

The Character of the Indian Bourgeoisie

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The Central Committee of the CPI(M) has recently adopted in its session held in Madurai {August 18-27) a long-winded resolution viz. "Divergent views between our Party and the CPC on certain fundamental issues of Programme and Policy." The resolution has two sections—the first one relates to the issues of programme and tactical line, while the second deals with the issue of the "code of fraternal relations" between fraternal parties.

There are quite a few instances in both the sections where the Chinese viewpoint has been presented in a distorted manner. Not only that, instances are there where the Chinese viewpoints have been misquoted. While the entire resolution has to be subjected to criticism, the scope of the present article is confined only to the question of the character and role of the Indian bourgeoisie.

The Programme adopted at the Seventh Congress of the CPI held in Calcutta says:

"The other broader sections of the national bourgeoisie which are either having no links altogether with foreign monopolists or having no durable links, which are not by themselves monopolistic and suffer at their hands in a number of ways, are objectively interested in the accomplishment of the principal tasks of the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist revolution. This stratum of the bourgeoisie will be compelled to come into opposition with the state power and can find a place in the people's democratic front." (Para 106, pp. 46-47)

So, it becomes evident that the national bourgeoisie of India "will be compelled to come into opposition with the state power". Who then control the state machine? The Programme says; that the present Indian state is "the organ of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and the landlords, led by the big bourgeoisie, who are increasingly collaborating with foreign financial capital in pursuit of the capitalist path of development." (Para 56, p. 23.)

We can sum up from the above two statements of the Programme that the "Marxist" leadership has correctly divided the Indian bourgeoisie into two sections, namely, the big bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. The first statement, with which we have no difference, defines the character of the national bourgeoisie. But what about the big bourgeoisie? The Madurai resolution says: "Hence our programme states that the present Indian Government is a bourgeois-landlord Government led by the big bourgeoisie which is compromising and collaborating with foreign monopoly capital. It further observes that this big bourgeoisie is, by its nature, counter-revolutionary, inimical to the people...." (p. 5).

According to the "Marxist" leadership, the character of the big bourgeoisie of India is that—

(1) it is increasingly collaborating with foreign financial capital in pursuit of the capitalist path of development;

(2) it compromises with imperialism;

(3) it is by nature counter-revolutionary;

(4) it is inimical to the people.

Now let us examine how the Chinese Communist Party analyses the character of the Indian big bourgeoisie. Let us look at the Chinese viewpoint as presented by the "Marxist" leadership.

According to them, the Chinese Party "maintains that the Indian big bourgeoisie is a parasitic class fostered by British imperialism, that it represents the comprador, bureaucratic capital in India, and that the Congress Government acts as the chief instrument and the main mouthpiece of this comprador, bureaucratic monopoly capitalist class." (Resolution, p. 3).

The “Marxist” leadership, of course, differs with this assessment by the Chinese Party, because—as they say—“But the fact to be noted here is that, it is the industrial big bourgeoisie which, today, has emerged as a powerful factor holding the leading position in the new state and government, and not the comprador element.” (Ibid, p. 5).

The "Marxist" leadership does not agree with the view that the reactionary Indian state is led by the parasitic, comprador bourgeoisie; according to them, the leaders of the Indian state are the very powerful industrial bourgeoisie.

What is the difference between the comprador bourgeoisie and the industrial bourgeoisie?

Before going into this we should at first know what is actually the Chinese viewpoint. This is necessary, because the “Marxist” leaders have presented the Chinese viewpoint regarding the Indian big bourgeoisie in a distorted manner. The Chinese viewpoint is, in brief, that the main and basic feature of India’s big bourgeoisie is their comprador character in spite of the fact that certain elements of the industrial bourgeoisie are present among them.

Now let us consider the difference between the industrial and the comprador bourgeoisie.

The industrial bourgeois are they

(1) who try to industrialise the country and, in particular, try to build up heavy and machine-building industry ;

(2) who are self-reliant and take measures to create capital for the industrialisation within the country and do not depend on foreign capital for the same;

(3) who create their own market for purchasing raw materials for industry and for selling their manufactures and export more industrial goods than agricultural products to the world market.

In other words, the industrial bourgeoisie plays a healthy positive role in building up an independent national economy.

On the other hand, the comprador bourgeois are they,

(1) the growth of whose capital and trade depends on imperialism and imperialist assistance and, as such, they are unable to do away with foreign monopoly domination and ownership in the main branches of national economy and to build up an independent national economy;

(2) whose dependence on imperialist capital makes them build up, a few scattered enterprises apart, basically and mainly only such industrial enterprises that can assist in selling the products of the imperialist capital and facilitate the industrial expansion of the latter;

(3) who oppose the liquidation of feudal relations of production in the countryside because the perpetuation of feudalism there proves to be extremely profitable to the imperialists, who want our countryside to continue as a market for supplying raw materials to them;

(4) who, because of their abject dependence on imperialist capital and because their interests are basically and mainly interwoven with those of the imperialists, are ever eager to protect imperialist vested interests and, as such, prove themselves to be the main obstacle in the path of building an independent national economy.

In other words, the parasitic, comprador bourgeoisie does not play any positive role whatsoever in the economic, social and political life of the nation. Their role is basically and mainly a negative one.

What are the effects of a parasitic comprador economy on the social life? These are:

Exploitation and looting by foreign capital, political chaos, economic bankruptcy, unusual intensification of misery and hardship in the life of the people, and social and moral degradation.

One has only to compare this with the reality of the social, economic and political life in India during the last twenty years to realise whether the big bourgeoisie of India is parasitic or

industrial. Supposing the Indian big bourgeoisie is industrial, not parasitic, what prevents them from building up an independent national economy? And if they can build up such an economy why not call them national bourgeoisie? Being Indian does not necessarily mean being national in character. Only such sections of the bourgeoisie, whose hopes and aspirations, aims and interests, are concurrent with those of the nation, can be called national bourgeoisie. The interests of the big bourgeoisie are opposed to the national interests and this fact compels even our Marxist leaders to concede that the big bourgeoisie is by nature counter-revolutionary and inimical to the people. What makes them declare then that the character and role of the Indian big bourgeoisie are the same as those of an industrial bourgeoisie? How can the "Marxist" leaders get over this glaring self-contradictory position of theirs? If, as they assert, the big bourgeoisie is so powerful, why should it then increasingly submit to foreign finance capital for industrialisation?

To reconcile these contradictions between the real character and role of the big bourgeoisie on the one hand and its character and role as imagined by themselves on the other, the "Marxist" leaders have spun out an absurd theory whose mischief-making potentiality is great. This 'theory' will be taken up for criticism in a later article.

However, this theory of the "Marxist" leaders which attempts to prove that the big bourgeoisie is industrial bourgeoisie is neither new nor original. It was M. N. Roy and Abani Mukherjee who opposed Lenin's colonial thesis in the Communist International and stressed the industrial nature of the Indian big bourgeoisie. Roy's theory of 'de-colonisation' has deservedly earned a notoriety in the history of the international communist movement. Comrades who are interested in the history of the communist movement may go through the book, *India in Transition*, written by Roy and Mukherjee and find out for themselves how well the Madurai Resolution of the "Marxists" fits in with the theory fathered by Roy and Mukherjee.

One may ask of the "Marxist" leadership, if, as you claim, the Indian big bourgeoisie is industrial in character and if, as you say, they have persisted along the path of capitalist development all these twenty years and are still continuing along that path, what makes you give the slogan for an anti-feudal, anti-imperialist People's Democratic Revolution instead of a Socialist revolution?

Now let us find out how deep is the colonial, that is, the parasitic and comprador nature of our economy.

According to official statistics, 97 per cent of India's oil, 65 p. c. of rubber, 62 p. c. of coal, 73 p. c. of mining, 90 p. c. of match industry, 89 p. c. of jute and 86 p. c. of tea are in the hands of foreigners. Of the total foreign capital investment, 64 p. c. is British and 27.6 p. c. is U. S. (including World Bank's investment). Indian capital thrives only on the basis of and with the assistance of this foreign capital. It is, therefore, evident that the character of Indian capital is nothing but parasitic. In its attempt to hide the existence and real face of foreign imperialism, the parasitic section of the Indian bourgeoisie has resorted to establishing joint enterprises with imperialist capital. Because, in certain cases, the Indian bourgeoisie happens to hold more than 50 per cent of the shares of such enterprises, our "Marxist" leaders have jumped to the conclusion that the Indian bourgeoisie is not parasitic but only collaborates with imperialism. Monopolists like Tata, Birla, Dalmia, Jain, Shriram, J. K., Martin Burn, Kirloskar etc. are the initiators of such joint enterprises. The fact that the Indian bourgeoisie holds more than half of the shares in some such joint enterprises does not in any way give them decisive control over them. On the contrary, their parasitic and subservient character is clearly evident even in such joint enterprises. As is known to all, share capital is of two types—ordinary and preference. The

voting right is exclusively reserved for the holders of the ordinary shares while the holders of preference shares, who have no voting right, are entitled to receive only a pre-determined portion of the profit. The foreign imperialists distribute most of the preference shares among their Indian counterparts, keeping the ordinary shares for themselves. In this way, they exercise control over the capital and the policy. During the period from 1960-61 to 1965-66 the Controller of Capital Issues approved investment of new capital in 162 cases, in 99 per cent of which, foreign monopoly capital held between 50 and 100 per cent of the shares.

The existence of foreign imperialist capital and the infiltration of fresh imperialist capital are throttling the development of national industry, particularly, heavy industry and exposing ever more clearly the parasitic and subservient character of the nation's economy. In spite of this, we are asked to believe in the fairy-tale that our ruling class is the industrial bourgeoisie!

In the recent period, most of the foreign capital investments have been in industries like cigarette, sugar, soap-making, pharmaceuticals etc. which are most profitable.

We are told that considerable development of industry has taken place in the state sector, which, we are assured, is serving as an instrument for building up an independent national economy. The reality is, of course, different and we find that in this vaunted state sector also, the foundation of a parasitic, subservient, bureaucratic and colonial economy is being gradually laid.

The *Economic Times* of July 11, 1964, wrote: "It is reported that the Government of India has appealed to the U. S. businessmen to invest in this country at least 300 million dollars annually (i.e. 150 crores of rupees). The present rate of annual investment of private U. S. capital is 60 million dollars (i.e. 30 crores of rupees), The Government of India has requested them to increase this rate five-fold." [Retranslated from Bengali.—Ed]

The organ of the U. S. monopoly capital, the *Wall Street Journal*, wrote that the Government of India has given the following guarantees to tempt U. S. capital. They are:

- (1) 10 per cent rebate and abolition of super-profit tax;
- (2) capital and equipments to the tune of Rs. 25 lakhs can be installed for expansion of factories for which no permission from the Government will be required. The previous limit was Rs. 10 lakhs;
- (3) price control will be lifted from important industrial products;
- (4) special measures will be taken to exempt Indian companies from the existing tax on income from exports.

This is how, we are told, our rulers, the 'industrial' bourgeoisie, are attempting to build up an independent national economy and to consolidate their own class position *vis-a-vis* imperialism. This is, indeed, a novel way of doing this! The truth is, it is the way that precisely suits the interests and aspirations of the parasitic and subservient bourgeoisie and certainly not those of the industrial bourgeoisie, that is, national bourgeoisie.