and people.

The international bourgeoisie is manipulating everything and wrecking whatever it can to turn the wheel of history back, to negate the gains of the twentieth century in particular. It has become extremely arbitrary, less cautious and very incoherent, so much so that some of its own laws and institutions are in self-contempt. As a result of these developments, people are under utmost pressure to wage reactive struggles. But at the same time, this has made the bourgeoisie extremely vulnerable for political exposure on the questions of credibility, arbitrariness and incoherence. It is an opportune time to elaborate a coherent alternative on a pro-active basis and put the bourgeoisie on the defensive as a prelude to its defeat.

Our philosophy and theory tell us that the retreat of revolution and socialism is a temporary phase within this era of imperialism and revolution. It will inevitably give way to its negation, another period of flow of the revolution, the second round of proletarian revolutions in the 21st century which will overthrow capitalism in one or more countries. As Lenin concluded, it is not possible to predict precisely when and where the chain of imperialism will break and the revolution will make a decisive advance. The manner in which the major contradictions are developing internationally points to the possibility of South Asia becoming the weak link. For Indian communists, the key question is whether the subjective factor,

and most importantly the vanguard party of the working class, will be adequately prepared to grasp the moment when the tide turns.

What are the developments in India revealing?

As India approaches yet another General Election barely 20 months after the last one, the inability of the major political parties to offer a credible and stable government to the bourgeoisie is very apparent. It is this inability that forced the elections, even though none of the political fronts of the bourgeoisie was fully prepared for it.

The political system in India is in crisis, most acutely manifested in the governmental crisis. This governmental crisis has the potential to bring the entire political system into disrepute. The bourgeoisie is unable to whip up euphoria amongst the working masses in favour of a government formed by any of the political combinations - the Congress front, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) front or the Third Front. Politicians and political parties have been hurling mud at each other and all the institutions of government - the bureaucracy, the judiciary and the armed forces are extremely discredited as a result of the infighting and the mutual exposures.

This governmental crisis has been in the making for nearly a decade. Following the most recent Lok Sabha elections in 1996, neither the Congress party nor the BJP could fulfill the need of the ruling classes and the imperialists. The Indian bourgeoisie went along with the international trend of bringing to power a left-of centre coalition including communists, to defend capitalism and liberalisation with a "human face". However, the inherent instability of such a government, as well as the boost it has given to centrifugal forces by giving space to various regional bourgeois groupings at the centre, is not to the satisfaction of the Indian bourgeoisie as a whole. Just as

the mid-term election in 1991 failed to resolve the governmental crisis, the election in 1998 is also not expected to do so.

The BJP is presenting itself as the best choice to provide a “stable” government under an “able” Prime Minister for the Indian bourgeoisie and imperialism. It has struck various alliances, and is desperately trying to ensure that it gets endorsement of the bourgeoisie as a whole, by being all things to all sections. But by launching Sonia Gandhi as the star campaigner for the Congress with huge support from the Indian and international media, it seems that once again the war will be waged to the bitter end. It is possible that neither the Congress nor the BJP coalitions may win a majority, and the governmental crisis continues. It is becoming clear that the bourgeoisie is using the governmental crisis to keep the people in a state of perpetual anxiety and to prevent the working class from setting its own aims.

The elections are taking place at a time when the Indian economy has not only failed to deliver the promised goods, but its growth has in fact slowed down. The Rupee has fallen by over 12 percent since May 1997 and it has already hit the 40 Rupee to a dollar mark. The predictions are that it will soon reach 50 Rupees to a Dollar. The burden of foreign debt and the cost of imported goods are rising as a consequence. Inflation is predicted to once again rise beyond double digits. Industrial growth has already been slowing down as has exports. Unemployment is swelling and is expected to rise further in 1998.

The effect of the East Asia crisis is already being felt in the Indian markets. Finance Minister Chidambaram, while announcing the latest measures to hike interest rates, called upon political parties not to make “irresponsible statements” which could create panic in the economy. At the Conference of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in Chennai, it was clear that worry about the impact of the South East Asian crisis on India is very much there amongst

the Indian bourgeoisie. Moody has downgraded India in its index of credit-worthiness. Gujral has called the Indian economy an “elephant” which allegedly moves cautiously. Chidambaram declared the Asian Tigers had done nothing wrong - and called for stepping up liberalisation and privatisation. The BJP is reported to have called for locking in of the fast speculative money for a period of six months, which it hastily denied the next day. What the developments are revealing is that while there is unity on “liberalisation with a human face” and on “growth with equity” amongst all the political formations, they have not been able to work out a clear line that can win the trust of the bourgeoisie as a whole.

The governmental crisis shows that the old arrangements are no longer working. The coalition of big capitalists with the landed interests of different regions and the elites of different castes and communities, as represented by the Indian National Congress, was the old arrangement that served the Indian bourgeoisie for many decades. However, the development of Indian capitalism has not only enriched the old industrial houses such as the Tatas and Birlas, but it has also given rise to new monopoly groups. Capitalist-landlord families from various regions have joined the ranks of the big business houses. This has changed the composition of the big bourgeoisie and accentuated contradictions among the monopolies over the control of various markets. It has also widened the claims and expectations of diverse regional bourgeois groups for a share in political power.

The intensification of inter-bourgeois contradictions is accompanied by the collective desire and drive of the Indian bourgeoisie to emerge as a major power in South Asia and on the world scale. Towards this end, it has adopted the Gujral Doctrine which, in the words of its author, is “enlightened self interest”. And it is moving aggressively to implement this doctrine in its relations with Pakistan, Bangladesh and other neighbours. Recent events such as Jyoti Basu’s dealings with

Bangladesh and Bal Thackeray's utterances with respect to Indo-Pak relations are indicative of the new arrangement that the Indian bourgeoisie is seeking.

There is no reason to believe that the new arrangements that are being worked out will put an end to the crisis of bourgeois rule that has become the constant feature of Indian politics. The intensification of the contradiction between the exploiters and the exploited led to deep divisions among the exploiters and a split in the Congress Party in the sixties. Since then, the bourgeoisie has managed to preserve its rule, through one crisis after another, by employing the method of the ballot and the bomb.

The political experience of recent decades include:

- mass upsurge and extra-parliamentary opposition of the early 1970s
- imposition of National Emergency in 1975;
- staging of the drama of "restoration of democracy" in 1977-79 and return of Indira Gandhi in 1980;
- emergence of mass struggles in defence of rights in Assam, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh (A.P), etc.
- the rise of state terrorism in the name of defending the unity and integrity of the nation;
- assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 and the massacre of the Sikhs;
- Rajiv's modernisation drive along with escalation of state and individual terrorism;
- assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991;
- Rao's liberalisation and privatisation program accompanied by massive scams, communal violence and criminalisation of the polity, including Ayodhya and its aftermath of organised violence against Muslims in 1992-93;
- growing opposition to liberalisation, privatisation, GATT and WTO;
- the rise and collapse of the left of centre coalition with its common minimum program in 1996-97.
- Clearly, the response of the Indian bourgeoisie to the

struggles of the people in recent decades has been to unleash violence in the form of state and individual terrorism and of communal violence. This points to the need for utmost vigilance on the part of the people to ensure that the bourgeoisie does not succeed in drowning in blood the growing resistance.

For the first three decades after achieving political independence from colonialism, Indian capitalism flourished under the framework of the Nehruvian “socialistic pattern of society”. The state sector invested massively in heavy industry and infrastructure, taxing the broad masses of people to ensure maximum profits for the big industrial houses. The license-permit regime of controls on imports and investment enabled the big bourgeoisie to monopolise the market by restricting the competition from others, both Indian and foreign. The bulk of the population was bled dry to fatten the minority of rich and privileged, the big bourgeoisie and its hangers-on.

By the eighties, the Nehruvian model and strategy of monopoly capitalist growth had run out of steam. This was why Rajiv Gandhi had to launch his modernisation drive, which had to be taken further by Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh with their liberalisation and privatisation program. Now this reform program or package of market oriented reforms, through which the bourgeoisie hopes to get out of the economic crisis at the expense of the people, has itself become a factor for aggravating the crisis.

That the market-oriented reforms only serve to enrich a privileged minority has been exposed very rapidly to increasing numbers. Since the Narasimha Rao government in 1991 launched the reform program, prices of consumption goods have risen much faster than wages, even in the most organised sectors of industry, not to speak of the wages of agricultural and other unorganised labour. The real wages of labour have been eroded on an all-India scale, while the profits of big business houses have multiplied several times over. At the same time,

more jobs have been destroyed than have been created. The growing control of the market by the biggest monopolies and multinationals, the rising interest rates, bank scams and tight credit situation has led to a tremendous squeeze on the economy of small and medium-scale producers in all sectors. The ruination of peasants, of small businessmen, their proletarianisation – is a process that has been accelerated, swelling the ranks of the unemployed as well as the ranks of the resistance to capitalist reforms.

The resistance to this economic reform program has deepened and widened to include diverse sections of the people including workers, peasants, women, adivasis, other tribal peoples and displaced communities. Sections of big business that feel threatened by the pace of change begin to use the platform of resistance for their own ends, thereby further aggravating the crisis.

The economic offensive has been accompanied by criminalisation and communalisation of the polity, confirming again that the bourgeoisie cannot continue to rule except by resorting to violence and crime. In Manipur and Nagaland, in Kashmir and Punjab, the brutal violence of the central armed forces against broad masses of people continues to be justified in the name of “defending national unity and territorial integrity”. The resistance and opposition to central despotism and state terrorism has grown to massive proportions in all the border states as well as in other parts of the country such as Andhra Pradesh. Such struggles in reaction to the offensive of the bourgeoisie can be seen all over India.

The existence and mushrooming of a multiplicity of parties in India has been a necessary by-product of the reactive struggles coupled with the policy of accommodation by the Indian State.

The multi-party system works most effectively for the bourgeoisie when there are two main parties or coalitions of parties, one in power and the other in the opposition. When one

gets discredited, the bourgeoisie can replace it with the other. This is how the multi-party system is managed in the USA and in Britain. In India, the bourgeoisie has been unable to achieve such a formula thus far.

The “victory” of the bourgeoisie in keeping the working class and people away from waging any pro-active struggle has at the same time been its “defeat” in being unable to stabilise the multi-party system. The inevitable consequence has been the overgrowth of corruption, criminalisation, communal and caste based violence, etc. All the “hallowed” institutions of bourgeois political power are in disrepute - the Parliament, the Cabinet and the Prime Minister, the electoral process, the parliamentary parties, the judiciary, the police and the bureaucracy. The bourgeoisie is desperate to restore the credibility of the political system, as evidenced by the various “cleansing” measures. It promotes various theories of how some minor modifications in electoral laws can address these problems, all the time careful to ensure that whatever is done must strengthen, not destabilise the present system. At the same time, it is betting on ensuring a “stable government” in the near future to tide over the credibility crisis.

The crisis of the bourgeoisie offers a favourable opportunity for communists to push forward the demand and vision, and work for the creation, of a ***new political arrangement***, a new state power to defend the interests of the peoples from imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie. The present Indian State is a state that defends the colonial legacy. This means that the interests of the workers, peasants and other oppressed masses cannot be defended from the predatory aims of foreign powers or of the Indian bourgeoisie, if the present political arrangements remain. A new arrangement based on the worker-peasant alliance will have to come into being as the precondition to liberation and progress, and as the instrument of the defence of sovereignty. In the light of how the dictates of the IMF and the World Bank are being implemented in various countries of

Asia, maximum discussion, elaboration and agitation around this theme will help to set the perspective.

The Indian working class does not stand to gain anything from a stabilisation of the status quo. It does not stand to gain from a division of the polity into rightist, centrist and leftist bourgeois coalitions. In the absence of any independent standard by which to judge what the different fronts have to offer, the working class and people are vulnerable to being pushed into one or another of these positions, lining up behind one or another of the bourgeois fronts. The prospects in 1998 and in 1999 depend to a considerable extent on what the communists will offer to the people in these conditions, and on what standards the movement will set for itself.

Revolutionary Alternative

The revolutionary alternative has to emerge out of the movement of the working class and the toiling masses. Communists must lead the working class to set its own aim and a program that would achieve that aim.

This is a period when the bourgeoisie continues to have the initiative in its hands. The immediate aim of the working class is to turn this situation around, that is, to enable the broad masses of toiling and oppressed people to seize the initiative, transforming their struggles from a reactive to a pro-active movement. It is necessary to demand such reforms that will further deepen the crisis in the ranks of the bourgeoisie as they refuse to fulfill them and as the arbitrariness, incoherence, irrationalism and despotic nature of the bourgeois rule is further exposed. This would enable the working class to arouse the masses of people and turn the situation around.

The working class needs to declare that it will establish such an economy that would provide for all and ensure the continuous expansion of that economy to meet the increasing needs of all the peoples. This will take place without the cycles of booms

and busts that are fellow-travelers of the current system. For this to happen, ensuring maximum profits for big business without any regard to what happens to the workers and their families, as well as the rest of society, must stop being the orientation of the economy. Investing in human beings and productive assets on a continuous basis must become the orientation of production. With this aim and perspective in mind, the working class must challenge the bourgeoisie on the question of budgetary policy. It must contest the claim of the bourgeoisie that there is no money to provide for the needs of human beings. It must raise demands such as a moratorium on debt service payments to banks and freeze on military purchases, which are two of the most unproductive uses of public funds. It must demand that the money saved should be reallocated to ensure the fulfillment of basic human needs. Why is it that cuts in spending on health or education can be made so easily but a mere postponement of debt service payments until the situation improves is unthinkable? When such a step was necessary in 1990, the Indian rulers preferred to fly the gold reserves of the country to London rather than postpone payments. Military purchases are the most lucrative business for the seller countries and result from the geopolitics which the Indian bourgeoisie participates in to further its own ambitions. It is time that the working class leads all the people of India in discussing these matters as part of advancing its own economic program.

The bourgeoisie claims that it wants to mobilise hoards of black money for productive use. It is advertising the Voluntary Disclosure of Income Scheme (VDIS) as a great success, even though only a miniscule portion of the unaccounted wealth robbed from the people has been turned in under this scheme by the exploiters and corrupt officials. The working class must demand that black money be confiscated in its entirety without compensation. Besides such methods as the demonetisation of the currency, confiscation of the assets linked to black money

can be done by a Parliamentary action just as VDIS can be done by an act of the Parliament.

The aim of the economic reforms being implemented by the bourgeoisie is to expand the space for the law of surplus value to operate. The working class must not only demand that this must be stopped. It must go further and demand such reforms that would restrict the space in which the law of surplus value operates. For instance, why should middlemen be allowed to reap private profits from foreign trade and internal trade? The working class must demand that foreign trade and internal wholesale trade be removed from the realm of being sources of profits for private interests. They must stop being the arena of speculation and artificial price hikes. The working class must demand that foreign trade and internal wholesale trade be nationalised and any monies that are generated be put to use for the well-being of the people.

If workers and peasants are to be empowered, to be the real decision-makers, then a **renewal of the political process** is required. Life experience shows and the working class and toiling masses know that the parties and leaders of the rich and middle classes in the Parliament do not and cannot represent their interests in the decision making process. The existing election laws empower the Party presidents to have the final say in the selection of candidates at all levels of the electoral process. This enables the bourgeoisie to make the entire population mere voting cattle while it works with elite party leaders to engage in corruption and intrigue and impose a government of its choice, legitimised by the ballot. The working class must arouse the people to end this process by demanding that the choice of candidates for election be taken out from the hands of the party presidents and from the hands of the parties themselves and be vested in the hands of the people. The spectacle of the candidates camping in front of the party president's house, the behind the scene manipulations and huge monetary transactions before candidate selection can then be

ended. Such a starting point will pave the way for new forms of organisation of the people to emerge, where workers, peasants, women and youth can participate in political affairs at their own level alongside their peers, giving rise to power that emanates from their unity.

The slogan – ***No Election without Selection!*** – can be the basis of building the unity of the people to expand the scope of democracy beyond where it is at this time. Such issues as “people with criminal records be banned from contesting elections” will remain an abstract debate until and unless the people gain the right to select candidates. The people at their own level will then ensure such a thing as they are the ones who know the crimes and the criminals best. Similarly, if a voter must vote where she or he is registered to vote, why is it that a candidate who is not part of a constituency can be imposed on the people of another constituency by the decisions of a party president? It is high time that people have a role in deciding who will represent them in assemblies and parliaments rather than a party president or a party that includes no more than a very small fraction of the electorate. The working class has the historic responsibility to put this as an aim for itself and the entire society so that the polity is enabled to exercise the right to elect and be elected. The latter – the right to “be elected” is now in the realm of the political parties and those who fund these political parties; it is urgent that an alternative mechanism be created at this time by the working class to realise this element of universal suffrage.

Any political reform proposed by any political party or formation can be judged on the basis of this standard: will this reform expand the space in the political process for the workers and peasants and restrict the monopoly of parliamentary parties, or will it do the reverse? Elections, as they are currently organised, are a form of class struggle of the bourgeoisie where it publicises its agenda, its aims, its organisation and so on and calls on everyone to make these the subject of

their discussion, activity and preoccupation. The working class cannot but use the occasion to lead people to discuss *their* aims, *their* agenda, *their* organisation and method to empower themselves. If this work is not spearheaded by the communists, by the Indian communist movement, then the working class and people will not be able to escape from the *jaal* (net) of the aims and organisations the bourgeoisie has created to keep them marginalised from power. The bourgeoisie uses minimum political mobilisation of the people and maximum deception during elections and otherwise. The working class must use maximum political mobilisation and exposure of deception as a policy both during elections and otherwise to advance its aims.

A **halt** to, and complete repudiation of state terrorism is an immediate demand that needs to be raised by the working class and all the people. The movement for human rights and for democratic rights, including national rights, is the target of repression and suppression at the hands of the central armed forces, justified by the slogan of defending “national unity and territorial integrity”, “fighting terrorism”, “maintaining law and order” and so on. Both state terrorism and individual acts of terrorism need to be condemned and repudiated. All black laws must be withdrawn, victims of these be compensated and those guilty of any form of terror against people be tried openly and punished. Use of any force against people raising political demands, in the name of “law and order”, must be opposed. The working class must demand that mechanisms be created for the people to advance political demands, starting from mass level to organised demands inside and outside the Parliament.

Upholding the rights of diverse peoples, each to determine its own destiny, is an essential principle of the revolutionary front led by the working class. The working class and toiling masses do not gain from national oppression and strife between peoples. They do not gain from forcible oppression of tribal

peoples by incorporating them into administrative structures where they cannot participate in governance. It is only the big bourgeoisie and the ruling circles that gain from such things. The working class stands against any and every act of violation of the identity, dignity and rights of any people, nation, nationality or minority within India and sets the perspective for the reconstitution of the Indian Union as a voluntary union of peoples for their mutual benefit.

Given the vastness of India and the multinational composition of its people, what else but the recognition of each people and their right to affirm themselves on the basis of their national coherence can be the principle for empowering the people? But can this come about in selected pockets, without at the same time involving the vast majority of inhabitants of India who are together oppressed by the centralised authority in Delhi today? Any coherent pocket that liberates itself will face the onslaught of the existing power and of world imperialism, and only by entering into alliance with other friendly peoples can it defend its freedom. The working class must imbue the people all over India that such an internationalist perspective is the surest guarantee of its victory, either on a local scale or on a countrywide basis. What better prospect for the liberation of the people than to prepare for the liberation of all the peoples with the clear recognition that each of them will have the right to enter or not enter any new arrangement that is established after liberation? In other words, ***the polity of India cannot be sovereign unless all its constituents are organised to exercise sovereignty.***

In the Indian political experience, people consider rights and duties as one whole system and not independent categories. This has been the basis of laws at all times, be it in the period when small kingdoms arose in Indian prehistory or the time of *Mahabharata*, *Arthashastra* or the *Bhakti lehar*. Such an outlook developed at each stage in the course of struggle against the brahmanical caste order, against the tyranny of

despotic kings, against injustice. At the present time, these Indian conceptions need to be modernised such that the human collective becomes the basis of all rights and duties. This can happen in the course of struggling against the existing system where some can have the right to reap maximum profits with no duty or obligation towards the rest of society. The idea that everyone fends for himself or herself is alien to the Indian mind. The peoples of this subcontinent have upheld the idea of prosperity for all as the condition for the prosperity of each. They have created communal ownership of land and other resources, until this was negated by the creation of capitalist private property and private profits as the goal of production under colonial rule. Modernisation of political theory, of the philosophy and outlook arising out of our own conditions and the conditions of the world today, is necessary to create a coherent and all-sided vision for the renewal of India in every field. It is necessary in order to break with the legacy of Eurocentrism in ideology and social-democracy and social-chauvinism in politics.

Ideological Struggle and Communist Unity

Overcoming the division in the movement alone can restore the unity of Indian communists. The divisions can be overcome only by exposing and isolating those positions that are harmful to the working class and favour the class enemy. Conciliating with the line that there is no alternative to capitalist reforms at this time is one such position. Such also is the position of defending the status quo in the name of warding off the “communal threat” or in the name of defending the “unity and integrity of India”.

As the Elections approach, the question is once again being debated as to what should communists do in this situation. Should they merge themselves into the Third Front of the bour-

geoisie, calling on the people to support this as the lesser evil? Or should they take up the challenge of giving rise to the revolutionary alternative of the working class and toiling masses, calling on all those who are opposed to the status quo to support and join this revolutionary front?

Joining the Third Front does not facilitate the work of setting an aim for the working class and people of India. At best it amounts to a policy without a plan. When this policy is analyzed further, it becomes clear that this policy will help the status-quo. The latter approach — building the front of the workers and toiling masses -- will create the conditions for the people to build their front to give themselves the program for ending the crisis-ridden system and to build a political and economic system that meets their needs. The recent experience as well as all the above considerations suggest that a political front led by the bourgeoisie in which some communists and various bourgeois parties are accommodated to implement the program of the bourgeoisie (Congress(I) policy without Congress(I)) will not assist the working class and people. A political front of all revolutionary forces and all the people led by the working class will assist.

The CPI(M), CPI, RSP and Forward Bloc have just recently put forth a common election program. This is a response to the rising consciousness among the broad masses of people, through the work of many communist parties such as ours, that the task of communists is not to build bourgeois coalitions but to lead the working class in charting out an independent program and build the revolutionary front of the people around such a program.

According to news reports, the joint manifesto of these four parties released on January 16 promises the voters that if voted to power, they would enact a legislation separating religion from politics, have pro-people economic policies guaranteeing growth with equity, and provide a corruption-free government with accountability. The manifesto also promises that the United

Front will be consolidated and national unity safeguarded.

The joint manifesto released by these parties is supposed to be in response to the demand of the communist movement that communists must act as one. The fact that only four parties have decided to speak in the name of the Indian communist movement, without any effort to involve the entire movement, is against the interests of the Indian working class. If Indian communists have to build the revolutionary front of the workers, and other toiling masses, elections and election manifestos must facilitate this work. What is needed is maximum discussion in the ranks of all the parties, and among the masses of communists and advanced workers, as to what ought to be the program of the working class in the given conditions around which the revolutionary front can be built. A manifesto that does not correspond to this need, but has instead been arbitrarily imposed, can only cause confusion amongst the advanced workers that these parties are actually addressing the concerns of the class. Furthermore, the content of this manifesto does not deviate from the demands of the Indian bourgeoisie.

These questions of what kind of front and what kind of program of the working class need to be debated very actively and openly in full view of the broad masses of the working class and toiling masses. All communists need to continuously elaborate their views to the people on these questions at this time. What kind of party and what kind of political front? We must elaborate our views and call on all the communists to do the same. We must step up the pressure on those who call themselves communists but refuse to participate in the debate. The CGPI stands for open discussion and debate among communists.

It is not uncommon to find many people, organisations and groups which claim to be working for establishing “people’s power”. But often, this is turned into a slogan for propaganda purposes. The Constitution of India also says in its preamble that “We, the People” have given to ourselves this fundamental law. But the real content as to who is this “we” has been

kept in the shade. The facts reveal that it is the Indian big bourgeoisie and its allies who have established the fundamental law and rule society today. And when the bourgeoisie and their representatives say “we, the people” they mean basically the capitalists and landlords, the people with property and position in society. They do not have in the mind the broad masses of workers, peasants and the middle strata. For these social forces to establish power, both the content and the form of that power must be elaborated. We know that power is that which allows the holder of that power to effect changes in the existing conditions. How should the workers, peasants and the middle strata be organised so that they can affect changes in their lives on the societal scale, at the level of their collective and at their individual level? How will they organise to defend such a power from attack by the forces that have it in their hands today and have organised the laws, the bureaucracy and the law enforcement agencies to defend this power? These questions must be elaborated in full view of the class and the people as a prelude to establishing “people’s power”.

There are other tendencies within the communist movement which also needs similar approach. There is a lot of discussion about a “left and democratic” front, unity at the top among different parties of the middle and regional bourgeoisie and so on. All these questions have to be elaborated in the context of uniting all the Indian communists to lead the working class and the people. Without this work, not only the politics of the class cannot develop, but workers and peasants will be left out of working out this politics. In other words, the present situation where workers and peasants are at the tail of bourgeois politics will carry on. It is extremely important for communists to act in the interests of and speak in the name of the working class and its close ally, the toiling peasantry and call upon the middle strata to work for the aims of the united front of the workers and peasants, instead of the united front of the bourgeoisie.

Conclusions

The challenge facing all Indian communists is to remove that obstacle which is standing in the way of the working class and communist movement making a decisive advance at this time.

For India to make progress, the people of India will have to give themselves a program to overthrow capitalism and all remnants of feudalism, colonialism and imperialist domination. They have to give themselves the project for empowering themselves –repatriating sovereignty from the Parliament to their hands–through a thorough renewal of the political process.

The working class has to assume its historic role of leading the people in this movement. It urgently needs to set its own aims and take up its historic responsibility. This will take place only on the basis of a conscious and organised movement of the class with its own vanguard party leading the class.

Without a single vanguard party at its head, the working class can neither lead nor set its own aim. It cannot discharge its historic responsibility. The work to establish the united vanguard party belongs to all Indian communists. The work to remove the obstacle facing the working class and communist movement–conciliation with social-democracy–is the work to restore the unity of the Indian communist movement. This will contribute to building the working class movement with its own aims, which in turn will lead the movement of the broad masses of people to give themselves their own program for the transformation of Indian society.

Our Party's tasks are the same as the tasks facing all Indian communists. Victory will be achieved only on the basis of the struggle of all Indian communists. Our Party will do everything to ensure that this is not left to chance. We will set our immediate plan on this basis.

The year 1998 must become the year when the Indian communist movement adopts the plan to defeat the conciliators with social democracy.

Part II.

**Indian Communist
Movement—Situation
and Prospects**

Introduction

At a time when the bourgeoisie is caught in an all-sided crisis with the credibility crisis being most acute, the Indian working class is unable to advance its vision and program and rally the people of India for the transformation of society. This is because the Indian communist movement is unable to lead the working class due to the disunity in its ranks. Instead of all communists thinking and acting according to the General Line, they are sending conflicting signals to the class and pulling in different directions. The working class remains politically marginalised, unable to advance the class struggle for the victory of the revolution and socialism within the conditions of the present crisis.

The Indian communist movement contains within it a large number of parties and groups with a wide spectrum of political and ideological trends at this time. At one pole, there are those who want to strengthen the Third Front and preserve the status quo. At the other pole, there are those who are working to build a revolutionary front of the toiling and oppressed masses led by the working class, to renew the political process and open the road to revolutionary changes. The parliamentary left consisting of the CPI(M), CPI, Forward Bloc and RSP belong to the former trend and the CGPI belongs to the latter. And in between, there are other tendencies, including many who conciliate with the Third Front position through their activities while appearing to oppose it. The main roadblock to the work of building the united communist party and the revolutionary front of workers and toilers is the political line of conciliating with the status quo supposedly because the people have no alternative at this time but to settle for the Third Front as the “lesser evil”.

There are many theoretical, ideological and practical questions that are demanding solution in order that the prevailing state of confusion is ended. Such questions concern, among other things, the stage of the revolution in India, the forms of struggle, such as the parliamentary struggle and the armed struggle, and the nature of the Indian bourgeoisie. Our party believes that such questions need to be treated in theoretical and ideological terms, with all communists devoting their energies towards elaborating them and exchanging views as they take practical measures to facilitate the discussion. The discussion needs to be pursued on an ongoing basis, with a great deal of patience and broadmindedness towards everyone who calls himself or herself a communist.

The Indian bourgeoisie has been using class collaboration as the main ideo-political weapon to keep the working class of India from the path of revolution for the last fifty years. The curse of splits in the Indian Communist Movement and the main obstacle to the restoration of its unity comes from conciliation with this class-collaborationist ideo-political approach. Our party recognises that the Indian communist movement will be united by defending the conclusions of Marxism-Leninism and by purging itself of the tendency which conciliates with the class collaborationist ideology and politics called social-democracy. Waging the ideological and polemical struggle against the conciliators in the course of elaborating the General Line, modernizing the theory of liberation for India and building the revolutionary front of the people led by the working class, are the means to purge the movement of this disease.

Communists and political power

Is it right that communists present themselves to the ruling classes of India as the force most suited to manage the capitalist crisis at this time, both at the center and in the states? This is a question that has emerged in the communist and working

class movement and needs to be addressed. The participation of the CPI and the CPI(M) in the United Front Government and the United Front Steering Committee respectively, and the current propaganda of the leaders of the parliamentary left calling on the working class and people to restore faith in the Third Front, have brought this question to prominence even in the bourgeois media.

Communists, by definition, fight for the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism and communism. They fight for the emancipation of labour from all forms of exploitation. Their aim is to end capitalism and eliminate the basis for it to flourish. They fight to create a political power that can accomplish these aims. That power, known as the dictatorship of the proletariat in the classics of communism, is in reality the most democratic system of governance. It is one in which the overwhelming majority of people—workers, peasants, middle strata, i.e. all those who are marginalised from power today—exercise power, while the minority of big business houses and landlords who wield power today are deprived of their power to exploit the people. What the debate about communists participating in and even leading bourgeois coalitions in today's India is revealing is that within the movement for revolution and communism, there exists a trend that has the opposite aim. There are some who strive to manage the existing dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and stabilise and perpetuate the status quo.

What is the program that the Third Front has to offer to the working class and toiling people? Will their exploitation and oppression stop, or even begin to decline, if they put their faith in the Third Front? Will their needs be satisfied? Will the rich exploiters stop growing richer at the cost of the rest of the society? All the evidence points to the contrary. Even the votaries of the Third Front admit that under its government, the liberalisation and privatisation program will continue along with more “poverty alleviation” programs. Workers and peasants will

be asked not to intensify the class struggle, both the spontaneous struggle as well as any conscious struggle, because it will upset the “secular and democratic” coalition. This will keep the working class paralyzed while the bourgeoisie will flourish.

Seeking out social democrats, socialists and communists to convince the masses of people not to wage struggle for their demands, is part of an international trend. If by preaching class collaboration, these forces can paralyze the mass struggles—something which the free marketers have not been able to do—then the bourgeoisie is willing to reward them by handing over to them the responsibility of managing the affairs of their state. This trend has manifested itself since the defeat of Lech Walesa in Poland a few years ago, followed by the rise of Zyuganov’s party in Russia. It seems that some within the Indian communist movement are very excited by this trend. For instance, Jyoti Basu has termed it to have been a “historic blunder” to have refused the offer of the post of Prime Minister in 1996, and Harkishen Singh Surjeet seems to agree with him. At a time when the bourgeoisie needs leftists and social democrats to stabilise their rule, why not make use of this opportunity to occupy the seat of supreme power? This is the logic of Basu and Surjeet, who are reportedly trying to convince the Polit Bureau and Central Committee of CPI(M) that their party ought to seek the leadership of the Third Front, including even the post of Prime Minister, were such an opportunity to emerge again. It is a proposal to champion the platform of social democracy, i.e. the left wing of the bourgeoisie, in collaboration and competition with the free marketers.

What should be the attitude of Indian communists to the existing political power and the state apparatus at the central and other levels? Is it a power that needs to be defended, preserved and strengthened? Or is this a power that needs to be renewed, in the sense of being replaced by a new power? How one answers these questions determines whether one is interested in opening the door for the progress of Indian society

or one is a defender of the bourgeoisie and the status quo.

Our party, the Communist Ghadar Party of India, considers the replacement of the existing power with a new power, established by the people themselves with the working class at their head, as the necessary condition for the emancipation of Indian society from exploitation and oppression. This is also the conclusion of many other communists and revolutionaries in different parts of the country, militating in the ranks of different parties and groups. The present crisis offers an opportunity for the working class movement to make a clean break with the bourgeois coalitions and to close ranks around its own independent program for the democratic renewal of India. Our party welcomes and urges all Indian communists to plunge into this work to establish the revolutionary political front with the working class at the head and unfurl the banner of renewal of Indian democracy, guided by our own theory of liberation that is arising out of the Indian conditions.

In order to establish the General Line of the Indian Communist Movement and restore the unity of Indian communists, it is essential to expose and defeat the political and ideological currents advocating the path of persisting in supporting bourgeois coalitions and seeking the crown that may be offered by the bourgeoisie. The historical conclusion of Naxalbari that the Indian people need power in their hands has to be taken further. This must be done through the further development of Indian political theory and by leading people to accomplish this goal through their own deeds, on a step by step and planned basis. The content and form of that new power need to be further elaborated, along with the immediate program that would facilitate its realisation.

The General Line and the fall of Soviet Union

Once it is recognised that there is but one communist move-

ment internationally and also within India, it is necessary to also accept that there can be only one General Line of the Communist Movement. Objectively, the General Line is the embodiment of the conclusion of Marxism-Leninism that in the era of imperialism and revolution, the victory of the struggle of the working class can be achieved only through a conscious and organised battle against capitalism. Without the General Line, the class and the people are left to the mercy of spontaneity, devoid of direction and of a general staff capable of leading the struggle to victory. The features of the General Line are such that every communist party or group contributes to the enrichment of the General Line and in turn, all communist parties and political groups establish their own program and line of march in accordance with that General Line. The question of the General Line is a question of paramount importance for all communists and revolutionaries. In the present period the international bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie in each and every country are exerting constant ideological pressure against socialism and communism, to the effect that socialism is finished and there is no alternative to capitalism and market-oriented reforms. It is by arming itself with the General Line that the communist and working class movement goes to fight the world bourgeoisie, with the working class of each country taking on the bourgeoisie in that country within the specific situation and with a specific plan and organisation.

The General Line is based on summing up the experience of the working class movement internationally and nationally, including the experience of socialist construction and the struggle against capitalist restoration in the former socialist countries, as well as the struggle to end all vestiges of feudalism, colonialism and any form of medieval bondage. The General Line continues to develop all the time, in step with all the objective and subjective developments which are constantly unfolding. It brings to the fore the obstacles facing the working class movement at any given time, pointing to the content and form of the struggle

the communist parties must wage to advance the struggle of the working class and people for emancipation.

The main aspects of the General Line of the Communist Movement at this time are as follows. While we are passing through a period of retreat of revolution and socialism on the world scale today, the character of the epoch remains that of imperialism and the proletarian revolution. The fundamental contradiction between capitalism and socialism, between capital and labour, has not disappeared. Nor have any of the other major contradictions. A socialist camp of states does not exist in the way it did in the previous period; but the struggle between the capitalist system and the socialist system carries on in new forms. The contradiction between capitalism and socialism, between social production and private appropriation, remains at the hub of international politics. For example, it forces itself onto the agenda of international fora in forms such as spontaneous demands for the elimination of poverty and hunger, for an end to gender discrimination, for the elimination of national oppression and violation of rights, for the establishment of harmony with the natural environment, etc.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the changes that took place on the world scale made it imperative for communists to assess the situation afresh and establish the General Line and tactics of the class struggle in the post-Cold War world. Our party, the CGPI, began this discussion right at the time of our First Congress in December 1990, even before the Soviet Union had disintegrated. We continued the discussion through the first and second National Consultative Conferences. By the second National Consultative Conference in 1993, we had concluded that the world had entered a new period within the era of imperialism and the revolution, a period when the revolution was in retreat and the bourgeoisie had an upper hand in the unfolding of all the major contradictions of our time. We began to discuss and define our strategy and tactics within the context of elaborating the General Line of march for the com-

munists in the new period. We held the Third Consultative Conference in 1995 and released our assessment in the form of the book **Whither India?** for public discussion.

We have held that the bourgeois ideological pressure can be fought and overcome by the communist and working class movement on the basis of upholding and defending the basic conclusions of Marxism-Leninism and of Contemporary Marxist-Leninist Thought. On this basis, we have continued to analyze the rise and fall of communism in the 20th century and drawn certain conclusions. The basic conclusions we have drawn thus far with respect to the fall of the Soviet Union are as follows:

- the victories of socialism in the first stage of construction and over fascism in the Second World War led to the second stage of socialist society in the 1950s;
- this second stage of socialism posed new problems to be solved, in the sphere of the economy, of political democracy and of philosophy;
- with respect to the economy, the sphere of the operation of the law of value had to be further restricted by expanding the role of the working people in setting the prices of products as well as the remuneration of labour;
- in the sphere of political democracy, the solution to the problem of empowering the people had to be developed and brought on par with the needs of the time: the transition had to be made from the Communist Party managing the affairs of the state to the Communist Party leading the people in governing themselves;
- in the sphere of philosophy, the role of the human conscious factor in the development of society had to be established within the changed production relations and social relations that had appeared through the construction of the economic base of socialism;
- the CPSU, under Khrushchev's leadership, failed to address any of these needs and in fact pretended as if none of these existed. Instead, it pushed a hidden agenda of collaborating

and competing with imperialism for superpower status under cover of the struggle against the cult of Stalin, building the party and state “of the whole people”, preaching peaceful coexistence, talking about the withering away of the state and so on;

- in the absence of any serious effort to address the problems of the second stage of socialism, the revolution began to mark time while the militarisation of the economy and the superpower rivalry proceeded at an accelerated pace;
- discontent and alienation spread among the broad masses of people, as a result of the conversion of socialism to pseudo-socialism and the exclusion of the people from political power;
- the discontent of the masses was manipulated by the internal and international bourgeoisie, who invoked the slogans of perestroika and glasnost in the final stages to overthrow the Soviet State and destroy the CPSU, and to go from pseudo-socialism to classical capitalism and imperialism.

All these conclusions can be elaborated further; they are verifiable. The CGPI is continuously discussing and elaborating these and other issues. It also is of the opinion that all Indian communists need to grasp the key lessons from the rise and fall of socialism in this century in order to wage the struggle against the bourgeoisie and triumph under the current conditions.

A number of communist parties and groups as well as mass organisations of the working class are engaged in analyzing the changes that have taken place on the world scale and contributing to the enrichment of the General Line. Bilateral and multilateral discussions on the General Line are already going on both inside and outside India. These discussions need to be deepened and broadened to include the key questions of theory, of ideology and of the immediate program of the class. Those who hesitate to confront the experience of the rise and collapse of the Soviet Union and shy away from this discussion are not assisting the advancement of class struggle under the new conditions.

It is noteworthy that the CPI(M), besides some other parties and organisations, has been fighting shy of analyzing the reasons for the retreat of the revolution thereby contributing to the enrichment of the General Line at this time. The 14th Congress of CPI(M) postponed the discussion on the issue to the 15th Congress after summarily stating that the Communist movement had “overrated” the strength of socialism and “underrated” imperialism. When the CPI(M) held its 15th Congress in 1995, a full four years after the Soviet Union had disintegrated and gone out of being, it once again postponed discussion on the issue. Now it is approaching its Sixteenth Congress which has been postponed from February 1998 to a later date. It is imperative that all Indian communists, whether inside or outside the ranks of the CPI(M), deliberate on this issue as a matter of urgency. Refusal to deal with this question has meant that many cadres, basic organisations and other bodies of communists at different levels have become vulnerable to the bourgeois pressure that communism cannot work and that there is no alternative to market-oriented reforms promoted by the bourgeoisie. The communists are unable to establish the line of march for the people in this complex period without the summation of the general experience. They are hindered in waging the struggle against the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie is calling on them to give up any independent aims and to exclusively engage in forming alliances with other bourgeois parties and groups as an aim in itself, while the aims and program of the Indian working class are left in the dark. The bourgeoisie has presented the policy of “opposing the communal threat” as an aim for communists and the working class of India. It is justifying the opportunist principle that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”. As a result, the communists inside the ranks of the CPI(M) are under tremendous pressure to join in the bandwagon of “averting the communal threat” and to continue ignoring the tasks facing the Indian working class and communist movement.

With the failure of the 15th Congress of the CPI(M) to fulfill the task of analyzing the rise and fall of socialism and assessing the present period, doors were opened for individuals inside CPI(M) to publicise their personal views and conclusions in the party organ. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, for instance, has publicised his view that the problems of socialism began with the decision of the CPSU in the 1920s, with Stalin at the head, that the USSR should embark on the construction of socialism in one country. Prakash Karat has concluded that the source of the problem was that the socialist state of the Soviet Union was based on democratic centralism instead of political pluralism. Others have still different conclusions on the subject, and an atmosphere of ignorance, gossip and fatalism has crept into the movement as a result. The mechanisms that communist parties have for the discussion of the general conclusions of the communist and workers' movement, by involving all the communists and raising their consciousness in the process, has been thus replaced by the bourgeois method of one-upmanship by some leaders while the cadres and organisations of the party and the working class look on in disbelief. With the Indian and world bourgeoisie on the offensive and the communist movement failing to establish a clear line of march under these conditions, the bourgeoisie carries on spreading its poisonous influence among the communist cadres and workers.

The CGPI is of the opinion that as communists, we all have the important responsibility of solving this problem. It is not a matter of who is right and who is wrong, or who is first and who is last. It is a matter of life and death for the struggle of the working class and people against imperialism and the bourgeoisie that they are not rendered helpless and defenceless, without a perspective, a plan and program, a general staff and line of march. It is up to us, the Indian communists, to establish the General Line within our conditions and within the context of the General Line of the world communist and workers' movement. This will be the first act of affirmation of the Indian

working class that it is ready to lead the Indian people for revolution and socialism and is also ready to fulfil its historic responsibility as a worthy contingent of the international proletariat.

Immediate Program for Political Unity

At present, the Indian ruling circles have divided the Indian polity between different fronts of the bourgeoisie and are using the division to stabilise their crisis-ridden rule. Creating the subjective conditions for the revolution in India amounts to transforming this condition into a condition of political unity of the people against the bourgeoisie so that the people can empower themselves.

There is one polity in India, and it is this factor that necessitates that the political unity of the people be established so that they act as one and not as a divided polity. This unity is established around a single aim. The bourgeoisie has created an artificial notion that a polity can have many aims. This is suited to the bourgeoisie because while it actually has a single aim—the aim of preserving and strengthening the capitalist system—it pretends as if it has many programs, emanating from the many political parties it gives rise to. When a closer analysis of this supposed multiplicity of the programs under bourgeois rule is done, it emerges that they all have the one aim of preserving capitalist slavery, while they divide the polity along the party lines so that people do not raise their independent aims and fight for their interests. Political unity is essential for the people to set their aims and fight for them, and at the same time it can be strengthened in the course of working out their aims and fighting for them. Without political unity of the people around a conscious political aim, mere “action” will not lead to revolution.

The task facing Indian communists is to lead the working class in developing its own program to lift Indian society out of

the crisis and to build a revolutionary political front around such a program. This program must include an action plan that addresses the immediate problems and dangers facing the working class and people, their rights and their livelihood, and at the same time is consistent with the strategic aim of the revolution and socialism. It must be based on the development of Indian revolutionary theory, a theory that would sweep away all the colonial and neo-colonial prejudices that have been imposed on the Indian mind in the name of political and economic theories over the past few centuries. Having elaborated and discussed the General Line since the Third Consultative Conference, the CGPI is presently engaged in developing such an immediate program in close connection with the movement of the working class and peoples against the exploitative and oppressive order.

On the basis of analyzing the rise and fall of socialism in this century, as summed up in the document *What Kind of Party?*, the CGPI came to the conclusion that a modern communist party has to highlight the fact that it is not a party that seeks power for itself but a party that seeks to empower the people. We have played and continue to play an important role in developing the theory and practice of empowering the people. We have initiated and contributed to the discussion among Indian communists and advanced workers about the General Line and program of the working class movement in the present coalitions. We have initiated discussion and participated in joint actions on immediate economic and political demands. However, it must be said that this work of building the unity of the working class and people behind such a political program is hampered today by those who insist that this work be replaced by a program to build the “secular and democratic front” or the Third Front to run the bourgeois state.

A program for the working class must contain what the working class will do in political matters, economic matters, social matters, international matters and so on. Once such a program

is worked out by involving the workers and broad masses, the soundness of the policy of building the “secular and democratic front” can be examined to determine if this work will advance the aims of the working class or not. In place of such an approach to the discussion on the topic of building a “secular and democratic front”, the working class is unfairly called upon to take a stand on this issue and be diverted from what it must do at this time.

According to the CPI(M) and some other groups, restoring the Third Front of “secular and democratic forces” to power will avert the BJP threat. This is the same policy that was adopted at the 15th Congress of the CPI(M) in 1995, and whose results the working class and people have seen during 1996 and 1997 with the United Front government implementing the program of liberalisation and privatisation beyond where the Rao government had left off. The logic of the leadership of the CPI(M) for the last 30 years, and of the leadership of CPI even before that, has been to abandon the independent aim of the working class of establishing its rule in order to end all exploitation, and substitute for it the policy of supporting one wing of the bourgeoisie under the pretext that it is more progressive than the other wing. In 1998, the leadership of CPI(M) has gone further and added to this policy the claim that it is ready to lead the bourgeois government if such an opportunity presents itself.

The policy of a communist party must be such as to bring the immediate as well as strategic long-term aim of the working class closer. But does the policy of averting the BJP threat and leading the central government help the immediate or long-term aim of the working class? Under the existing political process, does this help the working class to end its marginalisation and the marginalisation of the people from power and to seize the initiative to change the political process? Can the rise of a member of the leadership of CPI(M) to prime ministership in 1998 be considered to be empowerment of the people, any more than the rise of the CPI leaders to the

status of cabinet rank ministers in the last government meant the advance of the workers' and communist movement in India? Is it not that such policies and actions negate the immediate and the strategic aims altogether and demobilise the working class while strengthening the status quo?

What the CPI(M) presents as a political line—that of building the secular and democratic front—amounts to defending the existing rule of the bourgeoisie. It is done under the guise of averting the BJP threat on an immediate basis. What is being threatened and who is being threatened by the BJP? According the CPI(M), the BJP threat is to “secular and democratic India”. The “secular and democratic India” is nothing but the existing political power which has been in place since the Indian Constitution came into force in 1950. This power is characterised by the disempowerment of all but a minority of the wealthy business houses and landlords of India, and its essence is the arbitrary rule by the Cabinet with the help of force. This power threatens the people of India every day not to rise up against the status quo, against the capitalist system. The CPI(M) does not give any explanation as to how averting the BJP threat at this time will bring an end to the existing power which has defended the system of exploitation and oppression of the Indian people. It does not explain how averting the BJP threat at this time will enable the Indian working class to advance its independent and conscious struggle for the transformation of Indian democracy and Indian society for all-round progress. The argument that the Third Front is the lesser evil as compared to the BJP is nothing but succumbing to the bourgeois pressure that there is no alternative to the existing system. This is the manner in which the status quo is defended.

This policy of promoting allegedly secular bourgeois coalitions to avert the BJP threat amounts to a complete abandonment of the class interests and aims of the working class. Far from bringing the day of revolution any closer, this policy as-

sists a section of the bourgeoisie in their struggle against their competitors while eliminating the threat from the workers to the bourgeois rule. It is to find a way for the bourgeoisie to continue with capitalism and capitalist reforms while disarming the working class and preventing it from effectively waging any defensive or pro-active struggles. By exaggerating the differences between the BJP and the Congress(I) in order to present the former as the main threat, and by the distorted portrayal of the communal threat, the followers of this policy consciously or unconsciously divide the working class further, between different fronts of the bourgeoisie. A section of the working class is objectively pushed into the camp of the BJP, i.e the camp of the “bigger evil”, as a result of this policy.

The revolutionary front can be built only on the basis of seeking unity strictly on a political basis. For instance, on the question of the renewal of democracy to empower the people, the working class seeks unity with any and every force that recognises the lack of power in its hands and fights against the common enemy which deprives one and all of power. It does so in the course of solving all the problems that the movement for empowerment presents, both in terms of the concrete forms in which the struggle is to be waged as well as of the content of the new power that is yet to be born. It appeals to all the forces irrespective of their ideology or outlook to seek new arrangements with all other forces opposing the existing bourgeois rule. The working class insists that allegiance to communism cannot be made the basis for the people of India to fight for their empowerment. This will impose an ideological litmus test for the people who objectively are yearning for empowerment irrespective of their ideology and specific brand of politics. Similarly, any other ideological consideration such as being “*secular*” or not being a “fundamentalist” cannot be made the basis of uniting people to fight for their empowerment.

Opposition to the restructuring of the economy and to market reforms is shared by millions of workers, peasants, women and

youth. The working class cannot establish its revolutionary united front without presenting an alternative vision and program for the organisation of the economy as it opposes the market reforms. Similarly, the struggle for affirmation of rights, in defence of human rights, democratic rights and national rights, as well as opposition to state terrorism and individual acts of terrorism, provides a political basis for the unity of a wide variety of forces in society. The working class can lead the struggles of all the socially disadvantaged groups such as the dalits, harijans and other caste-based groups, of women and youth, of the peasantry and so on, to fight for rights by bringing to the fore that these struggles are not limited to winning a few privileges for only some people. Through these struggles, the working class can inculcate the notion that it is in the context of affirmation of rights for all that each and every collective in society will affirm its own rights. The chauvinist or sectarian tendencies that the ruling circles have been promoting amongst people can be defeated on this basis. It can lead people to give themselves a program to create a new Union on the basis of a free and equal union of nations and nationalities, uniting the national movements such as those in Jammu and Kashmir, the Punjab and in the North East for the creation of a new power in the hands of the people. Clearly, the working class cannot establish political unity of all the fighting forces if it insists on ideological unity of these forces. It cannot raise the demand that they submit to secular ideals as a precondition to any unity, or that such and such ideals must be kept out of the movement for people's empowerment. The struggle for empowerment has to be waged as a planned and conscious struggle and it is to be directed against the existing bourgeois rule by creating maximum unity among all the fighting forces that the present system is giving rise to.

Secularism and Sectarianism

The life experience of the working class and people over the past fifty years has revealed that communal division and com-

munal violence are preferred tools in the hands of the Indian ruling circles to perpetuate their rule. These tools have been integrated into the state institutions and apparatus in the form of laws and regulations as well as the habits and practices of the state organs. The security forces, civil servants and the courts, etc, play a definite role in the perpetuation of communal divisions and in the aiding and abetting of those who engage in communal violence. In addition, the main parties of the bourgeoisie, including the Congress(I) and the BJP and their allies, are all well known for organizing on a communal basis. On numerous occasions, the functionaries of these parties have been implicated for organizing and inciting people against those of another religion, to promote their narrow vested interests. Life experience has shown time and again that the threat of communal violence in India emerges from the Indian state and its activities, in the way the state divides the polity through its laws and rules and in the way the state hands out privileges. In the face of this reality, the proposal that secularism should be defended from the BJP threat is neither a contribution towards ending the communal division and communal violence, nor a contribution towards uniting the people to create a society in which equal rights and duties for all citizens is the norm.

Secularisation is a process that refers to the gradual elimination of religious authority from the public life of society as people defend their inalienable right to conscience. The struggle for the realisation of equal rights and duties for each and every member of the polity is a struggle on a different plane. This latter struggle is determined by the struggle for national and social emancipation, by the progressive elimination of all forms of exploitation and oppression of persons by persons in the course of the struggle of the people as a society and as collectives. The private right to conscience can never be accepted to be subordinate to rights pertaining to equality of all members in the polity. Neither can the rights pertaining to equality of all members in the polity be made subordinate to the private

right to conscience. Under the conditions of sectarian division and extreme deprivation and backwardness that the Indian bourgeoisie has been perpetuating in India, any suggestion that the struggle for secularisation must take precedence over the struggle for national and social emancipation will amount to negation of both kinds of rights. It is a negation of the right to conscience and of the rights pertaining to equality of all members in the polity. It does not contribute to the task of overcoming the sectarian division of the polity and building the political unity for people's empowerment; on the contrary, it helps to preserve the sectarian division and assist the bourgeoisie.

Nobody will deny that communal division and communal violence pose very serious dangers to the unity and well being of the broad masses of people in India and present obstacles to their struggle for empowerment. Fifty years after the gruesome partitioning of South Asia and forty-seven years after the establishment of a "secular and democratic republic", these dangers continue to remain acute. At the same time, the people of India continue to suffer from hunger and want, from police brutality and the rule of arbitrariness, from national oppression, gender and caste oppression and so on. The struggle against communalism and communal violence is a component part of the struggle to create a new society. For the working class of India, the victory of this struggle to create a new society will bring an end to the entire colonial legacy of dividing the polity on every conceivable sectarian basis. Presenting the struggle against communal division and communal violence as either the only meaningful struggle of the working class or as its main struggle, means to give up the aim of the working class as the creator of the new society.

The Indian polity is currently dominated by the rivalry between the Congress(I) and the BJP, both of which are representatives of sectional interests of the bourgeoisie. Life experience has taught the masses of Indian people that both these parties favour the rich in society, headed by the Indian and

foreign monopoly capitalists. Ample evidence has also been gathered that both these parties will not stop at anything to stay in power or to recapture the positions which they have lost, including the unleashing of anarchy, violence, humiliation etc. against sections of the people on a communal basis. In spite of all this, bourgeois propagandists create illusions that the Congress(I) is a secular party fighting an anti-communal struggle, and that the BJP is a nationalist party, which is fighting to restore the pride of Indians. Each of these illusions feeds the other. Joining this illusion-mongering will not contribute to the politicisation of the working class and people. Calling on the workers to take sides in the battle between the Congress(I) and the BJP is to contribute to the depoliticisation of the working class and to promote sectarian division in the working class along the lines of the divisions in the bourgeoisie. It is to contribute to the creation of illusions about the secular foundations of the Indian Republic instead of explaining to the people how this Republic is the basis of all the ills of society, including the marginalisation of the people from power.

One dangerous aspect of the notion that the immediate struggle is against the communal danger is that it justifies conciliating with the status quo, allegedly because this is the lesser evil. According to this viewpoint, it does not matter if all the economic, political and social problems are growing from bad to worse, as long as the BJP is kept out of power. It is a notion that blunts the class struggle against the capitalist system and its specific form in India. A corollary of this theory of “lesser evil” is the notion that it is dangerous to rock the boat. Do not question the Constitution, do not question the Indian Union, and do not question the parliamentary system or the market orientation of the economy — so goes the argument — because if you do, a bigger evil will take over.

The pursuit of the “secular front” is the pursuit of sectarian politics in the working class, demanding a form of ideological conformity so that the working class does not wage its struggle

against the capitalist system by building the political unity of the people. What is more, it is the perpetuation of the colonial notion which was imported from Europe over a century ago which held that the colonisers had to bring “enlightenment” to the backward Indians who were supposed to be hopelessly divided along communal, caste and other lines.

Indian people have a very definite tradition of forging their unity in the course of waging various struggles both against the foreign invaders as well as against internal tyranny. The issue of secularism as it arose in Europe in the last few hundred years within her conditions of absolutism and emergence of capitalism crystallised in the demand for the separation of the state and church. It may be said that this struggle was a continuation of the struggles already waged by the peoples elsewhere in the world hundreds and thousands of years before. In India, the struggle against the tyranny of priests and brahmans dates back to the 6th century B. C. and before, when the ideas of Jainism, Budhhism, *ajibika* and *lokayata* were widespread. This trend carried on and developed continuously for centuries and millennia through various currents of the Bhakti movement. The caste system, the leaders of the Bhakti movement preached, had nothing to do with religious beliefs and practices, and they called on the people not to accept it. Religion was a matter of personal devotion, they said. It was not dependent on this or that rite or ritual. They challenged the monopoly of the brahmans over knowledge, which was the basis for the relegation of other castes to inferior roles. They preached a radical equality and stood for the accessibility of knowledge to all men and women, something which the brahmanical system categorically opposes. The leaders of the Bhakti Movement came from all over India. The movement shook the brahmanical order to its foundations and posed a great threat to the foreign invader. The essence of that struggle has been that human beings need no middlemen to seek God or the truth irrespective of how learned or enlightened these middlemen are. The Bhakti

and Sufi movements were the basis for the ideas that inspire the Indian people today to unite irrespective of religious, language, caste, racial or regional differences for the common good.

The social life of the Indian people was thus in the process of being liberated from the authority and control of Brahmanism at the time of the conquest of India by the British. It is at this time that the supposedly enlightened colonialists imposed a new form of Brahminism in India in which the new brahmin was the European ruler whose ideas were the last word. A feature of the Bhakti movement had been that it developed and enriched the various national languages, raising their literary level as well. The Bhaktas wrote and composed in the vernacular languages, not in Sanskrit. They gave rise to scripts consistent with these national languages and with the psyche of the people. With the new European brahmin arose the supremacy of the English language. Enlightenment began to be equated with European ideas and education with fluency in English.

The “secularism” which forms the basis of the left-of-centre coalition in Indian politics today has nothing to do with the ideas or values that the struggles of the Indian people have given rise to. The essence of this secularism is the imposition of the supremacy of the “enlightenment” imported from the West by the British colonialists, whose context was completely different from anything within the experience of the Indian people. It makes no sense to the Indian worker why he or she cannot unite with his or her brothers and sisters to fight the common enemy without someone else first making a value judgement about whether he or she has secular ideas in the first place. The fight against injustice is the essential enlightened idea that Indians have valued, and this has been enriched and perfected over a period of 2500 years of struggle against the brahmanical order and the invaders. It is unacceptable that this enlightenment is sought to be replaced by a notion that had arisen elsewhere originally in the form of separation of

church and the State under completely different conditions; transplanted in India, it takes the form of religious tolerance mediated by the State.

The communist movement needs to further enrich the enlightenment of the Indian masses by leading them against anyone who subverts their struggle for a new society today. This is the time when their reactive and defensive struggles are being superseded by a conscious and proactive struggle for the creation of a new society. This requires that the ideas that people have given rise to in their defensive and reactive struggles are enriched to enable them to fight effectively not only those who oppose the struggle for a new society, but also those who conciliate with the forces of the old society. The pressure on the working class to support or oppose the mutated European ideas of secularism, as well the pressure on the working class to support or oppose the revival and restoration of the glory of the Hindus, are pressures that must be rejected.

Secularism, as it is promoted by imperialism and the world bourgeoisie today has moreover nothing to do with the ideas which the bourgeois democratic revolutions in Europe gave rise to in earlier centuries. The present-day secularism is a component part of imperialist propaganda to present any force opposing the Americans and the West as medieval and backward, as “fundamentalist”. That is how imperialism characterises the Iranians, for example, when they oppose the Americans. In India, this takes the form of dividing the people by calling certain forces as “fundamentalists” and others as “secularists”.

In Indian conditions, the division between “secularists” and “fundamentalists” dates back to the last century, to the time of the creation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 or before. In the years following the First War of Independence in 1857, when masses of people had united irrespective of religion, caste or language against British colonialism, the main weapon that was used to undermine the anti-colonial struggle was the fos-

tering of divisions in their ranks. Various privileged brahmans, mullahs and others who collaborated with the colonialists, were rewarded and imposed on the people to foster communal hatred, backed and financed by the colonial state. However, the hatred among the toiling people for the collaborators and their communal politics was so great that this tactic alone could not stem the tide of the anti-colonial struggle. The British colonialists further refined the politics of divide and rule. The birth and growth of the Congress Party was an important vehicle in this refining of the politics of communal division in India.

From its inception to this day, the Congress Party condemns communalism and imperialism in words while promoting both in practice, accepting the British colonialist theory that India is but an agglomeration of separate and antagonistic religious communities of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and others. The notion of secularism is presented in such a way as to mean support to all religions by the state. On this basis, the state takes upon itself the task of distributing privileges among the various religious elites in an equitable manner. This privilege distribution system is the mechanism for fostering permanent conflicts and creating a fertile ground for various so-called religious organisations to spread communal poison.

The material basis to overcome the communal division and build a bright future for Indian society exists among the Indian people. It exists in the form of a militant working class and a fighting peasantry that united against all odds to wage the anti-colonial struggle and has waged all the defensive and offensive battles of the last half century. It exists in the form of the unity in the ranks of all fighting forces in various parts of the subcontinent. The need is to build on the existing foundation of unity in common struggle and reject the practice instituted by the colonial state of granting privileges on the basis of religious affiliation. The place of the alien ruler has been taken by the Indian big bourgeoisie, but the system of religious toler-

ance as a means to bestow or withhold privileges still carries on. There is no need whatsoever for Indians to rely on the colonial version of secularism in order to unite people for liberation.

The essential content of the movement of the people in pre-British India was the striving for liberation from the brahmanical caste order, for the right of every human being to his or her conscience. The colonial import of secularism, on the contrary, coexisted peacefully with the perpetuation of the caste order and the continuation of caste based oppression. This was the first warning that the imported secularism had nothing to do with any enlightenment.

When the psyche of the Indian people is correctly understood and their history analyzed, the spirit of struggle against injustice and the unity of the people in this struggle irrespective of caste, religion, gender and so on emerge as integral parts of Indian culture. If there is any feeling, any aspiration, which is treasured in common by the entire Indian people, it is the striving for revolution. The continuation and perpetuation of the myth that the Indian state is secular while some other “communal” forces pose the greatest danger to the Indian people, is only to continue their division, postpone the revolution and prolong the suffering of the people at the hands of the big industrial houses and big landlords.

The Caste Question

The system of oppression and discrimination based on the caste into which one is born is one of the most pronounced remnants of feudal or medieval relations in India. Elimination of caste-based oppression and discrimination is an important unfinished task of the democratic revolution in India. It was one of the demands of the anti-colonial struggle that remains unfulfilled even fifty years after formal independence.

Indian capitalism has perpetuated the existence of the caste system in order to super-exploit the toilers, and also as a

weapon to ensure the political division of the working class and toiling masses. In the manner that the growth of capitalism in the US during the 19th century preserved chattel slavery to facilitate super-exploitation of labour even though the system of chattel slavery had been long superseded by feudalism and capitalism in Europe, capitalism in India has preserved anything from India's past which it can use to super-exploit the population. That progressive character of capitalism in its ascendancy in Europe, which was seen in the fight against medievalism, had turned to its opposite in India where capitalism developed, not in struggle against obsolete mode of production and the obsolete system of social organisation, but under conditions of colonial protection. With time Indian capitalism, instead of progressively eliminating the caste system and caste oppression, gave these pride of place in defending and strengthening the existing system.

The Indian bourgeoisie has refined the colonial legacy of caste reservation over the past 50 years. Reservation has been promoted as a weapon to empower the lower castes even though many studies in India have conclusively proven that reservation to date has only assisted a small elite section of the groups in whose name it is implemented. Amongst the working masses and youth of the lower castes, victims of centuries of oppression, the thesis has been advanced that it is not the capitalist system or the imperialist domination and the remnants of feudalism that are at the base of perpetuating their oppression. Rather, the blame is put on upper castes. The false notion is promoted that the Indian State is their saviour, and that their salvation lies within the existing system. At the same time, caste passions are inflamed everywhere amongst the students and working people who are supposed to be "savarnas", that they are being discriminated against in jobs and in other ways by a policy allegedly favouring those from the lower castes. In the process, the political unity of the toilers has been seriously fractured.

There is tremendous pressure on the communist movement to succumb to the position of approving and supporting caste-based reservation on the spurious basis that it is a “partial democratic reform”. When examined closely, it emerges that far from being a partial democratic reform, it is a measure to perpetuate the condition for the continuation of the caste system, i.e. to perpetuate the capitalist system and the colonial legacy. Its aim is to force a division between the struggle to end the medieval caste system and the struggle for the revolutionary transformation of society from capitalism to communism, and pit the former against the latter.

The demand of the anti-colonial struggle and all the progressive forces has been for an end to caste oppression. In order to divert this struggle while maintaining the system intact, the bourgeoisie promotes the caste-based reservation policy. There are some within the communist movement who argue that while the elimination of caste oppression is part of our strategic aim, support for the reservation policy should be part of our immediate program. The facts show that after fifty years of implementing this policy, Indian society is no closer to getting rid of this curse. Besides, the struggle against caste oppression is a struggle in defence of rights, while the reservation policy belongs to the realm of fighting for a privilege, something that can be given at one time and be taken away at another time by something as simple as a reclassification of a caste as being forward or backward. An immediate program or even a tactical stand that adopts the struggle for privilege and accommodation will not assist the struggle for affirmation of rights.

Communists fight for the realisation of rights, which by definition belong to the holder by dint of his or her existence. It cannot be turned into a privilege that can be bestowed or taken away from the holder. To fight for rights means to fight to end the system of privileges, a medieval system based on one's birth or one's wealth or other narrow considerations. The existing

system in India is based on privilege distribution and the negation of rights. For the working class and the communists to support the demand for extending or redistributing privileges on a caste basis means to compromise with the status quo and undermine their struggle for the new society.

Communists must reject the pressure exerted by the bourgeoisie that they and the people divide on the basis of their attitude towards the reservation policy. They should avoid falling into this trap altogether, by persisting in their work to organise the working class which knows no caste difference in its united struggle against capital. Paying attention to other tasks of the Indian revolution such as modernizing the theory and philosophy and waging the struggle against all conciliation with class-collaborationist politics, will help the Indian communist movement to lead the working class and the people to develop the revolutionary front and take the anti-colonial struggle through to the end, including the complete elimination of the curse of caste oppression and discrimination.

IMF-World Bank “Socialism”

The CPI(M) and some other left parties continue to present themselves as opponents of the liberalisation and privatisation policies. The trade union movement contains many members of communist parties who militantly oppose the various capitalist reforms introduced by successive governments. However, the MPs belonging to the CPI and CPI(M) were at the same time participants in the United Front, which implemented the liberalisation and privatisation policies and the “poverty alleviation” schemes. The leader of the CPI(M)-led government in West Bengal has been actively wooing foreign capital as the condition for the industrialisation of West Bengal. This seemingly contradictory approach of communists within the same party is causing some confusion and disorientation of the working class. This is happening mainly because the working class is not engaging in any independent and pro-active struggle, according to any plan. The trade union opposition, important

as it is for the defence of the livelihood of the workers in the face of the restructuring drive of the world bourgeoisie, is still within the scope of the *staus quo*. What will change the situation is when the advanced workers transcend the limitations of the defensive battles and give themselves the program for the transformation of the conditions of their exploitation. This is what is demanded of the times.

“Growth with equity” symbolises the main economic platform of the CPI(M) and its three allies who form the parliamentary left. This is qualitatively no different from the traditional Congress Party platform of welfare state in the form of “mixed economy”, where capitalist growth will take place through state intervention in the economy in the form of a public sector. The main aim of this welfare state in the post-World War II period was to deprive the working class of its own independent program for revolution. Having succeeded in diverting the working class from the path of revolution by the mid-eighties of this century, world imperialism turned away from the welfare state approach and gave the slogan for “less” government as a prelude to attack the very notion of modern society and its obligations. What is new at this time is that the institutions of international finance capital, such as the IMF and World Bank, have led the way towards defining a form of welfare state around a recipe of “poverty alleviation” and “growth with equity”. While the growth of the state sector was one form of taking the money from the public treasury and handing it over to the capitalists, now “poverty alleviation” is another form in which to do the same. People are deceived in either case and the state facilitates the plunder of the treasury in both cases. It is only appropriate that this form of state intervention, orchestrated by the IMF and World Bank, be accurately called *IMF and World Bank socialism*. Some communists, both inside and outside India, have joined hands with the IMF and the World Bank to promote the illusion of “growth with equity” under current conditions.

In the first few years following the disintegration and demise of the Soviet Union, imperialism and the world bourgeoisie promoted privatisation and the restoration of classical forms of capitalism in the erstwhile socialist countries with great fanfare. The free marketers ruled the roost as the IMF and the World Bank extended their structural adjustment programs to more countries of the world. Neo-liberalism and neo-colonialism became the weapons of international finance capital to extend the space for plunder by the monopolies, dismantling all national barriers that stood in the way.

Within a few years, imperialism and the world bourgeoisie found that they had to adjust their tune in order to keep the peoples deceived. They found that they had to once again promote class conciliation in order to divert the opposition and resistance to the capitalist offensive. The defeat of Lech Walesa and other champions of free market reforms, and the return of leftists of various kinds in France, Italy, Sweden, Mexico and other countries, were a reflection of this international trend. The World Bank employed the services of ideologues such as the Indian-born and British-trained economist Amartya Sen to advise its President and train its staff ideologically in class collaboration—in the promotion of capitalist growth along with equity in the form of poverty alleviation programs, special gender empowerment programs, etc.

In the present conditions of the impending elections to the 12th Lok Sabha, the BJP is promising stability and the continuation of liberalisation and privatisation programs, but with a difference. The BJP promises to protect the interests of Indian capital from the threat posed by foreign capital. This is BJP's version of capitalist growth with equity (for the domestic capitalists). The CPI(M) is also promising a version of capitalist growth with equity, with its definition of equity being somewhat different from that of the BJP. The CPI(M) promises that the Third Front will ensure that capitalist growth is accompanied by protection of the interests of the workers and

all the toiling and oppressed masses in the form of special laws and provisions. This is very close to what the World Bank has advocated in its 1997 World Development Report entitled ***The State in a Changing World***, according to which the State should complement the market forces by privatizing infrastructure while strengthening the role of government in some essential social services. The talk of the first half of this decade favouring “less government” and “more free market” has now been replaced by a “new” role for the state — to administer “poverty alleviation” for the poor and facilitate growth for the capitalists.

For over forty years since 1947, the Indian working class and people have witnessed the results of the “mixed economy” model of the Congress Party. They have seen the results of the Nehruvian socialistic pattern, which was also called Tata-Birla socialism. It led to tremendous expansion and growth in the wealth and clout of the Tatas and Birlas as well as other monopoly houses and no advance for the workers and toilers of India towards their liberation from exploitation and oppression. Now after a brief spell when the free marketers ruled the roost, we are witnessing the reappearance of the mixed economy notion in a new form, the IMF-World Bank socialism.

Communism is the condition for the complete emancipation of the working class from all forms of exploitation of labour. Capitalism is the condition for the preservation and maximisation of the exploitation of labour in the interests of maximum private profits for capital. Hence communism can be born only on the basis of negating capitalism. It has not been possible to preserve capitalism, allow capitalist exploitation to flourish, and at the same time protect the interests of labour or reduce poverty through some special government programs, although this has been the illusion promoted by the Congress party ever since 1947. And at each juncture when the Congress party and its slogans became discredited, in the sixties and again in the seventies and eighties, a coalition of non-Congress

parties including the parliamentary wing of communists arose to preserve the status quo until the Congress party could regroup and regain its lost position. Continuation of the Congress policy of “welfare state with mixed economy” without the Congress party—this was the content of the coalitions headed by Morarji Desai, by V.P.Singh and others. This was also the content of the United Front governments headed by Deve Gowda and by Gujral. Narasimha Rao was advocating “liberalisation with a human face” when his party lost power at the center. The Congress policy of class conciliation with or without the Congress party in power will also be the content of any new government when it is formed in March 1998.

Communists must make a clean break with the class-collaborationist ideology and politics of the Congress party. The Congress party was born in 1885 with the slogan of independence without social revolution. It carried on its activities until 1947 with the primary objective of opposing any social revolution in India when the prospects for this revolution were great given the national and international conditions of the times. Having prevented the anti-colonial revolution from developing into social revolution, in the post-1947 period the Congress party took up the mantle of the social welfare state whose aim was to stop the working class from waging any struggle for its own independent and revolutionary program. For over a century this politics of subverting the revolutionary advance of the working class movement in India has been spearheaded by the Congress party and its class-collaborationist policy, creating illusions about capitalism, colonialism and imperialism. Today, when the working class of India is readying itself to work out its own platform for the progress of society, it is imperative that a clean break is made with all the illusion-mongering that has grown on the Indian soil and any new forms of conciliation with that politics that is raising its head. It is only on the basis of making a clean break with the class-collaborationist politics of the parties of the Second International that the communist

movement made decisive advances at the time of Lenin and Stalin early this century. Today, the Indian communist movement will also make a decisive advance only by waging an uncompromising struggle against those who are conciliating with the politics of class collaboration and championing Congress politics with or without the Congress party.

Chauvinism and National Rights

The right of a nation to self-determination, including and up to secession, is one of the most important democratic principles for the creation of a peaceful, democratic and modern world. This principle has emerged in the course of the struggles of the peoples against colonialists and empire-builders of the past centuries. This principle stands against all attempts to negate, subjugate, humiliate, dominate or annex a people on the basis of their nationality, nationhood or other cohesive characteristics. Within the present conditions of globalisation, all nations, nationalities and tribes are under tremendous pressure to forego any right to self-determination and to join with imperialism and their own bourgeoisie as the means to develop. The problem of national oppression has increased as the foreign domination of the economies of countries and nations has increased. The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations is proving to be inconsistent in defending the national interests against the imperialist pressure. The Communist Ghadar Party of India considers it a matter of cardinal importance that people not only oppose imperialism and all its apologists who advise against self-determination, but actually take up this question of affirming their national rights in the course of their struggle for political renewal—i. e. affirming equal rights and duties for every member of the polity. Renewal of the political process to transfer the sovereignty to the hands of the people will necessarily require the negation of all national oppression irrespective of who the oppressors are. The working class, far from

being disinterested in the solution of the national problem as it wages its struggle for the emancipation of all the working people, will hoist the banner of ending all national oppression and lead the people to defend national independence. For the communists, defending the rights of nations to self-determination, including and up to secession, is an integral part of the struggle for the renewal of society not just in India but on the world scale.

This principle had been adopted and defended in the Indian communist movement since its birth in the 1920's. The CPI had organised the Indian working class, peasantry and others to wage the anti-colonial struggle on the platform of social and national liberation. It was the Congress party which was instrumental in severing the struggle for independence from the struggle for social liberation. This opened the space for the colonial policy of divide and rule that led to the partition of India. The nations of Bengal and Punjab were divided in 1947 and the nation of Kashmir in 1948. The British colonial state ceased to be the enemy of the national struggles in South Asia in 1947. In place of it there appeared in time three new states with their headquarters in Delhi, Islamabad and Dhaka which carried on the same political control over the nations and tribes, increasing their political alienation. All these new states presented themselves as the champion of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationhood. Meanwhile, the real struggles of the nationalities, nations and tribal peoples within each of these countries were suppressed under the slogan of "defending national unity and territorial integrity". The existence of divided nations like Punjab, Bengal and Kashmir ceased to be acknowledged. In the most chauvinist manner, the defence of the bourgeois states centred in Delhi, Dhaka and Islamabad was presented as the primary aim for the working class in each of these countries and in the respective parts of the divided nations.

In short, the struggle of the working class for social libera-

tion was subverted by the bourgeoisie, first by delinking that struggle from the struggle for national independence, and later by negating the struggle for social liberation altogether and substituting in its place the defence of the bourgeois states that had appeared after formal independence. The Indian communist movement came under the greatest pressure to adopt the slogan of “defence of national unity and territorial integrity”, particularly after India passed the 16th constitutional amendment in 1963. Finally, it was in 1972, shortly after the creation of Bangladesh as a separate country and at a time when liberation struggles in the North East were raging fiercely, and when the CPI(M) leadership in Bengal had played a role in the suppression of the armed peasant struggles led by the CPI(ML), that the CPI(M) officially abandoned the principle of right of nations to self-determination. This was done through a formal amendment to its program at its 9th Congress held in Madurai. The note on self-determination, which constituted the explanation for this amendment, states: *“The CC is of the view that in order to appreciate the full import of the proposed deletion of the clause, “the right of all nationalities to self-determination”, it is not only necessary to keep in mind the principled Marxist-Leninist stand on the national and colonial question as enunciated and elaborated by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin but it is also essential to concretely assess the national question as it confronts us in our country and the particular new epoch we are passing through.”* This is followed by an elaboration of the “national question as it confronts us in India today”.

The 1972 thesis of the 9th Congress of the CPI(M) on the “national question as it confronts us in India today” can be summarised as follows: (a) the Indian Union is multilingual and multinational in character; (b) with the winning of political independence in 1947, the demand for self-determination has been won and no longer remains in the orbit of political democracy; (c) the struggle of nationalities within India is not a struggle against one or another oppressor nation in the Indian Union

but part of a common struggle for the liquidation of economic dependence and backwardness; (d) this common struggle will be facilitated by the preservation of Indian unity; and (e) the growth of fissiparous forces helps the ruling classes to disorganise and disrupt the fighting people. According to this thesis, the struggle of nationalities within the multinational India is not a struggle for national self-determination. This is not a mere play on words but a declaration that first and foremost, the CPI(M) does not recognise the struggle for national rights. Secondly, communists know that the “common struggle for the liquidation of economic dependence and backwardness” is not a national struggle but a struggle for social liberation which must be waged on a conscious basis. This “common struggle” does not take shape spontaneously, without the working class led by its party organizing it according to a plan, and it is different from any national struggle at least in this respect.

On the basis of this thesis, the CPI(M) abandoned supporting any struggles for national self-determination and gave up on organizing the conscious struggle of the class for social liberation as well, taking up instead the defence of the bourgeois rule and “defence of national unity and territorial integrity”. India, according to the CPI(M), is the nation which had won her right to self-determination in 1947. The fighting people of what it continued to call this multinational India then become the “fissiparous forces”, because they were fighting against that India (the “nation-state”) which was created in 1947. In the characteristic style of advising the victim to accept victimisation lest the victimisers become erratic and inflict more injury, the CPI(M) is afraid that “the ruling classes will disorganise and disrupt the fighting people” if people fight against the preservation of the Indian state created in 1947! Through such an absurd and self-contradictory thesis, the task of the communists to build the political unity of the people is transformed into organizing for the defence of the bourgeois state created after formal independence. This thesis continues to be the ba-

sis of the CPI(M) opposing the building of the political unity of the people to date. It has driven its leaders to build the unity of the bourgeois parties and organisations under the Third Front, depriving the Indian working class of its vanguard party.

It is no wonder that the line of CPI(M) is deeply resented in places where the peoples are waging a grim battle for their national rights. If one were to ask any Manipuri, for example, as to what is the relation between their national movement and the present Indian Union, he or she would tell you that the present Indian Union negates the Manipuris as a nation. They would say that the post-colonial arrangement called the Indian Union was established by negating the national rights of the Manipuris, by forcing their king to sign a merger agreement and then disbanding the representative body that the people had constituted in Imphal. Mainly through forcible armed occupation, the Indian Union negates the Manipuris' rights as a distinct people who have inhabited a distinct territory and existed as an independent political entity both before and after the period of British rule, and who want to organise their state themselves today to look after their interests. The Manipuris would urge the Indian people to support them in this struggle and would in turn extend their support for the Indian people to create a new power in Delhi which will empower all Indians. Yet the CPI(M) tries to argue that the Indian Union should be viewed as an institution to be defended and guarded against "fissiparous forces" such as the Manipuris. By defending the despotic rule of the central state and its armed forces, the CPI(M) has done considerable harm not just in these areas, where potential allies of the Indian communist and workers movement have been driven away, but also to the struggle of the Indian working class which has been divided on this basis.

When the CPI(M) concedes that there is a struggle of nationalities, it has in mind those regional forces which are organised as influential bourgeois parties and are staking their claim to control the government at the state level, and are also send-

ing MPs to the Parliament in New Delhi. In general, the CPI(M) has formed alliances with such regional parties that are seeking some space within the existing political arrangement. At the same time, it has opposed any force that refuses to accommodate itself to the existing authority in New Delhi. When it comes to the regions that have been the worst victims of colonialism and central despotism, such as Kashmir and the North-east, the CPI(M) has become the ally of the Congress(I) and the BJP, singing in unison the bourgeois chauvinist tune of “defending the unity and integrity of India”. Such a policy brings great discredit to the name of communism and to the reputation of the communist movement. It is the opposite of the Leninist approach to the national question, which is that the communist movement builds alliances with precisely those national liberation movements that threaten and weaken the status quo and thereby assist the struggle of the working class.

What does it mean to say that the struggle of nationalities within India is not a struggle against one or another oppressor nation in the Indian Union? Granting that there is no one single oppressor nation in the Indian Union, is there not nevertheless one single oppressor state? This post-colonial state is headed by the big bourgeois class that oppresses the various nations, nationalities and tribal peoples of India, while preserving the colonial legacy, including the armed occupation of many regions. Is it hence not incumbent on communists to seek political unity with all those who are fighting against their oppression, including those whose national rights are negated by the Indian Union?

To say that with the winning of political independence in 1947, the demand for self-determination was fulfilled and it “no longer remains in the orbit of political democracy” means that the Indian Union has resolved the national question in India. This flies in the face of the reality where a number of nations remain divided and several nations and tribal peoples are waging their struggle for affirmation. The working class of

India, which is most interested in the progress of all the people of India, wants to solve the national problem by upholding the principle of right to self-determination. In practical terms, it means that it will support the struggles of all the forces who have the same aims as the working class at this time — to empower the people and create a new system of state which will ensure that a minority of big business houses do not monopolise power again. If indeed the CPI(M) believes that the Indian Union is multilingual and multinational in character as it stated in 1972, the form and content of this multinational Indian Union must be made favourable for the Indian working class to wage its struggle for emancipation. The Constitution of the Indian Union does not even recognise that the Indian Union is multinational in character and on that basis it wages war against national struggles. The communists cannot recognise the multinational character of India on the one hand and not fight for a free and equal union of nations on the other.

Writing recently in *People's Democracy*, Prakash Karat of the CPI(M) speaks about “language nationality” in reference to the nations and nationalities within India. The notion that is presented is that there is one Indian nation within which the Kashmiris or Punjabis or Manipuris are only linguistic groups, who can at most aspire for regional autonomy but cannot demand self-determination as their right. This thesis is the logical outcome of the 1972 thesis discussed earlier. By declaring those nations as mere linguistic groups, any political demand they make as nations is to be looked at with suspicion by the communists and workers. In other words, for the Punjabis, Kashmiris and Bengalis, they cannot ever aspire to have their nations united. And if they wish to do so in the future; they can at best aspire to have autonomy within the respective states of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Such a thesis is not only against any known principles and experiences of the people on a world scale, such as the cases of Ireland, Korea and so on wanting to have national unification now, but is a call for the perpetuation

of the national humiliation of the peoples of South Asia. When the CPI(M) adopts such a view, it amounts to training the Indian working class to look on the peoples and their national movements not as allies of the struggles of the working class against the bourgeoisie, but as enemies who pose a threat to “the unity and integrity of India”. At the same time, the Indian state and the Indian bourgeoisie are presented as the allies of the working class, a view that the Congress party has explicitly been promoting for the last hundred years.

It is not possible to establish the revolutionary front led by the working class without opposing state terrorism and individual acts of terrorism and also opposing those who justify state terrorism and central despotism in the name of “defending the unity and integrity of India”. Communists have to fight for proletarian internationalism, for complete equality between all nations and peoples, big and small. Indian communists have to fight for the establishment of a new India, a new political arrangement that will give opportunity to all the nations to unite on a voluntary basis and to defend such a union because it will be to their mutual benefit.

By identifying the national liberation movement in different parts of India as the main threat to “national unity and territorial integrity”, the CPI(M) is calling on the working class to unite with the Indian bourgeoisie in defence of the status quo. The logical conclusion of this line is to unite with the Congress(I), the BJP and other forces that stand for preserving the existing system of exploitation and plunder and abandon the immediate and long-term interests of the Indian working class and people.

Forms of Struggle

An analysis of the state of the major contradictions of our epoch and the obstacles facing the communist and workers movement at this time internationally and within India can serve as the

starting point for discussing the immediate program and the suitability of any form of struggle. It will be an error to assume that any single form of struggle is always valid irrespective of whether the objective revolutionary process is in ebb or in flow. Besides, it is necessary to affirm the validity of the program and fine tune it to meet the changing ratio of forces for maximum success in the struggles at each period. It is necessary to critically analyze the experiences from the use of any form of struggle and assess the situation that has been created as a result of the struggle itself.

Without a General Line to guide the thinking and orientation of the fighting forces and a political program based on this General Line, armed struggle will not necessarily lead to the victory of the people over capitalism. In fact, the armed struggle the bourgeoisie wages against the people with its army, police and other security forces as well as the unofficial goon squads, is meant to put the people on the defensive so that they react and deviate from the path of organizing their struggle based on a plan and the General Line. The bourgeoisie is confident that it will be able to defeat any spontaneous armed struggle of the people with its superior fire power and organisation of the armed forces. It incites people to turn to arms through the numerous “anti-terrorist” squads and agent provocateurs. The period of the Naxalbari uprising is full of examples of how the Indian state gained an upper hand to transform the armed struggle as a weapon to disorient the struggle of the working class and the peasantry for political power. Through the work of its agents, the Indian state used the armed struggle as a justification for unleashing state terrorism and criminalised the politics. They thereby caused great difficulties for the working class and the people to wage their struggles. Under such conditions, it is necessary for all communists to examine the suitability of all forms of struggle including the armed struggle, parliamentary struggle, trade union struggle and so on at this time. It is necessary at all times to ensure that the form of

struggle is assisting the people at any given time and that the bourgeoisie remains on the defensive. It is the political preparation of the working class and people which will determine which form or forms of struggle will be appropriate at any given time. Either to declare the parliamentary struggle as the only suitable form, and on this basis support the Indian state's use of state terrorism against those who persist on the path of armed struggle, or to advocate armed struggle as the only suitable form under all conditions, reduces the level of communist political work to absurdity.

It is not for nothing that the Indian state is armed to the teeth and is rearming freshly today. The working class can have no illusion that the bourgeoisie is peaceful or that its organisation of force is for anything other than preventing the workers and toilers from taking power. The class struggle of the forces of the new society against those of the old will inevitably take the form of an armed clash. But at the present time, the class struggle needs to be advanced from where it currently stands, using all forms of struggle that are necessitated by the conditions. The working class first needs to advance a program for itself and the rest of society. It will have to build the appropriate organisations in which the unity of the people is given concrete form. At this time, broad masses of people are clashing with the armed forces of the central state and waging armed struggle to defend their rights in different regions of the country. The working class must examine the context of all such struggles and determine its stand on each of them carefully, without losing sight of the fact that the conditions for an insurrection with the aim of seizing political power have not been created at this time in India. Calling for an insurrection without fully preparing the subjective factor will not assist the people to come to power.

Making the question of the forms of struggle as the line of demarcation to divide communists does not help the Indian working class to advance its aims at this time. If anything, they

will further contribute to the reproduction and extension of the sectarian divisions in the movement in place of overcoming this condition.

It is in the course of taking up the key political tasks of the movement that the Indian communists will restore their unity. Those who persist in promoting bourgeois coalitions to preserve the status quo, advocating “defence of national unity and territorial integrity” and “averting the BJP threat” and so on, will become anachronistic as the working class begins to establish its leadership in the movement of the people for their empowerment. This content of the struggle of the working class and people will force the appropriate forms to emerge to the fore and there is no need to split the ranks of communists and workers on this basis at this time.

Stage of Revolution

One of the most important questions on which much confusion reigns and which has been repeatedly used to create further sectarian splits in the communist movement is the question of the stage of revolution in India. It must be said at the outset that the stage of the revolution cannot be determined by imposing one’s ideas and prejudices on the movement. The development of Indian political theory will be of great assistance in determining the stage of revolution in India, but this work is still not completed. Any division in the ranks of the Indian communists on the basis of the stage of the revolution will be harmful to the preparation for the revolution.

In the opinion of the CGPI, at the center of this debate on the stage of the revolution is the role of capitalism in Indian society and its relation to the struggle for democracy. The view of the Congress party is that capitalism, with appropriate government regulation and government policies and programs, can bring about the democratic transformations that are required. This view is smuggled into the ranks of some communist groups

which advocate that since India continues to have vestiges of feudal and other pre-capitalist relations, the revolution in India is a bourgeois-democratic one which can establish a bourgeois nation state as was done in Europe in the 18th and 19th century. There are different forms of conciliation with this view that exist within the communist movement in India, but they all amount to advocating that capitalism can reform itself.

One view that is fairly widespread among Indian communists is that feudalism was the social base of colonial rule and colonial plunder of the Indian subcontinent. It follows from this notion that the main content of the struggle to end the colonial legacy is anti-feudal. On this basis, the illusion of an anti-feudal revolution of the kind that took place in the 18th and 19th century Europe is created, ignoring the fact that the capitalism which was the victorious force of those revolutions was the coloniser of India and the world. The capitalists of Europe brought their system to India and implanted it here and they very much want the Indian people to never fight against the capitalist system. The Indian and world bourgeoisie continue to promote a number of theories to convince the Indian people that they must fight for reforms which will make their societies like the European societies. Lacking a modern theory of liberation of the Indian people, the struggle for socialism and communism in India is presented through European forms: either of a peaceful and parliamentary process or a violent process but with the same content: that democracy will make an advance in India while preserving capitalism at the base of society. This notion exists not only in the CPI and the CPI(M), it is also fairly widespread among various Marxist-Leninist groups.

If the historical facts are examined dispassionately, it will emerge that capitalism came to India within the conditions of colonialism and along with it came the capitalist superstructure of Europe. The bourgeoisie which created the nation-states of Europe on the basis of its victory over feudalism used the

bourgeois state to colonise India. Capitalism grew in India on the basis of the colonial state and not on the basis of a bourgeois state that suppressed the feudalists. Instead of waging war against the feudalists, the colonialists preserved them as an ally to suppress the people's struggles against colonialism. The more the colonialists strengthened their rule in India, the more the capitalist system expanded. The same process carries on to this day—the more market reforms and IMF-World Bank socialism take hold in India, the more capitalism gets strengthened in India. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that all the struggles of the people in the last two centuries against colonialism and feudalism and for their empowerment have been frustrated by the colonial state and the capitalist system. Today, the struggle against the caste system and all forms of medieval bondage as well as against the imperialist domination and plunder cannot be waged without fighting the capitalist system and the colonial state. The preservation and survival of feudalism in India after two hundred years of capitalism is because of capitalism, and not in spite of capitalism.

The British colonialists introduced new property relations in agriculture, including the unrestricted right of private proprietors over the land. They also introduced the purchase and sale of land as private property, and various transitional forms of land ownership between the communal ownership and private ownership. In doing so, they sowed the seeds of capitalist private property on one side, and landlessness on the other. They sowed the seeds of the capital-wage labour relations in agriculture. They converted sectors of agriculture into commodity production for the world market. They also distributed trade and manufacturing licences and other privileges to create the class of capitalists in India. All these facts reveal that it was not the preservation of feudalism but the introduction of capitalist relations that constituted the base of the colonial order.

The class of landlords has undergone much change over the

years. With the development of capitalist agriculture, big farmers employing machinery and modern methods have emerged at one pole. At the other pole, the dispossessed class has also changed over the years. From a class of tillers who were deprived by the British land reforms of any security of tenure or rights over the land they tilled, this class today consists of rural proletarians (both landless laborers and marginal landholders), who are the most numerous class in rural India. Between the rural bourgeoisie and the rural proletariat exist the middle strata—middle peasants and other subsistence producers—struggling to stay afloat. Feudal and medieval forms of oppression, including caste oppression, have been and continue to be preserved and reproduced wherever it has facilitated capitalist exploitation and plunder, that is, in the interests of squeezing maximum surplus value out of the toiling masses.

There are some within the communist movement who, while recognizing that capitalism did not bring any democracy in the past, nevertheless argue that the worker-peasant alliance they want to create will follow “a progressive path of capitalist development” which would benefit the middle and lower strata. In this way, they tell the workers not to fight for an end to their exploitation because the middle and lower strata must first be helped. The point is that the capitalists of India are using the state power to help themselves reap maximum profits, and are not helping the lower and the middle strata today. The working class can help the lower and middle strata by creating a new political power in place of the existing power so that under the leadership of the working class a new form of economy can be created without private appropriation of surplus value and without labour power remaining a commodity. The argument of “progressive path of capitalist development” cannot be considered an aim for the working class of India to adopt if it wants to lead the Indian people to create a society free from exploitation and oppression.

The General Program adopted by the 6th Congress of the CPI(M-L) Liberation group at Varanasi in October 1997, for instance, says that *“imperialism, big capital and feudal remnants ... present themselves as a veritable nexus and the masses of our people are groaning under the deadweight of this alliance. But this alliance can only be overthrown by grasping and resolving the principal contradiction between feudal remnants and the broad Indian masses, for the feudal remnants remain the stumbling block on the road of free and rapid development of productive forces in the country”*. And the Policy Resolution on the Agrarian Question, adopted at the same Congress, says, *“The path of freest and broad based development of capitalism—the path of democracy—is possible only by basing on the mass of impoverished peasantry, who at present absolutely lack capital resources. The poor and middle peasants will be the principal actors in this vibrant capitalism. Such a path is possible only by challenging head on this agrarian policy of the bourgeoisie and its state”*.

We are living in the era of imperialism and monopoly capitalism where parasitic finance capital occupies the prominent position in the extraction of maximum profit and the capitalist system is a worldwide system. Only by negating this fact can the thesis be advanced that the Indian working class and its party should make their aim the creation of “vibrant capitalism” and the “free and rapid development of productive forces” on this basis in India. If the masses of people are “groaning under the dead weight of the alliance” between imperialism and big capital with feudal remnants, will imperialism and big capital agree to the “mass of impoverished peasantry”—the poor and middle peasants—becoming the “principal actors” in this “vibrant capitalism”? Why are the imperialists and big capitalists not making the capital resources at their command available to the mass of impoverished peasantry? How will this turn into its opposite without the mass of impoverished peasantry confiscating this capital from the hands of big capital and

making it available to themselves? That would in fact be the “path of democracy” today, because it would be done on the basis of political power in the hands of the majority who will wield it to develop the productive forces for the benefit of the majority. This would not be “vibrant capitalism” but confiscation of the capital owned today privately by big capital and its conversion into social property.

It is necessary for the communists and the advanced workers to discuss if the fight against feudal remnants is not hampered today because of the support that the imperialists and big capital give them, and whether the working class and people of India should not aim their struggle against the imperialists and big capital in the first place, and in defeating them, defeat the feudal remnants as well. In today’s world, feudal remnants anywhere on the globe, including India are nothing without imperialism and the world bourgeoisie standing behind them. They are the main enemies of the people in every single country today irrespective of whether feudalism there has already been smashed or not. “Challenging the agrarian policy of the bourgeoisie and the state” today is to organise the working class to lead the peasantry in struggle against the agrarian policy geared towards the needs of Indian big capital and imperialism for raw materials and grain. This current agrarian policy is in fact creating a kind of “vibrant capitalism” in the countryside today, whose features are introduction of commodity relations, introduction of credit, mechanisation and fertilisers, etc. In the process it is squeezing the small and medium producers alongside the rural proletarians. The feudal remnants are not the driving force behind this policy; they are beneficiaries of this policy to some extent, and the policy is dictated by imperialism and Indian big capital.

Social production already exists in various forms in India. Large-scale production takes place on a social basis but the ownership of the means of production and the products remain private. At the other end of the spectrum, communal owner-

ship of land, orchards and groves, pastures, etc. still continues to exist in many places. The tribal people treat their ancestral land as communal property even though the Indian state has declared them to be state property by law. The working class will be most interested in ending the private ownership of all the main means of production where production is already social, so that the surplus is made available to the mass of impoverished peasantry who have been deprived of such assistance by the big capitalists and imperialists. The working class will immediately make available to the tribal peoples their ancestral land from which they make their living. Besides, it will provide assistance from the surplus it acquires through abolition of the private ownership of large scale production, so that they can develop the productive forces further and rapidly improve their condition. The working class will not interfere with the communal land ownership of the peasantry where it already exists, but will assist the peasantry, first by freeing them from the clutches of the feudal remnants, and secondly, by assisting them to develop modern large-scale production on the communal land, so that productive forces develop very fast in the countryside. As a start, by eliminating the surplus appropriation system that the big capital and imperialists have in place today, the working class will eliminate the problem of lack of resources in the hands of the small producers and lead them to build a socialist economy in due course.

The 6th Congress of the CPI(M-L) Liberation states that *“The central objective of the agrarian policy of the party of the proletariat would be to intensify the class struggle in the countryside: between old and new type of landlords and kulaks and their state on the one hand, and the rural proletariat and the vast mass of poor peasants on the other.”* In other words, recognizing the changes brought about by the development of capitalism in the countryside, the class struggle is characterised essentially as a struggle of laboring masses against propertied classes. But if the struggle is between labour and capital, then

why confine the vision to “vibrant capitalism” championed by middle peasants? Why should the camp of labour not put forward its own class vision, the vision of political power in the hands of the people, with which they can smash all remnants of feudalism, caste oppression, bonded labour and so on, and organise production for meeting their own as well as society’s needs?

Defining “vibrant capitalism” as the economic content of the agrarian revolution in today’s India is based on the vision of a European-style democratic revolution on Indian soil. The land reform that the Congress party has advocated and implemented is also based on creating “vibrant capitalism” in the Indian countryside. The leadership of the CPI and the CPI(M) have advocated and implemented such an agrarian policy wherever they have been in power. The 6th Congress of the CPI(M-L) Liberation tries to distinguish itself from the parliamentary communist parties by declaring that “our agrarian policy upholds revolutionary approach in land struggle in contrast to the bureaucratic, legalistic and reformist approach”. A militant struggle for seizure of land to promote “vibrant capitalism” can be attractive to some budding capitalists to grab land from their competitors by using the muscle power of the vulnerable poor peasants. But it can never be the aim of the working class which wants to create new political power and new economic relations by leading the peasantry in the struggle against the existing state power.

Once it is recognised that it is capitalism that has developed and continues to develop in post-colonial India, it follows that the struggle to end the colonial legacy must be necessarily directed against capitalism. Capitalism is part of the colonial legacy of South Asia and is at the heart of all the other forms of oppression. The class struggle is therefore not only anti-feudal, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist. It is all of these but also, and most importantly, it is anti-capitalist. The workers, peasants, women and youth of India can be and ought to be united politically against capitalism and capitalist reforms, against

the capitalist state, as well as against feudal oppression, caste and gender-based oppression, national oppression, the denial of human rights, etc. The Indian working class cannot afford to get diverted from the task of preparing to transform the present-day society by conclusions drawn from the victorious revolutions of other peoples. While paying utmost attention to those conclusions, it will in the course of carrying out its own work give full definition to the stage of the revolution in India.

Nature of the Indian Bourgeoisie

Confusion continues to be widespread in the Indian communist movement on this extremely important question. Contributing to this confusion are those who create illusions about the “anti-imperialist”, “secular and democratic” characteristics of the Indian bourgeoisie and the Indian State. Confusion is also created by those who characterise the Indian bourgeoisie as a “comprador” bourgeoisie, as an agent of foreign imperialist powers.

As the bourgeoisie ruling for over fifty years a very large continental state with close to a billion people, the Indian bourgeoisie harbours expansionist and imperialistic ambitions. In the period of the Cold War between the two superpowers, the Indian bourgeoisie manoeuvred between the two camps in the name of non-alignment to emerge as a big power. Today, when the bipolar division of the world has ended, the Indian bourgeoisie is faced with a challenge — how to emerge as a big player in the world of today. The Indian bourgeoisie has decidedly become an integral part of the world imperialist bourgeoisie, with the same aims and methods as any other imperialist bourgeoisie belonging to any other country. It is engulfed in the inter-imperialist contradictions and inter-imperialist rivalry both for the control of the home market, as well as foreign markets. The collusion and competition inherent in the world capi-

talist system is at the heart of erroneous judgements that exaggerate either the “sell out” or the “nationalist” character of the Indian bourgeoisie.

The Indian bourgeoisie has its origin in those who collaborated with the colonialists and received land, property and licenses in return. After the end of British colonial rule, this bourgeoisie has grown by preserving and defending the colonial legacy, including the military-bureaucratic establishment and political mechanisms that were created to deprive the masses of Indian people of political power. With respect to the striving of the various nations, nationalities and peoples within India who feel negated by the Union, the Indian bourgeoisie has acted in typical imperialist and colonial fashion, establishing and reinforcing its rule through brute force. There is therefore no iota of truth in characterizing the Indian bourgeoisie as democratic in any manner.

To call the Indian bourgeoisie a “comprador” class is also at variance with the facts. It creates the impression that the Indian bourgeoisie has no initiative, strategy or ambitions of its own because it has accepted the “liberalisation and privatisation” policies, economic restructuring and so on at the behest of the international financial institutions. Facts show that it is at the behest of the Indian bourgeoisie that the specific strategies for economic development were prepared and launched, both in the 1950s when Nehru promoted his “socialistic pattern of society”, as well as in the 1990s when Rao and Manmohan Singh launched the liberalisation and privatisation program. It is also at the dictate of the Indian monopoly bourgeoisie that the calls for selective liberalisation, with a “level playing field”, are now being advanced. The opposition to the liberalisation of the insurance and banking sector is similarly dictated by the requirements of the Indian bourgeoisie to emerge as a big power.

The Indian bourgeoisie finds it very convenient to blame the foreign powers and institutions for the course that the economy

is taking. To some, this creates the illusion that the Indian bourgeoisie is a victim of imperialist dictate. But the Indian bourgeoisie uses all these many facets of its relationship with imperialism to convince the Indian people that there is no alternative for India except to fall in line with international trends. It hides the fact that the Indian bourgeoisie is deliberately following a course that is designed to establish its own big power status and expand its spheres of influence, no matter what happens to the rest of Indian society.

Restoration of Communist Unity

While almost all the communist parties in India swear by the principle of democratic centralism, the facts do not bear this out. What exists on the ground is not one General Line around which communists are united. There are innumerable lines, views and tendencies along which communists are divided, both within and between parties. What is prevalent is outright sectarianism in the form of each party and group declaring that such and such document represents their line and that they will only discuss with those who accept this document. In the name of ideological struggle, each group labels and denounces other groups to prove that its own line and program is the purest and the best. The destruction of communist unity and the rise of sectarian strife in place of communist ideological struggle have become the defining characteristics of the Indian Communist movement especially since 1964, when the CPI(M) was born by splitting the CPI.

Organizing sects around individual leaders is the method of the bourgeoisie, the industrialists and landlords. It is also the method followed by the petty bourgeoisie. Organizing on the basis of the collective consciousness and collective strength of the class and its allies is the method of the working class and the movement for communism. In the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois organisations, the right to take decisions lies in the hands

of some privileged individuals. In the communist party, this right resides in the collective. The membership of the communist party alone is the sovereign. This constitutes the most important principle of democratic centralism in organisation.

Inside many of the communist parties in India, democratic centralism is reduced to ensuring the domination of the Central Committee and its Polit Bureau over all other bodies. That the Congress of the Party is the highest forum of the party embodying the sovereignty of the membership who are organised in basic organisations has been repeatedly violated by those who continue to swear by democratic centralism in words.

In the undivided CPI, the first Congress was held in 1947, over twenty years after the founding of the party. This was the period of anti-colonial struggle, and the party faced many difficulties with respect to building its instruments, establishing the political line and the program and organizing the class. The problems of the Indian communist movement in the matter of organisation can be traced back to the problems of the communist traditions that arose in this period. As is well known, during this period and later, a number of “lines” emerged inside the CPI, known by such names as the Ranadive line, Dange line, Sundarayya line and so on. The basic organisations or the Congress of the CPI did not put an end to this phenomenon or exercise their sovereignty over the leaders. Some of these leaders later split the CPI in 1964 and created the CPI(M). None of these factions saw the need to convene the Congress of the Party in order to sort out the problems in a way that would strengthen the Indian communist movement. On the contrary, they first divided the party, giving various reasons for doing so. Then those who created the CPI(M) went on to organise their own congress to ratify the split.

The most tragic aspect of all was the fact that the line of the CPI(M) was no different from the line of the CPI, when the dust had finally settled; both parties transformed themselves into electoral machines in place of becoming the instruments

of class struggle of the working class, participating only in defensive and spontaneous struggles of the class instead of creating subjective conditions for revolution through a conscious policy and plan.

The majority of the splits in the communist movement since then can be traced to the negation of this basic principle of democratic centralism. The sovereignty of the members has been replaced by the supremacy of the leaders of different parties and groups who have not seen it fit to sort out their differences through the basic organisations or by going to the Congress. All involved have gone by the notion that the CC or the Polit Bureau is decisive while the basic organisation is a subservient body and the Congress is just a rubber stamp. With such an approach towards the Congress and the sovereignty of the membership, the Indian working class has been deprived of the leadership of the communist party at all levels, in the sense of lacking an aim on a countrywide basis and lacking the necessary consciousness and organisation at the basic organisation level.

The prevalence of sectarianism is such that the many different communist groups act as if their main concern is not the struggle of the working class and people as a whole for overthrowing the rule of the bourgeoisie and constructing socialism. The bourgeoisie cannot be overthrown, they say, because communists are not strong enough. They cannot unite with other communist groups and create a viable force that can lead the class in its mission because of “serious” ideological differences, which must first be sorted out! The CPI(M) says this and has been saying so for a long time. Many other groups are also singing the same tune.

The main program of a faction or sect seems to be to keep its own members intact and under tight control, and wage internecine war with other groups. The real main enemy in this case seems to be other communist groups as well as any perceived threats to leadership within their own groups. Un-

der the domination of this sectarian spirit, the working class is left leaderless and confused. Revolution keeps marking time. The bourgeoisie keeps unleashing terrible attacks on the working class and people. Communism remains an aspiration of the masses of the people, unrealizable in concrete terms.

The existence of factions inside a communist party is an indication that the party has ceased to be the party of the working class. Lenin and Stalin talked about the need to eliminate factions, not through police methods but through constant waging of the ideological struggle in defence of the single program of the class so that the bourgeoisie will find it impossible to smuggle its agenda into the working class movement and its vanguard party.

The CGPI has the proud history of organizing Indian communists for over 18 years, creating a tradition where the sovereignty of the membership is exercised by organizing the basic organisations at the place of work—in the factories and fields—and building the organs and instruments of the party to wage the class struggle according to a single plan. Neither factional struggle nor two-line struggle has crept into the party to disorient it from its activities, and its basic organisations are functioning as the instruments of class struggle, creating a new kind of communist political work that is neither reactive nor spontaneous.

It is clear that there are many hurdles in the way of restoring communist unity. There is the lack of a revolutionary line of march around which all communists can be united in one single party. There is also the lack of communist political work because of the failure of the Indian communist movement to nurture and develop democratic centralism over a long historical period. But most of all, the restoration of the unity of the movement will mean in practical terms that the communists of India militate inside the ranks of one single communist party, with unity in thought and action, to lead the Indian working class.

The way our party is approaching this question at this time can be summarised as follows:

- We firmly uphold that there is one communist movement in India and the CGPI is a contingent of this movement, which also includes many other parties, groups and individual communists;
- We believe that a united communist party will emerge out of all these parties, groups and individuals through a process of strengthening the communist political work and negating all that has rendered the working class incapable of setting its own aims;
- We wage the ideological struggle within this one communist movement, directing it against conciliation with social democracy on all questions — on the question of the ideological line as well as on the question of party-building;
- Our aim is not to discredit any group or individual, but to see to it that the political line and ideology of all forces are critically assessed in full view of all the Indian communists;
- We elaborate the general line and develop the theory of liberation of the Indian people emerging out of our own conditions in India and organise the working class and people to develop the program for people's empowerment, contrasting this with all other programs that conciliate with the agenda of the status quo;
- We discuss and debate with all communist groups and organisations as well as individuals on the basis that
 - we must oppose all forms of conciliation with social democracy and defend the purity of Marxism-Leninism; and
 - we must not impose any line of demarcation within the communist movement at this time or declare such and such parties as non-communist;
- We want all the communists, at any level in their organisations, to participate in the discussion and debate that will bring pride to the Indian working class and its aims, opposing any gossip, slander and innuendo;

We want to get all the communists into one camp! This will create the conditions for the Indian communists themselves to decide what program they give themselves and by what name they want to call their united party.

In the course of the work to build one communist party on the basis of ideo-political unity in its ranks, the CGPI recognises that there exists the basis for broad political unity of all like-minded parties, groups and individuals against capitalism and capitalist reforms, and against state terrorism and central despotism. There is also potential for political unity against gender and caste-based oppression and discrimination, for the affirmation of human rights, national and democratic rights and women's rights. The CGPI will continue and step up its efforts to strengthen political unity among communists groups and other fighting forces through joint actions and appeals, all the time maintaining a climate of healthy discussion and debate on theoretical and ideological questions.

The CGPI recognises that there exists the opposite tendency within the Indian communist movement. This is the tendency of striking deals with bourgeois parties. It is the tendency of issuing a "common manifesto" among the bigwigs in the parliament without consulting all the communists. The leaders of CPI(M) are the clearest example of this tendency who refuse to sit together with any of the "small" communist parties and act in an arrogant manner as netas or *Chanakyas* who are much sought after in bourgeois circles. The CGPI calls on all Indian communists, including those within the CPI(M) who aspire for socialism and communism in India, to defeat and eliminate this tendency of bourgeois and brahmanical arrogance from among the communists.

If the leadership of CPI(M) thinks that it has the right to act as if it is the sole representative of communism in India, then it also has the duty to act in a manner that behoves a major contingent of the communist movement. The intense factional fights within the leading organs of CPI(M) that have caught

the attention of the public eye do not bring credit to the name and prestige of communism. If the CPI(M) is a serious political party whose aim is socialism and communism, then it ought to explain its positions and conduct in front of all the communists. It must elaborate and strengthen the General Line, explain what it is doing to establish the alternative aim of the Indian working class, and how it is waging the struggle to end the political marginalisation of the working class and people and to defeat the program of the bourgeoisie for economic restructuring. It must also explain what the working class movement gains from communists participating in and even taking the lead in a bourgeois coalition at this time, what its views are about who are the enemy and who are the friends of the working class, and how the unity of the working class and the people behind the aim of the working class is being consciously built through its “secular and democratic” policy.

The work of the CGPI and other communists to establish the General Line of march of the Indian communist movement goes hand in hand with the waging of the ideological and polemical struggle against those who are pushing the line of conciliation with social democracy to preserve the status quo. The immediate work is to lead the working class and people to set their program and the building of the revolutionary front to implement the program. As this work advances, all those who aspire for progress will close ranks, and all the conciliators and collaborators with the bourgeoisie will be left behind. The Indian communist movement will emerge as a reunited and reinvigorated force to lead the offensive against the bourgeoisie in the 21st century, as the ebb of revolution once again turns to flow.

Part III.

Plan of Action

Plan of Action

We are at a crucial point in the work of our party where we have achieved various successes over the past 17 years. A decisive breakthrough is necessary in order to make a qualitative leap forward. This breakthrough will not come about on its own. It will have to be organised. The entire plan of action is aimed at ensuring this breakthrough for the party and for the Indian working class.

We have set ourselves the task of building the revolutionary united front of workers and peasants and all toilers around an independent program of the working class, along with strengthening the work for the restoration of communist unity. What are all the things that have to be done to fulfill this task?

The struggle to establish party basic units among the workers and other toiling masses is one of the most important and crucial factors to achieve the above. Serious attention needs to be paid to this work at this time. Without building the party among the masses, without recruiting fresh blood into its ranks at this time, what we are planning to achieve will remain merely a dream.

The strengthening of the party must be carried out at all levels. The Central Committee, the Regional Committees, the basic organisations—all must carry out their work according to a single plan. All the organisations of the party must contribute their energies to the strengthening of the centralised leadership.

The party paper must play an important role as (i) a regular paper for the working class, (ii) as the organ of the CC to lead the entire work of the party and (iii) as the scaffolding with which the party is built.

Our party organ should get to large numbers of advanced

workers and serve them. Paying utmost attention to the quality, the content, the style and regularity in the production of the paper in Indian languages is a decision to enable this. The CC will produce a fortnightly Hindi paper at this time, called *Mazdoor Ekta Lehar*. The different regions should strengthen the work to produce their language editions. The English version will also be made available on the CGPI Website.

We must fight to implement Lenin's formula that ***all*** the party organisations, all the basic units in all regions, must devote at least one quarter of their time and energies towards the party paper. This means that all the basic organisations must participate in selling the paper to the masses. They should seriously discuss the feedback from workers and other communists, as well as their own views on what the paper is saying. They must write reports of their activities as well as their comments and views, as well as contribute articles etc., to the party paper. How seriously a party organisation carries out this work of distributing the paper, contributing articles and giving prompt feedback, is an indicator of the state of health of that organisation.

The tested method of organizing mass sales at factory gates and other places must not be given up under any excuse. This is the way we built our party over the years, and this has been one of our traditional strengths. If the party's views and positions are not regularly received and discussed by masses of workers, how can the revolutionary front be built? Increasing sales is therefore very important. Let us set a bold target of selling 10,000 copies right away, and gradually increase it to reach 50,000 before the end of the year. Each RC should set its target in consultation with the CC.

To bring out a quality party paper in Hindi, a core team of comrades will dedicate their energies in a planned and organised way, to master Indian language journalism for the working class. And the entire membership as well as sympathisers of the party will be inspired and mobilised to contribute their

time and funds, from each according to ability, to fulfill the plan.

Over the past year and half, the party has been putting forth the outline and key elements of the program of the working class. We have again dealt with it in the paper presented at this enlarged plenum on the movement. It must be always kept in mind that the program will keep developing, as the conditions keep changing. The problem we are facing at this time is not that we have no program, but that the discussion on the program, if it takes place at all, is more academic and in limited circles, more for self-cultivation, than to organise the working class and people around such a program. All the party organisations must pay serious attention to solving this problem. The discussion and debate on the question of the program has to take place in the midst of the working class and broad masses of people. It has to spread in the communist circles. Developing discussion on the program is a weapon to build the revolutionary united front. It is a weapon to restore communist unity. If this work is not seriously done, all the things we write will remain on paper and become useless phrases.

The work on theory is extremely important. We will develop the work on Indian political theory, political economy and on philosophy. This work will be carried out in close connection with the working class movement for emancipation.

When we carry out discussions with various communist groups, our immediate aim is that the key questions facing the movement become topics of discussion in the communist movement. How should the discussion and debate on theoretical and ideo-political questions be developed so that no communist can keep aloof from it? Every RC should make its own plan for contributing to this work.

The mass organisations that the party has established, in India and abroad, are all organisations led by the Central Committee of the Party. The aims of these organisations are consistent with the party's strategic aim of revolution and commu-

nism. This is also the case with the aims of some non-party publications. Consistent with their objectives, and under the guidance of the CC, the specific plan of action of each of these organisations is worked out. That plan of action will be in accordance with the overall plan of action of the CC. The tasks of all communists working in these organisations is to provide leadership in planning and implementing the work of these organisations and win support for the political positions of the party.

Developing the movement for people's empowerment is an important initiative of the party whose aim is to build a non-partisan political front against the marginalisation of the people from politics, a front that includes the toiling masses as well as the middle strata. The year 2000 will be the 50th year of the Indian Republic. We must work with the perspective of developing a highly visible national and international program directed towards the reconstitution of the Indian Union on a modern democratic basis.

The year 1998 is crucial for the party and for the Indian working class and communist movement. Before the end of this year, we are going to convene the Second Congress of the CGPI. We must channel all our energies into fulfilling the above tasks as well as carry forward the specific work of preparation for the Congress.

In the climate of the campaign for the Lok Sabha elections, that is in the immediate two weeks following this meeting, let us launch our campaign for the revolutionary front. Let us test our slogans such as "No Election without Selection!", "Fight for the Renewal of the Political Process!", "Reject all three fronts of the rich exploiters!" and "Build the Revolutionary Front!" And this campaign should be steadily developed without let-up after the elections.