

ON THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME FOR THE CPI

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CALCUTTA -- The section of the CPI [Communist party of India] opposed to the Dange leadership are now circulating for discussion a "Draft Programme" for the party. This is the political platform of what is known as the left ["pro-Chinese"] wing of the CPI and if the threatened split materializes, this may, with some modification, constitute the basic political document of India's new Communist party. The "draft programme" has, thus, immense political significance for the future political evolution in the country and as such merits a serious study by every serious political tendency of the country.

In an "Introduction" to this programme, M. Basavapunniah claims that this is the first comprehensive programme that the CPI is going to discuss and adopt in its long career of four decades; previously the party's policy was guided by occasional political theses and resolutions but "none of these documents had any sustaining character for the whole stage of the revolution" and "our present endeavour to prepare this draft is precisely to meet this long-felt need."

Structure of the Draft Programme

The structure of a revolutionary programme itself must reflect a principled, Marxist approach to the problems to be discussed in that programme. The programme has to start from a discussion of the foundation of politics -- that is, the socio-economic structure of the country -- and then pass to the most basic issues in politics, the role of the various social classes in that country; it is only on the basis of such an analysis, based on one's ideological approach, that one can proceed logically to the elaboration of a detailed programme of demands for the coming revolution. The programme must deal with all problems from a generalised and fundamental standpoint, which accounts for its stability and vitality even after a long time; factors of secondary, local or transitory importance may be discussed in political resolutions, but they have no place in a programme. Besides, programmatic formulations must be terse, relevant and follow each other in logical sequence, leading inexorably to the conclusions, emphasized in the programme.

Judged in the context of the above Marxist criteria, the Draft Programme does not completely fulfil the prerequisites of a genuine programme; it contains the elements of a programme, side by side with features that are characteristic of a political thesis or a resolution. The treatment is very often amorphous and vague; paragraphs follow each other not always in strict logical sequence; sometimes the same discussion is scattered in various sections, whereas things which ought to have been discussed separately are grouped together in the same paragraph; thus an economic analysis is mixed up with political, social and even cultural developments sometimes in the same sen-

tence. All this makes the Draft Programme appear at times irrelevant, uneven in quality, and superficial.

Even a cursory examination of the contents of the Draft will confirm this. There are eleven sections in it, of which sections V-XI are under specific subject headings, whereas sections I-IV have no captions, for no obvious reasons. The captions of sections V-XI are as follows: Section V: Agrarian Reform; Section VI: Conditions of the People; Section VII: Balance Sheet of Planning; Section VIII: Foreign Policy; Section IX: State Structure and Democracy under Congress Rule; Section X: Programme of People's Democracy; Section XI: Building of People's Democratic Front. The first four sections deal with the following subjects: Section I deals with the national and international situation that led to the transfer of power in India and the major characteristics of the present epoch with the opportunities it offers to the underdeveloped countries. Section II deals with the failure of the Indian bourgeoisie to complete the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution, despite the favourable evolution of the international situation. Section III analyses the dual role of the national bourgeoisie -- oppositional and compromisist in relation to imperialism -- and its ever present tendency to come to terms with imperialism. Section IV is mainly devoted to economic developments in India after the transfer of power.

Thus, it can be seen that Sections IV and V cover the discussion relating to the economic structure of Indian society; but the exposition is neither very systematic nor at all comprehensive. Important aspects have been overlooked; e.g., there is no information regarding the relative strength of the state sector and the private capitalist sector, no discussion of the three-five-year plans and their impact on the economic structure of the country; the impact of capitalism on the agricultural and rural economy has been practically ignored and the necessary conclusions therefrom have not been drawn. Section VII is mainly repetitious and its contents should have been incorporated in Section IV. Major conclusions should always be backed up by sufficient economic data, which is not always the case with this "draft." Section VI is a hotch-potch and, in its present form, has no place in a programmatic document; it should be replaced with a section devoted to the study of the Indian social classes and their political role. The caption of Section VIII and the scope of its contents display ideological confusion; in a Marxist-Leninist programme, the international policy and outlook of the Indian Marxists should have been elaborated in a suitable section; beyond stating certain broad generalities, this is nowhere discussed in the draft; instead in Section VIII, the foreign policy of the Indian government is analysed in detail; this can be adequately covered in the section on Indian social classes, under the role of the Indian bourgeoisie. Section IX is also redundant and its contents could be more logically incorporated in various other sections.

It is, thus, quite clear from the above discussion that if the left Communists want to build a revolutionary party in India,

based on the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, they will have to undertake a considerable remodeling of the structure of the present draft. It is likely that some of these defects are due to hasty drafting and will be rectified during the discussion stages. This deficiency has been, in fact, recognised in the "Introduction" to the draft.

Although the draft falls short of the requirement of a genuine Marxist-Leninist programme, it signifies a definite advance on the earlier political documents of the CPI, at least since the Second World War. Compared to these documents, the draft's superiority -- as regards its comprehensiveness, ideological clarity, etc. -- is incontestable. Even in its present inadequate form, the draft programme can become an ideological weapon in the hands of the cadres and the masses oriented towards radical action.

Positive Features of the Draft Programme

It is only when this programme is viewed in perspective, in the background of the CPI's political past, that the strong points of the programme come out in sharp contrast, and its deficiencies can also be understood. Every political party grows out of its past and even while repudiating this past, may often carry over vestiges of the past in the present. The draft programme, with its strong as well as weak points, its forthright class approach to some issues coupled with ideological confusion on others, its revolutionary inclination along with lingering illusions about "peaceful means" and "parliamentary democracy" -- should all be taken in the context of the new revolutionary tide in the world on the one hand and the past history of the party on the other.

From the standpoint of revolutionary Marxism, the positive aspects of the draft, signifying a unique phase in the CPI's political thinking, can be briefly summarized as follows:

(1) The draft correctly characterizes the transfer of power in 1947 as a deal between the imperialists and the native bourgeoisie in their mutual interest, under the pressure of unprecedented mass upsurges (paragraph 2, page 1).

(2) The draft defines the class character of the emergent Indian state as "the organ of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and landlords [1] led by the big bourgeoisie." According to the draft, "This class character essentially determines the role and functions of the state in the life of the country" (Section IX, paragraph 72, p. 30).

(3) Regarding the political essence of the Congress government's economic and other policies, the draft states "After independence, the ruling bourgeoisie proceeded to develop the country's economy on the basis of capitalism, to further strengthen its class position in Society" (paragraph 17, p. 6). Rejecting the idea that the extension of the state sector signifies automatically a step to-

wards socialism, it says "this planning has nothing to do with socialist planning" (paragraph 21, p. 2) and "the state sector itself in India is an instrument of building capitalism (paragraph 24, p. 9).

(4) On the government's agrarian policy, the draft opines "that the aim and direction of its agrarian policies is not to smash the feudal and semi-feudal fetters on our land relations. . . but to transform feudal landlords into capitalist landlords and to create a stratum of rich peasants. . . who can constitute the main political base of the ruling class in the countryside." (Paragraph 32, p. 16.)

(5) On the basis of its over-all economic analysis, the draft comes to the categorical conclusion "that in the period of the general crisis of capitalism. . . it is futile for underdeveloped countries to seek to develop along the capitalist path." (Paragraph 62, p. 25.)

(6) Repudiating the foreign-policy line, followed by the CPI leadership for the last decade or so, the draft sums up its position in the following terms:

"The foreign policy of any state and its government, in the final analysis, is nothing but the projection of its internal policy . . . The foreign policy of the Government of India naturally reflects the dual character of our bourgeoisie, of opposition to as well as of compromise and conciliation with imperialism. Unlike the monopolist bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries, the Indian bourgeoisie for its very development needs world peace." (Paragraph 63, p. 26.)

The draft distinguishes three different phases in the evolution of the Indian Government's foreign policy. "In the early period after independence. . . the government of India exhibited marked tendencies of succumbing to the blackmail of the imperialist camp and leaned heavily on it." (Paragraph 64.) "Later, with the debacle of the imperialist army in Korea and Vietnam, with the growth in the economic and military might of the socialist world. . . with the new unprecedented upsurge in the liberation struggle in Asia and Africa . . . began a new phase in the Government of India's policy of non-alignment" (paragraph 65). The openly pro-imperialist orientation in the Indian Government's foreign policy, which is increasingly becoming evident in the recent period, is attributed in the draft to "the increasing reliance of its five-year plans on aid from the Western countries, particularly from the USA. . . Government's inability to solve the basic problems facing the Indian people and the contrast in countries where the working people in power have built within a short period a stable socialist economy, and growth and accentuation of social contradictions within the country due to the economic policies of the government. . . (This) new phase arises from the very class character of the present government" (paragraph 68, p. 29).

(7) The draft poses the need for a people's democratic revo-

lution, and emphasizes repeatedly the working-class leadership of this revolution. It exposes the failure of the bourgeoisie to carry out the tasks of the unfinished bourgeois democratic revolution and shows that the leadership of the revolution must, therefore, pass into the hands of the proletariat. The draft links up the fate of the democratic revolution with the socialist revolution, since the proletarian leadership of the revolution cannot allow it to stop in the middle of the road.

This is what the draft says on this vital issue: "Ours is a democratic revolution in an entirely new epoch of world history, when the proletariat and its political party is destined to assume its leadership and not leave it to the bourgeois class to betray it in the middle" (paragraph 107, p. 47), and "the leadership of the working class. . . will ensure that the Indian revolution will not stop at the democratic stage but will quickly pass over to the stage of effecting socialist transformation" (paragraph 126, p. 55).

Deficiencies in the Draft Programme

Despite the above-mentioned positive features and new departures in the draft, there are also quite a large number of political and ideological deficiencies in it; some of these are of serious political significance, while others may be of lesser importance. One aspect of these deficiencies -- namely, that relating to the structure of the programme and its exposition -- has already been dealt with. Here we propose to confine the discussion to the content of the programme.

On some major issues, as stated before, the draft displays a clear class approach; but in numerous other places in the draft, the sharpness of the class approach is not at all evident; vague un-Marxist formulations are used extensively; ideological confusion and ambiguities abound and sometimes concessions are made to alien classes and alien ideologies (such as nationalism), resulting in downright contradictions in the draft. Since it is not possible to amplify all these criticisms in the present discussion, attention will be confined only to the fundamental lapses of the draft.

(1) Regarding the crucial issue of the People's Democratic state which the People's Democratic Revolution will usher in, the draft is significantly silent. Of course, the draft is emphatic about the working-class leadership in this state; at times the exposition seems to indicate that this state is equivalent to a workers' and peasants' government or even a workers' state (e.g., "This demands first and foremost the replacement of the present bourgeois-landlord state and government by a state of the working people and a government led by the working class on the basis of a firm worker-peasant alliance," (paragraph 22, p. 37), while in some other places, the draft speaks of the necessity of bringing certain sections of the exploitative classes -- such as the rich peasantry and a section of the national bourgeoisie -- as participating allies in the

People's Democratic Front, which means that the People's Democratic State will not be a workers' state. The drafters ought to know that according to Marxism-Leninism, there cannot be any other variety of state between the bourgeois state and the proletarian state and also that a multiclass state is an absurdity.

(2) This brings us to some of the glaring contradictions in this draft. In Section V, the draft has characterized the rich peasantry as the chief beneficiary of the government's legislation and other state aids and thus as the main social pillar of the bourgeoisie in the countryside; but in Section XI (paragraph 114, p. 50), the draft suddenly declares "by and large, they can also, therefore, be brought into the democratic front and kept as allies in the People's Democratic Revolution." The draft does not explain what concessions are to be given to this layer to keep it in the front and how the irreconcilable conflict of this exploiting layer with the other more reliable allies of the Front -- e.g., the poor and landless peasantry are to be reconciled. In their eagerness to enlist the co-operation of as many classes as possible in the People's Democratic Front, the drafters forget the elementary truth that the contradiction between the rural bourgeoisie and the industrial bourgeoisie is relative, while their hostility towards the proletariat and the semi-proletarians is absolute. Merely heavy taxation and high price of industrial goods cannot snap the tie between the rich peasants and the urban bourgeoisie and compel the former to become allies of the common peasants in the Democratic Front.

(3) The same kind of un-Marxist and unreal outlook characterizes the attitude, adopted in the draft, towards certain hypothetical sections of the national bourgeoisie which are supposed to have no link with either foreign capital or Indian monopoly capital, and which are, thus, expected to sympathise with the anti-imperialist and antifeudal objectives of the People's Democratic Front (paragraph 117, p. 51). It is one thing for a proletarian party to exploit the contradiction and the rivalry between the various sections of the bourgeoisie to advance the revolutionary cause, and it is quite another to build up a theory about the bourgeoisie's "objectively progressive character" (p. 51) and thus to sow fresh illusions in the minds of the masses about them. Such theories, if seriously meant and implemented in action, are bound to lead to the backsliding of the revolution and cause disillusionment among the ranks of the revolution's best friends, as they have done in the past in so many countries.

(4) In the struggle between the right and the left wings inside the CPI where the latter continually subjects the former to charges of reformism and revisionism, one would have expected in this draft a clear enunciation of the Marxist-Leninist attitude towards bourgeois-democratic institutions. Marxist-Leninists have a dual attitude towards "bourgeois parliamentarism"; while they defend, up to a point, bourgeois democracy against fascist attacks, they also defend the toiling classes against the attacks of bourgeois democracy,

since bourgeois democracy represents, despite its democratic façade, nothing but the dictatorship of capital over labour. As such, the Marxist-Leninists do not and cannot conceal their aim of destroying bourgeois parliamentarism, when the proletariat is able to establish its own, new state apparatus.

Unfortunately, the draft programme seeks to answer, in a defensive and propagandist manner, bourgeois charges of "subversion of democratic institutions" against the Communists. According to the draft, "The threat to the parliamentary system and to democracy comes not from the working people. . . . The threat comes from the exploiting classes. . . . The Communists defend parliamentary and democratic institutions. They strive to preserve and develop them further [!] and to make democracy full and real for all [?]" (emphasis ours). . . . (paragraph 88, p. 35). Coming to India's "democracy," the draft says "Although a form of class rule of the bourgeoisie, India's present parliamentary system also embodies an advance for the people. It affords certain opportunities to them to defend their vital interests [?]. . . and mobilise them to carry forward the struggle for peace, democracy and social progress." (Emphasis ours.) (Paragraph 87.) The draft does not say anything about how Marxists are to link up parliamentary activity with their revolutionary activity; as a result, this one-sided emphasis only on the virtues of the "Indian parliamentary system," as well as the unqualified statement about the Communists' loyalty to democratic institutions can have dangerous consequences, in lowering the ideological consciousness of the CPI's radical cadres and causing illusions about parliamentary democracy among the masses. This is a very serious defect of the draft.

(5) The draft also lacks clarity and boldness in facing up to the crucial question about the road to the conquest of power. "The Communist Party of India strives to achieve the establishment of People's Democracy and socialist transformation through peaceful means" (our emphasis) (paragraph 120, p. 53); and as if to counter-balance this statement the draft states in the very next paragraph, "However, it needs always to be borne in mind that the ruling classes never relinquish their power voluntarily. . . . It is, therefore, necessary for the revolutionary forces to be vigilant and so orientate their work that they can face up to all contingencies." Equivocation and diplomatic tact, it must be understood, have no place in a Marxist-Leninist programme. Instead the draft should have clearly stated that much as the Communists would like the transition from capitalism to socialism to occur peacefully, the issue of "peace or violence" does not depend on their will; past histories conclusively prove that the need of revolutionary violence arises precisely because of the existence of organised, counterrevolutionary violence. The revolutionary forces will, therefore, have to remain prepared for the worst eventuality and cannot count on the most favourable variant.

(6) The draft also deviates from the spirit of internationalism which is the very essence of Marxism. There are numerous refer-

ences to "our great country," "our great people," to the people's "patriotism" and to the need to rouse "the patriotic enthusiasm" of the masses. This undue concession to nationalism, that is to say, to the political backwardness of the masses, is alien to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism. One of the major tasks of a Marxist-Leninist party is to educate its cadres not in the spirit of patriotism, but in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. The Communist Manifesto enjoined upon all Communists never to forget that "the working men have no country; we cannot take from them what they have not got."

(7) The draft is completely silent on those burning international issues, around which a serious and bitter controversy is raging now in the ranks of the international Communist movement -- e.g., the issue of war and peace and the meaning of peaceful coexistence, attitude towards Stalin and the Stalin era, attitude towards the national bourgeoisie of the newly independent countries, nature of the transition from capitalism to socialism, together with the related issue of the so-called "parliamentary road to socialism," and the nature of the road for socialist reconstruction.

The draft declares its adherence to the two Moscow Declarations of 1957 and 1960; but this declaration of loyalty does not clarify the drafters' own outlook on the above-mentioned points of dispute. As already stated above, the draft contains some cautious and cryptic statements on only two of the foregoing issues -- namely, the road to the conquest of power and attitude towards parliamentary democracy -- but even here the draft is not very clear. The peculiar structure of the programme where there is no place for stating the international policy of the party, has technically helped the drafters to avoid these ideological controversies, but, in so doing, it has also considerably lowered the ideological quality of the draft programme. Abstentionism can never be a virtue in revolutionary politics.

(8) This is particularly true in regard to Stalin. The issue of Stalin is not primarily a matter of history or of setting certain historical records straight; it has serious relevance for the contemporary working-class movement. Stalin's theories and practices have influenced and still continue to influence, for good or evil, a large section of the working-class leaderships in the world, despite the formal repudiation of the man for the last eight years. If the theories and practices of the Stalin era are defined as Stalinism, then it becomes at once clear that while Stalin is dead, the issue of Stalinism is still very much alive. Stalinism has two broad aspects -- one relating to his method of handling Soviet domestic affairs (involving as it does the related issues of proletarian democracy and the role of bureaucracy in a workers' state, especially during the period of socialist construction) and the other relating to his method of conducting international affairs, both within the international Communist movement and vis-a-vis the various imperialist powers (this involves also a number of issues of great theoretical and practical importance, e.g., attitude towards the

imperialists, the theory of peaceful co-existence first propounded by Stalin, the issue of what is the correct international policy for a workers' state, the nature of the revolution in a capitalistically underdeveloped country with the following triple theories -- Stalin's theory of revolution by stages, Dimitrov's theory of a "bloc of four classes" and Mao Tse-tung's theory of People's democracy, etc., etc.).

A proletarian party has to clarify its stand in regard to two basic issues, raised by Stalinism today, that is, whether it chooses the over-centralized, bureaucratic road or the road of proletarian democracy, during the period of socialist construction; and secondly, whether in its revolutionary activity, it is going to limit the growth of the revolution by imposing artificial barriers on it on the basis of the theory of revolution by two stages (first democratic, then socialist), or, to develop the revolution uninterruptedly, from its lowest to the highest stage, on the basis of its inner drive and potentialities and not on the basis of any theoretical schemata.

The draft has implicitly rejected the Stalinist schemata -- about revolution by stages, but on the other issue of Stalinism -- bureaucracy or proletarian democracy? -- the draft maintains a studied silence. This abstentionism cannot but affect the ability of the draft to attract at least the advanced section of the working-class cadres and even more, the radicalized section of the intelligentsia.

An Over-all Assessment of the Draft Programme

Applying the strict standard of Marxism-Leninism, the draft programme, in its present form, can be regarded as a centrist programme, standing midway between reformism and proletarian revolution.

Some of the ideological confusion in the draft is undoubtedly due to the burden of inertia, to the old mistaken policies of the CPI and the ideological heritage of the Stalin era. The attitude towards a section of the national bourgeoisie and the rich peasantry as prospective allies in the People's Democratic Front and vagueness about the class character of the People's Democratic State come under this category.

At the same time, the silence of the draft on the issues involved in the Moscow-Peking controversy as well as its equivocal position on some other issues are partly due to the inability of the drafters to come to any definite conclusion as yet and partly due to the existence of various ideological groupings among the anti-Dange wing.

It would be incorrect to view the draft as a finished, static and rigid document or to assess its political significance merely in terms of the past political thinking or ideological affiliation of the drafters.

The draft is an index of the current phase of thinking of the section of the CPI sponsoring it, which in turn is a by-product of the turmoil in the Indian political scene as well as of the crisis in the international Communist movement.

Further maturing of this crisis in the national and international sphere will undoubtedly cause this section of the CPI to undergo further evolution and its programmatic stand is also bound to evolve in keeping with it.

The gradual deepening of the process of world revolution in all its forms -- such as the destruction of colonialism, the conversion of anti-imperialist liberation struggles steadily into social revolution, the universal tendency towards social ownership of the means of production and the irrepressible urge for more and more democracy for the toiling people in all countries -- all these will surely exert their healthy influence on the militant cadres of the left CPI. Under this impact, they will be impelled towards a genuine revolutionary orientation at least on all the major issues. The developing class struggle will compel them to test out many of their old theories and hypotheses and to eliminate the deficiencies in their present thinking. The present draft programme will then be regarded as a passing episode in this process of evolution.

The anti-Dange wing of the CPI, or more precisely its left section, has already become a major factor in our national politics. The first requisite of a revolutionary party is its capacity to resist the pressure of its "own" bourgeoisie; the left CPI has unmistakably demonstrated this capacity on a mass scale during the worst phase of nationalist hysteria in this country. To those who are acquainted with the history of the Communist parties of various countries, the surrender of a major section of the CPI to the Indian bourgeoisie will not cause much surprise; but what appears to them also as a new and very encouraging development is the refusal of a significant section of this party to kow-tow to this class-collaborationist line. The anticapitalist stand of the left CPI and its link with the masses and the radicalized youth, coupled with its general militancy and revolutionary inclination -- for the first time opens up, against the background of the revolutionary world, the prospect of a mass, revolutionary Marxist party emerging in India in the foreseeable future. No revolutionary Marxist in India can look upon this phenomenon as a bystander. Whether he functions inside the CPI or outside, he has a duty to try to influence this process in such a manner that the weapon of the coming Indian revolution -- a mass party, based on the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and tested through a series of serious class combats -- can be shaped out with a minimum wastage of time.