

A BRIEF CRITICAL NOTE ON THE PROGRAMME DRAFTS (by E.M.S. Namboodiripad)

1. MY NOTE ON PARTY PROGRAMME was ready in December. At the time I wrote it, I had before me only the Programme Drafts presented at the Vijayawada Congress.

Subsequently, however, the latest drafts—the one adopted in April at the Delhi Convention of the “Leftists” and the other adopted by the “rightist” National Council in June and finalised by the Secretariat, have come out. There was also some discussion at the Tenali Convention on the contents of “Leftist” draft and my NOTE.

Added to this discussion at the Convention was the series of articles and comments which have appeared in the press giving the view points of the comrades belonging to the “rightist” and “leftist” political trends. It is therefore now possible to give a critique of the positions taken in the “right” and the “left” Programme Drafts.

2. It is necessary, in this connection to be clear about what the Programme should contain. For, there is, according to me, a good deal of confusion and misunderstanding on this.

Both the “right” and “left” appear to take the view that the task of the Programme is only to (a) describe the economic and political changes which have taken place in India since the attainment of Independence, and (b) lay down a series of basic slogans around which the Party is to unite all the revolutionary forces. They seem to be of the opinion that the development of capitalism on the world scale, the main features of the international situation, the ideological and political problems arising out of it—these having nothing to do with the preparation

of our Party Programme. They therefore separate the discussion of what are now called "international ideological questions" from the discussion of the content of our Party Programme.

Such a separation of the formulation of our Party Programme from the appreciation of the international position of capitalism is, according to me wrong. After all, the Indian revolution is not taking place in the vacuum; it is taking place against the background of the General Crisis of Capitalism which, besides, has reached its third stage. The problems to be covered in our Party Programme can therefore be understood only if they are seen in the context of the international setting. What is specific to the Indian situation should be seen along with what India has in common with the world. It is my claim that my NOTE ON THE PARTY PROGRAMME tries to do this, while both the "right" and the "left" drafts fail to do this.

3. Another task which any draft Programme should do is to analyse the post-Independence developments in India not only in relation to its economy and politics but to its social organisation and culture as well. After all, Indian society of pre-British days had some special features which did not exist in other countries. What is generally known as "pre-capitalist" or "feudal" society did undoubtedly prevail in pre-British India. The Indian variant of this pre-capitalist or feudal society however differs sharply from its counterparts in other Asian countries, not to speak of European countries with their "classical" type of feudalism. How were the transformations made by the British during the nearly two centuries of their domination over India; how the transformations brought about by the British are being carried forward by the Congress rulers; the specific manner in which the transformations made during the British regime and in the post-Independence years those and other questions should be concretely analysed. Only then can the reality of present-day India be clearly understood. Here again, I may claim I have made a humble effort, while the other drafts have failed to do so.

4. The third of a real Party Programme is to lay down the general lines along which the instrument for carrying out the revolution—a strong, united and revolutionary party of the working class—is to be forged. The concrete background against which the task of building the

Communist Party of India is to be carried out, the ideological enemies to be fought and defeated, the forces to be organised etc., have to be laid down. This is all the more important in view of the fact that, even since the attainment of Independence, our party has found itself in a permanent ideological and organisational deadlock, this deadlock having now reached the stage of complete division in the Party. Only if we are able to answer the question why all this has taken place will it be possible for us to lay down the line of overcoming the present division and build a united Party of the working class, the sure instrument for carrying out the revolution. In this again, both the "right" and "left" drafts have failed, though I cannot claim that my NOTE is better in this respect.

5. I am strongly of opinion that any Programme which does not cover the ground indicated above will fail in its declared purpose of showing the correct way to the mass of Party members and sympathisers. Failure to undertake the jobs involved in the above means failure to concretely apply Marxism-Leninism to the problems of Indian revolution. This being so, any Programme which fails in these respects will fail to take the Party out of the rut into which it has fallen. The adoption of any Programme with these shortcomings will make the Party as "rudderless" as one with no programme.

6. Just as on the question of what the Programme should contain, so on the crucial issue involved in the formulation of the Programme—the issue of the class forces ranged against each other—both the "right" as well as the "left" Programme Drafts have a common shortcoming. Even though drawing different conclusions, the two drafts make the identical initial assumption with which I am in sharp disagreement. That assumption is that the differentiation within the bourgeoisie is between the "Big" on the one hand and the "Medium" and the "Small" on the other. The former is, by its very nature, collaborationist, while the latter is National. This has become such a widely-held view that the term "National Bourgeoisie" is always equated with the "non-Big" Bourgeoisie. I am of the view that this is a wrong assumption both in terms of the formulation contained in international documents as well as in the light of data relating to India's development.

7. The statement adopted at the 81 Parties' Conference, held in

Moscow in 1960, does not make any such assumption. The distinction made in that document is not between the "Big" and the "non-Big," but between those "connected" and "unconnected" with imperialist circles. This is in full conformity with the materials of the old Communist International, including the Programme adopted at its Sixth Congress. The major authoritative pronouncements lending support to the distinction between the "Big" and the 'non-Big' sections of the Bourgeoisie are, to the best of my knowledge, Comrade Stalin's speech to the University of the Toilers of the East and Comrade Mao's writings. Both of them came to the conclusion that the Big Bourgeoisie had in the main, become collaborationist.

8. Coming now to the data relating to economic developments in India, two facts should be noted: (a) Economic collaboration with foreign monopolies is not confined to the "Big Bourgeoisie". As a matter of fact, technical and even financial collaboration with foreign monopolies has become the indispensable condition for the starting of any new industry worthwhile importance; the entire bourgeois class (big, medium and even small) is obliged to enter into collaboration with foreign monopolies. (b) On the other hand, even among the big bourgeoisie, there are individuals and groups who, while on the one hand collaborating with, are on the other hand facing serious cut-throat competition from, foreign monopolies. There are cases of industrialists who collaborate with foreign monopolies in relation to one industry, while they are up in arms against them in relation to another.

9. On both theoretical as well as practical grounds, therefore, I do not see any reason to equate the distinction between the collaborationist and National sections of the bourgeoisie with the distinction between the big and non-big. I certainly agree that the element of collaboration is, in practice, much greater in the case the "big" than in the "non-big" sections of the bourgeoisie, while the element of conflict is greater in the non-big. This, however, should not make us blind to the reality that both the elements of conflict and collaboration operate in the case of both sections. Failing to see this reality would lead us into serious practical mistakes in policy. It would lead to sectarian under-estimation of the conflict between foreign monopolies and the Indian big bourgeoisie.

It would also lead to tailism in relation to the non-big bourgeoisie even when its policy is collaborationist.

1. These mistakes in practical policy—sectarian under-estimation of the conflict and tailist under-estimation of the collaboration—are according to me, present in the "leftist" and "rightist" drafts. These mistakes are concentrated in the two slogans given in the two drafts—People's Democratic State directed as much against monopoly capitalists as against imperialism and feudalism (the leftist draft); and National Democracy so visualised as to make it indistinguishable from bourgeois democracy (rightist draft). I am unable to accept either of these two basic slogans, as understood and explained in these drafts.

11. What according to me is important is not the particular term to be used—National Democracy or People's Democracy? More important is the content to be incorporated. I would therefore indicate below what, according to me, are the essentials of that state form which would complete the democratic revolution and lay the basis for the socialist revolution.

Firstly, the new state is the political expression of, the form of political power created by, the alliance of revolutionary classes.

Secondly, the state therefore will arise out of the revolution in which these revolutionary classes participate.

Thirdly, these struggles will, according to circumstances, take peaceful or non-peaceful forms. In either case, they are directed against the classes which are now dominating the economy and state. The new state therefore will be the opposite of the present state in its class content.

Fourthly, all the classes and strata which participate in these revolutionary struggles will therefore find a place in the new State; the new State will, in other words, be the dictatorship of all the revolutionary classes directed against the classes which are controlling the present state machinery.

Fifthly, though thus the political expression of the alliance of several classes, the leadership in alliance belongs to the working class in firm alliance with the peasantry. Such a class alliance alone is

capable of dislodging the present ruling classes and of setting up a new State of people.

Sixthly, allied firmly with the entire working people, particularly with the peasantry, the working class is to unite all other patriotic and democratic classes, strata, groups and individuals, i. e., all those who are interested in eliminating all traces of foreign monopoly domination of the nation, rooting out feudalism in all its forms, in over-coming the economic, social and cultural backwardness of the people, in curbing and controlling all forces which perpetrate this backwardness, and so on.

Seventhly, no class or stratum as a class or *stratum* is kept out of the front. But all those who depend on foreign monopoly, feudal lords, social, economic and cultural backwardness etc. will naturally take their stand against democracy. They therefore, will, in fact, keep themselves out of, and even fight, the democratic forces. This however happens not because they belong to this or that class or stratum but because they oppose the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and democratic measures. Naturally, therefore, even those whose economic ties are with foreign monopolists or with feudal lords, but who are patriotic and democratic enough to support the democratic programme will have a place in the front. Hence the "National" character of the front.

Eighthly, the front being of a multi-class character, the state form will inevitably generate the process described as follows in the Moscow Statement: "as social contradictions grow, the national bourgeoisie inclines more and more to compromising with domestic reaction and imperialism. The people, however, begin to see that the best way to abolish age-long backwardness and improve their living standard is that of non-capitalist development". The struggle between the two paths—the capitalist and the non-capitalist—therefore comes on the agenda. The leadership of the working class in alliance with the peasantry alone ensures the victory of the non-capitalist path.

Finally, to sum up, the two essentials of our revolutionary democracy are, (i) the alliance of the working class with the entire working people, particularly with the peasantry, under the leadership

of the working class, exercised through a well-organised Communist Party based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism. (ii) Unity of all classes, strata, groups and individuals interested in the successful struggle against imperialism, feudalism and economic, social and cultural backwardness.

12. As opposed to this revolutionary conception of the new State form is the conception contained in the rightists' Draft Programme. This conception is, according to me, out-and-out revisionist. Without going into too many details of separate formulations contained in the Draft, attention may be drawn to:

(a) **The rejection of the fundamental tenets of Marxism-Leninism that any democratic movement or struggle to be successful in giving real power to the people and in satisfying the peoples' aspirations should be under the leadership of the working class, firmly allied with the peasantry.** As opposed to this revolutionary idea is the rightist concept of the democratic State in which the working class not only allies itself, but shares leadership, with the bourgeoisie.

(b) **The virtual rejection also of the idea that the new State comes into existence out of furious political battles between the Working people and their democratic allies on the one hand and the vested interests who are entrenched in the present state-apparatus on the other.** The real class character of the present state apparatus (dictatorship of reactionary exploiting classes camouflaged by parliamentary democratic forms) is not exposed; there is, on the other hand, fulsome praise for the virtues of parliamentary democracy. There is not even a mention of the fact that, on the one occasion when the working people made effective use of the parliamentary democratic institutions against the vested interests, i.e., when the Communist-led Ministry was formed in Kerala, the bourgeoisie came out in its true colours.

(c) **The deliberate effort to conceal the fact that the present State is the organ of the richest and most powerful sections of the ruling classes.** It may be noted that, while describing the consequences of the economic policies of the Government even the

rightist Programme has to admit (i) that monopoly capitalists are developing in India on a big scale ; (ii) that they are developing not in collaboration with foreign monopolists ; (iii) That capitalism is developing not in uncompromising struggle against feudal lords but by transforming them into capitalist landlords and maintaining many forms of semi-feudal exploitation. But all this is forgotten when it comes to the characterisation of the State which is supposed to be "influenced", but not "led" by the big monopolists and landlords.

(D) The certificate of good conduct given to the ruling Congress Party by blaming all anti-people and undemocratic policies and measures of the government on the rightists in the ruling Party rather than on the Government and the ruling Party as a whole.

The total effect of all these separate aspects of the strategic concept contained in the rightist Programme Draft is the negation of the Political line of revolutionary struggles, to be waged by the working class and its allies against the vested interests and their State machinery; the adoption in its place of the reformist and revisionist line of the gradual going over of the bourgeois parliamentary democratic State into a new State jointly led by the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It is therefore totally unacceptable to marxism-Leninism.

13. Behind this revisionist strategic concept lies the failure to make a concrete analysis of the stage of development of capitalism in the world as a whole, and in India in particular.

A whole chapter of the rightist Draft Programme is devoted to the description of the "contradictions of the path of capitalist development." However, the "contradictions" described there in are not the manifestations of the crisis in the world system of capitalism which has now reached the third stage of its general crisis. On the other hand, the Draft Programme speaks of "all inherent and inevitable contradictions and crises of the capitalist system and its basic laws".

Such "contradictions and crises", it may be noted, could be spoken of in relation to capitalism at any stage of its development and to any country. They were worked out, in generalised form, over a century

ago by the founders of Scientific Socialism in the Communist Manifesto brought out in 1848, It does not require any deep analysis of present-day data for one to say that these laws of development of capitalism and its crises apply to Indian capitalism as well. What is required is to examine the specific features of capitalist development in India which were given in general form by me in my NOTE ON PARTY PROGRAMME.

Indian capitalism has had the misfortune", I pointed out, "of having been born and developing in an epoch when world capitalism entered the last stage in its history—its General Crisis affecting all aspects of social life. It can not therefore expand itself to other countries and turn them into suppliers of cheap raw materials and markets for its own products. Even in the internal market, it has to face serious competition from the powerfully—entrenched foreign monopolies. Added to these difficulties of production and marketing is the difficulty in relation to raising capital internally: the adoption of those methods of 'primitive accumulation' which enabled the bourgeoisie in capitalist countries to raise capital internally is made much more difficult here since the masses subjected to those methods are in a much better position to offer resistance. These specific features of capitalist development in India have given rise to a large number of contradictions which can not be resolved within the frame-work of the capitalist system" (Pp. 46—47).

There is no attempt to make such a concrete analysis of the conditions in which capitalism is developing in India. Hence the conclusion drawn by one of the co-authors of the rightist Draft Programme, Dr. Adhikari, that "the possibility of reaching the stage of mature industrialisation and developed agriculture in the capitalist way can not be excluded." Although not putting it in so many words, the Draft Programme too is based on this understanding. For, it fails to bring out the fact that the 13 year of capitalist planning in India has taken the national economy to a blind alley. The economic analysis contained in the Draft Programme shows only that the fruits of development are appropriated by the monopoly and other sections of vested interests. It conceals the fact that the entire economy is showing unmistakable signs of cracking up and that the "crisis of foreign exchange", the accentuation of the crisis of internal finance act., are the manifestations of this over-all crisis.

14. The Draft Programme prepared by the rightists completely fails also in the analysis of political developments in post-independence India.

As early as in 1952, our Party had pointed out the great significance of the defeat suffered by the ruling Congress Party which, in the words of the then Central Committee, "created a qualitatively new situation in Indian politics, a serious crisis for the ruling class", and so on. It was also pointed out that one of the main factors which helped to create this "qualitatively new situation" was the fact that "inside the camp of the democratic masses, the Communist Party has become the strongest single factor, the most powerful challenge to the Congress."

This situation developed further in 1957 when the "crisis of the ruling classes" got further deepened by the coming into existence of the Communist-led Government in Kerala.

How were these developments made possible? Have the trends indicated by these developments continued to grow; or, have they received a setback in the post-1957 period? If so, what are the reasons for the setback? These are the questions for which answers have to be found if the correct revolutionary strategy is to be evolved.

15. The rightist Draft does not even raise these questions, not to speak of answering them. The only explanations they give to the increasingly critical political situation in the country are:

(a) the conflicts between the top monopolists and the other sections of the bourgeoisie;

(b) the influence of foreign monopoly interests who support the monopolist groups and princely feudal circles; and

(c) the failure of the ruling party to solve the problems of building a democratic State.

In this description, they miss the most important key factor in the national political situation—the growing contradiction between the interests of the overwhelming majority of people on the one hand and the policies pursued by the ruling party on the other, a

conflict which is deepened by the existence of the conscious socialist forces led by the Communist Party.

It is true that the factors mentioned in the rightist Draft operate in Indian politics. It is, however, not true that any of them singly or all of them together, operate in isolation, or that they created the "qualitatively new situation" in the post-independence years. The "new situation" was created because all these factors were operating against the background of the mental conflict between the new ruling classes and the people in free India.

16. Failure to note this as the most important key factor in the situation gives rise to the strategic concept of such a "National Democratic Front" in which the bourgeoisie and the proletariat share the leadership of the democratic masses. The two together constitute the rejection of the basic Marxist standpoint according to which the conflict between the ruling classes and the people is the main motive force of development in any capitalist country.

17. While thus rejecting the basic approach taken in the rightist Draft Programme, I find myself in disagreement with the position adopted in the leftist Draft Programme as well.

Like the rightist, the leftist Draft fails to make a concrete analysis of Indian capitalism as it develops against the background of the General Crisis of world capitalism which, as is known, has now reached in third stage. It is not seen that all the economic difficulties faced by the Indian planning authorities and the ruling party arise from the fact that India is developing capitalistically in the particular world context in which (a) the sphere of operation for capitalism is continually shrinking; (b) the capitalistic groups who compete among themselves for domination in this ever shrinking area of operation for capitalism are growing in number, with the result that their mutual competition and struggle become more and more fierce; (c) the working people everywhere are becoming so class-conscious that they would not allow those forms of primitive accumulation which was possible in the early days of capitalism. If these realities had been seen, the conflict between foreign monopolists and India's top monopolists would have been assessed in a more balanced way.

18. Let me make clear that the most important key factor in the situation, according to me, is the conflict between the ruling classes and the mass of the people. The recognition of this reality is the line of demarcation between the 'right' on the one hand and the 'left' and 'centre' on the other. I am therefore in full agreement with the idea that the new State which will arise out of the revolutionary democratic struggles will be based on the "coalition of all genuine anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces headed by the working class." But, having made the conflict between the ruling classes and the mass of the working people the most important and decisive force on which to depend for success in the revolutionary democratic struggles, we have to take full account of; and skillfully utilise, other conflicts as well. This too is accepted by the authors of the leftist Draft. There is therefore agreement between them and me on this point as well. I am, however, in disagreement with them on the question of what these other conflicts are. According to me, they are (a) between the Indian ruling classes as a whole (which may include even the topmost monopolists and landlords) and foreign monopolies, (b) between the monopolists and the rest of the Indian bourgeoisie, (c) between the bourgeoisie as a whole and feudal and semi-feudal classes and (d) between the urban monopolists and the rural people, the latter include even the feudal elements in the rural areas and so on.

The authors of the left Draft appear to dismiss (a) and (d) above. They appear to hold that, apart from certain individuals and certain extraordinary situations, the entire strata of the ruling classes-landlords and monopoly bourgeoisie are irrevocably in the enemy camp. Therefore, according to them, there is no question of these strata having any place in the democratic front.

19. The real question is not whether, in actual reality, these two sections will or will not be in the democratic front. That depends on a variety of circumstances most of which can not be foreseen now. The real question is what approach to take: should the party of the proletariat consider the landlords and monopolists to be enemies of the revolutionary democratic movement in the same way in which imperialism and feudalism are; or would they be welcomed into the front provided they join the rest of the nation in the struggle for

eliminating all remnants of feudalism and all traces of imperialist domination?

The essentials of a correct strategic approach, according to me, are,

with the entire nation against foreign monopolists;

with the rest of the Indian bourgeoisie against the Indian monopolists;

with the bourgeoisie against feudal and semi-feudal classes;
with the rural people against the urban monopolists;

and above all, with the peasantry and other sections of the working people against the ruling classes as a whole.

20. The above being the strategic concept, I am convinced that the idea of National Democracy as a form of non-capitalist path, envisaged in the Moscow Statement, applies to India. The two essential factors of that concept are (a) the democratic forces which bring the new State into existence are essentially **National**, i. e., no class stratum is excluded; only those individuals and groups who actually oppose the programming of national regeneration are excluded (b) though thus excluding no class or stratum, the front has a definite class content; it is based on worker-peasant alliance and is led by the working class.

The concept of People's Democracy contained in the leftist draft rejects the above. I therefore can not accept it.

As for the concept of National Democracy as envisaged in the rightist Draft, it rejects the above from the opposite end. Its concept of class relations has nothing to do with Marxism-Leninism. I am further of opinion that the rightist Draft distorts the idea of National Democracy as envisaged in the Moscow Statement. For, the essentials of the slogan of National Democracy, according to Com. Khrushchov, "consists precisely in taking note of the peculiarities of the economic, political and cultural life of the peoples and in seeking forms in uniting all the sound forces of the nation ensuring the leading role of the working class in the national front, in the

struggle for the final eradication of the roots of imperialism and remnants of feudalism, paving the way for the ultimate advance to Socialism." ("The National Liberation Movement page 31, emphasis added.)

21. I would therefore plead for rejection of both the drafts and for the setting up of mechanism for the discussion of all questions connected with the further development of India's revolutionary democratic movement against the background of the growing crisis of the economy, politics and ideology of capitalism in India and the world.

22. Before I conclude, I should also refer to the question of inner-party struggle which has now reached the stage of an open split. It is unfortunate that neither the rightist nor the leftist Draft makes any reference to its existence, not to speak of giving explanations for it. Their failure in this respect makes the two drafts completely ineffective in fighting the twin dangers of Revisionism and Dogmatism. It is necessary, to me, for our Party Programme to draw attention to the following :

(A) The origin and development of inner-Party differences, which have led to split in the Party, should be traced not to the evil intentions or misdeeds of certain individual leaders, but to certain **objective factors** ;

(B) The most important of these objective factors is **the fact of capitalist development which is creating new strata of entrepreneurs and prosperous capitalist farmers; however narrow** the circle of these strata, they hold key places in the social and cultural life of the nation, and are therefore able to create among the broad mass of people **the illusion of all-round national prosperity**. This illusion is shared by section of the working people as well. Furthermore, the agitations and actions led by the trade unions have led to some improvement in the living and working conditions of at least a section of the class.

(C) **The above-mentioned objective factors are strengthened by the failure of our party leadership to make a sufficiently**

concrete exposure of the class essence of capitalist development. Our party leadership did, in its analysis of capitalist planning in the country, shift itself from the initially negative assumption of no development to the subsequent failure to bring out the contradictions inherent in the capitalist planning as practised in India. The party has developed a particular approach according to which the only shortcoming in India's capitalist planning is that the fruits of development are appropriated by the exploiting classes ; the contradictions of planning and its consequences for the nation as a whole are not seen and exposed.

(D) Added to the above is the fact that **within the party and its leadership are emerging elements who, unless effectively checked by a sufficiently vigilant party, will become purveyors of bourgeois ideology into the working class**, e. g., those who have become, or can legitimately aspire to become, members of Parliament and state Legislatures, members and Presidents of co-operative societies and so on. The development of trade unions has also resulted in the emergence of a whole-time cadre who, if not checked by a vigilant party, will play the same role in India as the "labour aristocracy" does in the advanced capitalist countries.

(E) As opposed to the above-mentioned objective and subjective factors which lie behind the emergence and strengthening of revisionism within the party is the objective reality that national development and consequent prosperity embrace only a narrow upper stratum of the Indian society. The living and working conditions of the mass of the people are in fact, deplorable ; their misery is ever-growing. This naturally leads to the growth of acute mass discontent which breaks out in various forms. Given correct leadership, this can build the unity of the people against the policies and practices of the ruling classes and their party. **In the absence of correct leadership, however, this discontent is likely to lead to chaotic and futile forms of agitation and struggle, Herein lies the soil for Dogmatism and Sectarianism.**

(F) It should therefore be the endeavour of the conscious vanguard of the working class to keep before itself the need for educating the whole working class and other sections of the toiling people on the

correct revolutionary strategy and tactics. In doing this, it should **direct the main fire against revisionism (since the objective basis for it is stronger than for Dogmatism), while giving no quarter to sectarianism and Dogmatism in any form.** Only such a party as carries on the simultaneous struggle against both will be able to organise and lead India's working people against imperialism feudalism and its allies.