

India's Communist Party (Marxist): Defender of Stalin and capitalist restoration

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For the first time since 1992, the leadership of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)—India's principal Stalinist parliamentary party and the dominant partner in the Left Front parliamentary/electoral bloc—is presenting an “ideological” resolution to its national congress.

The last such resolution was occasioned by the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union—by the fall of the bureaucratic police-state regimes that the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPM had always lauded as “real, existing socialism.”

Titled “Draft Resolution on Some Ideological Issues,” the “ideological” resolution to be adopted at this week's 20th Congress of the CPM has similarly been brought forward in response to a major crisis.

In contrast with many of its sister Stalinist parties, which collapsed or faded into insignificance in the aftermath of the dissolution of the USSR, the CPM gained new importance in the politics of the Indian bourgeoisie in the 1990s and the first decade of this century. It played a pivotal role in creating and sustaining in office national coalition governments that implemented the bourgeoisie's “new economic policy” aimed at making India a haven for foreign investment and a cheap-labor producer for world capitalism. From May 2004 through July 2008 the CPM-led Left Front provided the current Congress Party-led United Progressive coalition with its parliamentary majority. Meanwhile, the CPM continued to rule over West Bengal and alternated with the Congress Party as the dominant coalition partner in Kerala's state government. But whereas in an earlier period it introduced limited land reforms and social-welfare measures, whenever and wherever the CPM has held state office over the past two decades it has implemented rightwing pro-market “reforms.”

As a consequence the CPM has suffered a major erosion of its support in the working class and among rural toilers and suffered a series of major electoral reversals. In the 2009 national election, it lost close to two-thirds of its MPs and in 2011 it fell from power in both West Bengal and Kerala. [See: India: Stalinist CPM holds party congress amid mounting internal crisis]

The aim of the CPM's new “ideological” resolution, like that adopted in 1992, is to provide a “theoretical” cover and alibi for the CPM's role as a stalwart defender of the rule of the Indian bourgeoisie and to perpetuate the ever-more preposterous claim that it is a Marxist party based on the lessons and heritage of the 1917 October Revolution.

The resolution opens with declaration that “The current global crisis of capitalism [is] more intense in many of its manifestations than the great depression of the 1930s ...” and “is imposing greater miseries on the vast majority of the world's population.” But it then hastens to dismiss any suggestion that this crisis raises the possibility, let alone the necessity, of the working class overthrowing world capitalism. The very next paragraph affirms the continuing validity of the claim the CPM made in its 1992 ideological resolution that “with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the balance in the international correlation of class forces had shifted in favour of imperialism.” And this claim is a veritable refrain in the remainder of both the ideological resolution and the accompanying

“political” resolution.

The CPM—in keeping with the reactionary Stalinist two-stage theory that it has upheld since its formation in 1964—has always justified its political subordination of the working class to the bourgeoisie on the grounds that the struggle for socialism in India can only begin after the working class in alliance with the “patriotic,” “anti-imperialist,” “anti-feudal” bourgeoisie completes the “national democratic,” that is the bourgeois, revolution.

But with the collapse of the USSR, the CPM proclaimed the socialist revolution off the agenda globally, as epitomized by former West Bengal Chief Minister and Politburo Member Jyoti Basu's proclamation that “socialism is a far cry.” On that basis, it justified a further shift to the right, propping up rightwing governments at the Center and implementing what it has described as “pro-investor” policies in those states where it formed the government.

According to the Stalinist CPM, the current world capitalist crisis merely demonstrates that capitalism is an inhumane, exploitative system that “continues to deny humanity its complete emancipation, liberation and progress.” The task posed before the Indian and international working class is not the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the imperialist world order, but the defeat of “neo-liberalism” and the struggle for a “multi-polar” world.

This consistent, full-throated counter-revolutionary perspective is the logical outcome of the CPM's defence of the crimes of the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy and of Stalinism, the nationalist perversion of Marxism it propagated.

The CPM's claim that the collapse of the USSR resulted in an enduring “qualitative shift in the international correlation of class forces in favour of imperialism” is based on the lie that the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy constituted socialism. It is also a gross distortion of the significance and import of what happened in the USSR following Gorbachev's ascension to the head of the Kremlin bureaucracy in 1985.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union was the culmination of decades of misrule by a privileged bureaucratic caste that ruthlessly suppressed the working class. It was the final stage in a counter-revolution that had begun in the 1920s with the usurpation of political power from the working class by a privileged bureaucracy, based in the state and party apparatus and led by Joseph Stalin, that had arisen because of the isolation and backwardness of the first workers' state.

The bureaucracy repudiated the internationalist perspective of Lenin and Trotsky, who conceived the Russian Revolution's fate as inseparably bound up with the world socialist revolution. Under the banner of “socialism in one country”, Stalin sought to arrive at a modus vivendi with the imperialist powers, transforming the various the CPs into instruments of the Kremlin's counter-revolutionary foreign policy. During the 1930s, the Kremlin bureaucracy, in pursuit of its interests as a privileged national caste, organized a series of catastrophic defeats of the working class that paved the way for World War II. In Germany, it

instructed the Communist Party (KPD) to oppose any and all efforts to organize a united front of working-class organizations to block the Nazis' path to power, on the grounds that the mass reformist labor organizations were "social fascist." In Spain in the name of an anti-fascist "Popular Front" with the progressive bourgeoisie, it strangled a workers' revolution, using the CP and units of the NKVD, the Soviet secret police, to spearhead the counter-attack of the bourgeois state. Meanwhile, it betrayed the colonial peoples, opposing a revolutionary challenge to the empires of Britain, France, and the other imperialist "democracies" in the hopes of convincing them to ally with the Soviet Union against the Axis powers. And within the Soviet Union, the Stalin regime mounted the Moscow frame-up trials of 1938-39 to justify the physical annihilation of the leadership of the Bolshevik party under Lenin and hundreds of thousands of socialist workers, youth and intellectuals.

After World War II, the Kremlin provided the crucial political support for world imperialism that allowed the US to use its economic strength and unprecedented hegemony over its capitalist rivals to reorganize and resuscitate world capitalism. As agreed at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, in exchange for the U.S. and Britain accepting a Soviet buffer zone in Eastern Europe, Stalin instructed the CPs in France, Italy and across Western Europe to assist the bourgeoisie in reviving capitalist democracy.

Trotsky and the Fourth International had warned from 1933 on that without a working class led political revolution against the bureaucracy, the Stalinist bureaucracy would ultimately devour the workers' state, would overturn the nationalized property relations created by the October Revolution and anchor its privileges in capitalist private property. Tragically this perspective was confirmed in the negative in the events of 1989-91.

The CPM and the Communist Party of India (CPI) from which it emerged have always held up as a model the counter-revolutionary politics of the Kremlin bureaucracy, especially when it was led by Stalin, and supported his bloody suppression of the Trotskyist opposition.

In its 1992 ideological resolution, the CPM explicitly reaffirmed its support for Stalin, declaring: "The uncontested contribution of Joseph Stalin in defence of Leninism, against Trotskyism and other ideological deviations, the building of socialism in the USSR ... are ineradicable from the history of socialism."

Twenty years on, this paean to Stalin remains CPM orthodoxy. Its current ideological resolution further venerates Stalin, who ran roughshod over the minority-peoples in the USSR and instructed the CPI to support the 1947 "independence" settlement and partition of the subcontinent, as an expert on the national question.

In 1992, the CPM, borrowing arguments from Mao, blamed the USSR's collapse on Khrushchev and other of Stalin's successors, while promising to make a thoroughgoing examination of the roots and causes of the restoration of capitalism. Predictably, this has remained an empty promise, for any such examination would immediately draw attention to the lies and distortions upon which the CPM's claim that the USSR was "socialist" rested, as well as its own role in promoting the bureaucracy and its counter-revolutionary horse-trading with imperialism.

The short section of the current ideological resolution that deals with the collapse of the Soviet Union is devoid of historical specificity and Marxist class analysis. Reinforcing the document's central thesis that the correlation of class forces favours the bourgeoisie, it attributes the collapse of the USSR to an underestimation of the resilience of world capitalism: "an underestimation of the class enemy both without and within the socialist countries and the overestimation of socialism ... created a situation where the problems confronting the socialist countries were ignored [by their ruling parties] and so were the advances and consolidation of world capitalism".

In reality, if imperialism survived the innumerable revolutionary

challenges to capitalist rule over the course of the Twentieth century it was because the Soviet bureaucracy suppressed them in pursuit of peaceful co-existence with imperialism and because it feared the revolutionary impact a successful workers' revolution would have on the Soviet working class. As for the CPSU and its sister parties "ignoring" the problems confronting "the socialist countries," they were at the root of these problems—siphoning off vast resources in the form of privileges, denying the working-class any form of political self-expression, and pursuing a reactionary program of autarchic national economic development.

What the rapid passages in the CPM resolution seek to cover over is that it was the Stalinist bureaucracy, in response to increased imperialist pressure and growing resistance from the working class as expressed in the repeated upheavals in Eastern Europe, that carried out capitalist restoration. And did so with the aim of rooting their misbegotten privileges in capitalist private property. During the years immediately prior to and following the dissolution of the USSR, the bureaucracy carried out a vast looting operation, seizing state property as its own and deliberately wrecking any state economic planning.

Imperialism certainly exploited the opportunity presented by this last betrayal of the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy. It mounted a worldwide ideological offensive claiming that history had proven the unviability of socialism and turned to the former Soviet republics and Eastern Europe to provide new reserves of cheap labor. The consequences for the working class in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have been horrific, with whole sections of industry shut down and many social benefits, including free health care and education, destroyed.

But this did not signify the resurgence of world capitalism, much less a shift in the world balance of classes in favor of the world bourgeoisie. Rather, as the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement explained, the collapse of the Stalinist regimes was a product of the unraveling of the post-World War II world capitalist equilibrium, ushering in a new period wars and revolutions.

The CPM resolution presents US imperialism as on the march. In reality the explosion of US militarism over the past two decades is rooted in an historic crisis of the capitalist power which has served as the banker and policeman of world capitalism for the past six decades. The world's largest debtor nation, heavily dependent on forms of financial parasitism to sustain profits and growth, and losing markets to new rivals, the US has had to turn to wars of aggression in a bid to reassert its hegemony.

While the CPM invokes the dissolution of the USSR to argue that socialist revolution has been removed from the historical agenda for the foreseeable future, its ideological resolution hails China as "socialist" and defends the Chinese Stalinist regime's liquidation of the social benefits of the 1949 revolution and emergence as a ruthless enforcer of cheap-labor production at factories owned by both foreign and a rising class of domestic capitalists. "In present-day realities, when the international correlation of class forces has moved in favour of imperialism," declares the CPM, "the existing socialist countries have embarked on a course of economic reforms to meet the challenges posed by international finance capital-led and driven globalization."

The resolution goes on to hail the "positive results" these "reforms" have produced in China and cites with approval various spurious, nationalist rationalizations that the Chinese government has advanced to justify its brutal suppression of the working class and the full restoration of capitalism that followed the CPM-supported 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. These include, the claim that China is in "the primary stage of socialism ... [which] will last for over a hundred years," the need to develop a "socialist market economy," and to build "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

The resolution then admits certain "negative" factors and several "imponderables." These include inequality and corruption, "number of

entrepreneurs and businessmen” joining the CCP, and its “dropping the concept of imperialism.”

That the CPM can continue to celebrate as “socialist” such an open party of capitalist restoration and indeed invoke it as a model for its own “pro-investor policies” in states like West Bengal underscores that there is no line the Stalinist CPM will not cross in accommodating itself to the Indian bourgeoisie and imperialism.



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