

The C P I (M) Election Manifesto

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THE CPI(M) Election Manifesto runs into 32 pages. Hence it is not possible to review it in detail in a short article.

The Manifesto says that "the great goal of Peoples' Democracy leading to socialism cannot be achieved within the framework of the present bourgeois-landlord Constitution". So it urges the people to develop "mass sanctions to scrap the present Constitution and replace it by one enshrining the sovereignty of the people".

What strikes one is the liberal lamentations over the failings of the Constitution. In vain does one search for an exposition of its class character though it has been characterised as a "bourgeois-landlord Constitution". A few stray lines from the Manifesto: "The Fundamental Rights are now *reduced* to sanctity of private property". "Freedom of the Press *really has meant* freedom of the Goenkas, Tatas, Birlas" etc. "A public *bonfire* is being made of all the Fundamental Rights." "The Centre *uses its hold* over the all-India cadre of the bureaucracy to over-ride the elected Ministers." In the name of Independence of the right of the judiciary to interpret the Constitution, "*unheard of powers* are claimed by public officials paid from the common treasury" etc (italics added). As if all these acts are new and are occurring only in case of the Indian Constitution. It is well known to Marxists that all the bourgeois constitutions, including the Indian Constitution, bear a dual character in order to conceal the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. As all bourgeois constitutions are two-sided in character, this can be used by both conservative-reactionary and progressive forces. Marx said of the French Constitution of 1848 that "every one of its provisions contains its own antithesis—utterly nullify-

ing itself." The Indian Constitution also, with its beautiful, high-sounding preamble and with some provisions granting civil liberties and rights, followed by restrictive and nugatory provisions and prerogatives, has both progressive and reactionary aspects and "contains its own antithesis". Marxist-Leninists do not lament, like liberals, over "these failings", as these are not really human failings but the manifestation of class character. That is why it is necessary to expose the hypocrisy and duality of bourgeois constitutions and at the same time utilise some of their provisions as weapons against the bourgeoisie. Instead of exposing the Constitution from the viewpoint of the proletariat the Election Manifesto of the CPI(M) demands of the "bourgeois-landlord" government that the concept of the role of the court and its organisations be completely changed. A thorough reorganisation of the judiciary by replacing those who are *demonstrably prejudiced* in favour of the vested interests by those who are committed to rapid changes in the socio-economic set up in the country is advocated. "*Courts must be deprived of all powers* to set at naught legislation in regard to removal of social injustice, inequality and oppression."

Ultimately the CPI(M) warns the people that "unless the economic and political power of the capitalist and landlord classes is attacked (only attacked?), *unless the masses are able to secure their demands, the way to real freedom and democracy will not open*". (emphasis added). The demand of the masses must be secured first in order to open the floodgates of "freedom and democracy"! And that is perhaps why the advice is given that the "economic and political power of the capitalist and landlord classes" should be "attacked" not overthrown, to secure the demands first and thus "open

the way to real freedom and democracy". This is nothing but the advocacy of structural reform of Togliatti, the late arch-revisionist of Italy.

The immediate demands are put before the people in a way as if, by realising the proposed "profound reforms" of the Constitution envisaged in the Election Manifesto the CPI(M) would be able to change the present power grouping of the "faithful followers" of imperialism and decidedly stop "the bankrupt policy of the capitalist path" which has reduced the country to the position of a beggar going all over the world for "aid" and on such terms as no self-respecting nation can accept. Of course, the Election Manifesto remained spectacularly silent as to which anti-capitalist path it will follow after the realisation of immediate demands through structural reforms. Would it be a "non-capitalist path" as was suggested by Rubinstein, the Russian revisionist, or the "socialist path" of the CPI(M) variety! The socialist path of Marxism-Leninism definitely rejects any anti-capitalist or non-capitalist path within the "reformed" or unreformed bourgeois constitution and bourgeois dictatorship.

The CPI(M) further "hopes" that the people of all parties "would see that unless a complete break from the present policies is made, the nation's economy, political and cultural life and all those values which we treasure are in danger of being submerged in the barrage launched against it *by the imperialist powers and their faithful followers in the country*." (emphasis added). Thank God! At last the "independent industrial bourgeoisie" of the Burdwan Plenum has become "faithful followers" of "the imperialist powers". One step more, comrades! From "faithful followers" to "willing servants" will, undoubtedly, ease the situation.

The Cat is Out

How is this "complete break from the present policies" to be made? Perhaps it will not be amiss to stress here that our ruling classes are not only the victims of imperialism but are also their willing servants. As such, "complete break from the present policies" is only possible by the political, organisational, and military defeat of the ruling classes whose interests are quite contrary to those of the Indian people as a whole. The CPI(M) on the contrary, thinks that provided a majority in Lok Sabha and Bidhan Sabhas is achieved, it would be possible to "break" "completely from the present policies" and "enshrine" "the real sovereignty of the people in place of the sovereignty of the vested interests".

How simple! How easy! Of course, to our great relief the CPI(M) "wants to assure the people that everyone of its candidates if elected, either to the Lok Sabha or to the State Legislatures, will fight for these policies and that the Party organisation outside will supplement this fight inside Parliament and State legislatures, by a powerful mass movement outside" (emphasis added).

So long we have been taught by the authorities of Marxism-Leninism that participation or non-participation in election and parliamentary struggle, under no circumstances, is independent of the main form of struggle of the day. The form of utilisation of parliament and parliamentary struggle must bear an auxiliary character, and be entirely subordinated to the task of the main form of the struggle of the day. But now the CPI(M) assures us that "the Party organisation outside will supplement" the parliamentary fight" by a powerful mass movement outside"! It means that the "mass movement outside" will remain subordinated to the task of strengthening the hands of the parliamentarians. It means that the mass struggle outside will bear an auxiliary character while the parliamentary struggle inside will bear the principal character.

To demand and assure "powerful

mass movements" is, of course, a good thing and one should feel happy about it. But the pity is that the CPI(M) leadership looks at mass movement as a supplementary movement to strengthen the hands of the parliamentarians. The masses raise demands, within the limitations of parliamentarism, and then Parliament satisfies them, such is the formula of mass struggle and class struggle of the CPI(M). One may most reasonably ask: what difference is there between the CPI(M)'s formulas concerning mass movement and those of the CPI and other parliamentary parties?

The experiences of Kerala and West Bengal proved beyond doubt that the powers of the bourgeois Lok Sabha and Bidhan Sabhas are given by the bourgeoisie themselves. Owing not only to their relationship to the people, but also to the complex mutual relations within the various groups of the bourgeoisie themselves, they are forced to have some of their policies passed through parliament and State legislatures, where various cliques haggle for power. The extent of the power to be given to the Lok Sabha or Bidhan Sabhas is decided by the bourgeoisie according to their own interests. No matter how much power the bourgeoisie allow, parliament can never become the real organ of power of the bourgeois state. This is ABC of Marxism. Yet the Election Manifesto of the CPI(M) boastfully says, "remaining loyal to the people, standing firm against the exploiting classes, our Ministries boldly declared that the police would not be used to suppress the toilers; they implemented this promise and gave every protection to the toiler's struggle" (emphasis added), while remaining silent about the High Court judgment and "their Ministers" docile acceptance of the punishment on the very issue of not detailing the police force against the "toilers' movement". What does this boast mean? Unpleasant facts like Naxalbari, Gopiballavpur, Debra and other things apart, it means that a false and illusory idea is being purposely encouraged that everything "progressive"

is possible through the bourgeois Lok Sabha and Bidhan Sabhas provided there is will and determination, provided there is mass movement. It means suppression of the truth that the real organ of power of the exploiting classes, is not parliament, but the bureaucratic, military and police apparatus. If you do not make the people conscious of the real organs of power of the enemy, taking advantage of each and every single day-to-day event then you keep the people really unconscious about the necessity of properly equipping themselves and there is no difference between the CPI(M) and the revisionists.

Elections

The CPI(M) Election Manifesto urges the people to vote them to power. Undoubtedly wars as well as elections bring people of all sections into the vortex of politics. One of the most direct political approaches the communists can make to the people is an electoral appeal at every level. People do not vote for revolution, nor are they urged to vote for revolution even when they are deeply dissatisfied with existing conditions. Parliamentarians and constitutionalists urge the people to vote either *in protest* against the "misdeeds" of the existing government or for *specific reforms*. This is what we call the politics of keeping the people within the parliamentary precincts. Communists take part in the parliamentary struggle as one of the methods of legal struggle, which the working class should *utilise in certain conditions*. In certain conditions communists do take part in government or form a Ministry, in certain other conditions they urge the people to boycott elections and disperse parliament. As such the question of participation or non-participation in elections is not a question of principle for the communists but one of tactics, of practical expediency. There cannot

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be any hard and fast line in this matter. The question must be approached from the point of view of living facts of the situation prevailing at a particular time.

What are the living facts today? The class struggle in almost every country of Asia, Africa and Latin America has either already entered or is entering the phase of civil war; the deep and widespread economic and political crises are beyond solution by palliatives; the contradictions among the ruling classes and the imperialists are acute; the centre of gravity of political life *as a whole* has completely and finally gone beyond the limits of parliament; parliament today can in no way serve a struggle for reform, for improving the lot of the people; it is an epoch when the revolutionary initiative is in the hands of the people and the tide of revolution is rising. In this period to fight for petty reforms for improving the lot of the people in the assemblies and parliament, to make parliament an arena of struggle does mean not only creating illusions in the minds of the people that a peaceful development of revolution is possible since "our Ministers" are there, but also means turning the political struggle for capturing power into sheer economism. In this period, Communists *may* detail its "scouting party" in the assemblies and parliament—which is the enemy camp—to obtain information about the enemy's weak and strong sides to utilise the contradictions of the enemy in order to facilitate the destruction of parliamentarism itself. In this period, communists must not take the responsibility of policy-making by way of accepting or forming Ministries.

The CPI(M) tries to draw a parallel and cite the analogy of the Popular Front governments in France and elsewhere, of the directives of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International. That was a period when the working class, due to the betrayal of the Social Democrats and failure of the Communists, had lost the initiative to the reactionaries, when even a section of the bourgeoisie had

come in open opposition to the reactionary section of the bourgeoisie and joined hands with the working class. It was a *policy of detour*, going one step back, to re-seize and snatch the initiative from the hands of reactionaries and then to go forward two steps. But, now the time is quite different. The initiative is now in the hands of the people, and reactionaries are on retreat.

We should like to ask the CPI(M) if they would be able to: (i) take over the closed and badly managed factories; (ii) slash down the soaring prices; (iii) tackle the problems of galloping inflation, land-hungry peasants and restive unemployed youth. All these are the direct effect of the colonial and neo-colonial policies of our ruling classes. We are afraid, the CPI(M) would not be able to solve any of these problems and they know it. Still they promise to their voters that they are in a position to solve the two major maladies i.e., unemployment and soaring prices. What will be the consequences? Overburdened with misery and poverty, disappointed with their false promises, the people will resort to independent and spontaneous action. Undoubtedly the people will raise demands and will try to implement those demands themselves. Would the CPI(M) not then be "forced", reluctantly or otherwise, to restrict those mass movements, as these, instead of "supplementing" the parliamentary struggle and strengthening the hands of their ministers and parliamentarians, will pave the way for the destruction of parliamentarism itself? Are they prepared to take the responsibility of policy making and thereby of the numerous crimes of suppression of the people's spontaneous and organised movements that would be perpetuated by the bureaucracy, the police and military? Since they claim a share in policy-making, they would not be exonerated from the charges of committing crimes on the people.

Marx in one of his letters to Danielson wrote: "To delude others and by deluding them to delude yourself—this is: *Parliamentary wisdom* in a nutshell." How prophetic!