

Indian Maoists summon masses to ... vote for big business Congress Party—Part 1

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2 June 2024

India's most influential Maoist organization—the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation—is a founding member and integral part of the Congress Party-led opposition electoral bloc, the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA).

The CPI (M-L) Liberation claims the defeat of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the hands of the INDIA alliance in the multi-phase general election which concludes this week is crucial to the defeat of fascism. In their Election Charter, “Defeat BJP, Save Democracy! Vote for CPI (M-L), Elect INDIA candidates,” the Maoists urge “the people of India ... to apply our constitutional power of the vote to end this reign of disaster and rebuild India as a robust democracy.”

Should the post-election parliamentary arithmetic permit, the Maoists have pledged to do everything in their power to bring to office the big business Congress Party and the various right-wing ethno-nationalist, caste-ist and Stalinist parliamentary parties that are its INDIA alliance partners.

Led by the Congress, till recently the Indian bourgeoisie's preferred party of national government, an INDIA government would be a right-wing capitalist regime. It would be entirely committed to implementing the Indian bourgeoisie's class strategy of transforming India into a global power through the intensification of the exploitation of the working class and rural masses; and by clutching to the bedraggled coattails of US imperialism, as it wages war on Russia, oversees Israel's genocidal assault on the Palestinians and strategically encircles and economically squeezes China.

At its founding in 1969, the 55th anniversary of which it celebrated in April, the CPI (M-L) advocated “protracted people's war” against India's then Congress Party-led capitalist government. It carried out armed attacks on leaders and cadre of the Stalinist Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPM and the Communist Party of India (CPI), whose opportunist politics it denounced as “social fascist.”

We will have more to say about this politically bankrupt and retrograde perspective below. Suffice it to note here that the Maoists, like the CPI and CPM before them, have now thoroughly integrated themselves into the bourgeois political establishment. Like the traditional Stalinist parliamentary parties, the CPI (M-L) points to the crimes of Modi, his BJP and their fellow Hindu fascists not to summon the working class for class struggle, but to

chain it to the parties and state institutions of the bourgeoisie.

For more than three decades, the principal rationale that the CPM, CPI and their Left Front have advanced for their systematic suppression of the class struggle has been the need to combat the BJP-led Hindu supremacist right. In the name of defeating the BJP, they have supported right-wing governments, most of them Congress Party-led at the Centre. In those states where they themselves have held office, they have pursued what they frankly admit are “pro-investor,” that is anti-working class, policies.

The end result is that the Hindu fascist menace has only grown. With the working class prevented from offering its own solution to the mounting capitalist crisis, the BJP and the RSS-led network of Hindutva (Hindu nationalist) organizations have been able to exploit and divert along reactionary communal lines the growing social anger and frustration among the petty bourgeoisie and sections of the toiling masses over chronic poverty, dilapidated public infrastructure, and ever-increasing social inequality.

In an editorial in the April 25, 2024 edition of its newspaper, *Liberation*, the CPI (M-L) urged India's workers and toilers to make the reactionary electoral campaign of the Congress-led INDIA alliance “a historic people's movement to deliver a decisive blow to the fascist forces in power.”

What a farce! The only campaign the Congress and its allies can wage is one aimed at hoodwinking the masses, and so it has been. Its campaign has been fronted by Congress Party leader Rahul Gandhi, the son, grandson and great grandson of Indian prime ministers. It has combined phony populist appeals with denunciations of Modi from the right for supposedly failing to stand up to China.

The reactionary bourgeois forces that comprise the INDIA alliance are organically hostile to the Indian masses, to any genuine “people's movement.” They view its struggles with trepidation and have shown time and again that they are ready to mobilize the full power of the capitalist state to suppress them.

A Congress Party-led coalition government along the very lines advocated by the Maoists held office for a decade beginning in 2004 and ending with Modi's 2014 election victory. Far from “saving democracy,” the United Progressive Alliance government pushed forward with privatization, deregulation, and massive tax concessions to big business and the rich—further polarizing India between a tiny stratum of rich and ultra-rich and their upper middle-class agents and the brutally exploited toiling masses. It also forged the Indo-US “global strategic partnership” under

which India has been transformed into a frontline state in Washington's military-strategic offensive against China.

Deeply discredited by its many decades in power and especially its role in spearheading post-1991 "pro-market, pro-investor" reform and New Delhi's global strategic partnership with US imperialism, the Congress Party has eagerly accepted the Maoists' support.

The CPI (M-L) election campaign and Charter

After the traditional horse trading that is the stuff of Indian parliamentary politics, the INDIA alliance agreed to the CPI (M-L) standing four candidates under its banner—three in Bihar, one of the most populous and fiercely contested states in the 2024 election, and one in neighbouring Jharkhand. In addition, the CPI-ML is independently contesting one Lok Sabha seat each in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha. Everywhere else, it is mustering votes for candidates of the INDIA alliance. In Maharashtra, this includes stumping for votes for the Uddhav Thackeray wing of the Shiv Sena—a fascist Hindutva-espousing party, with a long record of inciting communal and ethnic violence. In West Bengal, the Maoists are urging their supporters to vote for the candidates of the ruling Trinamool Congress Party led by the anti-communist demagogue Mamata Banerjee on the grounds they are the best placed to defeat the BJP. The Trinamool Congress is nominally part of the INDIA alliance but rejected any "seat-sharing" with the Congress and the CPM-CPI led Left Front.

The CPI (M-L) Liberation election Charter was clearly drafted with a view to not embarrassing or offending its big business political allies. It excludes any mention of radical "land reform," although historically this was a main Maoist battle-cry. Its 15 points outline timid democratic and social-welfare reforms, none of which would seriously impact on the wealth of the bourgeoisie, let alone call into question its stranglehold over socio-economic life or the capitalist profit imperative.

The Charter calls for a stop to all further privatization, increased social spending, reversal of some of the BJP's most egregious attacks on working people such as their anti-worker labour laws, an unspecified "increase in corporate tax rates" and a "wealth and inheritance tax of 1 percent on the super-rich." Adoption of these and the other measures outlined in the Charter would the CPC (M-L) asserts, "enable the India Alliance, of which we are a part, to meet people's aspirations."

In keeping with its reactionary claim that the needs of India's impoverished masses can be met through a "reformed" Indian capitalism, the Charter calls for "for workers' representation on company boards"—a corporatist demand traditionally raised only by the most right-wing labour bureaucracies in the West.

Tellingly, the Charter makes no reference to ending the Indo-US Global Strategic Partnership. This under conditions where US imperialism is pursuing a global war that already has three main fronts—against Russia in Eurasia, Iran and its allies in the Middle

East and China in the Indo-Pacific. Through this partnership, and with the full complicity and support of the Congress Party, the Indian bourgeoisie has harnessed the Indian people to US imperialism's war drive, particularly against China. Beginning under the UPA government and especially during the past four years which have been punctuated by war and intensifying great-power conflict, New Delhi has forged an ever thicker web of bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral ties with Washington, and its chief Asia-Pacific allies, Japan and Australia.

The Charter is also silent on the vast amounts being squandered on expanding India's military prowess, including on the development of a blue water navy and a triad nuclear-weapons capacity. Instead, the Maoists repeat the lie the BJP government occasionally puts out that India is pursuing, as it did during the Cold War, a "Non-Alignment policy." This, the Charter affirms, should "be retained and bolstered." At the same time, the CPI (M-L) expresses the pious wish that India adopt a "foreign policy free from the interests and priorities of the United States-led western powers."

The Maoists played an important role in the creation of the INDIA bloc, acting as a facilitator and mediator between the rival bourgeois parties and their leaders. Today, however, they would prefer that the specifics of this be forgotten, since it sheds revealing light on just how deeply they are mired in the cesspool of Indian bourgeois politics.

On the sidelines of the CPI (M-L)'s eleventh all-India congress held in Patna, Bihar, in Feb. 2023, the Maoists held an anti-BJP, "Save democracy, Save India" rally that brought together for the first time prominent leaders of a prospective "grand opposition alliance" for the 2024 Lok Sabha election. A key element in this initiative was the invitation the CPI (M-L) issued to Bihar Chief Minister and Janata Dal (United) leader Nitish Kumar.

For most of the previous 25 years, Nitish Kumar and his JD (U) had been close allies of the BJP, serving alongside it in governments in Bihar and at the Centre. But from time to time, they temporarily parted ways and the JD (U) chose to do so again in August 2022. The CPI (M-L) facilitated Nitish Kumar's return to the "democratic, secular" opposition, and the Maoists were in his corner cheering him on when he convened the first meeting of what would become the INDIA alliance in Patna last June, and subsequently began sending out feelers to become its prime ministerial candidate.

Only to the Maoists chagrin, Nitish Kumar and his JD (U) suddenly bolted from the INDIA alliance in January and re-entered the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance leaving the Congress Party and its allies with egg on their faces. The Maoists were reduced to bleating about Nitish Kumar's "betrayal," as if one can reproach a Bengal tiger for being a carnivore.

To be continued ...



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