

Political Review Report

Focus on Independent Strength of Party

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In a departure from normal practice, in the preparations for the 24th Congress of the CPI(M), the Central Committee discussed and adopted a Political Review Report which reviewed the implementation of the political tactical line of the 23rd Congress. Based on the conclusions of this review report, the Central Committee subsequently proceeded to discuss and adopt the Draft Political Resolution which contains the Draft Political Tactical Line (PTL) of the 24th Congress. Both these documents were sent for inner Party discussions for eliciting the views and opinions of the Party units and members before being presented to the Congress in Madurai in the first week of April 2025.

Usually, the political review formed part of the Political-Organisational Report which is drafted and adopted by the Central Committee after the Draft Political Resolution is finalised. This made the Review redundant except as a record. That is why, the Polit Bureau and the Central Committee decided that in future, the review of the implementation of the previous PTL should precede the drafting of the new PTL. In the case of the 24th Congress, there was another impetus for undertaking the review of the PTL first. Over a period of time there had been no appreciable growth in the independent strength of the Party. On the contrary, the trend of decline had not been reversed. This lent urgency to identify causes for this state of affairs and the necessity to conduct an in-depth review.

Need for Deeper Review

As the Political Review Report adopted by the Central Committee in November 2024 explained “Why are we unable to increase our independent strength is something which is of concern to the entire Party. Hence a deeper review and analysis is required. The Political Review Report should make this effort at a deeper review and analysis, so that we can come out with concrete formulations and tasks in the Draft Political Resolution”.

The PTL adopted at the 23rd Congress had set out a political line where the main task was to isolate and defeat the BJP. This required the growth of the independent strength of the CPI(M) and the Left forces to mobilise the people in mass and class struggles. Further strengthening the Party and the left forces was also required to lead the fight against the hindutva communal agenda. At the same time, the Party should

work for the broadest mobilisation of all secular forces against hindutva communalism. The review report noted that the PTL has proved to be correct in its political focus and assessment of the danger of the BJP-led government and its description as a communal-corporate regime. The political developments in the intervening period, the various struggles of the working class and peasantry, the efforts to rally all secular forces leading to the formation of the INDIA Bloc and the results of the Lok Sabha elections in which the BJP lost its majority, all go to show the correctness of the PTL adopted in the 23rd Congress. However, one vital aspect of the PTL which linked the fight against the BJP with the requirement of the independent growth of the Party was not achieved. The lack of the independent growth of the Party was also reflected in the voting strength and seats won in the Lok Sabha election and in the various Assembly elections held during this period of three years.

Hence, the review made the important point that “It is not enough to say that the PTL we formulated at the 23rd Congress is correct and that there were some failings and weaknesses in the implementation of the line. Why are we unable to advance based on the implementation of the line and the tasks adopted? We have to go beyond noting the shortcomings and weaknesses and analyse what are the factors which are preventing us from implementing the political-tactical line effectively.”

Class and Mass Struggles

The review seeks to understand the reasons why we were unable to develop class and mass struggles to a large extent. This is particularly so when it comes to developing local struggles on a sustained basis. It sets out three factors as responsible for this weakness. Firstly, it was necessary to conduct concrete studies of the changed socio-economic conditions and agrarian relations so that new slogans and tactics could be formulated. This was not done. Inability to adopt new tactics and slogans means we are continuing to work on the old basis, which does not reflect the problems and issues of different sections and classes. In this connection, the review noted the lack of struggles of the rural poor against the rural rich nexus, which is the crux of the class struggle in the country side. We have to take up the issues of the various forms of exploitation practiced by the rural rich nexus. Issues such as low wages, house sites, tenancy terms, exorbitant interests on loans, high charges for tractors, harvesters etc.

Secondly, the inability to conduct local struggle on class and mass issues on a sustained basis is due to the reformist approach prevailing. The bourgeois parties including the regional parties are representatives of the rural rich nexus. We seek

cooperation of these parties representing these classes for elections to panchayats, local bodies and assemblies. In the process, the orientation to struggle against these dominant classes is given the go by.

Thirdly, there is the prevalence of parliamentarism or reliance only on parliamentary activities. This thwarts the PTL being implemented to develop a mass base through class and mass struggles. Parliamentarism also results in seeking conciliation with the dominant class and caste groups.

So, it is necessary to conduct concrete studies to identify the problems and issues of the rural poor and the urban poor, to conduct struggles. The higher committees should provide the lead to the Party units at the grass roots level to take up the issues on which sustained local struggles can be conducted and to face the repression of the dominant rural rich nexus. It is also necessary to conduct a serious struggle against parliamentary deviation and orienting the Party and cadres with the correct class outlook.

As far as the working class movement and struggles are concerned, the review, while noting the various strikes and struggles of workers in different sectors, notes the weaknesses which have been identified in our work on the trade union front in a review adopted by the Central Committee in 2022. It calls for overcoming the weakness in organising the workers in the modern manufacturing and strategic sectors; to strengthen our work in organising the contract workers who are a large part of the workforce in the organised sector. The review appreciates the efforts undertaken for united action by the trade union, kisan and agricultural workers organisations during this period and stresses the importance of carrying forward such joint actions for worker peasant unity.

Politicisation of the Masses

The review makes the important point that the working class and kisan struggles that have taken place over time have not resulted in the politicisation of the masses who have joined these struggles. Here two factors are to be noted. The Party should directly lead local struggles on mass issues, which will be helpful in establishing the identification of the basic classes with the Party. Such struggles should not be confined to the class and mass organisation. The other factor is the failure of the Party mobilised in the mass organisations and struggles through the fraction committees and Party members. It is only when the Party conducts political and ideological work independently among these masses that political influence develops.

Fight against Hindutva

An important task which flowed out of the PTL of the 23rd Congress is the combating of the Hindutva forces and their ideology. Seven activities and fields of work which the Party and mass organisations should undertake for a sustained struggle against the Hindutva forces were set out. Review of the activities of the Party in campaigning against the Hindutva communal forces shows that overall our activities against communalism is confined to conventions and some limited campaigns. We have still not taken the ideological and political campaign against Hindutva deep among the people, even amongst our own mass base and amongst the mass membership in class and mass organisations. Here, the review self critically noted that the Polit Bureau has not given sufficient guidance to the State Committees on how to concretise and conduct the anti-communal campaign integrated with our overall political campaign. The review provides a direction to develop and promote activities in the ideological, social and cultural spheres in a sustained manner to counter the Hindutva ideology and activities.

In concretising these activities it is necessary to recognise that there is growing religiosity in society among the people of all religious communities. The RSS is using religious sentiments to attract believers through religious activities, ceremonies and festivals in order to inculcate communal outlook, especially targeting women for this purpose. The review states “We have to have an approach on how to reach out to believers and make them understand the difference between practicing their faith and their faith being misused to target other religious faiths. We have to concretely work out how to draw religious believers towards secular politics and against communalism. For this, we should highlight secular and progressive traditions in philosophy and the role and practice of religious reformers. At the same time, it is necessary to oppose and counter minority communalism. We have to speak out against Islamic fundamentalism with its reactionary social values, in particular regarding women.”

Social Issues and Identity Politics

The PTL had underlined the importance of advancing the struggles for social justice and championing the fight against social oppression of women, dalits and adivasis. Reviewing the work in this regard and the dalit and adivasi platforms set up to take up their issues, it noted activities of these platforms in the southern states, notably Tamilnadu, but pointed to the continuing weakness in taking up social issues in a sustained manner in the Hindi speaking states. It also noted how identity politics of different varieties have played a role in the erosion of our mass base in strong states like West Bengal and Tripura. Concrete steps should be worked out to address the

issues of the various ethnic and oppressed caste groups and to counter narrow identity politics.

Building Broad Unity

As part of the implementation of PTL we made efforts to build wider unity against authoritarianism, in defence of democracy, secularism and against communalism. However, given our limited strength at the national level, we were not able to forge wider unity against authoritarianism and communalism to the extent that we wanted. The bourgeois opposition parties were more interested in forging unity for electoral purposes. In this connection, the formation of the INDIA Bloc of parties to face the Lok Sabha election was an important step so far as trying to maximise the pooling of anti-BJP votes is concerned. It is necessary to continue efforts to mobilise secular and democratic forces through forging broad platforms at various levels, according to the situation in each state. While being part of the broader platform, we should give priority to the independent activities of the Party.

Socialism as the Alternative

The review report has emphasised the importance of propagating the goal of socialism. The Left and Democratic Alternative that we talked about should be linked to socialism. This has been pinpointed as lacking in our political and ideological campaign. At present in our tactical line, our focus has been on the “defence of the Constitution, democracy, secularism and federalism”, which all the secular bourgeois parties also talk about. We cannot demarcate our identity unless we talk of the real alternative. Without projecting socialism in tune with Indian conditions, we cannot establish our identity as a Communist Party.

Appeal to Youth

Since the Kolkata Plenum on Organisation in 2015, we have been noting that the appeal of the Party and the Left has been waning among the youth. Apart from strengthening the work on the student and youth fronts, the main task is to re-shape the Party’s political and policy approaches. The Party has to work on what issues should be taken up and articulated that relate to the youth and connect with their concerns and aspirations. The general political and democratic demands of the Party should integrate in them a youth component. The Party’s message that ‘Socialism is the Alternative’ must be specifically directed to the youth to attract them towards an alternative to the bourgeois landlord system.

Strengthening our Base in Three Strong States

The re-grouping and advance of the Party in West Bengal and Tripura and overcoming the weaknesses in Kerala could further expand the movement – are all crucial for the task of increasing the independent strength of the Party at the national level. The political review report has addressed how this was taken up as per the PTL set out in the 23rd Congress. Based on this, the review report has set out certain directions for each state, which can be summarised as follows:

Kerala: The first task is to strengthen our work among the basic classes and take steps to address the issues of the middle class. Systematic efforts to politicise the masses that follow the Party and mass organisations must be undertaken. This is important at a time when the BJP-RSS influence has grown. The Party has decided to take steps to mobilise believers in the struggle against communalism and casteism. At the same time, the Party should counter the activities and propaganda of Muslim fundamentalists and extremist groups. The Party should study the changes in society with a growing middle class amongst all sections. Even amidst the offensive of the central government to disrupt the finances of the state government, it is important that the LDF Government prioritise its expenditure so as to ensure that the welfare support to poorer sections of the people is not compromised. At the same time, the momentum of infrastructure development must also be maintained by innovating alternative means of financing, with adequate precautions not to put a serious burden on the people.

West Bengal: The Party has been fighting both the TMC and the BJP for the past one decade. While doing so, the Party at all levels must pay more attention to counter the BJP politically and ideologically. The main task must be our work among the rural poor and the urban working people. The Party has to forge live links with the people after a long period of disruption in the Party organisation due to terror and the threat of violence. Both the TMC and the BJP has used identity politics based on caste and ethnic identities to create divisions and garner support. More attention should be paid on how to counter this and take up social issues of dalits, adivasis and other ethnic groups.

Tripura: The reign of terror and intimidation unleashed after the 2018 Assembly election, which brought the BJP to power, has hampered the Party and eroded its mass base. However, as the results of the 2023 Assembly election show, the Party was able to get 24.62% of the vote and win 11 seats. The Party has to patiently work to take up the livelihood and economic issues of the people. The work of exposing the disruptive Hindutva ideology must be carried out among the people. Special attention must be paid to the tribal people and their problems. New slogans and demands must

be spelt out which meets the aspirations of the tribal youth and serves the cause of tribal autonomy and identity.

Left Unity and Left and Democratic Front

The PTL had called for efforts to strengthen Left unity. The review report states that in the three year period since then we have not been able to initiate joint action with the Left parties and strengthen Left unity, as desired. Joint calls by the Left parties occurred only on the issue of Israel's genocidal war on Gaza. There were joint Left activities in some of the states. But, at the national level, regular meetings of the Left parties could not take place. The preoccupation of some Left parties was towards forging a wider unity through the INDIA Bloc. Consequent to this review report being adopted by the Central Committee, steps were taken to resume the holding of Left parties' meetings. As far as the Left and democratic front was concerned, there was not much movement in this direction. The main reason being that no common understanding has been forged with the CPI on this matter. This needs to be taken up with the CPI and other Left parties so that a common approach emerges.

Conclusions

Based on the implementation experience of the PTL of the 23rd Congress, the review report provided a set of conclusions for stepping up the independent role and activities of the Party in the political, ideological and organisational spheres. These include: i) paying serious attention to counter the RSS/Hindutva activities in the ideological, political, social and cultural spheres, ii) working out concrete tactics and slogans to rally the rural poor for struggles against the rural rich nexus, iii) helping the local units and branches to take up issues for sustained local struggles, iv) emphasis on organising workers of modern manufacturing and key sectors and contract workers in the organised sector, v) pay more attention to the Party directly taking up social issues of caste and gender oppression, iv) concentrate work in selected tribal areas among adivasis, vii) make socialism part of the political campaign as the alternative, viii) the broadest mobilisation of secular and democratic forces against the authoritarian-Hindutva-corporate danger must be pursued, ix) strengthen united actions and joint platforms of Left parties and pursue efforts to rally left and democratic forces in each state.