

The “Statement of Policy” Reviewed

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In 1951 the Communist Party of India adopted two documents – the Party Programme and the Statement of Policy. Subsequent developments led to the abandonment of the 1951 Programme since it contained many mistakes. But, the companion document Statement of Policy was neither reviewed nor revised. In the struggle against revisionism inside the communist movement in India, the Statement of Policy came under attack from the revisionists. The CPI (M) reiterated its adherence to the basic postulates of the document, but for various reasons could not incorporate the requisite changes in the changed circumstances. After a discussion within the Central Committee of the CPI (M) the understanding that emerged in relation to the document could be finalised only in 1976. Since this was the period of repression and Emergency rule in the country, the revised document could not at the time be circulated to the party ranks. We are publishing here a review of the Statement of Policy document as was adopted in the year 1976.

Introduction

In April 1951, the central committee had released two documents, the Draft Programme of the Communist Party of India and the *Statement of Policy* to the party ranks, inviting suggestions and criticisms. Both these drafts were adopted by the All-India Party Conference in October 1951. They were again endorsed by the Third Congress of the Party which was held between December 27, 1953, and January 4, 1954, in Madurai. The *Statement of Policy* was also called by another name, the *Tactical Line*, which deals with the perspective path of the Indian revolution, and the building of the class and mass movements and the Communist Party, in accordance with this perspective.

It is relevant to recall the historical fact that both the above-mentioned party documents were the outcome of prolonged and bitter inner-party discussions and struggle during the years 1947-51. In the period 1946-1947, a number of militant, mass, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggles erupted, as an integral part of the post-war upsurge. The Warli tribal revolt in Maharashtra, the Tebhaga kisan struggle in Bengal, the tribal armed resistance in Tripura, the Punnapra-Vayalar and North-

Malabar peasant struggles in Kerala and the Telangana peasants' armed struggle in the erstwhile princely state of Hyderabad, were some of the most important struggles of that period.

Out of all these struggles, the Telangana peasants' struggle not only acquired the character of peasant partisan armed resistance against forced labour, evictions and for land, but also shaped itself into liberation struggle against the Nizam and his autocratic feudal rule in the erstwhile state of Hyderabad. The Telangana peasant partisan war of resistance, which began in the last quarter of the year 1946, lasted till October 1951, when it had to be withdrawn due to the concentrated and heavy military attacks of the Congress government as well as the new political situation that had come to prevail. The Telangana armed peasant revolt had risen to such heights as to be able to set up nearly 3000 village committees or *Gram Rajyalu*. These committees virtually took over and retained in their hands, for more than a year, the entire village administration until the military intervention by the Indian Union government in September 1948. This military intervention, though termed as a 'police action' against the intransigent feudal Nizam of the state, was actually hastened with a view to putting down the rapidly advancing armed struggle of the Telangana peasants, led by the Andhra Mahasabha and the Communist Party.

The Andhra Provincial Committee of the CPI, which was in direct charge of guiding and leading the Telangana armed struggle, had faced a number of political, ideological, theoretical and organisational questions. They had to be seriously discussed and resolved. These issues related to the stage and class strategy of the Indian revolution, to tactics and the forms of struggle and organisation; to the perspective path of revolution, i.e., whether it was likely to take the "Russian path" or the "Chinese path" of development; to the specific role of working class uprisings in cities and peasant partisan war in the rural areas; to the correct understanding of the concept of proletarian hegemony, etc.

The discussions and their conclusions were expressed in various documents such as the Thesis of the Second Party Congress, the Note of the Andhra Provincial Secretariat in June 1948, the document on Strategy and Tactics in the Struggle for People's Democratic Revolution in India worked out by the then Polit Bureau, the Report on Left-Sectarianism in the Organisational Activities of the Polit Bureau, the Report on the Left Deviation inside the CPI, adopted at the June 1950 C.C. meeting, and a Note on the Present Situation in Our Party, by the late Ajay Ghosh and the late S.V. Ghate. Differing views were expressed on the different issues being debated. Most of these documents are now in printed form published by the People's Publishing House as Volume 7 of the 1948-50 period. They are cited only to show the stupendous nature of the inner-party discussions preceding the preparation and

adoption of the two key documents, the *Party Programme* of 1951 and the *Statement of Policy*, otherwise called the *Tactical Line*.

But the tragic part of the story is that before long, within two to three years in fact, some of the basic postulates made in the Party Programme of 1951 were found to be wrong and required correction. The then dominant section of the C.C. leadership, instead of correcting these wrong postulates that had crept into the Party Programme, began to ‘correct’ them in an utterly Right-reformist and revisionist direction. Exploiting the mistakes in the 1951, Party Programme and drawing some totally *defeatist and Right-opportunist lessons* from the defeat suffered in the mid-term elections of Andhra state in March 1955, the C.C. leadership worked out a political resolution, under the caption *Communist Party in the Struggle for Peace, Democracy and National Advance* in June 1955, a resolution that once again threw the entire party line into the melting pot, and intensified the differences inside the party. The continued conflict finally paved the way for the split of the party in the years 1963-64.

The enormity and the extremely grave character of the differences and disunity that was prevalent inside the once united CPI during the years 1955-64 can be understood by those who witnessed the stormy scenes at several meetings of the C.C. and National Council, besides the sharp divisions witnessed during the Fourth Congress at Palghat and the Sixth Congress at Vijayawada. It was in the November and December months of 1964, that, after the split, the two parties, the Right C.P. and the CPI (M) adopted two different, new, Party Programmes. It goes without saying that if the new Programme adopted by the CPI (M) is Marxist-Leninist, the Right C.P. had worked out a Right-opportunist and class-collaborationist Programme.

In the long period from 1951-52 to 1967-68, the *Statement of Policy* was neither taken up for discussion *in depth* at any time nor was its understanding sought to be translated into practice in building the class and mass organisations and the Communist Party. In fact, the thesis of peaceful transition to socialism, made at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, made a great impact on the *dominant section of the Party leadership*, and the *Statement of Policy* or *Tactical Line* was shelved and relegated to the background, if not actually repudiated. In the place of the latter, the slogans of 1948-50 of the “Telangana Path”, “Chinese Path”, etc., new slogans such as the “Kerala Path”, “non-capitalist path” and the like, came up for discussion. The other section of the party leadership, though unable to do anything regarding the *Statement of Policy* and in the matter of orientating our work on its basis, was pledging its loyalty to the *Statement of Policy*, treating it as a precious treasure of the party.

Between January 1965 and April 1966 the majority of the leadership of the CPI (Marxist) was detained under the Defence of India Rules, then subsequently released. The C.C. meeting at Nurmahal, in the last quarter of 1966, took up in its agenda, the working out of tasks on the kisan, trade union and party fronts, in conformity with the new Party Programme of 1964 and the *Statement of Policy*. *The Tasks on the Kisan Front*, *Tasks on the Trade Union Front*, and *Our Tasks on Party Organisation*, are the documents which were released by the Central Committee during the 1966-67 period, and they manifest our Party's earnest attempts to orientate our current work to the *Statement of Policy* and its guidelines.

It was precisely at this juncture that the Naxalite disruption arose inside our Party, beginning in May-June 1967, and culminating in May-June 1968, in sizeable sections of the party breaking away in different states. The Naxalites challenged the Party Programme, the *Statement of Policy* and the entire political line of the CPI (M) from extreme Left-opportunist positions and demanded that the CPI (M) accept the so-called Thought of Mao Zedong as the Marxism-Leninism of our epoch. Our party was drawn into a furious political-ideological and organisational struggle in defence of the Party Programme, *Statement of Policy* and the general political line of the party, at a time when it was striving its utmost to reorientate, the entire work of the party on the lines of the new Programme adopted at the Seventh Congress and the *Statement of Policy* or *Tactical Line*, which had been put into cold storage during the fifteen-year period from 1952 to 1967. The Polit Bureau and the Central Committee firmly upheld and expounded its Marxist-Leninist viewpoint on the Party Programme, *Statement of Policy* and other issues, while sharply opposing and rejecting the Naxalite line of thought on every score.

However, this positive defence of the *Statement of Policy* against the Left-adventurist distortions of the Naxalites, did not automatically mean that a collective and common understanding existed on all the different propositions that had been made on the *Tactical Line* document. The *Tactical Line* document as we pointed out earlier, had neither been taken up for discussion at any time nor its understanding sought to be translated into action in the building up of class and mass movements and the party organisation, as long as the united CPI was in existence. The new leadership which was forged during the course of the inner-party struggle against the Right-revisionist policies and practice of the leaders of the united party, and which was elected into the new C.C. and P.B. of the CPI (M), also did not and could not discuss the *Statement of Policy*, afresh and collectively, to arrive at a correct and common understanding of its different aspects. Subsequent developments inside the P. B. and C.C. showed that a general understanding and acceptance of the *Tactical Line* document was not enough to unify our party or to orientate its work according to *Tactical Line* and the revolutionary understanding it implied.

The Eighth Party Congress in December 1968 endorsed and reiterated the *Statement of Policy*. While publishing this *Statement of Policy*, the following Note was inserted as an introduction:

“*The Statement of Policy* which is being printed here was adopted by the Communist Party of India at the All-India Party Conference in October 1951. It accompanied a Programme for the Party which was also adopted by the same conference. The *Statement of Policy* was later endorsed by the Third Party Congress at Madurai.

“The Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has reiterated this *Statement of Policy*.

“But the *Statement of Policy*, based as it is on the old programme, contains some formulations regarding the stage, strategy and class alliance of the Indian revolution which have since been corrected by the Party in its new programme adopted at the Seventh Congress.

“The old programme describing the stage of the revolution as anti-imperialist and anti-feudal, had advocated a *General United Front* in which the big bourgeoisie was also to be a participant. The present Party programme, correctly characterising the present stage of the Indian revolution as the second, agrarian stage of the revolution, directed not only against the landlords and imperialists but also against the Indian big bourgeoisie, has laid down that the big bourgeoisie has no place in the People’s Democratic Front.

“It is necessary to keep this in mind while studying this *Statement of Policy*, which essentially deals with the path of the Indian revolution.”

The above-quoted Note of Introduction, mentioning the changes made in the new Party Programme, regarding the stage, strategy and class alliance of the Indian revolution, exhorts party members with the words that,

“*It is necessary to keep this in mind while studying the Statement of Policy which essentially deals with the path of the Indian Revolution.*” This, was a clear admission on the part of our party’s central leadership that it had neither given serious thought to the basic changes in the Party Programme and their bearing on the *Tactical Line* and its implementation, nor made any comprehensive assessment of the socio-economic changes in our country that had come about in the period after Independence, and their impact on the *Tactical Line*, and implications for carrying on the day-to-day work of the party and the revolutionary movement. Under these circumstances all our

attempts to orientate our work to different class and mass fronts, and all our efforts to concretise the *Tactical Line* in terms of the tasks to be discharged in the day-to-day work of the party were bound to suffer from inadequacies and even mistakes – all, in their turn, leading to differences and disagreements in the party leadership over the *Tactical Line* and the precise meaning of different formulations in it. This is exactly what happened, forcing us to undertake a discussion, in conditions of the Emergency, which had severely restricted the legal possibilities for such a discussion.

The Salient Points in the Tactical Line

Before we assess the socio-economic developments during the post-Independence period and the basic changes introduced regarding the stage, strategy and class alliance in the new Party Programme of 1964, and begin to integrate such an assessment with the *Tactical Line* and its implementation, it is first of all necessary to narrate, though briefly, all the salient points made in the document.

I. The immediate objective set forth in the 1951 Party Programme was “the complete liquidation of feudalism, the distribution of all land held by feudal owners among the peasants and agricultural workers and achievement of full national independence and freedom. These objectives cannot be realised in a peaceful, parliamentary way. These objectives can be realised only through a revolution, through the overthrow of the present. Indian state and its replacement by a People’s Democratic State. For this the Communist Party shall strive to rouse the entire peasantry and the working class against the feudal exploiters, strengthen the alliance between the working-class and the peasantry and build, under the leadership of the working-class, *a broad nationwide united front of all anti-imperialist classes, including the national bourgeoisie*, sections, groups, parties and elements willing to fight for democracy, and for the freedom and independence of India.” (Emphasis added).

II. the Tactical Line negates two wrong and distorted ideas: “For a period, after the Second Party Congress, the dominant tendency inside the party leadership was to forget the colonial nature of India’s economy, to refuse to draw lessons from the experience of the revolutionary movement in China and other colonial countries, to minimise the importance of the peasant struggle and to put forward the thesis that the political general strike in the cities and in industrial areas is the main weapon of our revolution, that such a strike will itself unleash countrywide insurrection and lead to the overthrow of the present State.

“Afterwards, on the basis of a wrong understanding of the experience of the Chinese revolution, the thesis was put forward that the Indian-revolution would develop exactly in the same way as the revolution in China and that partisan war would be the

main or almost the only weapon to ensure its victory.

“While the former thesis minimised the importance of the peasant masses and their struggle, the latter thesis minimised the importance of the working class and its actions. Both *Tactical Lines* were the result of ignoring the specific situation in India and the tendency to draw mechanical parallels with other countries.

“In theory as well as in practice, both *Tactical Lines* amounted to repudiation of the key task of building the alliance of the working class and the peasantry, repudiation, therefore, of the task of building the united national front of which this alliance alone could be the firm basis, repudiation of the leadership of the working class in the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist revolution.”

Hence it is necessary to discard both the above *Tactical Lines*, in order to evolve a correct *Tactical Line*.

III. similarities and differences: The specific features of the Chinese revolution are:

(a) “In China, the split in the United National Front in 1927, simultaneously split the armed forces also and the Chinese Communist Party had an army of 30,000 to start with.

(b) “Moreover, because of sparse development of railways and other means of transport, the enemy found it difficult to rapidly concentrate his forces against the areas held by the Communists.

(c) “In China different imperialist powers had different spheres of influence, and different warlords were at loggerheads with each other and could not combine and concentrate against the revolutionary bases.

(d) “Despite these advantages enjoyed by the revolutionary forces, they were repeatedly encircled by the enemy. Time and again, they had to break from this encirclement and threat of annihilation and migrate to new areas, to build again. It was only when they made their way to Manchuria and found the firm rear of the Soviet Union that the threat of encirclement came to an end and they were able to launch the great offensive which finally led to the liberation of China. *It was thus the support given by the existence of a firm and mighty Soviet rear that was of decisive importance in ensuring victory to the tactic of peasant warfare in the country-side inside China.*”

In contrast to these conditions, the situation in India is different in several respects.

IV. peasant partisan struggle is one of the most powerful weapons in the armoury of the revolutionary movement in india: Do the different conditions in India, when compared to China, warrant the conclusion that partisan warfare has no place in India? No.

“India is a vast country, with a backward and basically colonial economy and with 80 per cent of its people depending upon agriculture. In such a country partisan struggle, as the experience in China has shown, is one of the most powerful weapons in the armoury of the revolutionary movement, and this weapon will have to be wielded by the Communist Party as is the case with all colonial countries.

“Partisan areas will inevitably arise in various parts of the country, as the crisis deepens and as the mass peasant movement rises to the level of revolutionary seizure of land and foodgrains, paralysing and wiping out the local forces of the counter-revolution. These areas and the revolutionary forces operating in them, however, will continuously face the danger of encirclement at the hands of the opponent.”

The partisan movement can be developed even in areas where communications are well-developed, if the peasantry expresses its readiness to enforce its demands by force. But when enemy encirclement occurs, we will have to lead the partisan forces out of such encirclement and join it with the partisan forces in another area, so as to create the liberation forces of our own. This, of course, is envisaged when peasant partisan struggles break out in various parts of the country.

V. peasant partisan struggles alone cannot ensure victory: It will have to be combined with the other major weapons, that of strike of the working class, general strike and uprising in cities.

It is so because “even the coming into existence of liberated territories with their own armed forces in several parts of the country will not eliminate this danger because these areas will themselves be surrounded by hostile forces from all sides. Therefore, partisan war alone, no matter how widely extended, cannot ensure victory over the enemy in the concrete situation prevailing in India. When the maturing crisis gives rise to partisan struggles on a wide scale, when the partisan forces in several areas are battling against the enemy, the workers in the cities, in vital industries, and especially in the transport system, will have to play a decisive role. The onslaught of the enemy against the partisan forces, against liberation areas will have to be hampered and paralysed by mass strike actions of the working class. With hundreds of partisan struggles merging with the general strike and uprisings of workers in the cities, the enemy will find it impossible to concentrate his forces anywhere and defeat the revolutionary forces but will himself face defeat and annihilation. Even inside the

armed forces of the government, the crisis will grow and big sections will join the forces of revolution.”

In this connection, “we should bear in mind that the Chinese party stuck to the peasant partisan war alone, not out of principle but out of sheer necessity. In their long-drawn struggles the party and peasant bases got more and more separated from the towns and the working class therein, which prevented the party and the liberation army from calling into action the working class in factories, shipping and transport to help it against the enemy. Because it happened so with the Chinese, why make their necessity into a binding principle for us and fail to bring the working class into practical leadership and action in our liberation struggle?”

VI. the role of the working class uprising and the correct meaning of proletarian hegemony: The *Tactical Line*, the *Statement of Policy* document, while pointing out how the weapon of peasant partisan struggles *alone or in the main*, cannot ensure victory, how “it is absolutely essential to combine two basic factors – the partisan struggle of the peasants and workers’ uprising in the cities”, and how important is the role of the working class and its hegemony in the Indian revolution, highlights the following points:

India has a far bigger working class than China had during the course of its revolutionary struggle, and it has a decisive role to play in the Indian liberation struggle. In order to frustrate the attempts of the class enemies – to keep the urban areas and industrial centres under their control and thus to be able to crush the partisan resistance and annihilate partisan areas and armed forces, the working class in cities and key industrial centres will have to play the most crucial role, through its direct actions and *revolutionary uprisings*.

Emphasising the worker-peasant alliance and the correct meaning of the concept of proletarian hegemony, the *Tactical Line* says:

“Such a perspective demands the closest alliance between the working class and the peasantry and the realisation of working class leadership in this alliance. This alliance will be built in action, by the bold championship by the working class of the demands of the peasantry, by the direct support given by the working class in the form of demonstrations and strikes to the struggles waged by the peasantry. *Leadership of the working-class will be realised not merely through the leadership of the Communist Party, but above all, through the direct mass action of the working class itself in support of the demands and struggles of the peasantry.* Of all classes, the working class is looked upon by the peasants as their closest friend and ally. Many workers come from the rural areas and are linked to the peasants by a thousand and one ties.

Actions by the working class help not merely the existing struggles, but also, as the history of our National movement shows, inspire the peasants in the neighbouring areas, radicalise them and help in developing new peasant struggles.

“In the present situation in India when all classes, all sections, except the exploiting few, are facing starvation and when hatred against the present government is growing, strike actions of the working class on such issues as food, ration-cuts, etc., can be a most powerful weapon to inspire the entire people, to give concrete forms to their discontent, to build their unity in action and to raise the popular movement to a higher level. By fighting not merely for its own demands but for the demands of all discontented sections and classes, especially the peasantry, by acting as the foremost champion of the interests of the general democratic movement, the working class will come forward as the leader of the revolutionary people and build their revolutionary unity.

“It is of the utmost importance therefore that the party creates political consciousness in the working class, makes it conscious of its role of hegemony, overcomes the present disunity of the working class, wins over the majority of the workers in the vital industries and builds a powerful movement with factory and workshop committees as its nucleus. The best and most advanced elements must be recruited in the party. All this demands intensive political agitation in the working class, patient day-to-day work, leadership of immediate struggles for the winning of the concrete demands and the building up of a strong trade union movement. Only a united working class and a working class conscious of its role of hegemony can build National unity.”

Thus the *Tactical Line* pronounced its judgement on the then prevailing confusion, controversy and mistaken notions about the concept of proletarian hegemony: though it is absolutely correct that the working class can exercise its hegemony through its political party, i.e., the Communist and Workers’ Parties that are guided by Marxism-Leninism, it is wrong and incorrect to equate or substitute the leadership of the Communist Party for the leadership of the working class.

The CPI (M) has clearly pronounced its stand on the path of the People’s Democratic Revolution in its Programme which reads:

“The Communist Party of India strives to achieve the establishment of People’s Democracy and Socialist transformation through peaceful means. By developing a powerful mass revolutionary movement, by combining parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forms of struggle, the working class and its allies will try their utmost to overcome the resistance of the forces of reaction and to bring about these

transformations through peaceful means.

“However, it needs always to be borne in mind that the ruling classes never relinquish their power voluntarily. They seek to defy the will of the people and seek to reverse it by lawlessness and violence. It is, therefore, necessary for the revolutionary forces to be vigilant and so orientate their work that they can face up to all contingencies, to any twist and turn in the political life of the country.”

VII. the scope of peasant partisan actions: The *Tactical Line* says: “As the crisis matures, as the unity, consciousness and organisation of the masses grow, as the strength and influence of the party develops and as the enemy resorts to more and more ruthless measures to crush the agrarian movement, the question of when, where and how to resort to militant resistance will be more and more forced on the agenda. As the question is of immense practical importance, it is absolutely necessary that the party is able to give a clear and unambiguous answer to it.

“It must be realised that because of the vast area of India, because of the uneven level of mass consciousness and mass movement in different parts of the country, uneven acuteness of the agrarian crisis and uneven strength of the influence of the party itself, the peasant movement cannot develop at the same tempo everywhere. Premature uprisings and adventurist actions of every type must be avoided but it would be wrong to lay down that the armed actions in the form of partisan struggle should be resorted to in every specific area only when the movement in all parts of the country rises to the level of uprising. On the contrary, in the course of development of the movement a situation will arise in several areas which would demand militant struggle in the form of partisan warfare; for example, in a big and topographically suitable area where the peasant movement has risen to the level of seizure of land, the question of how to effect that seizure, how to defend the land will become a burning and live question. The party is of the opinion that partisan struggle in such a situation, undertaken on the basis of a genuine mass peasant movement and the firm unity, under the leadership of the party, of the peasant masses, especially the most oppressed and exploited strata, combined with other forms of struggle, such as social boycott of landlords, a mass non-rent struggle, agricultural workers’ strikes, alone, if correctly conducted and led, have a rousing and galvanising effect on the peasant masses in all areas and raise their own struggles to a higher level.

“Wherever such partisan struggles develop they must also be combined with mass actions of the working class, especially in the neighbouring areas, in the form of strikes and demonstrations. Undertaken on the basis of the most careful preparations and assessment of all factors the partisan struggles must be conducted with the utmost boldness and tenacity, defending the gains of the movement by every means at our

disposal. At the same time, the party has to act with the utmost flexibility when overwhelming forces of the state are concentrated against the partisan areas and partisan forces and they run into the danger of defeat and total annihilation.”

VII. individual or squad terrorism is incompatible with partisan struggle: The *Tactical Line* rejects the assertion “that individual terrorism is a part of partisan struggle, and not even a part but even the basis of the partisan struggle. This is absolutely wrong. What is more, individual terrorism contradicts the spirit and objective of partisan struggle. And it is absolutely incompatible with partisan struggle. In the first place, the objective of individual terrorism is to destroy particular individuals while not pursuing the aim of destroying the regime of feudal exploitation and subjugation of the people, whereas the objective of partisan struggle is not to destroy particular individuals but to destroy the hated regime in a prolonged struggle of the popular masses. In the second place, individual terrorism is carried out by individual terrorists or by small squads of terrorists, acting apart from the masses, whereas the partisan struggle is carried out by the popular masses and not by individuals, it is carried on in close contact with the struggle of the masses against the existing regime.”

Individual terrorism “creates in the minds of the masses a harmful illusion as if it were possible to destroy the regime by destroying individual representatives of the regime, that the main evil is not the existence of the regime but the existence of particular and the worst representatives of the regime whom it is precisely necessary to destroy. It is clear that such a feeling created by individual terrorism can only weaken the onslaught of the masses against the regime and thereby facilitate the struggle of the government against the people”

Individual terrorism leads to an undue minimisation of the role of the mass movement and to equally undue exaggeration of the role of the terrorists, who are alleged to be capable of securing the liberation of the people by their own forces, independent of the growth of the mass partisan movement. It is clear that such a feeling created by individual terrorism can undermine the development of the partisan struggle.

“The theory of individual terrorism comes to the front when the revolution recedes. It is a reflection of weaknesses in the movement. Whenever the revolution is rising and the masses themselves rise, the theory of individual terrorism disappears from the horizon.”

IX. present partisan struggle to enforce demands: Partisan struggles to enforce partial demands are not to be confused with partisan struggles as part of liberation struggles.

The phrase or concept of the partisan form of struggle was understood and used in the

earlier discussions before the *Tactical Line* document was worked out, in a particular sense, as part of liberation war, especially as peasant guerrilla warfare. In a period of revolutionary crisis, a series of armed clashes waged by worker combatants or unemployed workers against the armed forces of the state were characterised as partisan struggles connected with these armed uprisings. The resistance movements conducted by the anti-fascist forces during the Second World War were also termed partisan warfare. The Telangana armed struggle which was conducted against the autocracy of the Nizam from 1946 to September 1948, i.e., until the Indian army intervened, was called partisan warfare, as it was an armed liberation struggle against the rule of the Nizam. The Telangana struggle during the 1948-51 period was also a peasant partisan struggle which was waged in defence of the peasants' gains made earlier.

The *Tactical Line* document, and the questions and answers which are appended to it, have enriched our understanding. This phrase partisan warfare has a much wider connotation. The clarification incorporated in the *Tactical Line* makes it clear that the peasant struggle even for enforcing a partial demand like reduction of rent or against eviction, is characterised as a partisan struggle. Sometimes, in our discussion, it is also described as “partial partisan struggle”, i.e., peasant partisan struggle to enforce partial demands.

“Question: Is it correct to resort to partisan war in one particular area where the conditions are ripe for it, even though other rural areas are not ripe for it, and the workers are not ready to support it with mass actions?

“Answer: Yes, you can and should resort to it. To start or not, does not depend on us. It depends on the organisational state of the masses and their mood. If the masses are ready, you must start it.

“Question: Have we to take up partisan struggle only when the stage of land distribution and establishing of village peasant committees arises? Or can we take it up when the movement is still in the stage of struggle for partial demands, for example, rent-reduction?

“Answer: The partisan struggle also has stages. It starts with smaller demands – let us say, reduction of rent. It is not yet a partisan struggle. If the enemy refuses to grant the demand and the peasant is eager to win it by force, then partisan struggles can start. True, it is not the struggle for seizure of land but only for a reduction of rent, still it will be a partisan struggle.

Hence, it does not depend on us. If the masses are ready and eager, we should assist

them.

“Question: Can partisan warfare even of the most elementary type be developed in areas where communications are well-developed?

“Answer: Yes, when encirclement occurs, transfer the best forces to another area. Lead out the armed forces so as to join them with the armed forces in another area, so as to create a liberation army of your own.

“Question: The aim of the partisan struggle must be the liquidation of the enemy’s armed forces with the active assistance of the masses of peasants. To kill individual oppressors with a view to terrorising all the other oppressors and making them renounce their oppression is terrorism. But I cannot understand the complete banning of any individual action against any oppressor landlord, notorious official or a spy, as a matter of principle, under the name of terrorism. In my opinion, at times, it becomes necessary, in the earlier phase of the partisan struggle, not in order to terrorise other oppressors into renouncing their oppression, but to guard the safety of the partisan squads. I am unable to understand how such actions make the people passive. As I understand international literature, such individual actions were conducted by partisans against German and Japanese fascists in the occupied territories during the anti-fascist war, and they are now being undertaken even in Asian countries where partisan warfare is going on – Malaya, Burma, Indo-China, etc. If I remember rightly, such actions were not only not banned by Lenin in his article on partisan warfare; but on the contrary, he severely criticised the Mensheviks who condemned them as anarchism. I seek clarification on this point.

“Answer: The comrade says he cannot understand why individual terrorism should slow down the action of the masses. Individual terrorism is called so not merely because it is directed against individuals or groups irrespective of the masses. Individual terrorism creates the illusion that the main evil is not the regime but individuals; that only if a few more are destroyed, the regime will be finished off. What conclusion will the masses draw? That with the help of terrorism of this type, it is possible to destroy the regime after a long struggle. And if such conclusions are drawn by the peasants, they will say, “No use developing the struggle against the regime. Our glorious terrorists will do the job.” Such sentiments weaken the onslaught of the masses against the regime. Therefore, it is harmful and dangerous. “Individual terrorism creates the belief that the main force lies in the heroic terrorists and not in the masses. The role of the masses becomes to watch and applaud. That means to cultivate passivity. Marx and Engels taught that the liberation of the masses has to be won by the masses themselves. That is what you ought to tell them. Different results follow from individual terrorism. The masses look to the terrorists as

heroes and liberators.

The comrade's reference to Lenin is without foundation. We can give him articles by Lenin directed against individual terrorism. You must know how hard Lenin hit the Mensheviks when the revolution was at an ebb and they took to terror.

“The theory of individual terrorism comes to the forefront when the revolution recedes. It is a reflection of the weakness of the movement. When the revolutionary movement is rising and the masses themselves rise, the theory of individual terrorism disappears from the horizon. The comrade must bear that in mind.”

X. build a mass communist party based on Marxism-leninism: The *Tactical Line* stressed the need to soberly and objectively estimate the current situation at a particular period, so as to avoid both adventuristic and reformistic tactics and action. It pointed to the fact that the growth of the popular movement was lagging behind the growth of popular discontent.

“This lag is due not merely to the repressive measures adopted by the government but, primarily and above all, to the weakness of the party and the existing disunity of the progressive forces. It is, therefore, one of the key tasks of the party to forge the unity of the working class, to unite the popular forces on the basis of a concrete programme, and to grow into a mass party so as to be able to supply the leadership which alone can extend the mass movement and raise it to a higher level.

“It has to lead the masses in their day-to-day struggles, and take them forward step by step so that the people, through their own experience, come to realise the necessity and inevitability of the revolution.”

It concludes with, the following statement: “The fact is that if the crisis bursts forth in the near future, the party in its present disorganised and weak state will not be able to fully utilise it to lead the people to revolution. It is not yet prepared to shoulder the gigantic responsibilities that such a situation will place on it. It is necessary, therefore, that the present weaknesses are overcome with the utmost rapidity, the ranks of the party are unified and steps taken to extend the mass base of the party and strengthen it, While recruiting the best elements from the working class and other fighting classes into the party and developing it into a mass party, it is necessary at the same time to exercise the utmost vigilance against the swamping of the party by elements that cannot yet be considered fully tested and trustworthy, The system of candidate membership must be introduced for this purpose. It is also necessary that while utilising all legal possibilities, the existing illegal apparatus of the Party is strengthened enormously.

“The building of a mass Communist party equipped with the theory of Marxism-Leninism, a party mastering strategy and tactics, a party practicing self-criticism and strict discipline and which is closely connected with the masses, is a crucial task.”

XI. the two wrong estimates of the situation rejected: It is stated in the *Tactical Line* that, “it would be gross exaggeration to assert that India is already on the verge of armed struggle, that civil war is already raging in the country, that the government, its leaders and agents are already and completely isolated, and so on and so forth. Such exaggeration leads to the advocacy of adventuristic actions and the issuing of futile calls for action and pompous slogans which bear no relation either to the existing level of mass consciousness or to the actual maturity of the party, making it easy for the enemy to destroy it.

“Equally wrong are they who through reformism see only the weakness and disunity of the popular movement, the offensive of the enemy and advocate a policy of retreat and ‘lying low’, a policy of regrouping forces, eschewing all militant actions in the cities and countryside for the present. Tactics based on such an understanding of the situation will result in the worst type of reformism and make the party trail behind the masses instead of leading them”

XII. lead the masses in their day-to-day struggle: The *Tactical Line* document, while noting the fast-maturing crisis, the growing mass discontent against the policies of the government and the weakness of the popular movement and its unity to lead the people’s struggles, calls for forging the unity of the working class and uniting the popular forces on the concrete programme.

The *Statement of Policy*, while laying down the “path and the perspective” of the Indian revolution, raises the question of current tactics and gives the following answer:

“The question of the immediate, while certainly influenced by the perspective, is not solely determined by it. It is also governed by the assessment of the present situation. How far is the government isolated, how far are the people disillusioned, how far are they ready to struggle, are some of the questions that determine tasks and slogans for them.

“The party must not preach the inevitability of fascism but utilise the enormous volume of democratic opinion in the country to unite the people to halt the growing drive towards fascism on the part of the present government.

“Taking fascism to be inevitable or already in power, they would scoff at parliamentary elections or fighting for civil liberties for which broad sections of the people can and should be mobilised.

“We must fight the parliamentary elections and elections in every sphere where the broad strata of the people can be mobilised and their interests defended. We must be wherever the masses are and would like us to be.”

It enjoins on the party to give the slogan that the present government must go and be replaced by a popular government, representing the unity of the democratic forces, a government that will break with the British Empire and carry out the programme of agrarian reform and defend democracy. It has to utilise the coming general elections for the most extensive popularisation of its programme, for mobilising and unifying the democratic forces, for exposing the policies and methods of the present government. It has to lead the masses in their day-to-day struggles and take them forward step by step so that the people, through their own experience, come to realise the necessity and inevitability of revolution.

The *Tactical Line* document ends with a stirring appeal to organise the peace movement against the war danger from the Anglo-American warmongers. It pinpoints the sectarian mistakes in the conducting of the peace movement. It shows how “the peace movement is not a pacifist movement, not a movement recording abstract support to peace, but is a fighting movement for concrete action in defence of peace and against the imperialist warmongers including those waging colonial wars.”

Such were the salient points made in the *Tactical Line* document of 1951. They were made after a serious inner-party debate which lasted for three years during 1948-1951.

All the political-theoretical generalisations made in the *Tactical Line* regarding the forms of struggle, organisation and the perspective path of development of the Indian revolution are absolutely correct, and hold good even today, though they were made more than three decades ago.

A really revolutionary trade union, kisan and democratic movement and a genuine Communist Party can be built in our country when the leadership of the CPI (M) at different levels understands these tactical and organisational precepts and orientates the work of the party on the lines laid down in the *Tactical Line* document.

To sum up, whatever the modifications that are necessary and whatever the enrichment that is required in the *Statement of Policy* of 1951, fulfilment of these tasks alone can ensure victory of the revolution in our country. The building up of a

united and revolutionary working class movement, the organising of a powerful kisan movement with special emphasis on agricultural labourers and poor peasants, the forging of a durable alliance between the working class and the peasantry and wielding of the two major weapons of peasant partisan struggles and working class general strike and revolutionary uprisings, the building up of a broad nation-wide People's Democratic Front and the assertion of working class hegemony over it, the building of the Communist party which should be able to combine legal and illegal work and build an illegal apparatus to be in a position to withstand all the possible attacks of the class enemies, etc., are some of the most important tasks that the *Statement of Policy* enjoins on us to discharge.

Socio-Economic Changes and Their Impact on Tactical Line

It is not enough to simply reiterate principal propositions contained in the *Tactical Line* document, and once again to pledge to stand by it. This we had been doing since our Seventh Party Congress in 1964. Nor is it correct to content ourselves with the fact that party documents such as *Tasks on the Party Organisation*, etc., testify to our earnest efforts to orientate our work on the lines indicated in the *Tactical Line* resolution, and there is nothing more that needs to be done.

The inner-P.B. discussions since 1969-70, and the inner-P.B. and C.C. discussions during 1975 and 1976, in particular, revealed that sharp differences of opinion existed in interpreting different postulates of the *Tactical Line* document, sometimes assuming the polemical character of the 1948-50 period, the so-called 'Russian Path' vs the 'Chinese Path'.

The *Tactical Line* document when it was formulated in 1951 was discussed in the C.C., reported to the state committees and adopted by the Special Conferences in 1951. It has been referred to from time to time and explained by individual comrades to state and district committees and in party schools also. The *Tactical Line* was defended against Naxalite distortions, and it was in that background that the Eighth Congress of the Party endorsed it. But yet the understanding of it has not been deep going. Discussion in depth by the party leadership of the document, the bearing the subsequent basic changes in the Party Programme had for it and its implementation, the impact of the socio-economic changes in the country after 1951 and their implications in carrying out the day-to-day work of the party and the revolutionary movement have not taken place, making it incumbent on us to do so now to unify the party and to orientate our work on the lines laid down in the *Statement of Policy*. Otherwise all earlier resolutions of our C.C. and the party dealing with this subject; will be liable to different interpretations, some emphasising particular aspects of the *Tactical Line* and others disagreeing with such an emphasis.

Such a discussion of the *Tactical Line* is additionally emphasised because of two very important factors, namely, the socio-economic developments during the post-Independence years, in particular the changes on the agrarian front, and the vital changes introduced in the new Party Programme of 1964 on the stage, class strategy and nature of the Indian revolution, sharply diverging from those made in the 1951 Programme. These changes will have to be correctly assessed and analysed as they have a direct bearing on the two principal forms of struggle advocated in the *Tactical Line*.

Principle Changes Effected by the 1964 Programme

Where the stage of the Indian revolution was described in the 1951 Programme as the “revolution of the *general united national front*” against imperialism and its feudal allies, the Programme of the Seventh Party Congress defines it as essentially the *agrarian stage* or People’s Democratic stage with the agrarian revolution as its axis.

Where the 1951 Programme defined the class strategy or class alliance of the revolution as one comprising the “working class, the peasantry, the toiling intelligentsia, the middle classes as well as the national bourgeoisie” *including the big bourgeoisie*, the new Party Programme advocates the class alliance of workers, peasants, middle classes and the non-big bourgeoisie, *excluding* the entire big bourgeoisie from the alliance and placing it as the force which stands in the forefront of violent opposition to revolution.

Where the 1951 Programme characterised the nature of the revolution as only anti-imperialist and anti-feudal, the 1964 Programme characterises it as not only anti-imperialist and anti-feudal, *but also anti-monopolist*.

Where the 1951 Programme put the demand for “the confiscation and nationalisation of all factories, banks plantations, shipping and mining *owned by the British in India*, without raising the slogan of confiscating *all foreign capital*; such as that of the U.S., German or Japanese monopolists; the new Programme raises the slogan of “taking over all foreign capital in plantations, mines, oil refineries and factories, shipping and trade” including “the nationalisation of *all banks and credit institutions and other monopolistic industries*.”

Thus the target of attack is not only British capital, but *all foreign capital and big or monopolistic Indian capital*.

According to the new Programme, our revolution is not only irreconcilable

opposition to feudal landlordism and foreign monopoly, but together with them, it is opposed to the big bourgeois class which is heading the state and collaborating with foreign finance capital, in alliance with feudal and semi-feudal landlordism. Naturally, under these circumstances the People's Democratic Revolution comes into clash with the state power headed by the big bourgeoisie of India.

Thus the Indian big bourgeoisie, which was considered by the 1951 Programme as an ally of the workers and peasants in the struggle against feudalism and foreign capital, according to the new Programme has been found to be allying with feudalism and collaborating with foreign capital, hostile to the workers, peasants and other democratic forces.

Can one say that the above changes in the class alliance for the People's Democratic Revolution will have no negative impact on the two principal forms of struggle envisaged in the *Tactical Line* for attaining the victory of the revolution?

They are bound to have some unfavourable effect on both the peasant partisan struggle and the urban workers' uprising, though it cannot alter the basic content of the *Tactical Line* and the perspective given therein.

Changes in the Agrarian Sector

One of the important development that needs a proper and correct assessment, is the changed agrarian set-up under the rule of the Congress Party during the last 35 years.

Nearly ten years ago, the C.C. in its document, *Tasks on the Kisan Front*, had the following to state:

“However, the bourgeois agrarian programme aims achieving certain limited objectives, it seeks, in the main, to reform the old-type feudal landlordism by inducing the landlords to break up and partition their big estates among their kith and kin, to sell some of their ‘surplus’ lands to the peasants and to take to personal cultivation and supervision of their farms more and more through employing hired labour and farm servants, instead of unrestricted renting out of their lands to the tenants as practised earlier. It also attempts at creating a narrow stratum of rich peasantry who, together with the new-type landlords, can become not only the new political base of the bourgeoisie in the countryside but can also produce the limited surplus of foodgrains to supply the Government for feeding urban centres.

“....They are not aimed at transforming our agriculture into a modern capitalist enterprise; but are intended only to modify and reform the earlier forms of crude

feudal exploitation, and superimpose on it capitalist forms and relations.

“The Congress agrarian reforms created and extended a new-type landlordism which combines in itself both the features of capitalism as well as feudalism; they created a ‘tenant’ who combines in himself the features of the serf and the wage worker; and they created a rural wage-labourer, who, as a pauperised peasant, forced by circumstances, is tied to the village and farming and has no other go than to accept any miserable wage-rate his rural employer is willing to pay. His struggle for better wages is inseparably linked with the struggle for the abolition of landlordism and for land to the tiller, because no appreciable improvement in the way of securing better wages is possible without breaking the land monopoly and drastically reducing the huge number of the pauperised peasant army. All these aspects will have to be borne in mind while formulating the programme on the agrarian front and building the revolutionary kisan movement, which strives to unite the entire peasantry in the fight against landlordism.

“The present countryside somewhat resembles, in a way, what was described by Lenin in the year 1901, regarding Russia. He observed that in the modern Russian countryside ‘two kinds of class antagonisms exist side by side; first, the antagonism between the rural workers and employers and the second, between the peasantry as a whole and the landlord class as a whole. The first antagonism is developing and becoming acute, the second to a considerable degree already belongs to the past. And yet, in spite of this’, it is the second antagonism that has the most vital and most practical significance for Russian Social-Democrats at the present time.’ It is on these lines that our Party was called upon to make a concrete study of the class changes brought about in the countryside, assess them properly, and work out its agrarian strategy and tactics”. (Paras 8, 9 and 11 of “*Tasks on the Kisan Front.*”)

This does not by any means imply that the present-day conditions in our rural areas are exactly the same as in Russia of 1901. But, at the same time, the contradiction between the peasantry as a whole and landlordism continues in our agrarian conditions.

After the above statement was made, the Congress Government with its pressure tactics on landlords, through the enactment of new land ceiling laws, by the introduction of some amendments to the old land ceiling and tenancy legislations and by repeatedly raising the slogan of land reforms, has enabled the landlords to evict tenants’ more and more, to further partition the land among their kith and kin, to sell some portion of their land at good prices, and to increasingly take to “personal cultivation” and intensive agriculture and modern farming.

There has been a further rise in the percentage of agricultural labourers among the rural households. Millions of tenants, protected and tenants-at-will, have either been evicted outright and thrown into the army of landless or forced to purchase the land rights, paying varying prices to the landlords. The so-called “Green Revolution” has helped the landlords and the rich peasants in the main to benefit from the loans granted, the fertilisers supplied, the high-yielding varieties of seed provided, and several other so-called rural development programmes.

The changes effected in the agrarian set-up under the Congress rule since 1946-47 can thus be summed up as:

Reduction in the old form of land concentration in the hands of zamindars, jagirdars and big landlords, even though 35 to 40 per cent of the land is still concentrated in the hands of five to six per cent of the top landlords.

Eviction of millions of tenants thrown into the army of agricultural labourers and tenants-at-will. Only a section of the tenants could become owners of a certain portion of the land on which they had been working as tenants, by paying compensation, or by purchasing at a price lower than the market rate. Today’s tenants are mostly “tenants-at-will”, with no legal record of rights, and, neither so conscious and organised as to demand ownership of the lands they are cultivating, or to enforce even the legally fixed rent, viz., one-third, one-fourth or one-fifth of the produce, as the case may be.

Nearly 50 *per cent* of rural households today own no land at all, or only tiny pieces of land which are totally inadequate to eke out a livelihood, and *who consequently are forced, in the main, to earn their livelihood by hiring themselves out to others* – rich peasants, landlords, etc. They fall, into the category of agricultural workers, handicraftsmen and those engaged in village services.

Another 15 per cent or so of the present rural families come under the category of *middle peasants* who own from two to five acres of wet land, or ten to twelve acres of dry land. They and their families do manual labour on their land, employ a cowhand for tending cattle and hire some agricultural labourers in seasons when there is pressure of work in agricultural operations.

Those who own five to ten acres of wet land or ten to twenty acres of dry land constitute some *ten per cent* of our rural households and are to be defined as *rich peasants*. They and their families do manual labour on their farms, but also employ a considerable number of wage labourers and farm servants. They normally not only have enough for their consumption needs but are also able secure some surplus which can be converted into capital. This is the basic division and class differentiation, with

some variation occurring from state to state, and region to region.

In this given structure, it is evident that the middle and rich peasant households which constitute 25 per cent of the total rural households, will not be moved by the slogan of abolition of landlordism and the distribution of their land among the agricultural workers and poor peasants, though the slogan remains the central slogan of the agrarian revolution, not only because it is in the interests of the agricultural workers and poor peasants but also because it is in the objective interest of the peasants in general, and the country as a whole.

The agricultural labourers and poor peasants, who are land-hungry and respond to the slogan of land distribution wherever they are organised and led, have not yet the confidence to go into *action for the expropriation of landlords' land and its distribution among the agricultural labourers and poor peasants*. They are mostly moved into action for the occupation of waste lands, Government lands and forest lands. Even the occupation of the so-called surplus lands of the landlords, over and above the ceiling laws, could be undertaken only when the state Government of the United Democratic Front in West Bengal, under the influence of the CPI (M), restrained the police from going against the fighting peasants. The experience of Kerala shows that the agricultural labourers and poor peasants who are drawn into the struggle for land, are inclined to occupy Government and forest land, but are not yet prepared to seize even the surplus land of landlords on a big scale.

The ruling Congress Party, utilising its hold over the state and Government during the last three and a half decades, has been able to draw a sizable section of the peasantry into its political fold and disrupt the peasant unity that had prevailed prior to the winning of political independence. It is true that this peasant unity which existed centred around the rich and middle peasants, unlike the peasant unity which we seek to forge on the basis of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants. The Congress Party's hold on the village panchayats, block samitis and zilla parishads is being utilised to perpetuate division and disruption among the peasantry. This type of hold on the peasant is not to be ignored and brushed aside, as the general ideological hold of the bourgeois-landlord classes on the peasantry – it is disruptive of peasant unity, and prevents sections of the peasantry from fighting for the realisation of anti-feudal and democratic demands.

The foregoing material goes to show that the Congress agrarian reforms during the last three decades, though they did not abolish landlordism and give land to the landless, succeeded in disrupting whatever peasant unity was built in the earlier decades around the central slogan of abolition of landlordism and land to the actual tiller.

The- phenomenal increase in the number of landless, which has nearly doubled under the Congress rule, the continued concentration of 35 to 40 cent of the land in the hands of five to six per cent landlord households, the growing and large percentage of our people – as high as 50 per cent – in the category that falls below the poverty line; the poverty, hunger and misery of the great majority of our people and the consequent fall in the purchasing capacity of the people; the deepening economic crisis and, above all, the aggravation of the agrarian crisis, additionally emphasise the urgency of the agrarian revolution.

But this task cannot be fulfilled unless the revolutionary working class and its Communist Party undertake sustained and deep-going work among the peasant masses. It requires the creation of a new awakening and awareness on the part of the peasants in general, and the toiling and exploited in particular, to build peasant unity, united organisation and a united movement, on the basis of a new heightened class consciousness. It demands intense efforts on the part of the proletariat and its political party to dislodge the bourgeois-landlord political-ideological hold on the peasantry, and win it as its firm and reliable ally in the struggle for the People's Democratic Revolution.

Though the slogan of the complete abolition of landlordism and distribution of land gratis among the agricultural labourers and poor peasants, continues to be the central slogan of the agrarian revolution for the entire stage of our Peoples' Democratic Revolution, taking into account the structural changes effected by the Congress agrarian reforms, taking serious note of the existing state of organisation, level of consciousness and degree of unity among the peasantry, this central slogan remains today still a *propaganda slogan*.

Until and unless the basic slogan of abolition of landlordism and distribution of land among the landless and the poor peasantry becomes a *slogan of action*, the peasant movement will not be able to reach the level of partisan struggles on such a scale and intensity as to enforce partial demands such as reduction of rent, against eviction, for the abolition of forced labour, etc., as visualised in the *Tactical Line*. Even there partial demands have serious limitations under the present changed conditions, viz., when tenancy, rents, forced labour, etc., no longer exist in their old *form*, scale and *intensity*.

In the light of all these developments, the kisan movement led by our Party, while projecting the slogan of seizure of landlords' land and its redistribution as the central propaganda slogan, and while organising struggles for waste lands, forest lands, and

the so-called “surplus” lands under the ceiling acts, will have to channelise many other agrarian currents. These concern the question of wages for rural workers, the issues of rent reduction, abolition or scaling down of peasant indebtedness, fair price for agricultural produce, reduction of tax burdens, abolition of landlord and police zoolum, against corruption, etc., so that all these currents can be harnessed into one powerful agrarian stream. Otherwise, the maximum peasant unity, isolating the handful of landlords and their hirelings cannot be achieved, nor peasant partisan forces be able to move among the peasantry like fish in water. The guerrilla areas will not be able to survive and liberation areas and liberation forces cannot be created.

In this connection, it is necessary to recall what the Party Programme has stated:

“The agricultural labourers and poor peasants who constitute 70 per cent of the rural households and are subjected to ruthless exploitation by landlords, by their very class position in present day society, will be basic allies of the working class. The middle peasantry, too, are the victims of the depredations of usurious capital, of feudal and capitalist landlordism in the countryside and of the capitalist market, and landlord domination in rural life so affects their social position in innumerable ways as to make them reliable allies in the democratic front.

“The rich peasants are another influential section among the peasantry. The agrarian reforms have undoubtedly benefitted certain sections of them and to some extent, they gained under the rule of the post-Independence regime. They aspire to join the ranks of capitalist-landlords and by virtue of their engaging agricultural labour on hire for work on their forms, they entertain hostility towards them. *Nonetheless, heavy taxation, high prices for industrial goods, and inflation, constantly harass them so as to make their future uncertain. Subject to the ravages of the market under the grip or the monopolist traders, both foreign and Indian, they come up often against the oppressive policies pursued by the bourgeois-landlord Government.* By and large, they can also therefore be brought into the democratic movement and retained as allies in the People’s Democratic Revolution.”

With the aggravation of the economic crisis, the feudal and semi-feudal exploitation of the peasants, the oppression of the peasants by the monopolists, both Indian and foreign, have increased the gap between the prices of agricultural produce and the prices of inputs and other industrial commodities. All this makes it possible to build a powerful united peasant movement – a unity built around the rural labourers and poor peasants, and mainly based upon them.

The *Tasks on the Kisan Front*, released in April 1967, shows the Party’s efforts to assess the development taking place in the agrarian front. While exposing the

Congress land ceiling and emphasising the need to unite different sections of the peasantry on different issues facing them, it was stated:

“Experience has proved that the efforts to solve the problem of redistribution of land through legislations, fixing ceiling on landholdings, are totally ineffective. The landlords and their hangers-on are clever enough to bypass all such legislation, to keep with themselves the bulk of their lands. Our Party and the kisan and agricultural labour organisations should not therefore, allow themselves to be fooled by the idea that the basic slogan of ‘Land to the Tiller’ can be realised through adoption and implementation of legislation fixing ceilings on landholdings. Our Party should ceaselessly educate the peasant and agricultural labour masses that the basic slogan of ‘abolition of landlordism without compensation and giving land to the agricultural labourers and poor peasants free of cost’, is to be realised through the mass action of the entire peasantry. In fact, these struggles for the realisation of their basic demands are a part of the main revolutionary struggle, the struggle for the establishment of a People’s Democratic State.

“It is, however, possible, for strong, militant and well-organised movements of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers to force the unwilling Government and landlords to distribute fallow lands to some extent. It is also possible, through effective mass struggles, to prevent the eviction of tenants from the land they are cultivating, and to achieve land for house-sites for the rural poor, free of cost, to a limited extent. Such struggles against evictions and for the distribution of fallow lands will so strengthen the forces of agrarian revolution that the revolutionary redistribution of land will be possible at a subsequent stage. These struggles, therefore, are of particular interest to the agricultural labourers’ and poor peasants. Directed as they are against the landlords and the Government, no stratum of the peasantry is opposed to it; Those middle peasants who are holding lands under landlords as tenants are, in fact, interested in the anti-eviction struggles. There is, therefore every possibility of making these struggles the united struggles of the entire peasantry. It is, however, the agricultural labourers and poor peasants who are immediately and directly interested in them. These struggles, therefore can succeed only if the mass of agricultural labourers and poor peasants are actively drawn into them and the widest democratic support is built for them.

“It should also be realised that, while the agricultural labourers, poor peasants, middle peasants and rich peasants have their different (and sometimes even conflicting) interests, there is something which unites them all unity against landlord oppression and the anti-peasant policies of the bourgeois-landlord state, led by the big bourgeoisie. On a series of questions like taxation, prices, allocation finance for projects and so on, conflicts develop between the urban and rural sectors of the

economy, conflicts also develop between the landlords and rich peasants and the big bourgeoisie, on a number of issues. All these conflicts being within the framework of the class alliance of the bourgeoisie and the landlords, they invariably attempt to resolve them “peacefully”, i.e., within the framework of their solidarity as against the proletarian strata. Undue emphasis on these conflicts would; therefore, lead the Party to Right-opportunist mistakes. It would, however, be equally wrong to dismiss these conflicts within the class alliance of the ruling classes as of no significance. Occasions may, in fact, arise when these conflicts among the various strata of the ruling classes can be so utilised as to isolate the big monopolist bourgeoisie – the strongest partner of the ruling class alliance, the most ruthless enemy of the proletarian and semi-proletarian strata. *This, however, depends on the extent to which the agricultural labourers and poor peasants are organised and brought into action, both on their own specific slogans and on the general slogans of the peasantry as a whole.*”

While striving our utmost to forge all-in peasant unity against landlordism and the bourgeois state power, we should always guard against the Right-reformist deviation of basing our kisan movement on the middle and rich peasantry, instead of building the united peasant movement around the agricultural labourers and poor peasants.

Certain other Developments that Need to be Assessed

So far, we have tried to briefly point out the changes made in the Party Programme of 1964, departing from the 1951 Party Programme, and the changes that have been brought about by the Congress reforms on the agrarian front – both of which have a direct bearing on our perspective *Tactical Line*.

Before we attempt to study the impact of these changes on the *Tactical Line* and its implementation, there are other developments which too need to be taken into serious account if our Party is to really orientate its work on the lines chalked out in the *Statement of Policy*.

(a) In the *Tactical Line* document, while comparing and contrasting the favourable and unfavourable factors between China of 1927-49 and India of 1951, it was stated that in China, “because of the sparse development of railways and other means of transport, the enemy found it difficult to rapidly concentrate his forces against the areas held by the Communists”, while “the transport system in India is far more developed than in China, enabling the Government to swiftly concentrate big forces against partisan forces.”

This was stated fully 34 years ago. Today, the entire transport system, road, rail, air and other communications have developed manifold, thus enabling the Government to

even more swiftly move its armed forces against the workers' and peasants' struggles, no matter whether they are in the rural or urban areas. The continuous state of war with Pakistan since partition, and the three wars fought with it in 1947, and 1965 and 1972[sic. The war with Pakistan took place in 1971—*editor Revolutionary Democracy*]; the border clashes between India and China since 1959 and the border war with it in 1962, and the tribal revolts such as that of the Nagas, Mizos, etc., were fully utilised by the Congress Government to develop the transport system in every nook and corner of the country. Today, unlike in the years 1947-50, the entire police forces – Special Armed Constabulary, Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police Force, etc., are fully equipped with telecommunication facilities.

(b) If, during the years 1947-50, the strength of the Indian army was around two lakhs or so, today it is nearly one and a half million or fifteen lakh strong, including the Border Security Force. It is one of the most modernised armies, next only to those of the developed imperialist states in the capitalist world. Together with the different categories of the constabulary, the armed personnel of the Government of India total anywhere around two million men, who constitute a formidable force of organised violence against the struggles of the workers, peasants and other exploited sections of our people.

(c) Our class enemies, the big capitalists, landlords and the imperialists, drawing upon the innumerable lessons from the post-war revolutions in Asia, Africa and Latin America, have been systematically and constantly perfecting the weapons of counter-revolution, enormously enriching the most cruel techniques of counter-insurgency. In this regard, the Congress Government in our country is not lagging behind. So far as our Party is concerned, it remains a helpless victim at the hands of the class enemies, and not even a systematic study of these “counter-insurgency” techniques could be undertaken up to now, let alone the setting up of even a counter-espionage nucleus at the C.C. level to study the enemy's ingenious forms, methods and technical devices, and devise ways and means to counter them and overcome them.

(d) The old, hated “Arms Act”, imposed by the British imperialists, is still operative in politically independent India, even 38 years after the transfer of power to the Congress Party. Not even one per cent of our people have any opportunity, to learn what the butt and barrel of a gun are, let alone having any knowledge of the multiple sophisticated weapons of our time.

(e) The big bourgeoisie, which was visualised in the *Tactical Line* of 1951 as an ally of the working class in the struggle against imperialism, has now not only ceased to be an ally and turned out to be the enemy in the forefront, but *it has secured one additional advantage that was not contemplated in 1951*. In its pursuit of the capitalist

path of development in alliance with landlordism and in collaboration with foreign monopoly capital, it is now able to utilise the contradiction between the socialist and imperialist worlds, and to bargain with both in its efforts to build capitalism. Thus the socialist aid, which enables the bourgeoisie of the newly independent countries to resist imperialist pressures, is also being used as a weapon to strengthen itself in its struggle against the working class and the other toiling people. This new factor and its impact on the advance of our revolutionary working class movement will have to be studied in detail.

These factors which impose additional difficulties in the implementation of the *Tactical Line* will have to be overcome. A correct appreciation of all these factors alone will enable us to give serious thought to the entire question, i.e., taking the perspective *Tactical Line* seriously, and working out the immediate tasks on different fronts in such a way that they dovetail into the *Tactical Line* and the perspective laid down in it.

The apprehensions expressed by some of our comrades that the listing of all the unfavourable factors which have come into operation would result in either pouring cold water on the perspective *Tactical Line* or its virtual abandoning in favour of the classical urban-based working class insurrection, are unfounded and unwarranted.

Since the issues that we are here dealing with concern the art and carrying out of the Peoples' Democratic Revolution; every new technological factor introduced in the field of warfare will have to be duly taken into account and assessed. That is what Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin were doing.

For example, the following passages from Engels would show how the questions of warfare and its techniques were subjected to close study and discussion from time to time.

Answering the view of the opponents of the proletarian revolution that "the militant proletariat had been finally buried with the Paris Commune", Engels as late as on March 6, 1865, observed:

"The recruitment of the whole of the population able to bear arms into armies that henceforth could be counted only in millions, and the introduction of fire-arms, projectiles and explosives of hitherto undreamt of efficacy, created a complete revolution in all warfare. This revolution, on the one hand, put a sudden end to the Bonapartist war period and ensured peaceful industrial development by making any war other than a world war unheard of or cruelty, and absolutely incalculable outcome and impossibility. On the other hand, it caused military expenditure to rise in

geometrical progression and thereby forced up taxes to exorbitant levels and so drove the poorer classes of people into the arms of Socialism.”

Thus it was shown that though certain unfavourable conditions temporarily retard the advance of the proletarian revolutionary movement, certain other favourable factors come into play to counteract them.

Writing about the German bourgeoisie and its fear of working class victories in elections, and how they seemed to prefer facing an open rebellion of the working class, Engels said:

“For here, too, the conditions of the struggle had essentially changed. Rebellion in the old style, street fighting with barricades; which decided the issue everywhere upto 1848, was to a considerable extent obsolete.

“Let us have no illusions about it: a real victory of an insurrection over the military in street fighting, a victory as between two armies, is one of the rarest exceptions. And the insurgents counted on it just as rarely. For them it was solely a question of making the troops yield to moral influences which, in a fight between the armies of two warring countries, do not come into play at all or do so to a much smaller extent. If they succeed in this, the troops fail to respond, or the commanding officers lose their heads, and the insurrection wins. If they do not succeed in this, then even where the military are in the minority, the superiority of better equipment and training, of single leadership, of the planned employment of the military forces and of discipline makes itself felt...

“But since then there have been very many more changes, and all in favour of the military. If the big towns have become considerably bigger, the armies have become bigger still. Paris and Berlin have, since 1848, grown less than fourfold, but their garrisons have grown more than that. By means of the railways, these garrisons can, in twentyfour hours, be more than doubled ... The arming of this enormously increased number of troops has become incomparably more effective. In 1848, the smooth-bore, muzzle-loading percussion gun, today the small-calibre, breech-loading magazine rifle, which shoots four times as far, ten times as accurately and ten times as fast as the former. At that time the relatively ineffective round shot and grape-shot of the artillery; today the percussion shells, of which one is sufficient to demolish the best barricade. At that time, the pick-axe of the sapper for breaking through firewalls; today the dynamite cartridge.

“On the other hand all the conditions of the insurgents’ side have grown worse. An insurrection with which all sections of the people sympathise will hardly recur; in the

class struggle all the middle strata will probably never group themselves round the proletariat so exclusively that in comparison the party of reaction gathered round the bourgeoisie will well-nigh disappear. The ‘people’, therefore, will always appear divided, and thus a most powerful lever, so extraordinarily effective in 1948 is gone...

“Does that mean that in the future street fighting will no longer play any role? Certainly not. It only means that the conditions since 1848 have become far more favourable for the military. In future, street fighting can, therefore, be victorious only if this disadvantageous situation is compensated by other factors. Accordingly, it will occur more seldom in the beginning of a great revolution than in its further progress, and will have to be undertaken with greater forces.” (Introduction to “The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850”)

On another occasion, Engels, writing to Bebel on November 18, 1884, about the German Government’s demand on the Social-Democratic Party to declare that in no circumstances would it resort to force, reasserts that “indeed no Party has renounced the right to armed resistance, in certain circumstances, without lying. None has ever been able to relinquish this ultimate right... To require an unconditional declaration of this kind from such a party is sheer absurdity.

“For the rest, the gentlemen can keep calm. *With military conditions as they are at present we shall not start our attacks so long as there is still an armed force against us. We can wait until the armed force itself ceases, to be a force against us.*” (Emphasis added).

These are cited only to show that issues such as the forms of struggle, the state of the armed forces, technical developments and the new mode of arms, etc., were the subject matter of repeated discussions by the founders of Marxism-Leninism. It would be folly on our part to shut our eyes to the difficulties, on the alleged ground that these difficulties might be used by some as an excuse to run away from the real path of revolution. Our job is to be in constant search for the ways and means to overcome such difficulties, and to find out from time to time the vulnerable points in the enemy’s camp, and to make full use of them to compensate for the weak spots on the revolutionary front.

Factors which can compensate the unfavourable developments

1. If the *Tactical Line* noted the fact that “India had a far bigger working class than China was having during her march to freedom,” the number has more than trebled since then, with the marked growth of certain key and heavy industries and the development of huge urban complexes. This is the first biggest asset, and it should be

fully utilised in the People's Democratic Revolution in every respect.

2. The big percentage of agricultural labourers whose numbers too have nearly doubled during the last three decades, is not only a valuable asset to the working class and its Communist Party in organising agrarian revolutionary struggles, but also proves extremely useful in effecting the transition to the next, socialist stage of our revolution. In the matter of conducting peasant partisan struggles, too, the 50 per cent of agricultural labourers who together with the poor peasants constitute 70 per cent of the rural households will prove an invaluable asset, provided they are organised, awakened and united.

3. The sizable growth of the middle classes, both as white-collar employees in government offices, public undertakings, banks, LIC and the like, and in several institutions under the private sector, is a new development. They, mainly as wage-earners and as vocal sections of our people, are a valuable segment of our revolutionary forces. The role of this middle class, unlike in the developed capitalist imperialist states, is much more militant and revolutionary. A well-organised industrial and factory working class movement will be in a happy position to organise and lead this big middle class as its close ally.

4. The armed forces, which have expanded several fold since Independence, intended for the use of suppressing the revolutionary forces as pointed out earlier, have another important aspect. The mercenary army that was organised by the British rulers was a compact and handpicked one, recruited mainly from the so-called martial races and from other backward and tribal areas. The growth of the three wings of the armed forces, i.e., the army, navy and air force, together with their modernisation and expansion, etc., is forcing the Government to come out of the former, narrow framework and recruit more and more educated people as also people belonging to different big and small nationalities, the main mass being, from the peasantry.

5. A more favourable international situation: The international situation today is far more favourable to our revolution than was the case in 1950. The correlation of class forces on a world-scale has shifted in favour of the forces of peace, democracy, national independence and socialism. The world imperialists have not only lost their political control over their former colonies, but also face sharpened opposition from the non-aligned countries, mainly on the economic front; and this they face at a time when the capitalist world is under the grip of a serious crisis, and the countries of the socialist system are registering big, economic, industrial and material advance and achievements. Though the disunity in the world communist movement and the socialist camp is today preventing the world revolutionary forces from taking full advantage of the world capitalist crisis, and in some measure even the existence and

growth of the powerful world socialist system in a third of the world, the latter is objectively helping the unleashing of different revolutionary currents. While nothing the adverse impact of world communist disunity on the revolutionary movements of different communist contingents in the world, we should draw positive inspiration from the big advances that are being made by the socialist countries, the national liberation movements and the working class movements in the capitalist countries.

The socialist world's share of world industrial production which was about 25 in 1951, is now 40-45 per cent. The Soviet Union produces more steel, oil, coal, cement, milk and sugar than the USA. In missiles and nuclear weapons, in naval strength, the Soviet Union has acquired parity with the USA with advantages in certain fields.

Peoples' China has emerged as the third great power in the world after the USA and the USSR. With an annual production of 30 million tons of steel, 80-100 million tons of oil, 40 million tons of coal, 290-300 million tons of foodgrains, it is able to supply the minimum needs of its 900 million people. It has by its own efforts become the third in nuclear might and has modern weapons, a navy and an air force, capable of defending itself against any foreign aggression.

The most significant and world historic event during the last 30 years is the final and total victory of the Vietnamese people over U.S. imperialism after 30 years of bitter war, and the reunification of their country. This has been followed by the victories of the peoples of Lao and Kampuchea.

The Cuban revolution has won and the first socialist state in the Western Hemisphere has been established and is continuing to develop on the very doorstep of U.S. imperialism.

All of Africa has become politically free and bitter battles are being fought by the peoples of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa against the while [Sic. should be "white" editor – Revolutionary Democracy] racist regimes there.

The West Asian countries are today preventing an Israeli expansion and U.S. domination over the vast oil resources of the region.

The working class and democratic forces are more doggedly fighting their monopolist rulers in the capitalist countries. This is reflected in the great increase in working class strikes in these countries and in the growing influence of Communist Parties in countries like Italy, France, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Japan.

6. Finally, the most important factor that has developed in favour of our revolution

and its perspective path of development is the 38-year rule of the bourgeois-landlord government and its bankrupt path of capitalist development. If the people in 1951-52 had great illusions about the newly-won independence and the Congress promises of a “welfare state” and the “socialistic pattern” of development, the situation today is vastly changed, rapid disillusionment and growing mass discontent being the order of the day.

The economic crisis in India, an integral part of the world capitalist crisis, has in its turn introduced a crisis in the bourgeois-parliamentary system. The earlier imposition of the Emergency, the virtual banning of all legal activities of the Opposition parties, their trade unions and other class and mass organisations continues in other forms today. The bourgeois Opposition parties and groups which were, from time to time, able to mislead the popular discontent and frustrate the growth of the Left and democratic forces and the fructification of their united front, stand more and more exposed as no real and genuine alternatives. The people suffering under the despotic, one-party rule of the Indian National Congress are beginning to look upon our Party and its political line as the genuine and only alternative to the Congress misrule. Thus, the situation today is far more favourable to our Party and its perspective path of revolution, provided our Party rises to the occasion, utilises the opportunities that are present before us, and concretely and correctly estimates the current situation to work out suitable slogans and forms of actions that step by step will lead us to the implementation of the perspective *Tactical Line* to achieve victory in the revolution.

The Tactical Line and the current controversies on it

The question arises as to why the *Tactical Line* or the *Statement of Policy* and the revolutionary tactical and organisational concepts it contains, remained unimplemented all these years.

It is also asked whether the *Tactical Line* and all the postulates it contains are still valid, or whether the many developments that have taken place during the last 35 years invalidate one or several propositions in it?

Criticism is also made of the work on the kisan, trade union and Party organisational fronts not being in conformity with the lines laid down in the *Statement of Policy*.

Some express doubts whether reformist, revisionist and parliamentary illusions do not still persist amongst us, thus preventing our work from being orientated to the *Tactical Line* and its perspective.

Some of these questions have already been answered in the foregoing pages, but they

will bear a brief summing up.

The serious political-ideological differences and the disunity that plagued the united CPI during the years 1955-64, and the Right-opportunist outlook that was present in the dominant leadership of the C.C. and the National Council, certainly played a big role in virtually shelving the *Tactical Line*, till the Party split in 1963-64. In reality, it was not merely on programmatic issues, on the stage, strategy and nature of the Indian Revolution that there was a sharply divided opinion, but divergent views on the *Tactical Line* and the perspective that it embodied did also play a big part in this prolonged inner-party struggle. In a word, the so-called “peaceful path” projected by the 20th Congress of the CPSU, and the clash of opinion in our Party over this Right-reformist thesis cannot be separated from our inner-party struggle over the *Tactical Line*. Thus there was a struggle between the years 1955 and 1964 inside the united Party. This part of the Party’s history cannot be ignored or overlooked.

Coming to the period following our Seventh Party Congress in October-November 1964, with the majority of the central and state Party leaders detained under the DIR, there was no opportunity to attend to the task of working out the lines for different class and mass organisations, in accordance with the *Tactical Line* till the last quarter of the year 1966. It was precisely during 1966-67, that earnest efforts were made in this regard, and the *Tasks on the Kisan Front*, *Tasks on the Trade Union Front*, *Tasks on Party Organisation* and the *New Situation and Party’s Tasks* were worked out by the P.B. and C.C. Every one of these above-mentioned resolutions of our C.C. contains serious and forthright attempts to orientate our mass work to the *Tactical Line*.

The resolution, *Tasks on the Kisan Front*, called for conscious efforts to develop the kisan movement in some compact and contiguous areas. Similarly, the Calicut Resolution, *Our Tasks on Party Organisation*, of November 1967, again called for kisan work, especially among agricultural workers and poor peasants, round the industrial and educational centres, to larger and larger areas in a contiguous belt, and to consolidate scattered kisan areas and contiguous areas, trying to link them up with the nearest industrial and educational centres. The plan to develop the revolutionary movement in certain compact areas, zones or territories and the attempt to see that such areas, zones, territories were linked up with one or other big urban centre or industrial city was correct.

To underrate the significance of this effort in any manner neither does justice to the *Tactical Line*, nor to our party’s efforts to translate it into action.

In the middle of 1967, with the rise of naxalism, and its left-adventurist political-

tactical line, the party's attention was once again side tracked into defending the *Tactical Line* and its revolutionary content from the left-adventurist and terrorist distortions of it by the naxalities.

It was an integral part of our party's struggle to defend and uphold the *Tactical Line* and its revolutionary content. To lose sight of all this or to gloss over it, and on that basis to advance the criticism that all our shortcomings or failures in not succeeding in building up the kisan, trade union and party organisation on the lines laid down in the *Tactical Line*, is because of our "revisionist hangover" and "parliamentary illusions" is neither correct nor objective. From this, it does not follow that all the right-revisionist and left-adventurist tendencies amongst us are completely liquidated, that parliamentary and legalist illusions have totally disappeared and there is nothing more to be done to re-educate and remould our party in the spirit of the new Party Programme and the *Statement of Policy*.

In reality, the differences in the interpretation of different formulations in the *Tactical Line* have been cropping up in the course of our struggle to orientate our work on different tactics from time to time, which have to be dovetailed into the perspective *Tactical Line*.

The resolutions of the C.C. on the kisan front, i.e., the *Tasks on the Kisan Front*, are a clear expression of our Party's struggle to liquidate the reformist and revisionist weaknesses in the kisan movement, led by our party.

It is an effort to reorientate our outlook in building the united kisan movement, the building up of the movement based on the agricultural labourers and poor peasants, departing from the past practice of *mainly* basing it on the middle and rich peasantry.

Similarly, the need for peasant unity, not the old peasant unity based on the middle and rich peasants, but the unity of the agricultural workers, poor, middle and rich peasants, based on agricultural labourers and poor peasants, is sharply emphasised.

The agitation, propaganda and activity on the kisan front, during the last few years in most of the States where our kisan movement exists, conform largely to the lines laid down in the above-cited resolution.

In so struggling to reorientate our kisan work, if old reformist mistakes still persist or new left-sectarian mistakes creep in, the Party leadership at different levels will have to correct them, keeping constant track of them. The very weak state of the present organised kisan movement in our country, its splitting up under different political parties and groups and the Congress Government's disruption and suppression of

kisan struggles, have imposed many limitations on our party's struggle to organise it on revolutionary lines. Also, we cannot afford to forget the fact that the kisan movement our party is heading today, is a part of the old united kisan movement built under the leadership of the united CPI, and all the weaknesses that it had inherited cannot be liquidated as quickly and as thoroughly as we wish. But all efforts must be made to liquidate this legacy as quickly as possible.

Despite all these difficulties our party's efforts to correct the earlier mistakes on the kisan front have registered some progress in West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar, Tripura, and some other States.

Tactical Line and its Application to Trade Union Movement

The trade union front, it is true, cannot be treated as just one of the several class and mass fronts of any Communist Party, since *it is the political party of the working class*. Though Communists in India have been working in the trade union movement for the last half century and more, our political influence in the class as a whole, and in the organised trade union movement as such, remains very weak.

As regards our work on the trade union front, it must be stated that, as on other fronts; we were not starting on a clean slate. Although the formal split in the communist movement took place in 1964 when we broke away from the right-revisionist party, we continued to work in the AITUC, led by the right C.P. and carried on a prolonged struggle with them – their revisionism and class collaborationist policies – for six years, with a view to preserving the unity of the trade union movement. It was only when we found it impossible to unleash mass struggles of workers by continuing to remain in the AITUC that we decided to form a separate organisation. In April 1970, a preparatory meeting was held in Goa and the CITU founded in May 1970.

Despite this break with the AITUC, when it called a conference of central trade union organisations in May 1971, three months after the parliamentary elections, we were instrumental in evolving a common platform of unity and struggle and forcing the formation of a steering group for evolving steps in furtherance of that platform. That unity was disrupted when the AITUC and HMS sabotaged its functioning and finally deserted it and formed a national coordination committee of trade unions under the auspices of and with the blessings of the Government. It was after that, that we formed the UCTU.

Our independent activity, coupled with the pursuit of the tactics of united front had led to many strike struggles on our own, and also united struggles, frustrating the attempts of the class-collaborationist leadership of the INTUC, AITUC, HMS to

prevent struggles. Not only were there local and factory-based struggles, out statewide strikes in a number of industries like textiles, jute, engineering, sugar took place. This period also witnessed all-India strikes of cement workers, loco and running staff and of all railway workers. *For the first time in the history of India, there was an all-India general strike in all industries in support of the railway workers' strike.*

The role of the CITU in these developments has been such that it has come to be looked upon by the mass of workers as the most militant trade union organisation, while the Government and employers treat it as their enemy number one. We have become the foremost trade union organisation in the states of West Bengal and Kerala, and the most effective among all the trade union organisations in Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan. Our organisation has spread to new areas – Delhi, Western U.P., Haryana, the coalmines of M.P., Bhilai, Jamshedpur, etc. These facts must be kept in view while discussing the understanding and application of the *Tactical Line* document to the trade union front.

However, in spite of all these developments during the last few years since the founding of the CITU, it must be remembered that the organised working class under the CITU represents only a minority of the organised working class in the country, that too only in key and vital industries, leave alone the whole working class in the country.

This broad generalisation on the CITU is not enough and will probably hold good for a long time to come. What we must concretely assess now is the CITU strength, its membership and influence in relation to the total workers, (i) in different states, (ii) in the different industrial centres in the states, (iii) in key and vital industries in the states as well as on an all-India scale; we should also assess the CITU strength in relation to the strength of other trade union organisations affiliated to the AITUC, INTUC and others, as well as non-affiliated independent unions. Without this, we will be carried away by our subjective desires and not by objective realities. Without an objective assessment we will be dragged into wrong tactics in the course of developing working class mass actions, building trade union unity overcoming the present divisions.

It was precisely to overcome this above-mentioned weakness and several other shortcomings; that it was stated in the document *Tasks on the Trade Union Front*:

“The working class as a class can play its historic, political class role in the people’s democratic revolution if the trade union struggle wherein it gains its initial consciousness, trains it, disciplines it and raises its consciousness to discharge its political obligations”. (*Tasks on the Trade Union Front* para 2.)

“For the Marxist-Leninist Party the tasks on the trade union front do not comprise only the *Tactical Line* of running the trade unions as organs of daily struggles for the effective defence of the economic interests of the working class under given conditions. While defending daily interests, they aim at organising a disciplined working class with revolutionary Socialist consciousness” drawing it nearer to the Party, with its best elements joining the Party in hundreds, enabling the class as a whole to play its historic political role in the revolutionary struggle.” (*Tasks on Trade Union Front*, P. 1, para 4).

While attaching vital importance to the defence of the daily interests of the working class, and the building of its mass trade union organisation, it measures its own success and the success of the working class movement by the level of revolutionary consciousness created during the course of these struggles, *the advance of the Marxist-Leninist Party among the workers*, and the extent to which the Party is able to exercise its leadership over the trade union movement, (*Tasks on the Trade Union Front*, page 2, line 14-21 emphasis added)

Working Class Hegemony

It is necessary to remember that one of the major issues on which we fought the revisionists is the hegemony of the working class – the precondition for the victory of the democratic revolution. While the revisionists discarded it, we stuck to the Leninist concept.

Secondly, the passages quoted above from the *Tasks on the Trade Union Front* emphasise the nationwide role of the working class, its trade union movement and the forging of its unity. That means the entire class has to be organised and united. Its trade union unity must be brought about. In the course of the struggle, political consciousness has to be roused. The majority of the workers in the vital industries, as a class – not only in priority areas – is to be won over.

In developing working class hegemony in the Indian revolution, our struggle for trade union unity has a vital role to play. The struggle for trade union unity is the preliminary struggle for preparing the class hegemony of the leading class. The struggle for trade union unity through the application of united front tactics has to be seen in this light. Its role should be clearly grasped. A failure to understand the class role leads to undermining the struggle for the unity of the working class.

The C.C. resolution on *Tasks on Party Organisation* of November 1967 had stated; “Thirdly, in our choice of fronts, priority is for the working class and students in cities, and agricultural labour and poor peasants in rural areas. In the working class,

too, the priority is for key and major industries, and then the scattered small-scale or household industries.” This is the correct orientation of the *Tactical Line* document.

While we attempt to concentrate and build the trade unions in key industries, we must also build the movement industry wise, state wise and on an all-India basis. The two do not conflict with each other, and in fact, should go together. In this, the importance of developing the movement in contiguous areas and regions should be kept in mind.

Further the trade union pockets and movements our party inherited when the CITU was founded do not fit into a neat scheme of priority areas and industries. This has to be kept in view in developing the movement.

We have to take this understanding and examine whether any formulations made in subsequent documents conflict with or are capable of giving a different understanding. We have also to take into account life experience. Examined in this light, if any corrections are necessary, they must be made.

The Muzaffarpur resolution of the C.C. of 1973 stated: “Our tactics in the face of the uneven development of the movement must be to consolidate and extend to contiguous areas from the existing states, and develop these as wider and wider mass bases, while in the weaker states or areas, select the key centres or fronts to begin with, and link up with the, majority strong centre till we have a wider area where we can really function as a powerful mass and political force.”

It is also stated, When we are concentrating on key industries, we begin first with the key industries in the priority areas and develop neighbouring peasant belts *before we try to spread* and extend the organisation even in these key industries on a statewide basis.”

It is again stated: “In the name of developing a statewide trade union movement, even in the key and basic industries, it is no use the Party dispersing its energies throughout the state. Trade union work in that priority area means beginning with the key industries and spreading to other industries in that area, spreading among the peasantry all around.... Work among the railway and road transport or other strategic industries means priority to those industries in these areas, and expansion of these throughout the state gets secondary importance, after other fronts in the priority areas have been looked after, and in no case at the cost of other fronts in the priority areas.”

In the above-cited passages from our C.C. Resolution of Muzaffarpur, of March 1973, there are certain ideas and formulations which give the wrong meaning of counterposing the importance of work in compact areas and zones to that of extension

and expansion of our trade union work, industry wide and state wide. These will have to be corrected.

There have been some views and criticism regarding the shortcomings and drawbacks in our party's work on the trade union front. Such views and criticism fall into three broad categories.

The *first* is about the shortcomings and weaknesses that are common to the trade union movement in the entire country, in which our Party is able to assume leadership for only a small part. *These shortcomings pertain to the issue of building the party in the trade unions, developing kisan work around the industrial centres, raising political consciousness among the working class, working in reformist trade unions, organising of secret party units in factories and trades, etc.* Further these weaknesses are a legacy of the long past, and it requires patient and prolonged work to overcome them. That cannot be achieved as long as our influence on the trade union movement in the country is confined to a few, pockets in some states, a few branches of industries and concerns in the whole Indian Union, and a minority of the industrial working class. The fact that many such shortcomings and weaknesses still persist in the working class movement led by the CITU does not automatically and necessarily follow that it is so because of the incorrect understanding of the perspective *Tactical Line* and the role of the working class visualised in it. These are long-term tasks on the trade union front, and sustained and prolonged work, with a correct Marxist-Leninist understanding alone can overcome them.

The *second* concerns setting up statewise, countrywise and industrywise federations which are not in a position to really and effectively function; the organising of unions separately, under the CITU where it is neither desirable from the angle of, trade, union unity, nor from the angle of their desirability under the conditions of growing repression; and the functioning or otherwise of the T.U. sub-committees and fractions, etc., in accordance with the lines laid down by the C.C. on this subject.

The *third* viewpoint and criticism relates to the concept of proletarian hegemony, its interpretation and the means and methods of achieving it in the concrete conditions obtaining in our country. In other words it pertains to the correct application of the concept of combining the two major weapons of struggle in our revolution.

In the views and criticisms cited above, the last one is very much germane to the discussion of the *Tactical Line*, and the differences that have appeared over it.

The *Tactical Line* and the *Statement of Policy* documents, while laying down the perspective path of the People's Democratic Revolution in India, have negated the

two perspective paths that were projected and debated during the years of 1948-51, namely, the so-called Russian path and the Chinese path. The Russian path was understood as the capture of power in the cities and urban centres through political general strike and armed insurrection, and then proceeding to the liberation of the vast rural areas. The Chinese path was understood as the creation of liberated areas and liberation armies through prolonged peasant partisan warfare, under the leadership of Communist Party, and then proceeding to the liberation of the cities and urban centres.

If the advocates of the Chinese path contemplated prolonged peasant partisan struggle as the major weapon for the success of the Indian Revolution, the opponents of the Chinese path and the advocates of the Russian path contemplated the political general strike and revolutionary uprising of the working class to capture power in the cities and urban centres as the *major weapon* for the victory of the Indian Revolution. The *Tactical Line* document of 1951 rejected both schools of thought, on the grounds that in the specific Indian conditions neither of these two weapons alone could become the *major weapon* for a successful revolution, only a combination of both.

The *Tactical Line* not only rejected the two “paths”, but also the specific role allotted to the working class and the peasantry by the advocates of the respective “paths”. It observed that if those who believed in the Chinese path relegated the role of the working class to the background, the others who upheld the Russian path ignored the role of the peasantry in a colonial or semi-colonial country such as India, with a huge peasant population suffering under feudal and semi-feudal oppression.

Thus the *Tactical Line* postulates the perspective path of tactics as the combination of peasant partisan struggle and urban workers’ uprising, while specifying the role of both the working class and peasantry, under the specific conditions prevailing in India.

Thus, it is quite evident that the perspective *Tactical Line*, which negates the political general strike and armed uprising of the workers as the *major weapon* for the success of the, revolution, does not rule out general strike and revolutionary uprising of the working class during the course of the revolutionary struggle for power, visualising it to take place only at the *final stage* of the capturing of political power.

Our party, while adhering to the basic postulates made in the perspective *Tactical Line* document worked out in the year 1951, must also take into account the big socio-economic developments that have taken place in our country during the years since then, and work out its tasks in conformity with the, perspective projected in the *Tactical Line* document.

Since the possibility of either a short and swift attack, as was the case in the Russian revolution, or a prolonged peasant partisan warfare for twenty years and more like in the Chinese revolution cannot materialise in the specific Indian conditions, we should strive to combine both the weapons for the success of our revolution.

The economic crisis and its maturing, the widespread development of the revolutionary movement in the working class, peasantry and other exploited masses, the building of a powerful and steeled Marxist party, the building of the people's democratic front, the successful utilisation of the legal possibilities combined with illegal activities, and, the two major weapons of workers' uprising and peasant partisan struggle – all these constitute the components of the *Tactical Line*.

Any lopsided stress on one or two of the above-mentioned aspects, to the neglect or virtual negation of other, equally important aspects, is bound to undermine the very basis of the *Tactical Line*, and its living spirit.

Weakness in the T.U. movement

Despite the advance registered in the trade union movement during the last few years after our split from the revisionists, it is a fact that serious weaknesses persist, and without overcoming these the working class cannot play the role of hegemon, nor can the democratic movement be developed widely, which alone will create the basis for a successful revolutionary struggle. These weaknesses have been earmarked long ago in the *Tasks on the Trade Union Front* and repeatedly emphasised in CITU documents.

The working class movement in the country is badly divided, and it is not yet sufficiently organised even on a trade basis. A big section of it is still under the influence of the ruling Congress party and other petty-bourgeois parties. The level of political consciousness is very low, and even the section that is organised under the CITU, and on which there is the general political influence of the CPI (M), cannot be described as having socialist consciousness.

We have not yet succeeded in organising auxiliary units and regular party units from amongst those who are under our Party's general political influence. Unless the working class under the leadership of the CITU succeeds in uniting the class on a much bigger and wider scale, and makes big advances in politicising the class and building a strong Communist Party out of it, the revolutionary tasks enjoined by the perspective *Tactical Line* can never be fulfilled. Our party must make redoubled efforts to liquidate these grave shortcomings on the working class front.

In general, the trade unions under our leadership have not yet succeeded in rousing even that section of the working class to take up the issues of the peasantry, without which there can be neither worker-peasant alliance nor working class hegemony. Many workers come from the rural areas and are connected with the peasants by a thousand and one ties. If they are made conscious, they can organise the peasantry in those areas. That this is possible has been shown by experience. A serious effort must be made to appoint developed class-conscious working class cadres to discharge this task.

Secondly, the *Tactical Line* document explains not only that the building of the close and firm alliance of the working class and peasantry requires the working class to champion the demands of the peasants, but also that it comes out in actions in support of the struggles of the peasants. This has been repeatedly emphasised in the *Tasks on the Trade Union Front*, *Tasks on Party Organisation* and in the documents of the CITU.

“But barring rare cases like the Bombay” working class collecting sizable funds for the relief of the Maharashtra peasants when the State was going through a severe famine, and the jute workers of West Bengal in their conference taking up in a big way the issue of the price of raw jute to the growers, nothing much has been done.

Thirdly, very weak also have been our efforts to raise the consciousness of the entire working class under our influence regarding the general political situation in the country and the tasks it has to perform in this regard in relation to the objective of a people’s democratic revolution. Repeatedly, the trade union documents have pointed out the weakness of “economism” in the trade union movement and the need to politicise the workers. Any yet this weakness persists both in the section under the influence of the CITU, and the far larger mass of the working class as a whole.

The deepening and expanding of the popular movement in general, is necessary for the widespread development of partisan struggles, city uprisings and successful revolution.

This cannot be brought about without the working class championing the cause of all sections of the people, their demands, and actions, and actively supporting their struggles.

These weaknesses are due to the weaknesses arising out of lack of consciousness, born out of the reformist outlook that persists despite our break with the revisionists. A serious and sustained struggle has to be carried on against this hangover of the revisionist outlook, economism, etc., and these shortcomings quickly overcome by the party at all levels.

Development of the movement on wide scale

The *Tactical Line* document stated: “It is one of the key tasks of the Party to forge the unity of the working class, to *unite the* popular forces on the basis of the concrete programme and to grow into a mass party so as to be able to supply the leadership which alone can unify and expand the mass movement, to raise it to a higher level.”

This means that for the successful overthrow of the bourgeois-landlord government, for the success of the revolutionary movement, the party must have the support of the people. The basic condition is the widest possible mass base from which to operate.

After we founded our Party in 1964, then came out of jail, after the general elections, we worked out *The Tasks on Party Organisation*, in November 1967. In that initial stage, taking into consideration the tremendous uneven development of the Party and its mass base, the document directed that the movement be built in compact and contiguous areas.

Since that document was written, the mass movement has grown in West Bengal and Kerala. It is the strongest force and has a wide mass base in these two States. In Tripura also, the Party has a wide mass base, but it is a very small State.

This development frightened the government. It unleashed semi-fascist terror in West Bengal and savage repression in Kerala and Tripura.

For long, from 1942-43 in fact, the Congress party has been hostile to the CPI. Following Indian Independence in 1947, the ruling Congress party began furious attacks on the communist movement in India. This antagonism was further aggravated, concentrating its main fire against the CPI (M) after it broke away from the CPI in the 1963-64 period. Anti CPI (M) front-building has become a part of class strategy.

The defence and further progress of these advance movements requires the extension of the movement to ever new areas, new states and industries. This has become an urgent necessity.

The development of the mass base in the other states requires the intervention of the party, as effectively as possible, in the popular movements that have been developing there and are bound to develop in the future.

The document of 1967 as well as the organisational resolution by the C.C. at

Muzaffarpur were the first attempts to orientate our current work on different fronts, on the lines of the perspective *Tactical Line*. These documents were prepared without either a collective discussion of the *Tactical Line* or arriving at a common understanding. We cannot therefore stick to every formulation made, or adhere to the letter of the position regarding “priority areas” or “strategic areas” without making provision for the possibility of developing our movements and expanding influence on a wide scale, through intervention in the struggles which break out because of objective conditions.

The *Tactical Line* document directs the creation of a wide mass base all over the country, and the organisation of the working class on an all-India basis, winning over the majority in the strategic industries all over the country. Experience has shown that in the face of semi-fascist terror, it is impossible to defend and expand advanced movements without all-India support.

It must be realised that mass struggles are breaking out in various places where we are weak. In the absence of our party, other reactionary parties take the leadership of these struggles preventing the orientation of such struggles towards democratic revolution. It is essential that the party’s links with these struggles be established in order to help them spread further and politically influence the masses involved, in the direction of the democratic revolution.

It is in this connection that widespread political propaganda and development of the movement by the party in the country as a whole, not only in the priority areas and strong states, becomes a must.

It must be realised that at present the growth of the popular democratic movement lags behind the growth of popular discontent. While discharging its tasks on the trade union and peasant fronts, and while intervening in popular struggles when and where they break out, the party has to give due attention to organising and leading the movements of students, youth and women.

These weaknesses must be quickly overcome.

The *Tactical Line* document also deals with the need to build a mass party for successfully carrying out the people’s democratic revolution. Its implications for party-building are dealt with in a separate document.

The 38-year rule of the bourgeois-landlord government, the policies it has pursued in pursuit of the path of building capitalism in collaboration with foreign monopolists, and in alliance with feudal landlordism, have all landed the country in a very deep

crisis. They have led to a tremendous intensification of the exploitation of the people. Mass unemployment, poverty and misery have grown. As a result, the conflict between the people and government has intensified. The policies and measures that the government has taken in its attempt to get over the crisis only aggravate the conflict.

Further, these policies have led to intense conflicts between the ruling party and all other bourgeois Opposition parties, and in-fights inside the ruling party as a continuous feature. The government had earlier to declare a state of internal emergency when it did away with all freedoms, abrogated the rule of law itself. Vast sections who hitherto had remained unaffected by political developments, were enraged by these developments. All this has opened-up vast opportunities for developing the democratic movement on a far wider scale, for fulfilling the tasks laid down in the *Tactical Line* document.

In concluding the discussion on the perspective *Tactical Line* and its implications, bearing in mind the possible course visualised of the development of the People's Democratic Revolution in our country, the key importance of the combination of peasant and workers' uprisings, adhering to it and accordingly building our working class and peasant movements and the Communist Party, we must also be prepared for every contingency.

Many developments which we cannot foresee at the present stage of our movement may confront us. In what kind of national and international situation the Indian revolution will break out, how the nationalities problem shapes itself if the present path of capitalist development is allowed to persist for long, we cannot predict with any precision and exactitude. We can only, and must orientate our work to building the class and mass movements in the country, building the party and forging the people's democratic front for the People's Democratic Revolution.