



COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)

Central Committee

A.K. Gopalan Bhawan, 27-29, Bhai Vir Singh Marg New Delhi 110 001
Website: <http://www.cpim.org> email: cc@cpim.org

Review of the 15th Lok Sabha Elections (Adopted by the Central Committee At Its Meeting Held On June 20 & 21, 2009)

I

The 15th Lok Sabha elections have resulted in a verdict in favour of the Congress and its allies. The Congress has won 206 seats and along with its pre-poll allies, it has got 262 seats. The BJP has suffered a decisive defeat. It has won 116 seats and the NDA has got 159 seats. The CPI(M) and the Left parties suffered a serious reverse. The Party has won only 16 seats and the Left parties have won 24 seats. Parties like the TDP, AIADMK and the JD (S) also did not do well with the exception of the BJD in Orissa.

Though the Congress could gain 61 seats compared to its 2004 tally, its vote percentage has increased by only 2.02 per cent. The allies of the Congress – the Trinamul Congress and the DMK – did well in West Bengal and Tamilnadu respectively.

The BJP lost 22 seats from its 2004 tally and its voting percentage declined by 3.36 per cent compared to 2004.

The Samajwadi Party, the RJD and the LJP came together on the eve of the elections after failing to have any understanding with the Congress. The SP got 23 seats, the RJD got 4 and the LJP could not win any seat. The SP got 23 seats from UP alone and its tally came down by 16 seats compared to 2004. The RJD got four seats compared to 20 it had won in 2004.

The BSP has won 21 seats compared to the 19 it had won in 2004. Its all-India vote percentage has gone up to 6.17 compared to 5.33 percent in 2004. In 2009 it contested 500 seats.

It is significant that the combined vote share of the Congress and the BJP is 47.35 per cent, i.e., below 50 per cent. This is actually less than their combined share of 48.69 per cent in 2004. This negates the claim that the two national parties have reemerged as the dominant parties in a bi-polar situation and that the regional parties have been sidelined. The non-Congress, non-BJP parties continue to have more than 50 per cent share of the vote.

An analysis of the voting pattern shows that some regional parties have increased their support such as the BJD, DMK, JD(U) while some others such as the TDP, AGP and AIADMK have lost ground.

Congress Performance: Reasons For Its Success

While the Congress made gains, there is no overall uniform trend across the country in favour of the party. Among the 17 big states, the Congress Party's vote share has increased in eight states, viz. Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Kerala and Punjab. Its vote share declined in nine states viz. Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Maharashtra, Chattisgarh, Orissa, West Bengal and Jharkhand. Amongst the 11 smaller states the Congress party's vote share increased in seven viz. Delhi, Nagaland, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura and Uttarakhand, while its vote share declined in four small states, viz. Meghalaya, Jammu & Kashmir, Goa and Himachal Pradesh.

The Congress party registered its biggest gains in terms of seats in Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. It more than doubled its tally in Uttar Pradesh from 9 to 21. It improved its position in Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Uttarakhand. The party lost ground in states like Jharkhand, Assam, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and Chattisgarh.

In Maharashtra, it should be noted that while Congress-NCP alliance got the majority of the seats (25 out of 48), its vote percentage went down by 3.2 per cent compared to 2004. The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) cut into the vote of the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance which helped the Congress to win more seats. In Andhra Pradesh too, though the Congress vote share declined by 2 per cent, it could win more seats due to the division of the non-Congress vote with the newly formed PRP taking 16 per cent of the vote.

1. Behind the success of the Congress is the big support it has received from the most powerful strata of the ruling classes, the big bourgeoisie. There has been a consolidation of support from this strata for the Congress. This is because under the Manmohan Singh government the big bourgeoisie has benefited enormously. The four years of high growth provided them unprecedented gains. In 2004, the number of billionaires in dollar terms was nine; by 2008 it increased to 53. The assets of the top ten corporate houses in the private sector tripled from Rs. 3,54,000 crores in 2003-04 to Rs. 1,034,000 crores. The Congress got active support of different sections of the ruling classes and the corporate media.

2. The people's concern was for a stable secular government at the Centre. They saw the Congress and its allies as more capable of providing such a government. The rejection of the BJP for its communal politics was a corollary of this.

3. The support extended to the UPA government by the Left parties for four years also contributed to providing legitimacy and credibility to the Congress-

led government. The people did not see the non-Congress non-BJP combination as a viable or credible force to form the government at the Centre. Those who wanted the BJP defeated and a secular government at the Centre saw the Congress as the only option. In such a situation, there was a trend in favour of the Congress amongst the minorities in many places and amongst sections of the secular minded people.

4. During the five years of the UPA government, the government failed to tackle the agrarian crisis. The people suffered from price rise and unemployment. There was popular discontent on these issues. However, some of the steps taken by the government helped to check some of this discontent. Steps such as the NREGA; the farm loan waiver scheme and the Tribal Forest Rights Act providing land rights to the tribal people, had a positive impact. Many of these measures were taken due to the pressure of the Left. Along with this, the increase in the minimum support price of food grains and other crops also helped to mitigate some of the effects of the agrarian crisis. Despite the overall direction of the UPA government being of neo-liberal policies, these measures helped the Congress to garner support.

5. The implementation of the Sixth Pay Commission benefited lakhs of government employees both at the central and state level. The effects of the global economic crisis which affected the Indian economy during the last months of the UPA government were not yet as widespread as to impact the earlier four years of growth and welfare measures.

6. After the spate of terrorist attacks culminating in the Mumbai terrorist attack in November 2008, the people's concern was for unity and rallying behind the government to combat the terrorist threat. The popular mood was against any efforts to divide the people as the BJP's communal platform and sectarian approach to terrorism portended. This was seen also in the elections to the state assemblies of Delhi and Rajasthan which were held after the Mumbai attack where the BJP's efforts to communalise the terrorism issue were rejected.

7. While there was alienation of Muslim minorities at the indiscriminate police action after the terrorist blasts in various places, the action taken against Hindutva extremists in the Malegaon blasts and the putting on trail of the accused persons had restored some confidence in the Congress and the UPA government.

8. The Congress also benefited from the welfare measures and populist schemes implemented by the state governments of Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu such as the Rs. 2 and Rs. 1 per kg rice and other welfare measures that helped in checking the anti-incumbency feeling. The same benefit accrued to the Naveen Patnaik government in Orissa for implementing welfare measures.

9. The Congress improved its position in the urban areas. It had made some gains in the 2004 Lok Sabha polls and this trend continued in these elections too to the detriment of the BJP which used to get more support in the urban

areas. One of the factors is the increased support amongst the middle classes. The Congress also gained more support among younger voters and women.

Defeat of BJP

The BJP's defeat has been significant because it has failed for the second successive time to win the elections.

The BJP and its allies lost ground in Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra in terms of seat share. It could improve its position in Assam, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and Chattisgarh. In Gujarat its tally went up marginally by one seat. It failed to improve its strength in Uttar Pradesh. The vote share of the BJP declined in all but two states.

The main reason for this failure is because the people have rejected the communal platform of the BJP. The election campaign conducted by the BJP was marked by communal rhetoric as seen by the virulent hate speeches of Varun Gandhi and similar propaganda by less prominent figures. The image of the BJP as a hardcore Hindutva party was heightened by the projection of Narendra Modi as the future leader of the party. The record of the BJP as the opposition party which mainly concentrated on disrupting parliament and not taking up the main issues affecting the people such as the agrarian crisis, price rise and unemployment contributed to the loss of support to the party.

An important reason for the BJP's failure is also the fact that it could not get any worthwhile ally in states like Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh and lost its long standing ally the BJD in Orissa. Because of this the BJP could not win a single seat in these three states. It benefited more from its alliance with the AGP in Assam due to which it got four seats while the AGP could win only one. The increase in its tally in Bihar should be attributed more to the popular support for the Nitish Kumar government and the JD(U).

It should be noted that the BJP could retain a majority of the seats in four states where it ran governments like Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Chattisgarh even though it conceded ground in Madhya Pradesh. The only state where it did badly where it has a government is Uttarakhand where it lost all the four seats. In Jharkhand, the BJP had done well winning eight out of the 14 seats. It has benefited from the division among the erstwhile UPA partners, the Congress, RJD and the JMM.

CPI(M) Performance

The Party could win only 16 seats in the Lok Sabha this time. This is the lowest ever figure for the Party in the Lok Sabha elections. The Party has won nine seats in West Bengal, four in Kerala, two in Tripura and one in Tamilnadu.

The Party has got 5.33 per cent of the vote which is slightly less compared to 5.66 per cent in 2004. The Party had contested 70 seats in 2004 and this time it contested 80 seats.

The Left Front in West Bengal has polled 1,85,00,000 votes. The LDF in Kerala has polled 67,17,438. Though there is some erosion, the main base of the Party is intact by and large in these two states.

Left Parties

The CPI, All India Forward Bloc and RSP have together won eight seats. With the CPI(M), the total Left tally is 24.

The CPI has won two seats in West Bengal, one seat each in Orissa and Tamilnadu. Its percentage of votes is 1.43 compared to 1.41 per cent in 2004. The All India Forward Bloc and the Revolutionary Socialist Party won two seats each from West Bengal.

Non-Congress, Non-BJP Alliance

The non-Congress, non-BJP parties had an understanding with the Left parties in Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Orissa and Karnataka. These parties along with the Left together got 78 seats. The TDP got six seats in the Lok Sabha. This is only one seat more than in 2004. The TRS got 2. The BJD got 14 seats in Orissa compared to 11 last time. The AIADMK got nine seats compared to none last time and the MDMK one. The JD(S) in Karnataka got 3 seats compared to 2 last time. All these parties along with the BSP which was called the Third Front polled over 21 per cent of the vote.

II

Electoral-Tactical Line

Nuclear Deal and Withdrawal of Support

The 19th Congress Political Resolution had noted the struggle waged against the UPA government's steps to forge a strategic alliance with the United States. It stated:

“India becoming a strategic ally of the United States would be a major gain for US imperialism. The Party decided to oppose the nuclear agreement as it was the cementing factor for such an alliance. The Party and the Left decided that it would do whatever is necessary to block the agreement.”

After the signing of the 123 agreement, the Central Committee in its meeting in August 2007 had decided that there can be no question of going along with the various steps being taken by the UPA government to forge a strategic alliance with the United States. The Defence Framework Agreement of June 2005 was followed by various steps proposed in the joint statement of July 2005 between President Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The Indo-US nuclear deal

was one of the key elements for this alliance. The Central Committee concluded that the CPI(M) cannot support a government which is forging such a strategic tie up with US imperialism. It had authorised the Polit Bureau to withdraw support at the appropriate time if the government went ahead with the nuclear deal.

When it appeared that the government was getting ready to go to the IAEA for negotiations on the safeguards agreement, the Central Committee meeting held on September 29-October 1, 2007 reiterated the decision to withdraw support if the government went ahead with the nuclear deal and it also formulated our stand on the confidence vote in parliament if such a situation should arise.

At the time of the Party Congress, as the Political-Organisational Report stated, the Congress Party had committed that after the talks with the IAEA, it would not go ahead with the deal if the Left objected, as per the understanding with the Left. But this commitment was violated. Subsequently, the UPA government decided to go ahead and get the IAEA Board's approval for the safeguards agreement. It is then that the CPI(M) and the Left decided to withdraw support to the government on July 9.

After the withdrawal of support, the Party and the Left parties gave a call for a nationwide campaign from July 14 to explain our stand on the nuclear deal; reasons for our withdrawal of support and the government's failure to curb price rise. We did conduct an extensive campaign amongst the people between August and September 2008 to explain our stand on the nuclear deal and the withdrawal of support.

The decision to withdraw support when the UPA government decided to go to the Board of Governors of the IAEA for approval of the safeguards agreement was correct and there was no other option but to do so. The question is to examine how far we were able to take this issue to the people. As many members of the state committees in their review meetings have pointed out, the nuclear deal was an issue which was difficult to explain to the people. Though we tried to link it to the overall strategic alliance with US imperialism, it could not become an issue to rally the people around the stand of the Party. In the election campaign, the Congress party avoided making this a major election issue. Nor were we able to make this an issue for mobilising the people.

Evolution of the Electoral Tactical Line

In the light of the serious reverses for the Party in the elections, it is necessary to have a self-critical examination of the electoral tactical line that we adopted. The Party formulated its electoral tactical line based on the political tactical line chalked out at the 19th Congress.

The Political Resolution of the 19th Congress had set out the tasks of struggle against the neo-liberal policies; isolating the BJP-RSS combine; fighting the efforts to convert India into a strategic ally of the United States and organising

the struggles of the basic classes and championing the cause of the dalits, tribals, minorities, women and other oppressed sections.

The resolution reiterated that there can be no united front or understanding with the Congress.

After Withdrawal of Support

After the decision to withdraw support to the UPA government taken by the Polit Bureau, the Central Committee in its meeting held on 19-20 July 2008 set out the approach to be taken for the elections.

The July CC report concluded that:

“Based on this, in the current political situation we have to work to isolate the BJP which spearheads the communal forces and also oppose the Congress which has been instrumental in forging a strategic alliance with the United States and following neo-liberal policies.

“Our attitude to the other non-Congress parties and non-BJP parties will be determined by their attitude to the BJP or the Congress. We have to see what will be the relation of the UPA partners to the Congress.”

October 2008 CC Meeting

The Central Committee took up the electoral-tactical line once again in the October 12-14, 2008 CC meeting. The Political Report stated:

“In the last Central Committee meeting, it was decided that in the Lok Sabha elections we should work to defeat the BJP which spearheads the communal forces and follows reactionary economic policies and for the rejection of the Congress which is instrumental in forging a strategic alliance with the United States and follows anti-people economic policies.”

The electoral-tactical line envisaged an understanding with the non-Congress non-BJP parties to present an immediate electoral alternative at the all India level. In the October meeting, the decision to have an electoral understanding with the TDP in Andhra Pradesh was taken. The prospects of an understanding with the AIADMK in Tamilnadu was to be discussed in the Tamilnadu State Committee.

January 2009 CC Meeting

It was in the January 8-10, 2009 Kochi meeting that we concretised the electoral-tactical line. The electoral tactics in Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu were finalised with both the CPI(M) and the CPI deciding to go with the TDP and the AIADMK alliances.

The Central Committee report formulated the tactical line as follows:

“We should call for the defeat of the BJP and the NDA alliance to ensure that the communal forces are kept out of power at the Centre. The BJP’s communal approach to terrorism should also be exposed. The campaign should attack the UPA government’s anti-people economic policies and the harmful consequences of the strategic alliance with the United States for national sovereignty. We should call for the defeat of the Congress and the rejection of the UPA in the election. We should demand alternative policies to protect the jobs and livelihood of the workers, peasants and all sections of the working people. ***The Left parties along with the secular parties should work together to make a non-Congress, non-BJP alternative realizable.***” (emphasis added)

After the CC discussions in Kochi, the Polit Bureau while formulating the public stand to be taken decided that we should make an appeal to all the non-Congress secular parties to come forward and join hands with the Left on a platform of pro-people economic policies, defence of secularism and independent foreign policy. Such an appeal was issued in the press statement after the CC meeting.

March 2009 CC Meeting

The next meeting of the Central Committee was held on March 9-10, 2009. The Election Manifesto was discussed and finalised in this meeting. Based on the January CC line, the Manifesto called for the defeat of both the Congress and the BJP after citing the reasons why this should be done. It then concluded as follows:

“The country requires alternative policies. Pro-people economic policies; provision of social equity; consistent secularism; genuine federalism; and an independent foreign policy. The CPI(M) appeals to all democratic and secular forces to support such alternative policies.

“For this, an alternative political platform is required. The CPI(M) will work for the creation of a non-Congress, non-BJP government which will strengthen democracy, ensure equitable economic development and social justice.”

Here, for the first time, the call for the formation of a non-Congress, non-BJP government is made. It states that the CPI(M) will work for “the creation of a non-Congress, non-BJP government”. The final slogan put out at the end of the Manifesto is **“for an alternative secular government”**.

Projection of Alternative Government

It is during this CC meeting that the news came of the Biju Janata Dal breaking its ties with the BJP and indicating that it is prepared to have an understanding with the Left and NCP. The exit of the BJD from the NDA was a blow to the BJP.

Navin Patnaik's decision to join hands with the Left and other secular parties gave a boost to the idea that a third front is emerging. The media also highlighted this aspect.

On March 12, two days after the CC meeting, the Tumkur rally was held in Karnataka hosted by the Janata Dal (Secular) in which the TDP, TRS, AIADMK and the Left parties which had electoral understanding among themselves came together on a joint platform. This rally projected a third front being formed with the coming together of some non-Congress, non-BJP parties. It was after this rally that, at our initiative, a meeting of eight parties took place in Delhi on March 15. Apart from the AIADMK, TDP, TRS and JD(S), the BJD also attended the meeting. Along with the Left parties, a joint statement of the nine parties was issued. Here, in line with the approach decided by us, after resolving to work together to defeat the BJP and the Congress in the forthcoming election, the statement said: "We shall work together to form an alternative government for the progress and welfare of the people of our country". This was followed by a joint statement along with the BSP on the same day on the same lines stating that we would all work together for the formation of a non-Congress, non-BJP government after the elections.

So, with the launching of the election campaign, we went to the people projecting the formation of an alternative secular government which, in popular parlance, became the third front government.

Critical Review Of This Call

How realistic was this call for an alternative non-Congress, non-BJP government? The claim was that we would be in a position, with some other secular parties coming over after the elections, to replace the UPA government with an alternative secular government.

We must self-critically look at this slogan.

On the basis of state-level alliances in Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Orissa and seat adjustments in Karnataka along with the Left-led alliances in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, we said that we would work for a non-Congress, non-BJP government. Such a call for an alternative government at the Centre could not carry much conviction. The reliability of some of the partners was suspect given the fact that after the elections they could go to any side. That such a combination would be able to choose a credible Prime Minister was also in doubt.

All these above factors show that the call for a non-Congress, non-BJP government was unrealistic.

The efforts we made to bring together non-Congress, non-BJP parties was necessary and correct in a situation where the Congress and the BJP were trying to win over allies from amongst the various regional parties. It was also correct to give the call for a non-Congress, non-BJP alternative. But it should not have been extended to the call for

formation of a government. The failure to create a credible alliance does not negate the fact that we needed such an electoral alternative.

At the same time the non-Congress, non-BJP alliance we forged in states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Orissa prevented the BJP from getting any allies in these states and this contributed to the defeat of the BJP.

Assessment of Congress Strength

In the 19th Congress political resolution we had noted that the Congress and the UPA government's support had eroded due to price rise, the agrarian crisis, unemployment etc. In the Central Committee's reports from early 2007, we had been noting the erosion in support for the Congress. This was based on the electoral reverses in various states. The Congress lost the Punjab and Uttarakhand elections where they had state governments. This was followed by losing Himachal Pradesh and the failure to get a majority in Assam. Finally, the Congress lost to the BJP in Karnataka.

This was what was summed up in the assessment in the Party Congress. However, the situation changed by the time of the five assembly elections held in November 2008. The Congress won in Rajasthan, ousting the BJP government and retaining its government in Delhi. The Mumbai terrorist attack which took place just before these elections brought about a change in the atmosphere. The BJP's strident campaign against terrorism on communal lines was rejected by the people. While we noted after these election results that the momentum gained by the BJP had been checked, we could not assess the changed favourable situation for the Congress.

This explains why the projection of a non-Congress, non-BJP alternative also could not meet our expectations.

Electoral Alignments

In the run up to the Lok Sabha elections, the alignments of various parties took place. The Congress party declared that it does not have a national alliance and it is entering into state level alliances. Its negotiations with the Samajwadi Party in UP on seat sharing broke down. In Bihar the seat sharing between the RJD, LJP and Congress failed. As a result, the SP, RJD and LJP announced an electoral alliance which came to be known as the fourth front. The Congress had an election understanding with the DMK in Tamilnadu, the NCP in Maharashtra, the JMM in Jharkhand and the UDF allies in Kerala and the National Conference in Jammu & Kashmir. The BJP apart from the NDA partners the Shiv Sena, JD(U) and Akalis, came to an electoral alliance with the AGP in Assam, the RLD in UP and the INLD in Haryana. The BJD which was part of the NDA broke away and came to a state level understanding with the NCP, CPI(M) and CPI. As against the BJP and Congress led combinations, the Left parties had an electoral understanding with the TDP in Andhra Pradesh, where there was a four party alliance of the TDP, TRS, CPI and CPI(M). In Tamilnadu, there was a five party understanding consisting of the AIADMK, PMK, CPI(M), CPI and the MDMK. In Karnataka, the CPI and the CPI(M) had a seat adjustment with the

JD(S). In Bihar the CPI, CPI(M) and CPI(ML) had an alliance. In Maharashtra, the CPI(M), CPI, JD(S), PWP and some smaller groups came to an understanding.

Implementation of Electoral-Tactical Line

The Party had clarified the concept of a third alternative in the 18th and 19th Congresses. The two big bourgeois parties, the Congress and the BJP had forged all India alliances. The effort to consolidate forces behind the Congress and the BJP led fronts was not in the interests of the CPI(M) and the Left and democratic forces. It was necessary to build a third alternative. Such an alternative can be forged only by the emergence of a common platform of policies built around the joint movements and struggles by the Left, democratic and secular parties and forces. Such an alternative was not to be reduced to an electoral alliance to meet electoral exigencies. Till we are able to forge such an alternative, at the time of elections, we will have to enter into electoral alliances and adjustments whenever required.

Immediate Electoral Alternative

Based on this understanding, we did not attempt to build a third alternative for the elections. What we sought to create was an immediate electoral alternative. In a situation where as pointed out by the Party Congress, there was a concerted effort to isolate and weaken the CPI(M) and the Left, it was necessary to get allies and to present some electoral alternative.

Finding such allies was particularly important in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu as it was here that the Party could hope to win some seats through electoral alliances. The Central Committee after discussions in the state committees of Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu decided to have an understanding with the TDP and the AIADMK respectively. In the case of Andhra Pradesh, the state secretariat was against having an understanding with the TDP and this was conveyed to the PB. The PB decided to convey its views to the Andhra Pradesh state committee. This was done in October 2008 prior to the Central Committee meeting. The majority of the state committee opined that an understanding with the TDP and the TRS should be entered into based on the all India tactical line. Hence the responsibility for the alliance with the TDP was primarily of the PB/CC based on the all India electoral-tactical line worked out.

The review of the Andhra Pradesh state committee has concluded that the understanding with the TDP has not helped the Party as the TDP has no credibility amongst the people. Further, the TDP did not work sincerely for the Party candidates and its votes were not transferred to them in most places.

The election results show that the TDP could increase its seats in the assembly from 47 to 92. But it did not inspire enough confidence among the people to gather more support. The TDP alliance was primarily weakened by the PRP taking away 16 per cent of the vote, the bulk of which came from the opposition vote.

The PB and CC had decided to go with the TDP as it had taken a firm stand in the past two years in favour of a non-Congress, non-BJP alliance. The failure of the TDP-led alliance in Andhra Pradesh and of the non-Congress, non-BJP alternative that we projected at the national level are interconnected.

In the case of Tamilnadu the state committee was evenly divided on the question of having an understanding with the AIADMK. Therefore, they decided to refer the matter to the Polit Bureau for a final decision to be taken. The PB decided that it will be better if we forge an electoral understanding with the AIADMK. The CPI had already taken a decision in this regard. The state committee accepted the PB's decision. In the review of the elections by the Tamilnadu state committee, the committee felt that it was correct to have had an understanding with the AIADMK. In the case of Tamilnadu too, one of the factors responsible for the defeat of the AIADMK alliance was the votes polled by the DMDK of Vijayakant who got 10.3 per cent of the vote even though it did not win any seat. The bulk of this vote has been drawn away from the AIADMK and its alliance.

It should also be noted that there was no joint campaign with these parties at the national level. After the trust vote, the effort to have a joint campaign on a five point programme did not materialise.

Summing Up

- (i) The decision to withdraw support to the government when it decided to go ahead to operationalise the nuclear deal was correct. It was based on our understanding that the Party cannot support a government which is entering into a comprehensive strategic tie up with United States imperialism in which the nuclear deal was as the Party Congress put "the cementing factor". However, we could not mobilise people on the nuclear issue and rally them during the election.
- (ii) It was necessary for us to enter into electoral understandings with non-Congress secular parties wherever possible and give the call along with them to defeat the Congress and the BJP. However, the state-level alliances that were forged could not be projected as a credible electoral alternative at the national level.
- (iii) The call for an alternative secular government comprising non-Congress, non-BJP parties was a slogan which could not be believed by the people. It would have been more appropriate to call for an alternative by strengthening the Left and the non-Congress-non-BJP combination that we had forged.

III

OUR PERFORMANCE

West Bengal

The percentage of polling in West Bengal in the 15th Lok Sabha election is 81.50 per cent - 3.6 per cent more than that of the 14th Lok Sabha. This, however, is 0.43 per cent less than that of the 2006 Assembly elections. The Left Front has suffered a major erosion in its electoral support. In 2004, LF secured 50.72 per cent. In 2009, this has come down to 43.30 per cent – a reduction of 7.42 per cent. Compared to the 2006 Assembly elections, the reduction is of 6.88 per cent. On the other hand, the combined votes of Congress, TMC and SUCI alliance have increased substantially. This alliance has secured 45.67 per cent (TMC-31.18, Congress – 13.45 and SUCI – 1.04). BJP has secured 6.14 per cent.

Of the 15 seats that the Left has won, 5 have been won by securing more than 50 per cent votes. Of the 27 seats won by the opposition, 16 have been won by securing more than 50 per cent of votes. The Left Front has got less than 40 per cent votes in eight constituencies.

Out of the 294 Assembly segments within the 42 parliamentary constituencies, the Left Front has majority only in 99. Out of these, more than 50 per cent votes have been secured only in 41.

After delimitation, SC reserved constituencies in the state are 68 and ST reserved seats are 16. Out of 68, the Left Front has won 34 of which in 15, the secured votes are more than 50 per cent. Of the 16 ST reserved seats, the Left has secured majority in 12 but only in 2 the votes secured are about 50 per cent. Of the 34 SC reserved Assembly segments in which the opposition has won, in 21 they have secured more than 50 per cent.

Another feature of this election is that in minority-dominated districts of North Dinajpur, Maldah and Murshidabad, the erosion of votes is less than the state average.

Factors leading to the Reverse

The reasons which have resulted in the electoral setback for the Left are many. These factors can be broadly categorised under three sub-heads – political, government-administrative and organisational.

Political Factors

Among the national factors, the main factor which influenced the voters was the concern for a stable secular government. The lack of credibility for the electoral alliance of the Left and regional parties which came to be described as the third front, prompted the people to choose the Congress as the party that could form a stable government. The third front was not seen as capable of defeating the BJP and the communal forces and anxiety about a hung parliament were added factors. Though some states were exceptions to this trend, the all India trend influenced the people, particularly the middle classes in both urban and rural areas.

Some of the pro-people policies pursued by the UPA government at the instance of the Left also helped in enhancing the credibility of the Congress. The criticism of the state government's performance on REGA, loan waiver, increase in procurement price, granting of pattas on forest land and on the minority question also helped the opposition.

Governmental Factors

In the last state conference, separate discussions were held and resolutions on tasks adopted. They pertained to the class orientation of the government, industrialisation without affecting agriculture, Sarva Shiksha, public health, Self Help Groups, lacuna in the BPL list, ration cards distribution, roads, irrigation, flood control, rural electricity, public distribution and resource mobilisation. However, it cannot be said that our progress has been impressive in these areas. In some, there has been no improvement and in some others, the problems have intensified engendering popular discontent.

The Nandigram and Singur incidents highlighted the issue of land acquisition for industrialisation. During the panchayat elections, it was analysed that one of the reasons for erosion of support in certain districts was the apprehension that land would be taken away from peasants for industrial projects. The TMC-led combine has been effectively using this issue to drive a wedge between the Party and sections of the peasantry. The Lok Sabha results indicate that they have succeeded in certain areas. In districts like South and North Paraganas, East Midnapore, Howrah and Nadia, the Party failed to win a single seat. The land issue along with other factors have contributed to the erosion of support. In these districts, the erosion seen in the panchayat elections could not be contained. The Party and the Left Front government will have to rework the industrialisation strategy. The apprehension about land acquisition which affected sections of the peasantry should be removed. Steps should be taken to restore the links with those sections of the peasantry who have been alienated.

The alienation amongst some sections of the Muslim minorities stem from various factors including their feeling of being deprived of access to education, jobs and opportunities for advancement. The Party and the Left Front government must be able to address these issues effectively.

There has been lack of consciousness within the cabinet ministers, leadership of the Party and mass organisations, panchayats and municipal bodies on the need for increasing popular initiatives and mass mobilisation and resistance to address the problems faced by the people. Instead, there was increasing dependence on the administration.

The Rs. 5100 crore fiscal stimulus package in the run-up to the elections did not have the desired impact. Those sections of the poor who were excluded from the Rs. 2 a kg rice scheme also were discontented. There have been problems in implementation of the new programmes for minorities, unorganised workers, scheduled castes and adivasis.

The role of imperialism particularly in fomenting identity based sentiments could not be fought successfully. Only coordinated activities in the political, administrative and organisational sphere can ensure that class struggle is advanced and class unity forged enabling us to resist such conspiracies. In Darjeeling, the BJP, which is in favour of smaller states gained with the support of the Gorkha Ganamukti Morcha. There is a common thread among the Adivasi Vikas Parishad, Greater Coochbehar movement, KPP, Jharkhandis and self-styled Maoists. The same tendency is provoking sectional divisions among minorities, scheduled castes, tribes etc. The results reveal partial success of our enemies along these lines in different reserved constituencies bringing the correlation of class forces in their favour.

Practically the entire media conducted a virulent campaign against the Party and the Left Front. This media campaign was acting in concert with the anti-communist gang up among the political forces and they played a role in creating a negative image against the Left Front.

Organisational Factors

The weaknesses in the electoral battle also are a reflection of our overall organisational weakness. The proof of this is our failure to judge the opinion of the people beforehand. Even after specifically identifying the weakness of maintaining regular links with the people, particularly with emphasis on our links with our class allies after the panchayat election, there was no improvement. A mere formal approach in our contacts to the people, mechanical attitude, reluctance, lack of credibility – fear of facing questions and avoiding daily contact with the people even during elections affected the electoral activity in different places.

The need for attention and intervention in discussing the problems of the people and taking up demands which can be realised has not been followed up properly. The tendency to shift the burden has compounded problems. Even if some demands are not legitimate, they are not patiently explained. The lack of ideological, political and organisational approach exists.

The Party should study the nature of class relations particularly in the countryside and the changes that have come about. This should help us to adopt correct tactics and organisational steps in order to mobilise the support

of the basic classes and the urban and rural poor.

Among the problems existing are increasing inactivity of some members, malpractices and bureaucratic attitude and arrogance. Alien trends exist in the organisation at different levels. There is continuing lack of firmness in dealing with those elements who have degenerated. Statements by some leaders in the media created confusion among the ranks and the people.

There is weakness in understanding the relationship between Party and mass organisations. The need for independent initiatives by the mass organisations and maintaining their mass character suffers from confusion and distortions. Particularly, the work among the peasantry and the rural poor and the workers in the unorganized sector both in the rural and urban areas and their struggles and the task of organising them has remained neglected.

The leadership at different levels, hundreds of thousands of activists and one crore 85 lakh of the electorate have stood with us braving all attacks, provocations and inducements. More than 50 comrades were martyred since the elections were announced. The intensity of these attacks has increased manifold after the elections. Our class enemies and their media supporters are unleashing a hate campaign to create a wider basis for launching an attack on the Party. The Party should, work to overcome the weaknesses and unitedly counter the offensive against the Party.

The state committee has decided to take up two separate discussions on governance and Party organisation to undertake corrective measures. Some immediate future tasks have already been identified for immediate implementation. This include the launching of a struggle with the slogan: 'save democracy' and 'reinforce links with the poor'.

Kerala

The Party and the LDF suffered a serious setback in the Lok Sabha elections. The seats won by the LDF came down from 18 in 2004 to 4 in 2009. Only the CPI(M) in the LDF won seats in the present elections. The percentage of votes secured by the CPI(M) decreased by 3.16 per cent as compared to 2004 elections. The percentage of vote secured by the LDF declined from 46.08 in 2004 to 41.89 in 2009. The percentage of vote secured by the UDF went up from 38.89 in 2004 to 47.75 in 2009 and seats from 1 to 16. This is a fall of two lakh votes in this election for LDF compared to the 2004 Lok Sabha elections and more than 9 lakh votes increase for UDF compared to 2004 Lok Sabha elections. Compared to the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, LDF votes increased in 9 Lok Sabha constituencies and declined in 11 Lok Sabha constituencies this time. BJP's vote share declined from 12.16 per cent in 2004 to 6.31 per cent in 2009. BJP lost about seven and a half lakh votes this time. Though the LDF got weakened in this election, its mass base has not got substantially eroded.

The lack of credibility for the "third front" at the national level and the concern

for a stable secular government had its impact on different sections of the people, particularly the minorities. Though the all-India trends influenced the elections in Kerala, there were the state-specific factors which decisively affected the elections. A section of the people who had rallied behind the LDF during the 2004 Lok Sabha elections and 2006 Assembly elections moved away from the LDF. Religious and caste leaders actively intervened in the elections in favour of the UDF.

The anti-Communist forces succeeded in weaning away a substantial section of Christian minorities from the LDF. The Catholic Church rallied other churches and openly campaigned against the CPI(M) due to its opposition to the Education Act which sought to put in place some social control over self-financed colleges. Certain other controversies also came up during this period. Though there is no erosion of our support base among the Muslim minorities, the efforts to expand our influence among them have not yielded the expected results in many areas. The UDF and the media were successful in creating some confusion among a section of the secular minded people that the CPI(M) is also resorting to an opportunistic stand in the matter of getting the support of Madani's PDP to the LDF candidates. It may be necessary during elections to get support from different parties, groups and sections of people in elections, but at the same time, we should be careful to ensure that our secular identity does not get blurred by any such manoeuvres. We should have avoided having a joint platform with the PDP during the election campaign. It is to be noted here that the UDF got the support of the NDF or Popular Front which is an extremist outfit involved in communal and criminal activities.

The Party should continue its struggle against using caste and communalism for political or electoral gains. It was this secular stand taken by the Party that helped to expand its influence among the common people belonging to different castes or religions. Any weakness in taking such secular positions should be eschewed.

While the UDF was a united force, the disunity in the LDF was one of the factors for the defeat. The disunity in the Party and LDF had an adverse impact on the people. Some of the statements of Com. V.S. Achuthanandan during the campaign had an adverse effect and helped the opposition campaign.

The public controversies that erupted in the LDF just on the eve of Lok Sabha elections conveyed an impression in the minds of the people that the LDF was disunited and was fighting each other. It led to the dominant section of the JD (S) going out and opposing the LDF. The dispute over Ponnani seat with the CPI saw public acrimony. All this created frustration and confusion among the supporters and well-wishers of the Party and LDF. As the major component of the LDF, the Party should have taken steps to avoid such differences at least after the announcement of Lok Sabha elections.

Even though the LDF government did many things for the common people, they were not adequately projected and people rallied to support, because of the never ending controversies in the leadership of the Party and government. The opponents of the LDF made use of the SNC Lavalin case to create

confusion in the minds of the people. The media used the Lavalin issue as the central issue in the elections.

A section of the media continuously carried out a vicious attack against the LDF and particularly the CPI(M). The anti-LDF media acted as the propaganda team of the UDF and tried to see that the media reports were mainly confined to three issues – Lavalin controversy, PDP's support to the LDF and disunity in the Party and the LDF. They were successful in creating confusion in the minds of the people. The attitude of this section of the media was similar to the so-called 'liberation struggle' days of 1959-1960 in Kerala. Money was extensively used by the UDF in this election.

In some constituencies, the UDF was able to rally students, youth and middle class employees in considerable numbers. Political-ideological work among the students and youth should be strengthened. The erosion among our traditional support bases in certain areas should be self-critically reviewed and proper lessons drawn for appropriate corrective measures.

The Party failed to assess the magnitude of the setback till the counting day. We were hopeful of getting more than a majority of seats for the LDF. The Party has to identify why such a wrong estimation was made. It should be examined whether factionalism has adversely affected the organisational work in certain areas.

There are instances of alien trends among some Party members which violate Communist norms. All such and other shortcomings and weaknesses should be critically and self-critically examined and rectified. A rectification campaign should be organised within the Party against all the shortcomings, mistakes and deviations. The disunity and wrong trends should be firmly put down.

Tripura

In Tripura, the CPI(M) candidates won both the Lok Sabha seats on behalf of the Left Front. In West Tripura constituency, our candidate defeated the Congress alliance with more than 2.5 lakh votes and in the Tripura East (ST) constituency, the Party led by about three 3 lakh votes. The percentage of votes polled by the Left Front was 60 per cent in West Tripura and 63.5 per cent in Tripura East.

The Left Front got an aggregate 61.7 per cent of the vote. The Left Front increased its vote by 1,73,810 from that of the 2004 Lok Sabha elections and by 1,22,266 as compared to the 2008 assembly elections. Since the increase in the total voters this time is 1,05,440 from that of the 2004 Lok Sabha polls, it can be said that a section of anti-Left Front voters have voted for the Left Front this time. The Congress increased its vote this time by 3,51,619 votes compared to the votes it polled in 2004. But it lost about 3 lakh votes compared to the votes it polled in the assembly elections last year. This also indicates that a section of anti-Left Front votes swung towards the Left Front this time. The share of the BJP vote this time declined by 9.5 per cent

compared to 2004 and this erosion has caused some gain to the Congress.

It is significant that the Left Front could lead in all the 60 assembly segments of the state and that except in two assembly segments it got more than 50 per cent of the vote. The performance of the Left Front government of Tripura has had a positive impact in influencing the electorate. A section of the Muslim minority voters who could be misled against us in the assembly elections was won over and voted for the Left Front this time. The call for the formation of a non-Congress, non-BJP alternative at the Centre enthused the workers and the sympathisers of the Party.

Andhra Pradesh

Overall in the state, the Congress won 33 Lok Sabha seats out of the 42. Though its vote share came down by 2.61 per cent, it increased its tally by 4. The Congress won 156 Assembly seats which is a clear majority though this is a reduction of 29 seats compared to 2004. The TDP polled 28.12 per cent vote compared to 37.59 per cent in 2004. The TRS went down from 6.68 to 3.99 per cent while the reduction of the Left vote is 0.53 per cent. The Congress could come back to office because the discontent amongst the people was not so acute. The inner squabbles within the four-party alliance helped Congress to win more seats. The new party, the Praja Rajyam Party, got more votes of the opposition alliance than from the Congress base.

The Party contested two seats as part of the four-Party alliance led by the TDP. The Party contested the Araku (ST) and Bhuvanagiri seats. The Party also contested 18 Assembly seats. Of this, 15 were in adjustment as part of the alliance, and three we contested independently. In two constituencies where we had adjustment, TDP rebels contested against our candidates on their symbol. The Congress won both the Lok Sabha seats we contested defeating our candidates by big margins. The Party could win only 1 Assembly seat compared to 9 last time. Our voting percentage fell from 1.84 to 1.43 per cent.

Losing all the four seats that we contested in Khammam district is a big setback as it is our strongest base. The Congress targeted our Party especially in Khammam district. It used money power indiscriminately to lure the ranks of the opposition against our candidates. The PRP split the votes in the constituencies where we contested in Khammam.

The TDP did not work for our candidates in many constituencies and in places where PRP candidates were ex-TDP men, the TDP votes went to those candidates. The TDP could not win the confidence of the people.

The organisational problems in Khammam and Nalgonda, the two major districts, came out starkly during the elections. Two state committee members from Khammam district, including the former district secretary deserted the Party after the elections were announced. In Nalgonda district, there are wrong trends and divisions in the leadership. The state review points out that some Party members were influenced by money and caste considerations. All these matters must be seriously examined and firm steps taken to eliminate the

wrong trends and the Party has to be unified on correct principles.

Tamilnadu

The DMK-Congress alliance won 28 out of the 40 seats (including Pondicherry). The AIADMK alliance won 12. The DMK-led alliance got 43.58 per cent of the vote while the AIADMK alliance polled 38.07 per cent. The DMDK polled 10.32 per cent of the vote.

Overall, in Tamilnadu, the DMK alliance could succeed because the state government's scheme such as Re. 1 per kg rice, free colour TV and other measures had a positive impact alongwith the Central government's NREGA and higher minimum support price. State government employees, teachers, transport workers, electricity employees and their families have voted against the AIADMK due to the earlier experience of the Jayalalithaa government. The minorities have also voted for the DMK-Congress alliance. The DMDK split the votes mainly of those opposed to the DMK-Congress alliance.

The Party contested three seats as part of the electoral alliance with the AIADMK. These seats are Madurai, Coimbatore and Kanyakumari. The Party secured 6,69,058 votes which is 2.2 per cent of the votes polled.

The CPI(M) won the Coimbatore seat polling 2,93,165 votes defeating the nearest rival the Congress candidate by a margin of 38,664 votes. The Party got a lead in four Assembly segments while the Congress got the lead in two. A new outfit, Kongu Nadu Munnetra Peravai, based on Kongu Velala caste secured 1,28,070 votes. This split the DMK and Congress votes by and large. In Madurai, the Party candidate came second losing to the DMK candidate M. K. Azhagiri. The CPI(M) candidate polled 2,90,310 and lost by a margin of 1,40,985 votes. Despite our resistance, money and materials were distributed to nearly 70 per cent of the voters here. In Kanyakumari seat, we were badly defeated coming third polling only 85,572 votes. The DMK candidate won the seat and the BJP came second. Here there was a clear communal polarisation with the Christian community, which is in substantial number, voting for the DMK with the aim of ensuring that the BJP does not win. The BJP candidate could consolidate a large number of Hindu vote. We could not get the Christian vote as they felt that the third front will only split the vote and help the BJP and they had no trust in the AIADMK. The church played a key role in swinging the Christian vote to DMK. In all the three seats, the AIADMK worked seriously for our candidates.

Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, the Congress-NCP alliance won 25 of the 48 seats, with 17 to the Congress and 8 to the NCP; the Shiv Sena-BJP combine won 20 seats, with 11 to the Shiv Sena and 9 to the BJP; and three seats went to smaller parties or rebels. But the voting percentage of the Congress-NCP alliance declined by 3.2 per cent and that of the Shiv Sena-BJP by 7.5 per cent. The MNS which fought

12 seats did not win any, but polled 4.1 per cent of the vote and was responsible for the defeat of the Shiv Sena-BJP candidates in as many as 8 seats.

In Maharashtra, the Party contested 2 seats, Palghar (ST) and Dindori (ST). In Dindori the Party candidate polled 1,05,352 votes which is 15.46 per cent of the vote. In 2004, the Party had polled 1,13,436 votes. There is a decline of 3.74 per cent. These are not comparable as delimitation has changed some parts of the constituencies. In the Kalvan assembly segment, the Party has a lead over its nearest BJP rival of 11,640 votes.

In Palghar, the Party has polled 92,224 votes, i.e., 12.59 per cent of the vote. In 2004, we got 1,18,090 votes. The delimitation has affected our prospects, with four of the six assembly segments being changed. In the Dahanu assembly segment, we have led with 29,015 votes over the nearest Congress rival.

In both the seats, we retained and slightly expanded our main base among the adivasi people, but we have not much support among the non-tribal sections.

Rajasthan

In Rajasthan the Congress was able to register a big victory by winning 20 out of the 25 seats, polling 47.2 per cent of the vote. The BJP got only 4 seats polling 36.6 per cent of the vote. Measures such as the NREGA, MSP for wheat and rice, loan waiver scheme for peasants and Tribal Forest Act helped the Congress. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes generally supported the Congress.

The Party contested three seats -- Sikar, Bikaner and Sri Ganganagar. During the assembly elections, we had polled around 1,80,000 votes in Sikar fighting in six assembly segments. In Sikar, the Party worked unitedly and with dedication. We came third polling 1,61,590 votes. Given the unpopularity of the sitting BJP MP, a section of the BJP including five ex-MLAs supported the Congress candidate. In the assembly segments, we came first in Dhod and second in Dantaramgarh and Laxmangarh. In Bikaner we could not mobilise the whole Party for the campaign even though there is no factionalism. In Sri Ganganagar also it was found that many district committee members did not actively work. We have to consolidate the new mass influence we have gained through our struggles. Importance must be given for developing mass organisations and Party building.

Orissa

In Orissa, the Party contested one Lok Sabha seat and 4 assembly seats in adjustment with the BJD. In the Sundargarh (ST) seat that we fought we came third polling 71,582 votes. The Congress won the seat and the BJP came second. The Party had a base only in the Bonai assembly seat and some work in 2 other constituencies but did not exist in the remaining assembly segments.

A woman candidate from the tribal community was chosen at the initiative of the state committee after the district committee failed to find a candidate. Though we could not expect to win, the election campaign has benefited the Party and enhanced the prospects for the Party's growth, which should be properly utilised.

In the assembly election, we could not win any seat. We lost the sitting Bonai seat by 3,356 votes to the BJP. The other seat Nilagiri that we hoped to win we lost by 3,056 votes. What stands out is that despite the clear swing in favour of the BJD, our Party could not benefit from it. This shows our extreme organisational weaknesses. In both the seats we have failed to build the Party and mass organisations and conduct sustained struggles.

Jharkhand

Congress and JMM faced strong anti-incumbency in Jharkhand. The former contested 9 seats and lost all except one sitting seat in Ranchi and JMM could also retain only one. The RJD contested 4 and could not win a single seat. The BJP and JD(U) alliance helped the BJP to win 8 seats. Significantly, in the Maoist-dominated areas, there was hardly any difference in voting percentage. Maoists supported this or that candidate of the bourgeois parties. Huge money power was used in the election.

In Jharkhand, the Party contested two seats – Ranchi and Rajmahal (ST). In Ranchi, the CPI(M) candidate got 21,996 votes, compared to 37,688 votes in 2004. In the Rajmahal seat which we did not contest in 2004, the Party got 27,411 votes. We have got less votes in the Assembly segments of the two parliamentary constituencies compared to the votes we got in the 2005 assembly elections, i.e., in Rajmahal, Pakur, Maheshpur, Silli and Hatia. We could not create confidence among the people about our ability to win and this affected our performance. Steps should be taken to bring in the new sections who have come in contact with the Party and to strengthen the mass organisations and Party building in these areas.

Bihar

The JD(U)-BJP alliance improved its position from 11 (JD(U) – 6, BJP – 5) to 32 (JD(U) – 20, BJP – 12). The RJD-LJP alliance has been reduced from 26 (RJD – 22, LJP – 4) to 4 (RJD – 4, LJP – 0). The strength of the Congress has been reduced from 3 to 2. Independents and others got 2 seats. The CPI(M), CPI and CPI(ML) contested the elections jointly but could not win any seat. The CPI(M) contested 5 seats and polled 1,24,207 votes. The Party got 0.51 per cent, the CPI 1.40 per cent and the CPI(ML) about 2 per cent of the votes. The declining trend of the vote share of the Left parties from 1967 is continuing.

The anger of the people against the misrule of the previous RJD government is continuing. The Nitish Kumar-led JD(U)-BJP government took certain steps to improve the law and order situation, to construct roads and other

infrastructural facilities, to run schools and hospitals properly, to provide jobs for rural workers etc. The government implemented reservations for OBCs, Most Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and 50 per cent reservation for women belonging to all categories in panchayat institutions. Special quota has been earmarked for 'maha dalits' and 'pasmanda Muslim mahaj'. All these favoured the JD(U)-BJP alliance. Though allied to BJP, Nitish Kumar demarcated from the BJP and criticised the BJP's manifesto for its reference to the Ram Mandir, Varun Gandhi's speech and publicly opposed Modi's visit to Bihar. The JD(U) got the support of the business community, middle class and large sections among the upper castes. The RJD's last minute break from the Congress and formation of the fourth front with the LJP and Mulayam Singh Yadav and, at the same time, praising Sonia Gandhi and Manmohan Singh also went against the RJD-LJP alliance. One positive feature in these elections is that many known criminals and their close relations got defeated.

The Party contested five seats in Bihar and the votes and positions the Party obtained are: Ujiarpur - 58,900 (third position), West Champaran - 23,462 (4th position), Bhagalpur - 17,087 (6th), Nawada - 14,840 (9th) Supaul - 9,718 (8th). In Ujiarpur, the Party has been able to maintain its base. In all other constituencies, the influence of the Party has declined. The Party should address the serious erosion of its support base. The poor performance in Supaul where the Party expected good votes, is mainly because of neglect of organisational work. Weakness of the independent and democratic functioning of the mass organisations, weaknesses and shortcomings in the organisational functioning of the Party are the main reasons for the erosion. The weakness of the state Centre in making appropriate political interventions at the state level is continuing. The election results underline the importance of strengthening the independent and democratic functioning of the mass organisations and strengthening of the Party organisation at all levels.

Karnataka

The BJP in Karnataka got 42.25% of votes and 19 seats out of the 28. The Congress got 6 seats and the JD(S) 3. The main reason for the success of the BJP is the caste consolidation of Lingayats (to which the CM belongs) in favour of the BJP. Hundreds of crores of rupees spent by the mine mafia also played an important role. The JD(S), though it declared to fight against both the BJP and Congress, directly or indirectly supported Congress candidates in some seats.

In Mangalore where we contested, the minorities mainly voted for the Congress to defeat the BJP. JD(S) votes were divided between Congress and BJP. We have got only 28,000 votes which reflects the weakness of the Party in the constituency. We were not able to get the votes of Beedi workers and other unorganised sections wherein our trade union is functioning. A considerable section of Party members and even taluk committee members did not effectively participate in the election work.

Assam

The strength of the Congress-Bodoland People's Front alliance declined from 10 seats (Congress – 9, BPF – 1) to 8 seats (Congress – 7, BPF – 1). The BJP-AGP combine maintained its strength of 5 seats (BJP – 4, AGP – 1). The BJP gained 2 seats and the AGP lost 2 seats in the present elections. The Assam United Democratic Front (AUDF) got 1 seat. The CPI(M) contested 3 seats and got 84,671 votes. We polled 0.70 per cent and the CPI polled 0.92 per cent of votes. A strong anti-Congress trend was evident in the elections due to state factors such as the government failure particularly to protect the life and property of the people from extremist forces. The AGP lost support among minorities because of its alliance with the BJP. The alliance with the AGP helped the BJP to expand its influence among Assamese-speaking people. A good number of minority votes went in favour of the AUDF.

Our talks for seat sharing with the NCP, CPI and the AUDF failed due to the rigid stand of the AUDF. The Party had to fight the elections almost alone. The Party's support base, particularly in Barpeta and Silchar, got eroded by the pressures from the Congress, AGP-BJP alliance and AUDF. Factional factors, inactivity of a large number of Party members and certain Party leaders, their non-political attitude contributed to the process of erosion. The Party should make serious efforts to strengthen the independent and democratic functioning of the mass organisations and taking up the immediate issues of the common people and launch agitations and struggles. The quality of the Party members and the functioning of the Party units should be improved.

Uttar Pradesh

In UP, out of the 80 seats, the Samajwadi Party has won 23, Congress – 21, BSP – 20, BJP – 10, RLD – 5 and independent - 1. The main feature of the election has been the revival of the Congress which has been able to win 21 seats and get 18.2 per cent of the vote. The Samajwadi Party lost 13 seats from its previous tally but still emerged in the first place with 23 seats. The BSP was the first in terms of percentage of votes polled which is 27.4 but it could get only 20 seats. The BJP could not improve its position and got 10 seats like last time. While sections of the upper castes voted for the BSP in the Assembly elections, this time the bulk of them did not do so. A section of the Muslims shifted their vote from the SP to the Congress.

The Party contested two seats – Azamgarh and Ferozabad. Both these seats were contested for the first time. The results have been poor. In Azamgarh, the Party got 7,088 votes and in Ferozabad only 3,612 votes. In Ferozabad, there is the trade union movement of the glass workers but no Party unit. In Azamgarh, the low votes polled in Mehnagar assembly seat where we came second in the 2007 Assembly election shows the failure to build the Party and its dependence on the SP. The poor results show how the Party's mass base has got shrunk – a trend seen in the previous two Lok Sabha polls too. There is no shortcut except patient and determined work to reconnect with the people

and the building of mass organisations and the Party.

Punjab

The Congress improved its strength from 2 to 8 seats and the strength of the Akali Dal-BJP alliance reduced from 11 (Akali Dal – 8, BJP – 3) to 5 (Akali Dal – 4, BJP – 1). There is anger among the people against the misdeeds of the Akali Dal-BJP state government. The traders, industrialists and the middle classes supported the Congress. The projection of Manmohan Singh as the Prime Minister also favoured the Congress to attract Sikh votes. The Congress votes went up from 34.2 to 45.2 per cent and the Akali Dal-BJP alliance got 44 per cent. They suffered a loss of only 0.8 per cent compared to 2004.

The CPI(M), CPI and the Lok Bhalai Party contested the elections jointly. They could not win any seat. The CPI(M) contested the Anandapur Sahib seat and got 17,147 votes. The CPI contested 2 seats and got about 39,000 votes. The Left and the CPI(M) are getting marginalised from the political scene of Punjab. Lack of independent and democratic functioning of the mass organisations and weakness of the Party organisation are the main reasons. The ability of the Party in reaching masses through its organisational and political work is declining. All these aspects demand serious attention.

Himachal Pradesh

In Himachal Pradesh, out of the four seats the BJP won three and the Congress one. In the 2004 elections the Congress had won three and the BJP one. The BJP polled 49.58 per cent and the Congress 45.51. The Party contested the Mandi parliamentary seat. We polled 20,664 votes coming third after the Congress and the BJP, despite the fact that the Party and the mass organisations do not exist in many parts of the constituency. An effective campaign was conducted drawing in all the resources. The votes polled by our Party are the result of this effort and the performance has encouraged the Party.

Haryana

In Haryana, the Congress maintained its earlier strength of 9 out of 10 seats with around the same percentage of 41.8 per cent votes. The BJP lost the single seat it had and its vote share went down by 5.4 per cent. Its alliance partner, INLD, lost 6.25 per cent compared to 2004. The single gainer in vote percentage was the BSP which made significant inroads amongst the dalit population in Haryana getting as much as 15.73 per cent of the total vote, about 11 per cent increase from last time. The CPI(M) contested one reserved seat, Sirsa, and got 18,999 votes. The CPI candidate got 13,587 votes in Karnal. We have been able to build new pockets among the rural poor because of the organised effort towards implementation of the NREGA. New contacts have been established which have to be followed up. Independent participation by our mass organisations, fund collection, production of election

materials were by and large satisfactory. The Congress may prepone assembly elections in view of its good performance. We have to make requisite preparations.

Madhya Pradesh

In Madhya Pradesh, the BJP won 16 seats polling 43.45 per cent of the vote and the Congress won 12 seats polling 40.14 per cent of the vote. The Party contested the Morena seat. The Party got only 5,537 votes which was much less than the votes we received in the recent Assembly election, due to polarisation of votes among the main contending parties, viz., Congress, BJP and BSP. The Party was placed in the fifth position.

Chattisgarh

In Chattisgarh, the BJP continued to maintain its leading position in the state winning 10 out of the 11 seats. The Congress won only one seat. The BJP polled 45.03 and the Congress 37.31. The Party contested the Sarguja seat. It was a tribal belt and our Party has some influence among the coal mine workers. The Party got 11,667 votes and stood sixth.

Gujarat

In Gujarat the main fight was between the Congress and the BJP. Both more or less maintained their position, with the BJP gaining only one seat from 14 to 15 and Congress reducing its seats from 12 to 11. There was a slight reduction in votes of both the parties. Some well known leaders of the Congress lost. Advani's margin was also reduced by one lakh votes. The percentage of voting in the minority dominated areas was low, indicating a disenchantment with the Congress's attitude towards the crimes committed by Modi. The CPI(M) contested two seats. In the tribal reserved seat of Dahod we got 29,500 votes which is almost double the number we got in 2004 which shows that the work in the area has improved considerably. In the other seat of Rajkot which we contested for the first time, we got only 2908 votes. The Party worked unitedly in both seats.

Overall Position

Outside West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, and Tamilnadu & Andhra Pradesh where we had electoral alliances with regional parties, overall the performance of the Party has been poor in the weaker states. The exceptions have been the good votes polled in Sikar constituency in Rajasthan where we polled 1,61,590 votes and the Dindori constituency in Maharashtra where we polled 1,05,352 votes. In the other seat in Maharashtra, Palghar we polled 92,224, which is less than last time. But this is due to the fact that four tribal assembly segments were shifted out of the constituency due to delimitation.

The all India political situation could have had its impact on our performance in all these seats. But we should also recognise our shortcomings. In many states we were not able to mobilise people and conduct struggles for the implementation of the NREGA and other such measures. Except in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh, during this period there have not been sustained struggles particularly of the peasantry conducted by us. We should take up local issues and conduct struggles on a sustained basis. We must examine if there has been a erosion in our working class support including in strong states and whether we have been able to conduct sustained struggles of the workers on various issues.

Even where some struggles have been conducted we have failed to develop the mass organisations and build the Party without which we cannot expect to get political and electoral support.

IV

Anti-Communist Gang-up

The 19th Congress political resolution had pointed out that the Left had while supporting the UPA government opposed all the neo-liberal policies, some of which were blocked. The Left had also resolutely opposed the strategic alliance with the USA. This, as the resolution warned, has "attracted the ire of the imperialist circles and the vested interests in the country". It also pointed out that West Bengal, the bastion of the Party and the Left has come in for special attack.

In this election, we saw this offensive against the CPI(M) and the Left unfolding. The ruling classes and the imperialist agencies have concentrated their attack against West Bengal and Kerala in order to isolate the CPI(M). Spearheaded by the Congress, all the reactionary forces were mobilised to ensure that another government dependent or influenced by the Left does not come about. In West Bengal, we saw an unprecedented ganging up of all forces from the extreme right to the extreme Left. The Maoists became the instrument for killing cadres to disrupt the Party. The foreign funded NGOs and the divisive forces based on identity politics, many of whom are linked to imperialism were harnessed. In Kerala, sections of the Catholic Church, the media and NGOs were utilised.

This offensive is continuing in West Bengal where systematic efforts are being made to eliminate Party cadres and the organisation in different areas. This election review cannot be treated as a routine exercise in the face of this unprecedented attack on the Party. We need to work out correct tactics to meet this offensive. We need to go to the people, reforge links with the sections alienated from us and we should rectify our own weaknesses and wrong practices.

Use of Money Power

The 15th Lok Sabha elections saw the unprecedented use of money. The thousands of crores of rupees deployed, the direct distribution of money to voters and use of money to bribe and win over opposing party workers and polling agents -- all these have manifested themselves in various places. Some of the worst examples of this are in Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Karnataka but it is there in other states too. Tickets were distributed by bourgeois parties on the money power of the candidates as the criteria. Over 300 crorepatris have been elected to the Lok Sabha. Money was collected for allotting tickets. In the Madurai constituency in Tamilnadu where the Tamilnadu Chief Minister's son contested against our Party candidate, door to door distribution of money, sarees and other goods was done brazenly.

Such use of illegal money is vitiating the electoral system. It will subvert the democratic process. The CPI(M) and the Left parties will be the main victims of this use of money as unlike the bourgeois parties, we will not indulge in such methods.

The Party should take up the use of illegal money in elections seriously. It must work to create a climate of opinion where people are roused to oppose such methods as an attack on democracy itself.

Media Role

The corporate media launched a vicious campaign against the Party and the Left particularly in West Bengal and Kerala. This was part of the concerted campaign by the ruling classes to isolate and weaken the Party. Some sections of the print media in different states have adopted the corrupt practice of charging sums of money for election coverage of candidates. Since Election Commission has curbs on use of posters, banners etc. the attempt is to get coverage in the media by the use of money power as well as sponsored ads on TV and in the print media. The FDI allowed in the media has led to control of certain channels by foreign press owners like Rupert Murdoch. Such channels were particularly against the Left. The Party's opposition to FDI in media on the grounds that they will have the power to intervene in the domestic political scene is being proved correct.

Rectify Organisational Problems

The review of the elections of West Bengal, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh have thrown up instances of the disturbing erosion of Party standards and communist values. Parliamentarism leading to open violation of Party norms, sabotage of Party candidates, coming under the influence of money or caste considerations; cases of corruption, nepotism and behaviour of cadres alienating the people from the Party have been noticed. Such problems have been reported in other states too.

In West Bengal such alien and harmful trends need to be taken seriously as they will harm the Party organisation which has been the pride of the entire

Party. In Kerala, the prolonged factionalism has led to various evils flourishing without check. In Andhra, some of the trends in the two strongest districts of the Party need to be firmly curbed. All Party state committees should examine concrete cases of such violation and wrong trends and take specific action to check them. Particular attention will have to be paid to raising the political-ideological level of the members to counter the corrupt influences during election time.

Overall, the need for a thoroughgoing rectification campaign gets further underlined. As decided by the CC in January, 2009, we should take up the rectification campaign document at the earliest for adoption by the CC and initiate the rectification campaign.

Conclusion

The Party has no doubt suffered a serious setback in the Lok Sabha elections. On the basis of the review conducted by the Central Committee and the reviews made in the states, we should take steps to orient the Party towards implementing the political-tactical line of the 19th Congress which is correct. The electoral reviews show that even where we have conducted struggles, we have failed to build mass organisations and develop the Party. Without doing so our political and electoral influence cannot expand. The Party should take steps to reforge links with those sections of the people who have been alienated and win back their confidence. The basic task of stepping up the independent activities of the Party should be given priority. We should always take up the issues of the basic classes and the common people for launching struggles and movements. We should take up the issues of the people at the local level to launch struggles.

The Central Committee assures that steps will be taken to remove the organisational weaknesses and rectify the wrong trends in the Party. Steps should be taken at the governmental level in West Bengal and Kerala too to meet the aspirations of the people and implement the declared welfare programmes without delay.

We should take steps for further strengthening the unity of the Left parties on a political basis and for united actions. We should maintain our relations with the various non-Congress secular parties and draw them into joint actions on people's issues.

Despite the electoral reverses, our Party and the Left have retained our main support base. Millions of people have supported the Party. We should go amongst the people, champion their cause and organise movements and struggles. We have the confidence that the Party will overcome this setback and go forward with the people's support.