

FEATURE

## Special Conference: A New LANDMARK

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**E**xcept the first Party Congress, during which I was in prison, I have had the opportunity of attending all the Party Congresses. But this Special Conference has its own significance. It was some time back, immediately after the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and east European countries, that we felt that our Programme, formulated on the basis of the assessment at that time, though valid in respect of defining the stage, class character of the state, and the requisite class alliance, required updating in order to achieve our objective of *People's Democracy*. Accordingly the 14<sup>th</sup> Party Congress (January 1992), adopted a resolution for updating the Programme.

Because of the developing situation in the country, this task could not be immediately taken up, and it was only after the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress (October 1998), held in Calcutta, that serious efforts were made in this regard. A Programme Commission was entrusted with the task of preparing the draft. On completion of its work, and after two rounds of discussion in the Central Committee, the draft was finalized and released for inner Party discussion in August 2000.

### PROCESS OF DISCUSSIONS

Some bourgeois politicians always raise the point that "there is no democracy in the Communist Party", and many dissidents who have deserted the Party also always talk about the "absence of democracy" in the Party. The very process we have gone through for the finalisation of the Programme goes to show that no other party in the country has adhered to such principles and practices where, in the formulation of the Programme, every Party member in the country has been involved.

After the Central Committee approved the draft it was circulated among the units in the country. Individual comrades also were asked to send their views directly to the Central Committee, and a three-month period was provided for this process. In this period 5,725 amendments and 530 suggestions and general comments came from different Party units. After going through all these amendments, the Central Committee accepted 55 of them, which were then circulated to the delegates assembled for the Special Conference.

Further, during the debate in the Special Conference, delegates were free to opine on the document as well as move any other amendments if they so desired. In this way, 239 amendments, and two suggestions came from the delegates, of which 28 were accepted by the Special Conference. Their nature was essentially to strengthen the formulations contained in the programme. Even those amendments which were not accepted, did not express a difference of opinion, but related to the current political situation, or were of a clarificatory nature.

### CHANGE FROM EARLIER PROGRAMME

The earlier Programme contained 9 chapters, namely,

- i. India Attains Independence
- ii. Bankrupt Path of Capitalism
- iii. Balance Sheet of Bourgeois Agrarian Policy
- iv. Foreign Policy
- v. State Structure and Democracy
- vi. Conditions of the People
- vii. Programme of People's Democracy
- viii. Building of People's Democratic Front, and
- ix. Building of the Communist Party.



**Special Conference**

**I**ndia's Path to Socialism

**Special Conference**

**A** New Land Mark

**Petroleum Price Hike**

**H**eight of Deceit And Deception

The new draft contains eight chapters.

Chapter 1 narrates

- the historic role played by the Communist Party of India from its very inception, in developing the national liberation movement, being the first to raise the question of "Complete Independence" in 1921, at the Ahmedabad session of the AICC; its role in giving socio-economic content to the call of *Swaraj*, it linked the anti-imperialist struggle to the anti-feudal struggle by demanding the abolition of landlordism.
- Its a key role in the setting up of all-India mass organisations such as the All India Kisan Sabha and the All India Students' Federation, and strengthening of the All India Trade Union Congress.
- The severe repression it had to face at the hands the British through bans, imprisonment, torture chambers, proscription of Communist and progressive literature. It is not accidental that all the revolutionary currents in the country merged into the Communist Party and sought the path of mass struggle. Communists have the proud record of leading the post-war upsurge by developing various mass struggles, of which the Telangana armed struggle was the most important.
- The defeat of fascism coupled with the revolutionary struggle within the country, created a situation for complete independence, and faced with this situation, British imperialism struck a deal with the Congress and the Muslim League for the formation of two independent states.
- After independence, the Communist movement began its fight against the bourgeois landlord regime and for the establishment of a People's Democratic state. The CPI(M) emerged, in 1964, out of the struggle against right revisionism and left sectarianism in the Communist movement.
- The major international and national developments that have taken place during the last 36 years, the set-back to socialism, leading to a change in the international correlation of forces, with its impact on the national situation, necessitated an updating of the Programme. In all this period the historic role played by the Communist Party can never be undermined, and the Party has a proud record of fighting for independence and defending the interests of the working class, peasantry and other toiling masses.

Chapter two deals with socialism in the contemporary world:

- the struggle against imperialism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the victory of the October Revolution and triumph of other socialist revolutions and the new vistas opened up by the scientific and technological revolution.
- It analyses the advances made by the socialist countries and the progress achieved by the mankind, as well as the setbacks and reverses suffered by socialism.
- The new features and nature of imperialism in the current phase -- the instruments of exploitation in the IMF, World Bank and WTO which have sharpened the divide between the rich and the poor, the working of world capitalism and the changes in its mechanisms of exploitation, the development of productive forces through the scientific and technological revolution and how capitalism has utilized this, plus the threat to the environment due to the rapacity of capitalism.
- The validity of the four fundamental social contradictions. The CPI(M) has always emphasised on the importance of a proper understanding of various contradictions. When the Marx was alive, only one social contradiction existed, namely, the contradiction between labour and capital. It was Lenin who, analysing the development of capitalism, pointed out to imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism, leading to the emergence at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, of two other major social contradictions, namely, that between imperialism and the colonial countries, and that between the imperialist countries themselves. After the victory of the October Revolution the fourth major social contradiction, that between socialism and imperialism, was added, and in the subsequent historical development, acquired the status of the central contradiction. All contradictions have their own significance, but for the present epoch, the central contradiction remains the most significant . With a change in the situation in a given period, any one of these contradictions can come to the fore such as today -- though the contradiction between socialism and imperialism remains central to the whole epoch, at present the contradiction between developing countries and imperialism is coming to the fore. This analysis is of great importance in working out our strategy and tactics for the People's Democratic revolution, which is the objective of the CPI(M).
- This chapter also corrects the mistaken assessment of the international situation made in the 1957 and 1960 Documents adopted by the international Communist movement. The 1960 Document stated: "*It is the principle character of our time that the world socialist system is becoming the decisive factor in the development of society*". that, " *world capitalism is going through an intense process of disintegration and decay*", talked of "*the growing instability in the entire economic system of capitalism*", and concluded that "*restoration of capitalism has been made impossible not only in the Soviet Union but in*

*the other socialist countries as well".*

- This document gave a wrong understanding about the historical inevitability of the collapse of capitalism and its imminent downfall. This serious mistake prevented a concrete study of the changes that were taking place in the capitalist countries and the way they were planning to meet the challenges from the socialist countries. This present Programme negates the wrong understanding. Many mistakes which were committed in the past arose out of this mistaken understanding. This underestimation of the development of capitalism by making use of science and technology derailed the world communist movement including ours. However these mistakes do not negate the validity of science of Marxism-Leninism, which remains the only path which can liberate the workers, peasants and other exploited millions.
- The Programme stresses the protracted nature of building socialism and the various phases of struggle it will have to go through. It notes the imperialist pressures to which the existing socialist countries are being subjected, but which they are effectively fighting back.
- Socialism remains the only answer to the ills of society by putting an end to exploitation of man by man.

Chapter Three incorporates the areas covered by Chapter Two and Three of the 1964 programme, and explains the path adopted by the ruling classes in the 1950s.

- State capitalism with limited planning, development of the public sector and state regulation, as the big bourgeoisie by itself was too weak to build heavy industry and infrastructure with its capital base. With the help of Soviet Union, a degree of industrialization and development of indigenous science and technology base, was achieved enabling it to a certain degree to resist imperialist pressure.
- Following the collapse of Soviet Union and the subsequent imperialist offensive, the crises of the capitalist path domestically, leading the Indian bourgeoisie to embrace the policy of liberalisation and privatisation, and attempting to take over the core sector from the public sector.
- The present Programme deals with the impact of liberalization on the economy -- erosion of national sovereignty, dismantling of the public sector, the growth and penetration of imperialist finance capital in all sectors of economy, the roll-back of steps towards self-reliance, the new WTO regime, etc., agrarian relations which form an important component in the completion of the agrarian revolution, which forms the crux of the democratic revolution.

Chapter Four deals with foreign policy.

- While the basic formulation of the 1964 Programme is retained, note is taken of the fact that the shift in economic policy following the collapse of Soviet Union brought a change in the foreign policy. This pro-imperialist trend witnessed in the 1990s, was heightened with the BJP coming into power, the nuclear tests accentuating the shift towards the US. It states that BJP is a pro-imperialist party and we have to fight for the non-alignment movement and an independent foreign policy.

Chapter Five deals with the state structure and democracy.

- The basic formulations of the earlier Programme of the Indian state "as the organ of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and the landlords, led by the big bourgeoisie who increasingly collaborate with foreign finance capital in pursuit of the capitalist path of development", are maintained .
- Certain aspects such as the plight of the Adivasis and Tribal People has been strengthened, keeping in mind the development since 1964.
- The question of secularism is raised, stressing on the failure of the ruling classes to defend the secular values and the consequent rise of communal forces which threaten the democratic secular fabric of the nation.
- New paras have been added on the question of caste and caste oppression, elaborating aspects of the oppression of scheduled castes, dalits, the growing consciousness against caste discrimination and oppression, and the approach of the working class party in the fight to abolish the caste system.

Chapter Six deals with People's Democracy and its programme. Retaining the basic structure certain changes have been introduced.

- On the language question, while emphasizing on the equality of languages the necessity of a language of communication is indicated.
- One new idea has been introduced on the multi party system in People's Democracy.

- One section is added on the question of environment and media.
- In paragraph 6.4 a change has been made deleting 'without compensation' in the abolition of landlordsim. This does not mean that we are pleading for compensation in all cases. It will depend on the situation at a given period and the correlation of class forces in the process of abolition of landlordism.
- Paragraphs 6.5 and 6.6 state that the transition to socialism will be a prolonged one going through various stages of economic and social formations. The People's Democratic government will ensure a decisive deceive role for public ownership; the state will perform a regulatory role over economy as a whole. The economy under People's Democracy will be a multi-structural one, with various forms of ownership, with the public sector having the dominant position. In relation to the field of industry, this document does not mention nationalization. Steps to eliminate monopoly and breakup the concentration of assets will be implemented through various forms including state take-over. The precise form will depend on the prevailing situation. There is also a provision for allowing foreign investment in selected sectors for acquiring advanced technology and regulating finance capital from abroad.


The next two chapters deal with the building of the people's democratic front and the Communist Party. These will be dealt with in a subsequent article.

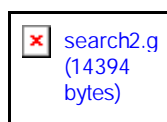
Of the 400 delegates only 7 could not attend due to illness and other exigencies. Delegations had a through discussion in their camps and presented different points of view. Everybody was given a chance to express his view point. The deliberations of the Conference showed a new confidence to advance the democratic movement in the country. The conference ended with the great enthusiasm, comrades shouting the slogan "Long live CPI(M)", and singing the *Internationale*.

The Conference adopted resolutions on the immediate situation facing the country and the people. The resolution on the economic situation called for building powerful militant movements culminating in an all-India action. The resolution on the communal challenge called upon all patriots to forge unity to uphold the integrity of India. In a separate resolution, the Conference expressed solidarity with the Palestinians and condemned the imperialist-backed Israeli intransigence.

The arrangements made by the Kerala Party which facilitated tremendously the smooth working of the Conference, were appreciated by everyone. The response from the masses in meeting the expenses was such, that in one day's house-to-house collection from one district alone, Rupees ten lakhs were collected.

On the last day a big procession was taken out accompnied by all the leaders. In the mass rally that followeed, around one lakh of people participated. Kerala was the first state to break the monopoly power of the Congress Party in 1957. Now again the mass support goes to show that armed with the present Programme, they will be able to meet all the eventualities and defeat the game of the bourgeois landlord classes, and achieve victory in the coming electoral battle in the beginning of next year.

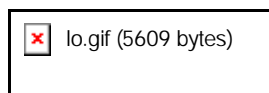
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