

# Thesis on India - building a revolutionary left today

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This draft thesis is the basis for the League's analysis on India and the major areas of research and analysis that need to be done to establish a revolutionary organisation

## Globalisation and its crisis

1. We are living in a time of a massive international onslaught against the world working class and poor. After the downfall of the USSR and the turn by the Chinese bureaucracy to restore capitalism, there was huge surge in the globalisation of capital. This meant not only its penetration of these hitherto closed economies but in most countries drive to open up industries and services hitherto the preserve of the state. Since 1991 Congress and JVP governments alike pursued a version of the neoliberal policy of privatisation and marketisation in India. On a world scale this "opening" to large-scale private capital appeared to have solved the stagnation and crises of capitalism which marked the period from the mid- 1970s to the early 1990s. India's' speeded up growth, alongside China's even faster development, added to the triumphalism of those who proclaimed the final triumph of capitalism over "communism" and "socialism"
2. These developments were hailed as a new era which would also lead to the eradication of poverty through the growth of a new middle class and the trickle-down effect of their enhanced purchasing power would raise the standard of living of the poorest - "a rising tide on which all boats would rise." Certainly the development of China, and in part India too, saw a real increase of the productive forces in new industries and services. But in reality this improved the conditions of only a minority and massively increased social inequality. It did however increase the relative and absolute size of the proletariat in a number of Asian countries, thus increasing the potential for a huge increase in the size and dynamism of the workers movement in Asia- the first effects of which we are beginning to see.
3. But the Globalisation boom in the imperialist heartlands was largely based on the massive expansion of fictitious capital (home mortgages, "complex derivatives," the huge expansion of the financial services sector, etc.). The wages of workers in the USA stagnated and declined and in all countries there was the development of a larger and larger sector of insecure, temporary low paid workers, and the structurally unemployed. Industries relocated to areas of relatively cheap labour.
4. Yet this capitalist triumphalism came to a dramatic end. The Globalisation system suffered a spectacular crisis in 2008 with the credit crunch and the financial crash leading on to the deepest and longest world

recession since the Second World War. The US and many European banks had to be bailed out by governments at the expense of the working and middle class taxpayers. This in turn produced a "sovereign debt" and currency crisis. The bourgeoisie demanded the restoration of state finances by a dual process of cutting state spending, particularly on welfare, health and education, and increasing taxation - particularly indirect taxation that hits the poor the hardest. In short this is not only a crisis of globalisation or of neoliberalism but also a crisis of capitalism itself. It is one that the ruling class demands that the working class, the urban poor and the peasantry pay for. Of course renunciation of the foreign debt, massive taxation of the rich, the uncompensated nationalisation of bankrupt banks and industry, the abandonment of huge war expenditures by the USA and the European powers could meet the problem of state debt.

5. People across the world are looking at the situation across Asia as it undergoes rapid change. The rise of China as an imperialist power creates an entirely new world situation, one which will see increasing inter-imperialist rivalry between the US, EU, Japan and China. Already important international disputes over currency have begun as China begins to challenge the dominant powers for a share of the world profits.

6. India is a country that encapsulates all the contradictions of the world today. A billion people, half of them in the countryside, the great majority in conditions of either capitalist or semi-feudal servitude, a massive proportion of the urban population working not in modern factories and offices but as cruelly exploited wage slaves. Millions live an utterly precarious existence in the slums and shantytowns of the modern cities. India is a country where the most ancient and modern forms of exploitation exist side by side. Villages living almost untouched by centuries of progress, lacking the most basic amenities, with the business districts and luxury apartment blocks of Mumbai or Bangalore.

7. Now much of the world manufacturing happens in China and across South Asia. The weight of the world industrial proletariat has shifted, with new trade unions and new forms of struggle emerging. The Indian working class has grown enormously in the last decades. Not just in the IT sector but also in manufacturing and other industries.

8. But India is not the "shining" example of globalisation and capitalism its publicists claim. Indeed today there are more Indians living in poverty (456 million) than the entire population of India in 1947 (345 million). Yet by 2009 there were 127,000 millionaires in India with a collective worth of \$477 billion. India has 69 billionaires, and the 100 richest people have a combined wealth of \$300 billion. Indian multinational companies such as the Tata Group - are today buying out "western" brands or creating globally recognized products. From steel to computer software Indian capitalists are playing a more prominent world role and foreign capitals have flooded in seeking to exploit the projected market of the much touted "new middle class" as well to take advantage of "cheap" skilled labour.

9. Congress remains the preferred party of the Indian bourgeois class. Before 1947 it acted to channel the anger of ordinary Indians into a struggle for constitutional reforms and negotiated independence from the British. Under Gandhi it repeatedly defused mass movements the moment they threatened to turn into a revolutionary uprising against the British or to class with the Indian landlords, princes and capitalists.

10. Independent India inherited a semi-feudal agrarian system from the British. Land ownership was highly concentrated in a few landlords, zamindars and their intermediaries whose main objective was to extract maximum rent, either in cash or kind from peasants. Congress under Nehru, for all its reformist socialist rhetoric and its state capitalist measures never carried out a radical agrarian reform let alone a rural revolution. It is noteworthy that the most far-reaching (though gradual) land reform has been in the states ruled by Communist Party governments or coalitions, i.e. in West Bengal and Kerala. Creating a more equitable distribution of land among the landless farmers, than in the states where the Congress with its deep ties to the landlord class ruled. Recent studies prove that rural inequalities have increased, rather

than decreased. The number of landless labourers has gone up and the top ten percent of landowners monopolizes more land now than in 1951.

11. After 1947 Congress became the dominant political party in India - uniting both working class and capitalist forces in a multi-class alliance subordinated to the bourgeoisie. It is a party that preserves capitalism and facilitates imperialist influence in the country. Gandhi and Nehru represented the interests of the Indian capitalist class as it was in formation to becoming a ruling class, neither one represented the interests of the working or peasant masses in the country.

12. But capital cannot help creating its gravedigger the modern working class. Likewise the creation of hundreds of millions of rural proletarians and semi-proletarians is an enormous explosive charge lying under capitalist India. This working class is under-organised both in trade union and in political terms but as global capitalism enters an extended historic crisis the impulse to organize will grow stronger and stronger. It is clear that the key to the revolution in South Asia lies in the Indian working class and its struggle against Indian and imperialist capital. The workers must unite with the rural proletariat, the poor peasantry and the huge numbers of the urban poor and the oppressed ethnic and national groups - offering them a vision of a socialist future where a direct democracy of soviets and a planned economy can really build a real India shining.

### **Crisis of leadership in India**

13. In the programme of the Fourth Programme in 1938 Trotsky wrote "The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat." This is true today. The working class is willing and wants to struggle, it organises trade unions, strikes, protests against the bosses. But the current leadership of the working class, reformists, Stalinists, or nationalists - refuse to lead the working class to power.

14. But there are strategic weaknesses within the Indian workers movement. The crisis of working class leadership in India is a product of the same contradictions as the crisis of leadership across the world. The Indian working class and peasantry are struggling to improve their living conditions and demanding social justice, but the reformist leaderships of the CPI and CPM hold them back.

15. The Indian working class needs a revolutionary party that can lead it in a struggle for working class power, not to some intermediate stage of national democracy under a coalition between the workers parties and a fictional patriotic bourgeoisie.

16. The CPI and CPM are both reformist parties, concentrating on parliamentary elections. When in power in different regions they act in the interests of capital against the interests of the workers and peasantry - most scandalously in West Bengal when the CPM sent in party cadres to intimidate, rape and harass villagers resisting privatisation. Nor does the guerrilla warfare strategy of the CPI (Maoist) offer a real alternative. Indian capitalism cannot be destroyed by ?surrounding the cities from the countryside? but only by an urban worker-led revolution that arouses a revolutionary wave in the countryside and amongst all the oppressed peoples of the subcontinent.

17. The CPI became a reformist party in the mid-1930s, despite still using the names of Marx and Lenin, but had become a block on mass revolutionary action. During the ultra left third period of the Comintern (1929-1934) the CPI rejected the national struggle against British rule and split the unions, forming their own red unions and isolating themselves from the mass of the working class.

18. When the class collaborationist and counter revolutionary policy of the peoples front was launched in

1934, the CPI zigzagged and joined congress uncritically, exalting Gandhi as a leader of the Indian people. In congress they agued left but always capitulated to Gandhi and the right wing leaders in the name of "unity". They effectively tied the Indian working class to the bourgeois nationalist cause and acted as "congressmen first, communists second". This was an appalling breach of the principles of Communist organisation and politics, where as Marx said "Communists disdain to conceal their views."

19. The CPI supported an anti-fascist war against Nazi Germany in the 1930s - which would in reality have been an imperialist war between Britain and Germany. When the Hitler-Stalin pact was signed in 1939 and the USSR took a neutral position against Germany, and the CPI was forced to change its position. This was not done from the principles of a revolutionary opposition to imperialist war as Lenin had argued in 1914-1917 but because the Stalinist bureaucracy reached a compromise with Hitler.

20. After the Second World War and in particular the beginning of the Cold War the CPI (like the rest of the world's CPs) swung to a left line position of fomenting armed peasant insurrections in Telangana, Tripura and Kerala, but which had little national support and were crushed. In the 1950s Nehru and Congress maintained close relations with the Soviet Union and the CPI was ordered to give up any real revolutionary struggle and commit themselves to parliamentary reformism. In the 1950s China began to have more and more of an influence on the CPI but the Sino-Indian War of 1952 -in which the CPI supported China- put it in a difficult position.

21. The split from the CPI, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in 1964 saw around 60 per cent of the CPI cadres leave the organisation. The CPI (M) adopted a left critique of the CPI's reformism and revisionism but refused to explicitly support the Chinese and de facto continued to concentrate on electoral work. As a result of this it established its long-term strongholds in Kerala and West Bengal. However during 1966 an uprising in Naxalbari (West Bengal the CPI (M) supported the state government (which it was part of). Left wing CPI (M) militants however supported the uprising, split away and were subsequently know as Naxalites. The Chinese, then in the throes of Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution, praised the uprising in the People's Daily (July 5, 1967) "The Indian revolution must take the road of relying on the peasants, establishing base areas in the countryside, persisting in protracted armed struggle and using the countryside to encircle and finally capture the cities."

23. The Maoists in the Naxalite movement wage a guerrilla war against the government and the landlords. Clearly they must be defended against the government and the army - but their strategy does not resolve the real contradiction at the heart of India. The key strategic struggle is not the peasantry versus the landlords, but the working class against the bourgeoisie. The strategy of Guerillarism takes the cadres from the working classes in the city and commits them to an armed struggle in the countryside, devoting all their time to fighting the police and the army. Although revolutionary socialists are not afraid of revolutionary violence, we see it as an essential moment in the struggle for power, we see our task in the here and now as the preparation of the working class for such a struggle in the future.

24. There are various centrist forces in India, political organisations that exist between outright reformism and consistent revolutionary positions. These centrists often use Marxist phrases and may even refer to Trotsky but in fact they are either chronic opportunists or inveterate sectarians. Revolutionary socialists stand on a clearly defined programme of socialist revolution and refuse to hide their politics to win support from non-revolutionary forces - we state what is and we find a way to the masses through their every day struggles.

### **The united front**

25. Revolutionary propaganda and "party work" alone is unable to organise the working class for

revolution. The majority of workers are not in a permanent revolutionary ferment, and only a minority ? a vanguard - will join a revolutionary organisation outside of a social economic crisis. The task of this vanguard is to train itself as leaders for the great battles of the revolution in the smaller day-to-day struggles of the workers and the oppressed, to win the confidence of the masses.

26. Therefore revolutionary tendencies within the working class must work alongside more reformist minded workers on a daily basis. This means working in a common struggle together on the issues that affect workers. But it also means giving a militant, revolutionary leadership. We propose working class action as a means of winning concessions from the bosses, through strikes, mass protests or occupations of factories and universities.

27. The united front is a tactic for gaining a hearing within the working class, and showing in action that our politics and ideas are superior to those of the Stalinist or reformist forces. Our principle is that we "march separately but strike together" - we strike together in demonstrations, workers strikes, protests and so on, but our own organisation and programme is clearly put before the class as well.

### **The rural population ? workers and poor peasants**

28. Although we want to build a working class organisation, and its most powerful battalions are in the large-scale factories, mines and mill, we dare not ignore the lives and struggles of the peasantry - far from it. Socialists conduct systematic work amongst the peasantry, through establishing peasant unions and co-operatives, through educational classes, through winning the peasantry to an alliance with the working classes in the cities and towns. Our programme must be explained clearly to the peasantry, we promote class warfare between poor peasant, the landlords, and all the parasites moneylenders and bankers who exploit the. The revolution in India will be led by the working class but it must be supported the peasantry, just as it was in Russia in 1917.

### **Our tasks**

29. Revolutionary socialists look first to the working class as the agent of revolutionary change. The task is to wield the vanguard of the class into a party, organised around a programme of demands which undermine capitalism at its very heart, the question of property and the "rights" of the bourgeois class to exploit, and prepares the class for the revolutionary struggle.

30. Training in bolshevism, that is programme, the utter dedication to the revolutionary cause and the correct relationship between party and class, is an essential part of the fight for communism.

31. The working class under capitalism is divided by country, race, gender, age and religion. We cannot wait for the working class to achieve revolutionary socialist consciousness simply through the economic struggle under capitalism. The role of socialists is to intervene into the economic struggle and give it a political dimension, arguing for anti capitalist ideas and militant methods of struggle. The dictatorship of the proletariat is not something that falls from the sky one day but is consciously argued for and prepared for by a revolutionary tendency within the working class. This requires a programme of demands and action, which prepare the working class for the overthrow of capitalism. The programme needs a party to organise its cadres around to fight for within the working class and social movements.

32. The revolutionary party is not built over night. Communists can go through various stages of pre party formations before they have created a party capable of leading the vanguard. Initially, when the revolutionary nucleus is small, Communists can find themselves in ideological tendencies - groups of communists united around key political demands, focussing on the fundamental concepts of programme.

The next stage is the fighting propaganda group, a small political tendency united around a programme, which intervenes into the working class movement with an orientation to winning leadership of the struggles. Successfully overcoming this phase of party building can see the creation of a small cadre party, a larger and more stable formation with regular publications, a consistent intervention into the working class.

33. The final stage of party building is the revolutionary party - such an organisation is only worthy of the name when it truly organises the great majority of the working class vanguard and beyond it a large part of the working class as a whole. A revolutionary party normally only comes into existence at the point of revolutionary crisis, a combination of the years of preparation work done by Communists before hand and an upsurge of the class struggle leading to a subsequent radicalisation of the workers vanguard. The fusion of the communist programme with the vanguard and the formation of a revolutionary party is the pinnacle of the work of the communists; its role then is to lead a successful insurrection against the capitalists to resolve the revolutionary crisis.

34. As Trotsky wrote in 1930: "... all those social peculiarities which made possible and unavoidable the October revolution are present in India in a still sharper form. In this country of poor peasants, the hegemony of the city has no less clear a character than in tsarist Russia. The concentration of industrial, commercial and banking power in the hands of the big bourgeoisie, primarily the foreign bourgeoisie, on the one hand; a swift growth of a sharply-defined proletariat, on the other, excludes the possibility of an independent role of the petty bourgeoisie of the city and to an extent the intellectuals and transforms by this the political mechanics of the revolution into a struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie for the leadership of the peasant masses. So far there is 'only' one condition missing: a Bolshevik party. And that is where the problem lies now." It is indeed a Bolshevik party that is missing in India. We are determined to create one in the coming years, and propose a close collaboration - fraternal relations with you in order to achieve that.

### **Trade union policy**

35. Many different trade union federations exist in India. They are all affiliated with different parties and political tendencies. Revolutionaries are in favour of working class unity against the capitalists and national industrial trade unions, organised independently of any openly bourgeois force. Our policy in India is to promote great trade union co-operation on a national, regional and local level, with cross union committees being formed and rank and file movements of workers in industries to organise action. In workplaces where multiple trade unions are active we promote factory committees to unite the unions, on the basis of action against the bosses.

### **The national question**

36. Socialist campaign against any discrimination on the basis of nationality or language. Socialists support the rights of every language group in India to be taught in their own mother tongue.

37. Our slogan is for a socialist federation of South Asia as the best way of resolving the national questions across the sub-continent. Only the working class in power can create a planned economy which will develop the means of production and lift the masses out of the poverty which imperialism has consigned India to. The boundaries of the constituent states of the federation should be drawn according to the wishes of the people that live there. The basic principles that all revolutionaries adhere to are the right to self-determination, including separation of the people so wish, and class unity and solidarity.

38. Revolutionary socialists opposed the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan as part of a divide

and rule strategy of British imperialism. Since then the states of Pakistan and Bangladesh have suffered years of dictatorships and socio-political crisis, nation states that are too economically weak too be stable for any length of time.

## **Internationalism**

39. Many socialists argue that it is necessary to build revolutionary organisations in one country and then create an international at a future point. For socialists this is the wrong approach. For us international collaboration and agreement around a political programme and shared methodology is crucial to establishing the correct line. As Trotsky wrote in 1930 "If the Communist Left throughout the world consisted of only five individuals, they would have nonetheless been obliged to build an international organization simultaneously with the building of one or more national organizations."

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