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**The Present Political Situation And The Evolution
Of Our Tactics In Perspective**

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Three political formations are emerging in the changed political situation in the country after the fall of the National Front Government. Some questions are being posed regarding this new alignment of political forces. How does the combination of Left and secular forces (National Front and the Janata Dal) fit-in with the political perspective our Party has been holding? What would be its relation to the slogan of "Left and Democratic unity", which our Party has been advocating since the fifth general elections? These are valid questions, because, as Marxists, we have to explain how the tactics pursued by our Party is going to help in changing the correlation of class forces in favour of the working class and subserve the strategic objective of the Peoples Democratic Revolution.

Strategic Goal: People's Democratic Revolution

Our Party Programme has clearly enunciated our strategic objective to be the People's Democratic Front (PDF) has to be formed which consists of the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the non-monopoly sections of the Indian bourgeoisie. Though the alliance consists of all these classes, the role of different classes comprising the front are not the same. The role of different classes depends on the place that each class occupies in the production process in the present bourgeois-landlord set up. It is but natural that the working class, being the most advanced class of our society, has to play the leading role in making the revolution. But ours is a predominantly agrarian country in which seventy percent of the population is dependent on agriculture. So unless the working class wins over the peasantry to its side and forges an alliance with it, it cannot succeed in making the revolution. Thus this class alliance is to be based on the alliance of the working class and the peasantry.

Then comes the petty bourgeoisie. Sections of the non-monopolist bourgeoisie will be rallied with the growth and development of the movement and when under the impact of the crisis of capitalist society, the big bourgeoisie would deprive them of their share of the profits and possibilities of expansion. The PDF thus formed has the aim of putting an end, not only to imperialist and feudal exploitation in our country, but also to abolish the exploitation by Indian monopoly capital.

The Party Programme, as Lenin stated is meant to "formulate our basic views (on the stages of the revolution) precisely establish our immediate political tasks; point out the immediate demands that must show the area of agitational activity; give unity to the agitational work, expand and deepen it, thus arising it from fragmentary partial agitation for petty isolated demands to the status of agitation for the sum total of Social-Democratic demands". He further stated, "Questions of tactics however, can hardly be introduced into the programme (with the exception of the most important questions, questions of principle, such as our attitude to other fighters against the autocracy). Questions of tactics will be discussed by the Party newspaper as they arise and will be eventually decided at the Party Congress". (Lenin Collected Works Vol. IV, P 230 & 238)

But when we formulated the programme, the debate was on what attitude we have to take in relation to the functioning of the State governments and how far we can made use of the bourgeois parliament as an instrument for effecting social transformation. The question of participating in the parliament never became the central issue in our Party, because we have been participating in it since 1936-37. It is only the naxalites, who broke away from the CPI(M) in 1967, who had rejected the idea of participating in the parliamentary elections. Therefore it is not necessary to deal with this question. Para 112 of our Party Programme clearly states: "The Party shall utilise all the opportunities that present themselves for bringing into existence governments pledged to carry out a modest programme of giving immediate relief to the people". It adds: "The formation of such governments will give great fillip to the revolutionary movement of the working people and thus help the process of building the democratic front."

The experience of last two and a half decades has vindicated the correctness of para 112 of our Programme. These governments have

helped in strengthening the mass movements not only in the concerned states but also in the rest of the country. In the process of forming these governments and their working, we have passed through many stages. From the stage of the United Fronts in the sixties (consisting of the classes which form the base for the PDF) in the formation of the Left Fronts in West Bengal and Tripura in the seventies and the Left and democratic front in Kerala in the eighties.

While participating in the parliamentary struggle and organising mass movements, we have to formulate some other slogans of intermediate nature. During the first, second and third general elections we came out as an independent force challenging the Congress monopoly of power and in the background of the class battles we were able to emerge as the first opposition group in Parliament. We were also the first to make a breach in the Congress monopoly of power when we formed the first non-Congress ministry in Kerala in 1957. But it is during and after the elections in 1967 that we came out with the electoral based slogans of United Front, the Left Front and the Left Democratic Front in Kerala. This Left Democratic Front nomenclature used in Kerala should not be confused with the concept of the Left and democratic alternative.

Left And Democratic Front

If we go through the Party documents of the last two and a half decades we find that it was in the 10th Congress of our Party that we explained that the slogan of Left and democratic front is not the same as the formation of the PDF. As the Congress resolution pointed out with regard to the LDF: "The struggle to build this front is part of our endeavour to bring about a change in the correlation of class forces, to end a situation in which the peoples can choose only between two bourgeois-landlord parties, and get imprisoned within the framework of the present system. By gathering all Left and democratic forces together for further advance, the Party makes a beginning to consolidate those forces which in future will participate in shaping the alliance for peoples democracy under the leadership of the working class. The Left and democratic front is not to be understood as only an alliance for elections or ministry, but a fighting alliance of the forces for immediate advance -- economic and political -- and for isolating the reactionary classes that hold the economy in their grip." This helped to understand the link between the Left and democratic front and the perspective of the PDF.

Based on this understanding it was only in the 13th Congress of our Party that we formulated a programme for the LDF which contained the immediate demands around which the Left and democratic forces can be gathered, as distinct from the programme of the PDF.

Our Party Programme envisaged that transitional slogans and platforms have to be worked out at different stages to mobilise the people for heading towards the strategic goal of the Peoples Democratic Front which has to be gradually realised through a series of struggles and stages. It is with this perspective that we raised some other interim slogans such as the broad platform in the struggle against authoritarianism, the unity of Left and secular forces to fight against the threat to national unity, and so on. But these slogans should not be confused with the slogan of Left and democratic front. These interim slogans have short-term implications and meet the needs of the immediate situation. The other slogans were meant to meet the requirements of the given situation for the advance of the democratic movement. The slogan of Left and democratic unity has an important class content because this slogan has a similiarity with the slogan of Peoples Democratic Front, so far as the classes comprising the front are concerned, which means it consists of all those classes who are interested in completing the democratic tasks of our revolution. And this cannot be achieved merely through the combination of various political forces or through merely parliamentary forums.

Importance Of The Slogan Of Left And Democratic Unity

Since the objective of our Party is to change the entire social order, this can be done only by bringing about a radical change in the correlation of class forces. This means that larger and larger sections of the masses must be weaned away from the bourgeois parties and rallied around the working class party. So it is necessary that the widest masses should be rallied behind the Left and democratic forces so that the programme of Left and democratic unity becomes a rallying point. That is why the various demands in the LDF programme are directed against the vested interests.

This unity is a process which can be built by unleashing mass movements on the burning economic issues as well as politicalising the masses and releasing them from the political-ideological

influence of the bourgeois-landlord classes. Thus, through this process of mobilising the masses they are growingly radicalised and in this process the weight and influence of the working class party and the Left forces over the mass increases. The concept of Left and democratic unity is not an electoral concept. This unity, built through mass actions, is intended to draw behind it all sections and classes that form the constituents of the PDF for People's Democratic Revolution. The unity is achieved by getting larger and larger sections in the struggle for a programme that is basically opposed to the programme of all bourgeois-landlord parties and all vested interests. In the fight for a radical programme the masses growingly separate themselves from the influence of the bourgeois parties and step by step begin accepting the leadership of the working class.

Mass Struggles To Intensify Class Struggles

To carry out the revolution in a country like India, with the bourgeoisie in power with tremendous resources at its disposal and its alliance with the landlords, is an extremely complex and difficult job. This requires building of powerful mass organisations, leading the mass struggles of various sections of the toiling people and winning over the masses from the influence of the ruling classes through united actions and coming forward as defenders of national unity.

Intensification of class struggle is of primary importance for building and developing the Left and democratic front.

But while adhering to this task we have to take note of the fact that the existing level of consciousness of the mass of the people, taking the country as a whole is not such where this slogan can immediately materialise. Therefore to be able to reach that goal we have to take the existing consciousness into consideration and be prepared to join hands with the bourgeois opposition forces to make use of the conflicts and contradictions which emerge in the ruling classes. Based on this understanding, at different stages we have been raising the slogans of broad front against authoritarianism, unity of Left and secular forces to meet threat to national unity etc.

Breaking The Congress Monopoly

In this connection if we look back, broadly the tactical lines pursued by the Party during the last two and half decades of its existence have met the requirements. Even in the united party from the beginning we took the line of breaking the monopoly of power of the Congress. We had clearly stated that the Congress is the dominant party of the bourgeois-landlord classes, a position which it still continues to hold. When the Swatantra Party came into being in 1957, there was discussion within the united party to come to an understanding with the Congress to fight the Swatantra Party, we rejected the idea. This did not mean that we were ignoring the emergence of the Swatantra party and the necessity of an ideological fight against it, but the Swatantra Party was not that much a force to challenge the Congress. Similarly in 1962, in the united party, the question arose whether we should concentrate the main fire on the ruling Congress party as the principal opponent of the revolutionary movement or whether we have to concentrate the main fire on the extreme rightist forces, through collaboration with the ruling Congress. Those who were charging us with blind anti-Congressism rallied behind the right reactionary forces in the wake of the defeat of the Congress in the assembly elections to eight states in 1967. Whereas the CPI joined all the SVD government we refused to join any government except in West Bengal and Kerala where the Left was able to play an important role and where our Party occupied the central place in the government.

We divided these governments into four categories:

- (i) where the strength of the Left-democratic parties is markedly pronounced like in West Bengal and Kerala;
- (ii) the DMK government in Tamilnadu because its programmes and pledges and activities represented democratic content despite certain hangovers of its chauvinist past;
- (iii) Bihar and Punjab belonged to the third category. Despite some degree of difference between the two, parties, groups and individuals with democratic and Left characteristics were found in considerable strength, though in both these states an avowed rightist party, the Jan Sangh happened to be an important component; and
- (iv) the last category were the governments of Orissa, Haryana and UP. Here the non-Congress fronts and governments had been formed. Despite some degrees of difference in class composition and character, all the three could be characterised as governments with a predominant composition of right reactionary parties like the

Swatantra, Jan Sangh and the like. Therefore it was quite evident that the question of our supporting them did not arise. Therefore the CPI(M), which was systematically slandered as following the tactics of blind anti-Congressism, refused to participate in state governments where the rightist parties were present and where the Left was not a dominant force. It decided to sit in opposition.

Assessment Of Congress Split

Then came the developments in the middle of 1969 when the ruling party was getting split into two, one headed by Indira Gandhi and the other by Morarji Desai, Nijalingappa and Kamaraj. The Review Report of the Ninth Congress of the CPI(M) held in 1972 noted: "Our Party took note of the split, made a certain valid distinction between the two Congresses and evolved certain tactics in the context of the split. It openly announced its decision to prevent the syndicate from seizing control of the administrative machinery, frustrated its attempts at a parliamentary coup and supported V.V. Giri, the Indira wing's candidate in the Presidential election in opposition to the Syndicate's nominee Sanjeeva Reddy". It continued, "it is our duty to study the changes in the ruling classes and the ruling party, assess their inner differences which produced a direct impact on the class struggle they waged against the proletariat. To miss this will mean refusal to respond to the manoeuvres of the ruling classes, the divisions among them which often weakens them in the fight against the proletariat if it is taken advantage of". The report further states: "these differences are the product of the rising class struggle and relate to the question of dealing with it. They are often the echo of the political activity of the proletariat and the proletarian party is bound to assess and meet this response of the ruling class to the activities of its class".

"Failure to take note of this leads to loss of political initiative and surrender to the opposing class. The proletariat while pursuing its independent line therefore takes note of these differences, makes tactical adjustments so that the progress of its line is accelerated". The syndicate at that time was openly advocating fresh attacks on the masses and immediate dissolution of the Kerala and West Bengal ministries and a ban on our Party. They were also opposing bank nationalisation and abolition of privy purses. They came out as aggressive advocates of monopolists in the Congress leadership. They were the strong advocates of a pro-American shift in our foreign policy. They were advocates of the unitary state, for

curtailment of the right of states, suppression of the democratic opposition parties etc.

While drawing a proper distinction between the two, the Party did not place any reliance on the Indira wing of the Congress and its policies. Therefore in the elections that followed, our Party had to oppose both the combinations. The CPI became a junior partner of the Congress in the 1971 elections, characterising the split as between the monopolist bourgeoisie and the non-monopoly bourgeoisie. We while opposing the Syndicate did not come to the conclusion that the split of such a nature had taken place. The result of the CPI's tailing behind the Congress at the time could be seen in the weakening of the Left forces in the country. The CPI did not hesitate to even forge the anti-Marxist united front together with the ruling Congress, and these tactics led the CPI to support the emergency regime of Indira Gandhi and also to support the anti-democratic 42nd Constitution amendment Act.

After the defeat of the Syndicate in the 1971 elections, the Indira Congress came to power supported by the CPI. When semi-fascist terror was unleashed in West Bengal during the elections and after, the Party had to warn the country against "the shape of things for the future" in the whole country. The Party of ruling classes itself, it was pointed out was "rapidly and systematically moving towards authoritarianism and one person rule". Against this threat to democracy, the Ninth Party Congress held in 1972 called for united resistance particularly by the unity of the Left and democratic forces. Making a realistic assessment of the situation, of how the unity of the Left forged during the 1967 elections was disrupted, the Party came to the conclusion that in the wake of the developments those Left parties which had abandoned their positions and joined the Congress would come back. Winning the Left forces back, in order to strengthen the Left and democratic movement, and for forging unity with other democratic forces against authoritarianism became the key tasks outlined by the Congress.

While working out this line, we failed to realise the possibilities of the growing resistance to the authoritarian rule of the Congress from the other parties of the ruling classes themselves. Till then we had a simplistic understanding that in the wake of the developing economic crisis, the resistance to authoritarianism could be put up only by the unity of the Left and democratic forces. That is why, when the JP movement took up the issue of struggle against

authoritarianism and rallied behind it the socialists and some Congressmen as well as the Jan Sangh, we hesitated in the beginning to take a positive approach towards the movement, but subsequently the Party was able to overcome this hesitation and decided to independently support the JP movement without merging with it. The Party adopted tactics of supporting the JP movement without joining the National Coordination Committee as was done by the socialists and some other Left forces, or to be dissolved into the Janata Party when it was formed in 1977 as did the socialists and some radical Congressmen and others.

When the elections came in 1977 after the lifting of the emergency, we did not hesitate to join hands with the Janata Party to put an end to the authoritarian rule of the Congress headed by Indira Gandhi to support the government formed by the Janata Party to dismantle the authoritarian framework and restore democracy. We did this without entertaining any illusion that the Janata Party represents any class interest different from that of the bourgeoisie and landlords as represented by the Congress.

However, it is a fact that we could not take full advantage of the conflict between the bourgeois opposition parties and the ruling party which culminated in the imposition of the emergency. Vacillations in utilising this conflict found expression within the Party at the time of the imposition of the hated emergency in 1975.

In the Review Report of the Tenth Congress, we had stated: "a closer study of our inner-PB discussions and the resolutions of the PB and the CC on the subject and our actual practice would show that there was severe resistance on the part of the Party's leadership to reassess the role of bourgeois opposition parties, when most of these parties in practice were slowly giving up their earlier pragmatic and policy positions and moving towards the programme of Jayprakash Narayan and his resistance movement". It further stated: "The PB and the CC instead of noting the changing moods of these bourgeois opposition parties continued to emphasise the fundamental class character of these parties and their right reactionary and counter-revolutionary nature as was described in our Party Programme and further explained during the 1969-72 period when these parties were holding the banner of the so-called "grand alliance".

It continued: "The PB and CC resolutions were grossly under-

estimating the conflicts and contradictions between the ruling Congress party on the one hand and the bourgeois opposition parties on the other, while tending to exaggerate the basic contradiction between the great mass of the people and ruling bourgeois-landlord class parties as a whole".

The report adds: "The efforts made by our Party particularly in the latter part of the year 1976 in organising the Civil Liberties Convention and the second convention opposing the utterly anti-democratic 42nd Constitution Amendment in Kerala, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Maharashtra enabled the Party to play the proper role during the March 1977 general elections in facilitating the defeat of the emergency regime of the Congress Party. It is this political leverage that helped our Party to emerge in the post-election political stage as the only hope for forging the unity of Left and democratic forces as an alternative against the reactionary concept of stabilising the so-called two party system of the Janata and the Congress -- two bourgeois-landlord formations -- to rule the country mainly and alternatively".

Broad Platform Against Authoritarianism

It is on the basis of this clear cut understanding that the Tenth Congress gave the slogan of Left and democratic front and came forward for the necessity of having a broad platform to fight the forces representing dictatorship. It is on the basis of the experience gained that for the first time the Party came forward with two slogans, one of building and developing a broad platform to meet the immediate requirements of fighting against authoritarian forces and the second of building a Left and democratic alternative to the bourgeois-landlord class rule. The need for the first one arose because of the "the sharp conflicts among the bourgeois-landlord parties themselves revealing the possibilities of developing it. This broad platform should have the immediate objective of completely dismantling the framework created by the authoritarian dictatorship, expanding democracy and introducing new clauses in the Constitution putting the fundamental rights of the people beyond the mischief of any ruling party or government."

The Tenth Congress also tried to elaborate the basis of Left and democratic front which included within its perview the people belonging to the ruling party and the masses rallied behind it.

The Tenth Congress gave a clear cut assessment of the Janata Party. While it advocated joining hands with the Janata Party as an ally in the struggle against authoritarianism, in demolishing the framework of the emergency and for restoration of fundamental rights, unlike the CPI, which trailed behind the Congress(I) party, the Congress gave the warning that "all will not be faithful to these commitments. Vacillations and hesitations may occur and even treachery may be attempted. The urge for democracy, for fulfilling the promises will be rapidly obstructed by the class interests which dominate the Party by its class outlook and ideology". It adds: "Still the promises of the Janata Party are a valuable asset which must be fully utilised in the political struggle".

While rejecting any idea of strategic alliance with the Janata Party, the Party resolution stated: "The sharp conflicts for the position of state power between the bourgeois-landlord parties at the same time help the democratic movement forward, increasing its sweep and drawing together much larger sections of the people". The resolution also noted "the growing combination of the Jan Sangh and the BLD which threaten to overwhelm the party with a reactionary conservative leadership. These forces are being resisted from inside the Janata Party by the democratic and Left elements. It is on the basis of this understanding of the goings on inside the Janata Party that the Party was able to determine its tactical line at the time of its split in 1979. There was a opinion at that time inside the party that the CC was involving itself in the unprincipled squabbles of the groups inside the Janata Party and what was happening was factional strife which was not guided by any principle. The Central Committee clarified its position by saying that:

"Most of the conflicts and quarrels amongst the bourgeois-landlord parties relate to the issue of sharing political power, and that is the overriding principle. The adoption of the principle and platforms by different bourgeois-landlord parties and groups is aimed at subserving this overriding principle. When sections fell out with the then ruling Congress party and formed the Bangla Congress, Utkal Congress, Jan Congress, Jan Kranti Dal, the Kerala Congress and like in 1966-67 we did not think some lofty principles were involved in it. The CPI(M) had supported and allied with some of them with the only one overriding consideration of breaking the monopoly of one party rule in the country."

The Tenth Congress of the Party had warned of the emergence of anti-democratic trends inside the Janata Party and that their economic policies were coming into increasing conflict with the working class and the toiling sections of our population. In foreign policy matters also, there was a danger of sliding back. The government was doing everything not to offend the susceptibilities of the imperialists and was accepting the conditions imposed by the World Bank. Some of the state Janata Party governments had already announced their intention to go back on the Congress land reforms by raising the ceiling limit. The Jan Sangh component of the Janata Party had intensified their activities which resulted in the communal carnage in Aligarh and Jamshedpur and innumerable atrocities on Harijans such as the ghastly killings in Belchi. In the inner struggle inside the Janata Party, the Jan Sangh-Congress(O) combine conspired and ousted the Chief Ministers of UP, Haryana and Bihar who belonged to the Lok Dal. And they eased out ministers like Raj Narain and Charan Singh from the Central Cabinet. It was in this background that the internal crisis in the Party led to disruption and consequent fall of the Central government. The government had to resign without facing the Parliament because of inner disruption. In such sudden and swift development of political events our Party decided to support the Janata (S) and Congress(U) combine, both to save the country from the reactionary combination of Congress(O) and the Jan Sangh as well as the authoritarian Congress(I).

That was why when we faced the elections in 1980 we came out in opposition to both the authoritarian Congress(I) and Janata combination with the Jan Sangh in it. We lent our support to the Janata(S) led by Charan Singh and the Congress(U) where the Left did not contest. It was seen subsequently that whereas the rightist combination was routed, it was the Janata(S) which was able to stand up to some extent against the offensive of the Congress(I). Only the CPI(M), because of its correct line, was able to increase its strength in the Parliament as well as in terms of votes polled.

Defence Of National Unity

The new feature of the political situation which emerged in the Eighties in a big way was the threat to national unity from the separatist and divisive forces. Beginning with the Assam movement, which had chauvinist overtones in the late seventies, the divisive forces gathered momentum. Punjab became the hotbed of

Khalistani terrorists. Secessionist movements were active in the North-East including Tripura. These movements found support from imperialism and the problem of national unity became one of the foremost issues before the country. The Congress(I) and other bourgeois-landlord parties adopted opportunist and conciliatory positions in the face of growth of these forces. Noting this phenomenon in the Eleventh Congress, the Party gave a call for the Party and the Left and democratic forces to face this challenge and defend national unity. Underlying the recognition of this threat to national unity was the working class standpoint to protect the unity of the toilers and to defeat the game of imperialism to weaken India. From this point onwards, the Party had to consistently mobilise all sections of the people on the platform of defence of national unity and to directly face the extremist and divisive forces who were out to divide the working people's unity. In Punjab, Assam, Tripura and later in Jammu & Kashmir, our comrades upheld the banner of national unity with great sacrifices and struggled to protect the unity of the toiling people. The growing offensive of communalism particularly majority communalism only aggravated the threat to national unity further.

In the 1984 elections, which were contested by the Congress(I) on the slogan of 'defence of national unity' in the background of the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the bourgeois opposition parties collapsed and it was only the Left led by the CPI(M) which was able to stand up and maintain its position.

The policies of the Rajiv government with regard to national unity, its anti-people economic policy and corruption scandals rapidly isolated the Congress(I) from the people. Gradually the bourgeois opposition parties came into the fray to mobilise the people. The formation of the Jan Morcha under V.P. Singh gave a fillip to the moves for opposition unity. The Left parties in this period conducted a big joint mass campaign through the mass organisations in the form of the all-India jatha and December 1987 rally at New Delhi. There were two lines working in the opposition, one for all-unity of the opposition including the BJP and the Left and the line of fighting the Congress(I) while isolating the BJP and other communal forces. We waged this struggle firmly all through 1988-89 and the formation of the Janata Dal and the National Front minus the BJP was a partial success of this struggle.

1989 Lok Sabha Elections

The 1989 elections were held both in the background of the drive towards authoritarianism by the Congress(I) and a grave threat to national unity arising from the activities of the communal and separatist forces and the compromising attitude of the Congress. We alongwith the other parties of the Left decided to lend our support to the newly formed opposition party, the Janata Dal and the National Front. We advocated the line of defeating the Congress(I) and isolating the communal forces.

We were aware of the fact that the propaganda offensive unleashed by the RSS/BJP/VHP in the name of Ramjanmabhoomi/Babri Masjid all over the country, particularly in the Hindi heartland was communalising the atmosphere, and that it was posing a serious danger not only to the democratic movement in general but to the country's unity itself. We tried to impress upon the Janata Dal not to join hands with the BJP in the elections and the need for the formation of an alliance of the Left and secular forces which can be an effective weapon both in defeating the Congress(I) as well as in isolating the communal forces. Though the Janata Dal-National Front clearly demarcated from the stand of the BJP vis-a-vis the Ramjanmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue, Article 370 of the Constitution and the Minorities Commission, they did go into an understanding for seats with the BJP in many states.

Support To N.F. Government

As a result of these electoral understandings, the Congress(I) suffered a major defeat. Its strength was reduced by more than half. But the results did not give a clear majority to any single party. Moreover, the BJP was able to utilise these seat adjustments and the anti-Congress mood of the people to increase its strength from a mere two in the previous Lok Sabha to 86, in the background of its stepped up communal activities. The mandate of the people was not decisive, though they did give a verdict against the Congress(I) and in favour of the formation of a non-Congress(I) government. Such a government could only formed with the support of all parties opposed to the Congress(I) -- whether they be of the Left, centre or right.

The question posed at that time was why should our Party and the Left support a government which was supported by a communal

party like the BJP. The people's electoral verdict went against the Congress(I) but there was no clear majority for any single party. A non-Congress government was only possible either through a coalition of parties or with both the Left and the BJP supporting the National Front government from outside. While we were conscious of the reactionary role the BJP was playing in communalising the whole atmosphere, we also had to respect the people's mandate and mood against the Congress(I). Therefore for us, there was no question of any government being formed with the participation of the BJP. The only option was the formation of a National Front government supported by the Left and the BJP from outside. We therefore advocated the formation of the National Front government supported both by the Left and the BJP.

At the same time, we made it clear that the National Front should implement its own manifesto and that neither will we pressurise for the implementation of our manifesto and nor should the BJP do so. There were sufficient promises in the manifesto of the National Front, which if implemented could give relief to the people. Under pressure from the masses, the BJP was also forced to agree to this position. They are on record in the proceedings of the Parliament, when they stated that though they had differences with the National Front on many issues and particularly those pertaining to the stand on the Ramjanmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue, Article 370 of the Constitution and the Minorities Commission, they will not press for the implementation of their views on these subjects. We did not compromise on any question of principle vis-a-vis denouncing the BJP on the question of Article 370, Babri Masjid/Ramjanmabhoomi dispute or Minorities Commission.

This arrangement worked for some time and the National Front government initiated measures in respect of the restoration of democratic rights. I do not think it necessary to elaborate it here. But it should be mentioned that the National Front government's most important step was with regard to the relations of the Central government with the State governments. It took an attitude of non-discrimination against state governments, including those headed by the Left and also brought into existence the 'Inter-States Council', as provided for in the Constitution which had remained unimplemented till now.

Crisis On Temple-Mosque Dispute

The N.F. Government ultimately took a firm stand of no compromise with communalism on the Babri Masjid/Ramjanmabhoomi issue, which led to the fall of the government given the intransigent stand of the BJP. The role of the BJP was thoroughly exposed during their period. Concluding that they will be able to rise to power only by arousing communal passions and carving for itself the role of the defender and champion of Hindu rights, they built up a campaign on this issue forcing a crisis on the government. This crisis has also revealed the levels to which the bourgeois politicians can stoop in their manoeuvres to come to power.

When faced with a threat to national unity in the wake of the Ramjanmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue occupying centre stage and withdrawal of support by the BJP on this issue, the need of the hour was the unity of all secular forces to fight this menace and isolate such forces. At this critical juncture, the Janata Dal dissidents, egged on and instigated by the Congress(I), chose to create a crisis for the government and secular values in the country. Similarly, the Congress(I), which was demanding the stoppage of the rath yatra (knowing full well that this will immediately lead to the reduction of the ministry into a minority) chose this very moment to demand the resignation of the government. It is all the more shameful that the dissidents led by Chandrashekar, who were elected on an anti-Congress platform chose this very moment to split the Janata Dal and join hands with the Congress(I) to install themselves in power. Thus came into being a government of dissidents now known as the Janata Dal(S) constituting a small minority, with the major party the Congress(I) supporting it. In this background, three distinct formations have emerged on the Indian political scene. One that of the Congress(I)-Janata Dal(S) combine; second, of the rabidly communal BJP and the third one consisting of the Left and the National Front.

Lessons To Be Learnt

We have to draw some lessons from this rich experience of implementing our tactical line in different periods and stages. The building of the Left and democratic unity is not a straight course. At every turn in the political situation the Party has to seek allies to advance the strengthening of the Left and democratic forces. This implies the recognition that the vast majority of the people are still

divided between the bourgeois-landlord parties and the alliance and platforms that we create provide us access to those masses who still follow these bourgeois parties. Here we have to utilise effectively the conflicts and contradictions which arise within the bourgeois-landlord classes. At one level, the process has been emerging, though not yet a class split, of conflicts and fissures between the big and the non-big bourgeoisie which finds expression in the regional political formations like the DMK, Telugu Desam etc. It also finds expression in the struggle to restructure Centre-State relations in which we gather allies. At another level, we have been noting since the Eleventh Congress the conflict and strains developing between the bourgeoisie on the one hand and the landlords on the other. This also finds expression in the intervention in politics by the landlord lobby which is able to mobilise big mass of the peasantry. It also reflects in the politics of some of the bourgeois-landlord parties.

In gathering forces behind the Left and democratic platform, Left unity is vital for its advance. The building and strengthening of Left unity is not a straight course. It will not come only from the understanding at the top between the Left parties but also from the common struggles developed which draw in the working class, peasantry, youth, women and other sections. The strengthening of the Left unity will enable the greater intervention to rally the democratic and secular allies. We have to constantly review and work out transitional slogans to meet the changing situation. In such interim and transitional alliance, no party or group will necessarily be a permanent ally. Many will come and go and some will come back again because these platforms and alliances are based on agreed common issues and not on common class interests.

Strengthening of Left unity and the struggle to built the Left and democratic unity will be dependent on how the class struggle is sharpened and also the way the crisis of the system deepens.

In fact, the Party in its Seventh Congress itself had dwelt upon the need for our intervention in the various manifestations of crisis that do erupt in bourgeois politics and how the intervention should be so planned and executed as to strengthen the position of the proletariat and its allies.

Since then in our struggle to build Left and democratic unity we have been making serious efforts and have tried to make full use of the

conflicts and contradictions between the ruling classes for the advance of the democratic movement in the country and have been striving to have an understanding with them. Our understanding with the Janata Dal and the National Front parties was directed towards the achievement of this objective.

Consistent Struggle Against Communalism

As noted earlier, the verdict of the people in the last elections was of a peculiar nature. We had to take note of this verdict while pursuing our tactical line. The pre and post-election political situation was plagued with a serious danger to national unity. We were consistently fighting against this danger. It was this consistent struggle by the Left and the secular forces in the Janata Dal, against communalism, that ultimately led to the fall of the government on the issue. In the Convention Against Communalism and Separatism held at Delhi in May 1989, we raised the slogan of unity of the Left and secular forces. Subsequently, due to the right persuasion of this line, we were able to rally the major chunk of the Janata Dal and the other parties constituting the National Front behind this slogan and in defence of national unity, even at the cost of their forsaking power.

Unity Of Left And Secular Forces

In the Thirteenth Party Congress, held in the background of the ruling Congress(I)'s attack on democratic rights and its drive towards authoritarianism in the wake of its loss and mass support, and, its compromises with communal forces, we had rightly advanced the slogan of the unity of Left democratic and secular forces both in the struggle against authoritarianism and in defence of national unity. In this Congress, we were also able to formulate the programme for Left and democratic unity keeping in mind the present correlation of class forces and the level of consciousness of the people. The tasks and slogans of the Left and democratic front were clearly delineated as distinct from the Peoples Democratic stage and they were so formulated which would enable us to rally the other democratic forces, when the working class and our Party had not emerged as a force that may influence the following of the bourgeois-landlord parties.

The direction of the Thirteenth Congress therefore enabled us to

more effectively intervene in the given political situation. The results are there for all to see. The Left has emerged as the foremost defender of national unity in the country. It has been able to instill confidence in the Janata Dal and the National Front that inspite of differences with them on some basic issues there was a firm basis for working together as allies. This understanding between the two formations helps us in the achievement of the second objective we had set before ourselves, ie, isolating the communal forces particularly the BJP.

The Congress(I), the main bourgeois-landlord party and its main ally the Janata Dal(S) stand exposed before the Indian masses for their rank opportunism and least concern for national unity and contempt of the electorate.

Of utmost importance is the emergence of alliance and understanding between the Left on the one hand and the Janata Dal and the National Front on the other. The leaders of the National Front and the Janata Dal have clearly stated that they will ally with the Left. The anti-Communism prevalent in the parties of the bourgeois-land classes is on the wane. In order to gain popular support, the Janata Dal is raising the demands of the working class and the toiling millions. Apart from talking of social justice, it should not be forgotten that it is on the issue of defence of national unity that they staked their power.

The campaign recently launched by the Janata Dal, the National Front and the Left has received a tremendous response. It has created a new confidence among the working class, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the down-trodden peasantry, and the minorities in whom a new hope has arisen. It is in this process that the unity of the Left and secular forces is being forged.

While it can undoubtedly be said that this had led to the strengthening of the Left and democratic forces, it would be erroneous to conclude that a split has taken place within the bourgeoisie vis-a-vis the monopoly and non-monopoly sections, and that the latter has become a part of the Left and democratic front. For the emergence of such a situation a further development and onward march of the Left and democratic movement is needed. Given the level of consciousness of the majority of the Indian masses who are still behind the parties of the bourgeois-landlord classes, the

stage is not yet set for coming into existence of such a situation. But the conflicts and contradictions that emerge among the various political formations of the ruling classes have to be skillfully utilised for the advance of the Left and democratic movement in the country.

For the creation of such a situation, we will have to make full use of the potential of the parliamentary struggle without at the same time ignoring the utmost necessity of leading class and mass struggles and developing mass organisations. In the background of the deepening crisis in the economy and the bourgeois-landlord order, it is of utmost necessity that we raise the level of political consciousness of the masses. Unfortunately, there has been a lag in this regard. While leading class battles on economic issues, we have not succeeded in releasing the masses from the political-ideological influence of the bourgeois-landlord parties. Without releasing the masses from their influence, Left and democratic unity cannot be strengthened.

Earlier we underestimated the role of parliamentary institutions and local self-government institutions and their administration. Gradually, we realised that they have to be fully utilised in order to arouse political consciousness and for the advancement of the democratic movement.

Potential Of New Alliance

The new alliance between the Left and the Janata Dal gives us tremendous scope not only for the battle against authoritarian forces and defeating the communal and divisive forces, but also for creating awareness among the toiling millions for defence of their own interests. But at the same time we should not forget that only in the Left moves collectively can this potential be fully utilised. Unity should not be confined to joint meetings and campaigns at the level of these parties alone, but should result in united mass actions of the working class, the peasantry, the youth, students, women and other sections of our society.

The present understanding with the Janata Dal and the National Front should not be confused with the slogan of Left and democratic unity. Building of Left and democratic unity envisages a prolonged struggle whereby unleashing mass movements and by leading class

battles, a change is brought about in the correlation of class forces, in favour of the working class and toiling masses. In that process the democratic classes wedded to fighting against monopoly capital, imperialism and feudalism come together. This would be a lasting combination, which will enable bringing about social transformation and strengthening the democratic fabric of our country.

The present understanding with the Janata Dal and the National Front can help this process, but it is not the same process. It is not based on a clear-cut programme of social, economic and political transformation. At the same time, its significance should not be underestimated, because it is for the first time that a party of the ruling classes has openly come out with a declaration of unity with the Left, clearly demarcating from the forces of communalism and separatism.

Being the main force among the Left, the CPI(M) has a special responsibility to discharge in this context, without in any form giving up its class outlook and ideological moorings. In the background of the developments in the international communist movement and the reverses and setbacks suffered, this aspect will have to be given more importance, of course keeping in view the concrete situation prevailing in the country. It will have to shoulder the responsibility in developing mass movements and leading the political-ideological battle to release the masses rallied behind the bourgeois-landlord classes from their ideological influence. In this context, the concrete application of Marxism-Leninism in the concrete conditions prevailing in the country, acquires great importance. Our Party's policies, tactics and programme based on concrete study of concrete conditions have stood the test of time. That is why inspite of the severe reverses and setbacks in the international communist movement our Party was able to stand united. At no stage in the history of our Party did we either trail behind any bourgeois party and give up our independent position, nor were we blind towards the divisions within the parties of the ruling classes. This gives us the confidence to march forward in the struggle for the defence of national unity, in defence of the interests of the masses, and in uniting with the other secular and democratic forces to advance the cause of Left and democratic unity.