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*Review Report of the Implementation  
of the Political-Tactical Line  
of 19th Congress\**

The Political Resolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress had set out four major tasks to be taken up in the coming period. They are:

“(i) The Party should ceaselessly struggle to defend national sovereignty, resist the neo-liberal policies and defend the interests of the working people; it should work for alternative policies.

“(ii) The Party should continue the efforts to isolate the BJP-RSS combine who spearhead the communal forces.

“(iii) The Party should mobilise all the patriotic and democratic sections to thwart the US designs to convert India into a strategic ally.

“(iv) The Party should champion the cause of the dalits, tribal people, women, minorities and other oppressed sections for social justice as part of the Left and democratic programme.”

Among the current tasks spelt out was the priority to be given for developing the independent strength and expanding the political base of the Party. For this, the Party was to take up class and mass issues

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to develop movements and struggles. The Party was to continue to adopt tactics for isolating and defeating the BJP. It would not enter into any alliance or united front with the Congress.

Further the Party would maintain relations with all non-Congress secular parties for developing united struggles and joint actions on common issues. The Party was to work for the building of a third alternative.

Left unity should be strengthened and the Party should have a clear perspective for building movements and platform of the Left and democratic forces by taking up the issues of the basic classes.

### WITHDRAWAL OF SUPPORT: MAJOR CHANGE

The decision to withdraw support to the UPA government in July 2008 was correct and warranted. We could not continue to extend support to a government which had grossly violated the Common Minimum Programme and gone ahead with the implementation of the nuclear deal. As a Communist Party, we could not facilitate the implementation of the nuclear deal which was the key factor in the Indo-US strategic alliance. We withdrew support when the Congress betrayed the understanding not to proceed to finalise the IAEA Safeguards Agreement to operationalise the deal.

After the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, the Party had decided to support the UPA government which did not have a majority in the Lok Sabha. This was done to ensure that the BJP was kept out of government. This was a correct decision given the nature of the verdict in the elections. The Political Resolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress had spelt out our attitude. While extending support to the UPA government, the resolution had stated that the Party would play an independent role. That role required criticizing and opposing such steps of the government which are against the people's interests or are a departure from the CMP and those which are a continuation of the policies of the previous government. The independent role also entailed that the Party and the Left conduct political campaigns to project the independent positions of the Left and popular mobilizations and struggles to defend the rights and livelihood of the people. Further, the independent role of the Party does not mean confining to or dealing only with the CMP and government-related

issues. It means taking up the demands of the Left and democratic programme set out by the Party.

Due to the pressure of the Left parties, the UPA government was compelled to implement some of the pro-people measures in the CMP like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and the Forest Tribal Rights Act. At the same time, the strong opposition of the Left stopped the government's move to further liberalise the financial sector and open it to foreign finance capital. This helped the country withstand the adverse impact of global financial crisis which broke out in 2008.

By the end of the second year of the UPA government in 2006, the Party and the Left were opposing the government's failure to tackle the agrarian crisis and the price rise of essential commodities and conducting campaigns and movements against the government's policies. The Left parties suspended their participation in the UPA-Left Coordination Committee in July 2005 on the question of disinvestment in BHEL, a navaratna company. After going back, in November 2006, the Polit Bureau decided that we need not revive the functioning of UPA-Left Coordination Committee. The forging of the strategic alliance with the United States and the nuclear deal were a flagrant violation of the CMP. Finally, when the UPA government decided to go ahead with the nuclear deal with the United States despite repeated warnings, the Party decided to withdraw support to the government.

Three months after the adoption of the political-tactical line, a major change took place with the withdrawal of support to the UPA government by the CPI(M) and the Left parties. The Political Resolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress endorsed the decision of the Party and the Left to do "whatever necessary to block the agreement" as it was the cementing factor for the Indo-US strategic alliance. At the same time, the assessment given in the Political Resolution was that the Congress leadership had decided not to proceed further with the operationalisation of the agreement. The Resolution stated: "Faced with the political consequences of such a confrontation with the Left, the Congress and the UPA decided not to proceed further with the operationalisation of the agreement." (Para 2.32)

In the Political-Organisational Report of the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, which reviewed the implementation of the tactical line, it was stated that:

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“The government has been holding discussions with the IAEA from November onwards. Till the end of February five rounds of talks have been held. It is only when the government brings the outcome of the talks to the committee that the Left will take the stand that they should not proceed further to finalise the safeguards agreement or go to the Nuclear Suppliers Group. The successful conduct of the struggle to block the nuclear deal should help the Party and the Left to rally other anti-imperialist forces to go forward with the struggle to prevent the strategic alliance with the United States”.

The assessment made in the Party Congress did not prove to be correct. We have to review the events that took place and the stand taken. In May 2008, the government concluded its negotiations with the IAEA for the draft safeguards agreement. It then insisted that it had to be sent to the Board of Governors for approval. The Congress leadership refused to abide by the understanding arrived at with the Left that they will not go to the IAEA Board of Governors for approval of the agreement, if the Left does not agree to it. This understanding was contained in the statement of the UPA-Left Committee on November 16, 2007 in the following words: “The government would not go ahead till the committee took into account the outcome of the IAEA also for its final conclusion”.

After getting the support of the Samajwadi Party for the nuclear agreement, which it had earlier opposed, the government was prepared to go ahead with the IAEA agreement and break with the Left. When the Prime Minister announced the intention to go ahead, the Left parties decided to withdraw support and did so on July 9, 2008. The Polit Bureau took this decision. It was authorized by the Central Committee to do so in August 2007 if the government decided to go ahead with the operationalisation of the Indo-US nuclear deal. The Central Committee reiterated this decision in its October 2007 meeting.

The Central Committee endorsed the decision of the Polit Bureau to withdraw support in its meeting held on June 29, 2008. After the 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election held in May 2009, the Central Committee reviewed the decision and summed it up as follows: “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.”

After the withdrawal of support, the Left parties gave a call for a nationwide campaign to explain our stand on the nuclear deal, the reasons for withdrawal of support and the government's failure to curb price rise. We conducted an extensive campaign amongst the people between August and September 2008. The review of the election campaign pointed out that 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 be made an issue in the election to rally the people around the stand of the Party. We could not succeed in bringing out the linkage between the domestic economic policies and foreign policy and its adverse impact on the people.

The Election Review of the Central Committee summed up this point as follows:

“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.”

Given the deep commitment of the Prime Minister and the Congress leadership to the Indo-US nuclear deal and the strategic alliance with the US, they preferred to break with the Left rather than jeopardize the nuclear deal. The PB and the CC underestimated the determination and the capacity of the ruling classes and US imperialism to pursue the nuclear deal as part of the strategic alliance. We also overestimated our own strength and capacity to influence events. Allowing the government to go to the IAEA for talks and the expectation that the Congress would abide by an understanding not to proceed with the operationalisation of the deal was wrong.

Subsequent developments including the close military collaboration with the United States, the continuing pro-US orientation on the foreign policy, growing American influence in domestic economic policies and the obnoxious Civil Nuclear Liability Bill, which is the last step in the implementation of the nuclear deal, have confirmed the correctness of the decision to withdraw support.

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### TACTICS TO MEET SITUATION AFTER WITHDRAWAL OF SUPPORT

After the withdrawal of support, the Party and the Left came under severe attack from the ruling party and the corporate media. Efforts were made to isolate the Left and particularly the CPI(M). On the confidence vote, the Party had to rally support from other non-Congress, non-BJP parties. On the confidence vote in the Lok Sabha, the Party and the Left succeeded in rallying other parties like the BSP, TDP, AIADMK, JD (S), RLD and INLD. The UPA was able to win the trust vote with the help of the Samajwadi Party and the defection of 19 members of the opposition who were bribed for voting in the trust motion.

Subsequently, the Party worked out a tactical line to meet the new situation. The July 2008 CC meeting provided the direction:

“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.”

### ELECTORAL-TACTICAL LINE

The Central Committee took up the electoral-tactical line in its October 2008 meeting and in January 2009 meeting. The January CC meeting at Kochi concretized the electoral-tactical line. It was formulated 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 alongwith the secular

parties should work together to make a non-Congress, non-BJP alternative realizable.”

Following this, the Central Committee while finalizing the Election Manifesto called for an alternative political platform which would work for the formation of an “alternative secular government”.

#### REVIEW OF ELECTION & ELECTORAL-TACTICAL LINE

The self-critical review made on the implementation of the political-tactical line summed up the experience as follows:

“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.

“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.”

The review pinpointed the two factors. Firstly, the alliance forged with the non-Congress secular parties in three or four states could not be the basis for projecting a national level electoral alternative. Secondly, we should not have called for the formation of an “alternative secular government” and should have stuck instead to the call for strengthening the non-Congress, non-BJP alternative.

The UPA was able to win the election though it did not get a majority. It won 262 seats, of which the Congress got 206. Various parties like the SP, BSP, RJD and JD (S) extended support to the government. The BJP suffered a second successive defeat. It won 116 seats and the NDA got 159. The CPI(M) and the Left parties suffered a serious reverse. The Party won only 16 seats and the Left parties together got 24.

The setback suffered in West Bengal was analysed in the election review. There was a reduction of 7.42 per cent in the vote share of the Left Front compared to 2004. There was an erosion of support among the rural and urban poor and the middle classes. Apart from the national factors which influenced the people, the state factors have

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been spelt out in the election review. The reasons were in the political, organizational and government sphere. In Kerala too, the review has identified the various factors in the state which led to the success of the Congress-led UDF and the shortcomings and weaknesses in the Party and the LDF. Only in Tripura was the CPI(M) and the Left Front victorious getting an aggregate of 61.7 per cent of the vote.

### NEW SITUATION AFTER THE LOK SABHA ELECTION

**Attack in West Bengal:** The post election situation saw a concerted attack against the Party in West Bengal by the Trinamul Congress-led combine in collaboration with the Maoists. More than 250 comrades have lost their lives since the Lok Sabha elections. The Maoists have targeted the Party cadres and supporters in West Midnapur, Bankura and Purulia. Imperialist agencies have also played a role in the manoeuvres against the CPI(M) and the Left.

The Political Resolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress had warned that West Bengal, the bastion of the Party and the Left, has come in for special attack. This is due to the prominent role played by the CPI(M) in national politics in opposing the strategic alliance with US imperialism and waging determined struggles to check neo-liberal policies. The CPI(M) had to be weakened to preclude any dependence on the Left for a future bourgeois government. Hence the targeting of Bengal.

The election review had identified the shortcomings and weaknesses. The Party decided to adopt corrective measures – political, organizational and at the government level – to overcome the situation. The steps taken should help in bringing about a turn around in the situation.

The Central Committee decided that the defence of the movement of Bengal and exposure of the anti-Communist gang-up and the role of the Maoists should be taken for a widespread campaign all over the country and democratic opinion mobilized. The attack in West Bengal is to be seen as an attack on the entire Party.

### OUR APPROACH AND TACTICS IN THE POST-ELECTION SITUATION

The October 2009 CC meeting discussed and decided our approach



and tactics after the Lok Sabha election and the formation of the UPA-II government. The CC report provided the following direction:

“1. The review of the Lok Sabha election has highlighted the importance of expanding the independent activities of the Party. In the present situation, without the independent strength of the Party being increased, we cannot undertake the political tasks set out in the 19th Congress. We have to intervene on all major political issues at the Central and state levels, we must take up the mass issues for campaigns and struggles. As noted in the election review we must concentrate on building sustained struggles on local issues. We must also build up state level movement on major issues.

“2. The Left parties have to take joint initiatives and we must carry forward the United work of the Left parties. On price rise, drought and food security, we have already chalked out joint actions.

“3. We must continue to oppose the neo-liberal policies of the government. This extends to areas outside the economy like health, education and basic services.

“Our orientation should be to take up the issues of the working class including the unorganised sector, poor peasants, agricultural workers and the mass of the rural and urban poor. Special attention has to be paid to the demands and problems of the dalits, adivasis, minorities and women.

“4. Already the stance of the UPA government on deepening its strategic alliance with the USA is evident. We have to pick up all the issues regarding the alliance with the United States and build up the anti-imperialist movement. The Pakistan-Afghanistan situation must also be followed carefully as it will affect our country.”

Regarding our attitude to the non-Congress secular parties, it was stated that:

“Our emphasis should be on independent activities followed by united Left initiatives. We should maintain relations with the non-Congress secular parties. This will take shape, mainly at present, of cooperation within parliament and state legislatures. In parliament we can coordinate with non-Congress secular parties on issues to issues. Such parties are the TDP, RJD, SP, BSP and the AIADMK. Even the JD(U) which belongs to the NDA can be mobilised on some issues.

“We should seek the cooperation of the non-Congress secular parties on issues and keeping the needs of joint movements in mind. It may not be

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possible to draw some of these parties into joint actions outside parliament. But we must maintain relations with them especially in the light of the disarray in the BJP As and when the political situation develops and mass discontent occurs, the scope for joint actions will increase.”

### CAMPAIGN AGAINST COMMUNALISM

The Party has been campaigning against the communal agenda of the BJP/RSS combine. In the states ruled by the BJP, the Party has been opposing the communalization of the administration and education. In this period, there were attacks on the Christian community in Kandmahal district in Orissa and at various places in Karnataka. We campaigned and conducted protests against these attacks. Campaigns have been mounted against the anti-conversion bill and anti-cow slaughter bill targeting the minorities.

At the call of the Central Committee, the Party observed a week against communalism and terrorism between October 30 and November 5, 2008. The issue of terrorist violence by extremist Hindutva elements as revealed by the Malegaon blast was also taken up during this campaign. This campaign was conducted in various states and was extended beyond this period. A notable campaign was in Karnataka where three state level jathas were organized throughout the state and it culminated in a mass rally.

During the elections, the electoral-tactical line worked out by the Party of rallying the non-Congress secular parties helped in weakening the BJP-led NDA. The BJD left the NDA in Orissa and cooperated with the non-Congress secular parties. The BJP was also left with no worthwhile ally in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Orissa. This contributed to the defeat of the BJP-led alliance.

### LAND ACQUISITION AND SEZS

The Party Congress Political Resolution had adopted a stand opposing the concept of Special Economic Zones being implemented by the Central government. We had criticized the large tracts of land including fertile agricultural land being made available in many places to private SEZ developers. At the same time we wanted the size of the multi-product SEZs restricted; strict regulation of land use to prevent

real estate speculation and demanded an end to the indiscriminate tax sops. The rights of workers had also to be ensured in the enterprises within the SEZs. The proposed petrochemical hub in Nandigram and the issue of land for other projects in West Bengal were used against us in a big way. Despite no land being acquired in Nandigram, the campaign against the Party and the Left Front government all over the country on the issue damaged our image. This posed difficulties in our stand and struggle on the SEZs and against large scale acquisition of agricultural land.

Given the nature of land relations, the nature of capitalist development and the agrarian crisis, the peasantry face the constant threat of land being alienated from them. The small peasantry see no other means of livelihood except their land holdings. In such a situation, the acquiring of agricultural land by corporates for setting up industries is seen as a direct attack on their basic rights and livelihood. We should keep this in mind and take a firm stand against acquisition of fertile agricultural land of peasants against their will. The acquisition of land by the government for public purposes like highways, irrigation, state-run power stations and other basic development may be necessary. When doing so, adequate compensation and proper rehabilitation measures should be assured. The Land Acquisition Act of 1894 does not protect the interests of the farmers and land owners adequately. There must be new suitable legislation which protects the right of farmers and ensures adequate compensation. This should be accompanied by a law on rehabilitation.

In the coming days, we should take up the land issue seriously, stress the struggle for land distribution and land reforms, protect land rights of the peasantry and oppose the dispossession of their land by corporates. We have to safeguard the rights of the tribal people over their lands which is threatened by large-scale, indiscriminate and illegal mining by foreign and Indian companies.

#### ANTI-IMPERIALIST STAND

On foreign policy, the Party has been consistently opposing all steps to strengthen the Indo-US strategic alliance. The Left parties' called for a protest against the nuclear surrender on September 26, 2008 and subsequently observed 'Black Day' on October 4 when the 123

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agreement was signed. The Party gave a call against the holding of the joint naval exercise with the US – the Malabar Exercises. The Central Committee called for a protest day on October 24, 2008 in the coastal states of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra. There was a good participation in the protests in Kerala in various centres. The Party opposed the End User agreement, the Civil Nuclear Liability Bill and the stand taken against Iran, once again, in the IAEA.

## RELATIONS WITH NON-CONGRESS SECULAR PARTIES

The Party has sought to cooperate with the non-NDA, non-UPA parties within Parliament like the TDP, AIADMK, BJD, SP, RJD and JD(S) on issues. On the price rise issue, the Party was able to rally most of the parties for the April 27 hartal. On the cut motion in the budget also, except the SP and RJD, the other parties stood with the Left. Some of the secular opposition parties are adopting a vacillating and opportunist position. They are bargaining with the Congress for meeting some of their immediate interests. The Samajwadi Party and the Rashtriya Janata Dal are trying to utilize their position to oppose some of the policies of the government while, at the same time, negotiating to get some of their demands fulfilled.

As per the direction given, our effort has been to maintain relations with these parties within Parliament and draw them into joint actions on mass issues wherever required.

## MOVEMENTS AND STRUGGLES

In the period after the Party Congress, the Party has been constantly taking up the issue of price rise. The Party gave a call for protests against price rise on May 15, 2008 in which five lakh people participated. After the Lok Sabha elections, in August 2009, the Left parties gave a call against the price increase of petrol and diesel. Subsequently, after the National Convention on Price Rise and Food Security organized by the Party in August 2009, the Left parties gave a call for joint state conventions followed by state rallies on the issues of price rise, food security, PDS and drought. Various state level conventions and rallies were held. Upto then, the mobilization was mainly of the supporters and mass base of the Party and the Left.

It is only after the all-India joint rally of the Left parties in Delhi on March 12, 2010 that the anti-price rise movement picked up momentum. The call for the April 8 picketing and court arrest programme and the April 27 hartal call by 13 parties met with a good response. In the April 8 picketing, 20 lakh people participated and the hartal was a good success in at least nine states. The July 5 hartal against the second successive increase in petroleum prices had the widest sweep all over the country. This was the biggest protest action in the last two decades.

The Party has been emphasizing the importance of sustained struggles on local issues. Except in a few places, we have not been able to develop the struggle for the implementation of the NREGA on a sustained basis all over the country.

At the trade union level, there was a general strike on August 20, 2008 called by the Central Trade Unions except the INTUC and the BMS. This strike saw a large participation of the workers of the organized and unorganized sectors. Subsequently, the Central Trade Unions came together to hold a National Convention in September, 2009. Through this platform, there has been a series of protest actions including joint protests and rallies in October 2009 and a court arrest programme in March 2010. There have been industry-wise strikes of coal, steel and construction workers. Recently, there was a one-day strike against disinvestment by the BSNL employees and coal workers. Despite these struggles of the working class and other sections, the overall sweep and intensity of the movements and struggles fall far short of the requirements to counter the determined thrust of the neo-liberal policies.

On social issues, there has been a significant movement in Tamilnadu against untouchability and struggles have been launched under the banner of Untouchability Eradication Front. We have not been able to take up issues of caste discrimination in the Hindi-speaking states despite decisions to do so. Haryana is the exception where we have opposed the khap panchayat dictates leading to honour crimes.

We have to assess whether we are consolidating after these struggles and movements that were conducted. With the exception of Rajasthan where we were able to consolidate the influence gained through the struggle on the canal waters issue and electricity to some extent, by

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and large, in other places we have not been able to consolidate the influence after struggles. The reason is that we are not developing the mass organizations amongst the people who join the struggle and follow it up by the work of politicizing them through the Party. In the future, we must pay attention to consolidation through the work of the mass organizations and the Party.