

Report of the Proceedings of the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) held at Cochin, 23–29, 1968*

The 8th Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) met at Cochin in Kerala on December 23, 1968.

At 11 a.m. on 23rd the proceedings of the Congress started with the hoisting of the Party's Red Flag by Comrade Muzaffar Ahmad.

Comrade P. Sundarayya, General Secretary, proposed the Presidium to conduct the Congress consisting of Comrades B. T. Ranadive, Jyoti Basu, M. R. Venkataraman, Godavari Parulekar and Susheela Gopalan. The Congress approved this proposal.

Later Comrade A. K. Gopalan, Chairman of the Reception Committee made his welcome speech and the morning session which was open to the Press concluded.

The Polit Bureau acted as the Steering Committee on behalf of the Central Committee.

The resolution on martyrs and condolence resolutions were moved by Comrade B. T. Ranadive and the Congress delegates passed these resolutions standing in silence.

The afternoon session started at 3.30 p.m.

Comrade P. Sundarayya proposed a Credentials Committee consisting of Comrades, E. K. Nayanar, Saroj Mukherjee, K. Muthaiah, Uddaraju Ramam and P. K. Tandon which was approved by the delegates.

The delegates then adopted the agenda of the Congress proposed by the Central Committee which included the

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Political Resolution, Political-Organizational Report of the Central Committee, amendments to the Party Constitution and resolutions on current affairs, election of the Central Committee and the open session.

BTR Introduces Political-Organizational Report

Introducing the Political Organizational Report of the CC, Comrade B. T. Ranadive said, we are meeting four years after the 7th Congress. Recalling the prolonged struggle against revisionism conducted by the Party, he pointed out that the dominant feature of this struggle was that the struggle against revisionism going on for long in the Indian communist movement merged with the struggle against revisionism on an international scale.

We came to our standpoint on vital issues connected with the development and consolidation of the communist movement in India by the force of circumstances, by the application of our own understanding of Marxism-Leninism to the problems of the Indian revolution.

In this gradual evolution of our policy and programme we did not accept the diktat of this or that big party. We arrived at our correct understanding by our application of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions prevailing in our country.

The last four years have seen tremendous changes in the world situation. The most important aspect of this fast-changing situation is the growth and unprecedented depth of the crisis of capitalism on a world scale.

The tremendous victories scored by the Vietnamese people in this epic struggle against U.S. imperialism are a confirmation of the decline of world capitalism.

The historic struggle of the French proletariat again demonstrated the insoluble contradictions of capitalism.

Imperialism is losing ground on every front.

This is a graphic confirmation of the 1960 Statement of the international communist movement that socialism is becoming the decisive force in human history.

The fact has to be emphasized that despite the serious

revisionist mistakes and distortions, the communist movement is a mighty force.

Vitality of Our Movement

The history of our own Party has shown the vitality of our movement. Soon after we adopted our Programme at the 7th Congress, we were attacked by the ruling classes and they resorted to all sorts of subterfuges to suppress our Party. They called us agents of China, depicted us as traitors and what not.

But the acid test of the strength of our Party, its correct programme and policies came soon after—during the mid-term election in Kerala in 1965. The Kerala election results showed conclusively that the people had tremendous faith in us and we were returned as the single largest party in the State, the Congress with all its patriotic protestations trailing far behind. The Congress attempt to slander us and isolate us from the people and other democratic parties was defeated.

The attacks on our Party did not scare us, we continued to defend the proletarian banner on Indian soil. The test came again during the Indo-Pakistan war. We were not overwhelmed by chauvinism. Our comrades stood the test of internationalism while the revisionists who claimed monopoly of proletarian internationalism succumbed to the worst kind of chauvinistic frenzy.

After our leaders' release in 1966, what was the task of the C.C.? The Programme had correctly analysed the class character of the Indian state and come to generalized understanding of the perspective of Indian revolution. But the transitional tactics had to be worked out.

The electoral struggle of 1967 came in the wake of the mightiest class struggles in the history of our country.

Elections—A Rallying Point

We decided to make the elections a rallying point for our entire programme. We did not shirk the issues for the sake of votes. Issues like India-China conflict and Indo-Pakistan

conflict were put squarely before the people. Our aim was not just to win a few votes. We wanted to rouse the political consciousness of our people on all the important all-India questions.

In April 1967, the C.C. met and analysed the situation. The C.C.'s attention was not diverted by the success in the two States, it pointed out that the deepening economic crisis was fast developing into a political crisis. We gave the slogan of utilizing the State Governments of West Bengal and Kerala as instruments of struggle, against the bourgeois-landlord-dominated Central Government.

We saw to it that except in West Bengal and Kerala we did not join the Ministries even though we were offered seats in the Ministries.

Even while we were fighting the electoral battle, we came out with two basic documents on our tasks on the kisan and the trade union fronts.

These documents nailed down the revisionist mistakes and approaches in our work in these vital sectors of mass activity.

New Serious Problems

However, soon we were faced with fresh problems of a more serious nature—the continuing struggle against revisionism and the newly-emerging threat of left-sectarian disruption.

We nailed down the revisionist lies. We said that revolution was possible only under the leadership of the working class.

The Indian state is a bourgeois-landlord state under the leadership of the big bourgeoisie, which was collaborating with imperialism. The revisionist understanding did not concede that the landlords are a component part along with the bourgeoisie in the state while they underplayed the imperialist threat. In fact, the collaboration with imperialism by the bourgeoisie was not a factor in their programme.

Now, of course, they say that National Democracy cannot be established without overthrowing the bourgeoisie.

The revisionists said main danger was the Jana Sangh and Swatantra. But soon after the elections, they joined with the Jana Sangh to form Ministries.

Their main enemy is, of course, the CPI(M).

They are now accusing that it is our policies that led to the adventuristic actions in Tellicherry and Pulpalli and as such organizing defence committees for those arrested in connection with these incidents.

The fight against revisionism has reached a stage when even their own ranks are seeing the bankruptcy of the revisionist line.

The revisionists have dropped the banner of proletarian internationalism as evidenced by their stand on Indo-Pakistan, Indo-China, Kutch, etc., issues.

Wrong Line of CPC

While fighting this revisionism, the Burdwan Plenum of our Party had to take note of the wrong approach of the Communist Party of China to many current international problems and warn Party members against the wrong line being advocated by the CPC.

At the time of the adoption of the Party Programme itself, we had rejected the line of struggle against imperialism being raised to the position of ignoring the bourgeois-landlord character of the state and the formation of a National United Front. We did not subscribe to the formulation that the Indian state was a stooge of imperialism.

As far back as 1965 some CC and PB members had begun to feel that there was something wrong about the stand of the CPC on some questions. We decided to settle accounts with the left-sectarian tendencies in our Party, though backed by the Chinese Party, as far as vital ideological problems and the problems of the Indian revolution were concerned.

At the Burdwan Plenum, some of the delegates asked us to swear by Maoism, that thought of Mao is Marxism-Leninism of present epoch. We said no, we will independently apply Marxism-Leninism to our own concrete conditions.

Socialist relations of production do not change its basic character merely because of revisionist leadership. Our demarcation was fully justified by later events in Czechoslovakia.

The CPC attacking our Party as neo-revisionist and agent of the bourgeoisie, praises the adventuristic actions in Pulpalli and Tellicherry.

It is the experience of our own Party that while fighting one deviation, we land ourselves in another.

Their whole approach is reliance on spontaneity.

The left sectarians are attacking us that we are creating parliamentary illusions among people!

They attack the concept of united fronts, of mass movements, the partial struggles, strikes etc.

Madurai draft itself had warned—these theories will lead to a select band of people going to struggle without masses, without organization.

From Kanu Sanyal to Kunnikkal Narayanan, the main target is the CPI(M).

Disruption is caused not because either the revisionists or the sectarians draw upon the prestige of either the Soviet party or the Chinese party to back up their bankrupt theories.

So far as Marxism-Leninism is concerned both left and right deviations are equally dangerous.

M.B. Introduces Political Resolution

Comrade M. Basavapunnaiah introduced the Political Resolution.

He pointed out that there was nothing entirely new in the political resolution. Party Congresses consolidated results already achieved and generalized past experiences to show the way forward. Even then, there is something new in the resolution.

The 7th Congress adopted our Programme. Revisionist understanding permeated all our work, our analysis, our approach to mass movement and problems. We settled

accounts with revisionism. In the period since the 7th Party Congress we concentrated on liquidating the legacies of revisionism. Four main issues were tackled: (1) Our tasks on Kisan Front; (2) Tasks on Trade Union Front; (3) Organizational problems; and (4) Ideological questions.

The present resolution incorporates all the understandings reached during the last four years and highlights what is new.

At the time we adopted the New Situation and the Party's Tasks in April 1967, the main question in the international situation was the question of the orientation of the national liberation movement as the centre of all world contradictions.

The Challenge

Subsequently, there arose the challenge: The line of national liberation movement alone liquidating imperialism—to the exclusion of the important role of the socialist camp, of the working class in the imperialist countries.

Life has shown that contradictions do not remain static.

The Burdwan Plenum refuted the thesis erroneously put forward by Nagi Reddy, etc. (supported by some Chinese statements).

The contradiction between the monopoly capital and French working class came to a head suddenly—with surprising force. The peace marches in America, etc., showed the same thing.

The resolution draws the attention of the entire Party to the erroneous conclusion that the working class movement in the metropolitan countries is to be written off.

All the four basic contradictions on the international scene noted by the New Situation and the Party's Tasks have intensified.

The contradiction between world socialism and imperialism cannot be suppressed for all time to come, despite the existence of revisionist leaderships in many socialist countries. This is to deny the very existence of this very fundamental contradiction. We cannot accept that only China and

Albania are in the socialist camp. We do not subscribe to the theory that there is no world socialist camp and only China and one or two other countries are socialist and the rest including the Soviet Union had ceased to be socialist. We adopted the principle of unity in action to strengthen the socialist camp. One thing is clear—despite the disunity in the socialist camp, distortions of socialism, etc., the socialist camp exists. We do not consider Yugoslavia as part of the socialist camp.

Economic Crisis

Fresh facts and figures have been given to bring the understanding about the crisis up-to-date. Revisionists and bourgeois economists have been questioning the theory of crisis. No crisis, they say, only recession, which can be met with some adjustment in trade, monetary and investment policies, etc. But our Programme is clear: In the third stage of the crisis of capitalism, no capitalist development is possible. During the last four years, life has demonstrated that the crisis is inherent in the capitalist path of development, in the delayed democratic revolution.

Facts marshalled by even bourgeois theoreticians and economists like Gunnar Myrdal have confirmed our analysis.

The capitalist system as a system is coming to the end of its tether.

The crisis has reached a new high.

As early as the Nurmahal meeting of our C.C. (November 1966) we indicated the emerging political crisis. The fact that we are not in a position to utilize the developing political crisis does not mean that the crisis is the less for that. It is becoming deeper.

Centre-State Relations

Centre-State relations are worsening. In this there is one aspect about the distribution of resources. We have to concretely examine how far the resistance of the State Governments to tax the landlords, etc., is to be attributed to the resistance of the landlord class.

We have to study the phenomenon of Centre-State relations more thoroughly.

The contradictions in the position of the bourgeois parties—on the one side they call for intensifying conflict with Pakistan and China and on the other call for higher wages for Government employees and more development.

This indicates that our Programme is the only programme which is consistent. Our Programme stood the challenge of practice.

Our stand on minorities is appreciated by many people.

The bourgeoisie know that no military settlement is possible in either the Indo-Pak or the India-China conflict. But they have not the moral courage to state what is obvious.

A mighty party like the Chinese Communist Party is bombarding us with the propaganda that so many armed struggles in India are going on. They say we are neo-revisionists.

The left sectarians see every political crisis as a revolutionary crisis. We anticipated this infantilism. Our slogan is: Orientate towards what is developing. Tactics should not be confused with perspective. We should be warned: A single mistake will cost us a generation. The bourgeoisie want to destroy our Party. The deliberate game of the bourgeoisie has to be defeated.

One thing has to be emphasized. A great mass upsurge is on. If we cannot lead it, some people may mislead it. But nobody can prevent it. To meet the situation, the ruling classes are arming themselves with all powers to launch an offensive against the people's movement.

Pivotal Task : Build the Party

Of all the tasks facing us, the central pivotal task is: Build the Party.

Our Party had to face a unique situation, unlike any other party in the world. We had to stand up to denunciations from both the Soviet Union and China. It is a painful experience. But this experience is also rich. In these four years

we have succeeded in evolving a political line. But the Party organizational tasks still remain to be fulfilled.

We are still far from being a Bolshevik Party.

The gap between evolving theoretically a correct political line and the implementation of the line in every respect has to be bridged.

Neither our Party nor any democratic party by itself can at present solve the most pressing problems facing us. We are still weak in the country as a whole. We cannot on our own mount an onslaught on the citadel of the bourgeoisie.

The ruling classes' drive towards a police state has to be halted. The threat of American neo-colonialism facing our country has to be met.

Let us, therefore, move forward to build united action against these twin dangers looming ahead on the political horizon, in defence of the interests of the working people.

After a discussion lasting nearly thirty hours, the delegates' session of the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) adopted the Political Resolution with a few amendments; in the evening of December 26

Apart from the two members of the Polit Bureau, Comrades B. T. Ranadive and M. Basavapunnaiah, forty-nine delegates spoke during the discussion of the resolution—eleven from Kerala, nine from West Bengal, five from Tamilnadu, four each from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, three from Andhra Pradesh, two each from Punjab, Assam and Karnataka and one each from Goa, Orissa, Tripura, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujrat. Of the 49 speakers, eight were members of Central Committee—S. Y. Kolhatkar, S. S. Shrivastava, Jagjit Singh Lyallpuri, E. K. Nayanar, M. Hanumantha Rao, Harekrishna Konar, Mohan Punamiya and A. Balasubramaniam.

The Debate

Niren Ghosh (West Bengal) spoke on the situation in West Bengal with special reference to the working class movement. He pointed out to the great strides made by the Party

in organizing, politically educating and leading the workers into action. However, there is a big division among workers—between the Hindusthani-speaking and other sections of working class. This weakness has to be overcome. The class-consciousness of the working class is still in an elementary stage and intense political and ideological education needs to be conducted. The peasant movement has to be developed.

Bharathi Mohan (Tamilnadu), a leader of the agricultural labour movement of Tanjore, spoke of the experiences of the agricultural labour movement and the struggles that are taking place now in that district.

Gerald Pereira (Goa) explained the advance made by the Party in Goa, especially among the working class.

S. Y. Kolhatkar (Maharashtra) gave a graphic description of the serious crisis gripping the industries in Maharashtra. Twentyfive per cent of the industrial capital is invested in Maharashtra and there is a big working class population, but unity in action has not been achieved yet.

Despite the apparent supremacy of the Congress, political crisis in the State was maturing.

The struggle of the Warli adivasis for land had been crowned with success, the Government being forced to recognize their possession of about 20000 acres of land.

K. G. Bose (West Bengal) spoke about the movement of State and Central Government employees and explained the Party's stand on the recent Central Government employees' strike. The deepening economic crisis was forcing more and more middle-class employees to the path of struggle in defence of their vital interests. The Party has to take increasing interest in these struggles, he said.

Balanandan (Kerala) said the economic position of Kerala was very bad. Traditional sweated industries employing lakhs of workers, like the Coir, Cashew, Handloom and Bidi industries were in crisis. The position was better in the organized industries. Since the U.F. Government took over, there had been a spectacular increase in working class actions for better wages and working conditions and many sections of workers

had gained some benefit. In the organized industries, the wage increase has been on the average 25 per cent depending on the nature of the industry, the workers had gained anything between Rs. 25 to Rs. 80 per month. The basic policy of the U.F. Government of not allowing the police to interfere on the side of the employers in labour disputes had helped the working people in a big way.

Similarly, in the State services, substantial increase had been granted in the emoluments of all sections. State transport, PWD, Non-Muster Roll, Electricity Board—employees in all these departments had gained. True, some officials, especially, police officers, flouted Government's policy on one pretext or another and resorted to arrests, etc. of workers in struggle, and in some cases the Government had also taken action against such police officers.

Jagjit Singh Lyallpuri (Punjab) pointed out that the Congress in Punjab was in a first class crisis. The Jana Sangh was also losing their hold with the young people getting radicalized as was seen in the recent student struggles. He stressed the need to base the Party's work on the agricultural workers and poor peasantry. He also pointed out to the splitting activities of the Right Communists in the working class.

Ramanand Singh (Bihar) said that unless social problems are properly understood, we cannot advance our movement. He illustrated this with the question of harijans, tribals, minorities and language problems.

B. B. Nayar (Kerala) spoke on the movement of agricultural labour in Kuttanad in Alleppey district and in Palghat district. The CPI(M) in Kerala was from the beginning mainly based on agricultural labour. He narrated the victories won by the agricultural labourers through the recent struggles. In Kuttanad, they had been able to enforce a 6-hour working day and better wages.

The influence of obscurantism and religious superstitions are still strong among the poorer people even though they follow the red flag politically.

B. Narasimha Reddy (Andhra) said that the general way

of analysis in political resolution has not taken into consideration the uneven nature of the development. Continuous clashes are taking place between our forces and the forces of the enemy classes helped by police. This is the case in Telangana area. We have to find out how we can defend ourselves against the combined attacks of the landlords, goondas and police, who are all armed.

Nirupama Chatterjee (West Bengal) pointed out that the consequences of uneven development of political consciousness of different regions have to be faced and rectified. She emphasized the role of women in kisan struggles and demanded that the wives of Party members should be organized and mobilized for political action.

Ravi Sinha (UP) emphasized the weakness of the communist movement in the Hindustani-speaking areas of India.

Surya Narayana Rao (Karnataka) said that even though our Party in Karnataka is weak, in South Kanara our volunteers defended the minorities during communal riots.

Kunhikanan (Kerala) described the strike of 3,00,000 plantation labourers and in Gwalior Rayon at Mavur.

Swarajyam (Andhra) in her passionate speech said that without the Party, without mass movements, kisan movements, etc., the women's movement cannot flourish. In the Telangana struggle, thousands of women were active. Land problem should be tackled seriously.

She narrated the story of the women of a village in Telangana recently, who defended themselves against the attack of the landlords and his goondas who had come armed.

E. K. Nayanar (Kerala) explaining the work of the U.F. Government said on the whole the record of the U.F. Government was creditable. Every section of workers had gained. This would have been impossible but for the existence of U.F. Government. Innumerable struggles of all sections of toiling people had taken place. Evictions had been completely stopped. The Land Reforms Act was being amended. The Universities Bill, Panchayat Bill, Debt Relief Bill, were all measures of far-reaching significance. Agricultural labourers

had gained big increase in wages. The police had not helped the landlords as in the past. The toiling people in the State had gained a measure of self-confidence and dignity which they did not enjoy earlier.

Sivaji Patnaik (Orissa) said the Swatantra Government was pursuing the same class policies as the Congress in every field—agrarian, food, labour and police etc.

Bhanu Ghose (Tripura) said that the leaders of the Party including Dasharath Deb Burman, member of the Central Committee were in jail for four years since 1962. Repression by the police and Border Security Forces on the population was continuing. The Government was trying to drive away the tribals from the land in the name of rehabilitating the East Bengal refugees and thus creating a rift between the Bengali and tribal people. The Party resisted successfully this Government attempt.

M. Hanumantha Rao (Andhra) said all comrades in Andhra were in agreement on the Resolution. The key task was building the Party. The Party's transmission belts are the mass organizations. In this connection he said that the impression that the Party in Andhra was completely paralysed by defections was wrong. The traditional strongholds of the Party in Andhra are still with the Party. Defections are very grave, no doubt. But the Party has been able to survive and regroup its forces. In 1967, the Party's membership was 16,000. After the extremists' revolt, the Party retained 9048 members. Out of the remaining 7,000 an over-whelming majority of the comrades are coming over to us as we go on contacting and explaining to them.

Referring to the land problem, he said that in 500 villages, over one lakh acres of *banjar* land had been occupied by harijans and landless labour. Recently, the Government had tried to auction fertile lands occupied by landless labour which was prevented by them under the leadership of the Party.

The intensity and savagery of landlord, goonda and police repression in Andhra is on the increase. However, agricultural

labour struggles are breaking out everywhere. 4,000 people are facing security cases.

Chandi Prasad (Bihar) invited attention to the special problems of Bihar. Chhotanagpur division is the centre of heavy industries. Tata Steel, Heavy Engineering Corporation, coal-mines, iron-ore mines are located in this area. It is also a tribal area. Our Party is quite weak there traditionally. All reactionary forces are concentrating in the area. There are 4,00,000 industrial workers in this area alone. The adivasis are being exploited by the landlords and traders and are being pushed out of their lands.

Manoranjan Roy (West Bengal) narrated the experience of the trade union movements in West Bengal. The formation of Rashtriya Sangram Samiti of trade unions had helped a great deal in achieving working class unity in action and politicalization of the workers. The Party was aware of the limitations of the U.F. Government and hence asked the workers to continue to struggle for their demands. The Party asked the workers to stand on the side of the peasantry. In the BPTUC conference, the main slogan was worker-peasant alliance. Workers are now coming in support of office employees, like LIC.

Nallasivam (Tamilnadu) referred to the textile crisis and said 20,000 textile workers were unemployed for the last two years. The engineering industry was in crisis. The handloom industry was in crisis. All this showed the bankruptcy of the policy of attempting to industrialize the country on capitalist lines. Because of mechanization of the tanning industry, thousands of workers had been retrenched. The DMK Government was failing to face up to the problems created by the economic crisis, he said.

Satyanarain Tewari (U.P.) said that in Banares Hindu University there was a new pattern on attack to root out physically the progressive forces among the students. RSS, goondas, police, CIA and even University authorities joined together in this gang-up.

P. K. Chathunny Master (Kerala) stressed the need for

revolutionary vigilance against counter-revolutionary activity. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, the Central Intelligence, enemy agents are all active in the educational, political and every other sphere.

He explained the salient features of the new Bill to amend the Kerala Agrarian Relations Act. The important thing is that the day the Act comes into force, landlordism will be extinguished in Kerala and tenants will become owners of the land they cultivate.

Kesto Ghosh (West Bengal) pointed out to the unprecedented scope for developing the mass movement and class struggle. The crux of the problem is to build up the mass movement. Relating the experience in West Bengal, he said the working class and peasantry were being won over to the banner of the Party. He said that the Party must create an independent mass base for itself.

Hare Krishna Konar (West Bengal) said that in the period since the 7th Congress there has been a consolidation of the gains of the Party. But serious shortcomings and weaknesses were there in the Party's work.

He said in the period of the deepening crisis and ruling class offensive, simple mass struggles were not enough. Politicization of the masses had to be achieved.

Govinda Pillai (Kerala) said that one of the greatest menaces to the building of united action was the Right Communists.

Others who spoke during the discussions were Biren Bose, Kali Banerjee, Subhas Chakrabarti, (West Bengal). M. V. Raghavan, Ramana Rai, C. K. Susheela, A.V. Aryan, Patyam Gopalan and Ramchandra Pillai (Kerala), Krishnappa (Karnataka), Ramanand Singh, Chandi Prasad and Krishna Kant (Bihar), Ram Asrey and P. K. Tandon (Uttar Pradesh), Nandeswar Talukdar and Biresh Misra (Assam), Gyan Singh (Haryana), and Motilal Sharma (Madhya Pradesh) V. P. Chintan and Varadarajan (Tamilnadu) and Chiman Mehta (Gujarat).