

REVOLUTIONARY DEMOCRACY

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‘CULPABLE GENOCIDE NOT AMOUNTING TO MURDER’ – THE TUTICORIN MASSACRE

The Working Class and Primitive Accumulation

‘Ensure zero tolerance towards safety, environment and governance’ (sic!!).

Mission Statement of Sterlite Copper (a unit of Vedanta Limited):

A demonstration of tens of thousands of citizens of Tuticorin (Anglicised form of Thoothukudi) marched to the office of district administration demanding shutting down of a copper smelting plant owned and operated by Vedanta Resources Plc under the name of Sterlite Copper. These citizens were convinced that the plant was blatantly violating environmental safeguards and causing severe pollution of air ground water and the adjacent sea. As a result, deadly diseases like cancer and respiratory disorders were becoming rampant and the diversity of marine fishes and flora was fast dwindling. The allegation was also that this was being done with the connivance of the state regulatory agencies. The agitators came from a broad spectrum of citizens which included school children, college students, workers, housewives, shopkeepers, fisher-folk, business-persons etc. Indeed a general strike had been called by the Merchants Association. Artisanal fisher-folk, shank divers, small salt pan manufacturers, the Tuticorin Chamber of Commerce, auto rickshaw unions, mini bus drivers and tea stall vendors quickly joined the call and stayed off work. They called for an immediate stoppage of the ongoing work to construct a new copper smelter complex, and closure of the existing factory. Vedanta was planning to establish one of the largest copper smelting complexes in Tuticorin. Once the demonstrators threatened to enter the office complex, the police opened fire which killed about 13 protestors most of whom turned out to be ordinary citizens including women and children, who had joined the protest. The TV media caught on camera snipers employed by the police who were shooting down the protestors in gross violation of norms for such circumstances.

Tuticorin happens to be an old city with a modest harbour and famous for its fisheries pearl fishery and salt pans. It was also an early site of colonial industrialisation where the textile multinational Coats established

one its early spinning mills in 1877. Significantly, it was the site of symbolic nationalist resistance where VO Chidambaranar set up a nationalist shipping firm to compete with the colonial shipping services in 1907.

The 1990s mark a watershed in the industrial history of Tuticorin. 'Liberalisation' and Globalisation and the attendant sell out to crony capitalists of public property is well attested here too. The Government of Tamil Nadu's State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamilnadu (Sipcot) set up an industrial estate in Tuticorin and many other towns and handed over land on 99 year leases to industrial houses. Sterlite Copper (Vedanta) was the largest beneficiary of this scheme. Within two decades Tuticorin became a major industrial and power hub of Tamil Nadu. A wide variety of industries including ship building, chemicals and petro-chemicals, textiles, food processing and thermal power plants have come up in and around the city which has a population of about four lakh people. The Vedanta happens to be the most aggressive of the industrial complexes that inhabit this landscape. Today it claims to be a major actor in world copper industry. "Sterlite Copper operates a 400,000 metric tonnes per annum (MTPA) Copper Smelter with associates (sic) facilities such as Refinery and Copper Rod Plant, Sulphuric Acid plant of more 12,00,000 MTPA and a Phosphoric Acid(sic) of 220,000 MTPA at Thoothukudi, Tamilnadu. Sterlite Copper also operates a 160 MW coal based power plant in Thoothukudi," (from the official website of Sterlite Copper)

The prehistory of Sterlite is instructive. In 1992, Sterlite had been allotted 500 acres of land by Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation to set up a 60,000 ton per annum copper smelter and associated facilities in the coastal district of Ratnagiri. Faced with the prospect of pollution by the smelter the local people engaged in a year-long agitation which eventually resulted in the government recognising that such plants can't be set up in ecologically fragile coastal regions and withdrawing the permission. In 1994 Tamil Nadu welcomed Sterlite with land in Tuticorin.

The sordid stories of ill considered permissions with weak clauses for protection of the environment (like keeping a minimum distance of 25 Km from the Gulf of Mannar and allotting land well within 14 Km, maintenance of a green cover for a certain distance from the plant, the clauses relating to getting environmental impact studies before commencing operation or the clauses relating to capping the capacity of the plant) as well as blatant violation of all these clauses by Sterlite form the background to the present agitation.

Despite the progress of industrialisation, the economy of the town

continues to depend 'majorly' upon traditional salt pans and fisheries including pearl fisheries. All three depend upon the fragile ecology of the Gulf of Mannar which separates southern India and Sri Lanka. With over 3600 species of flora and fauna (including turtles, sharks, dolphins, varieties of coral and pearls and among the flora sea weeds, sea grass, coral reefs, mangroves and salt marshes) this Gulf is one of the richest coastal regions in Asia. Yet due to diverse kinds of pollution and over fishing this diversity has been endangered. In 1989 the entire gulf was declared a Biosphere Reserve. The emergence of Tuticorin as a major industrial and energy hub has gradually undermined this fragile biosphere. A large number of fishing communities (47 villages with a population of about 50,000 people) depend for their livelihood upon this reserve. This is in addition to the salt pan workers and dock workers. The hinterland of the city is mainly agricultural and pastoral with the people dependent upon monsoonal flow in the rivers and streams and ground water for both drinking and agriculture. Over the last few decades the people of this region have seen a minimal growth of employment and a major degradation of natural resources, especially water and air. The Thermal power plants spew ash which not only increases the quantity of suspended particles in the air but also settle on salt pans severely spoiling the salt harvests. They are also said to settle on the sea damaging the fisheries and also on standing crops. The chemical and metallurgical industries as well as the sea food industries have not only used up immense quantities of ground water but also dumped toxic wastes into the aquifers and the sea. This decline in the air and water quality has not only meant depletion of livelihoods for the people but also a decline in health.

The earliest of the notable protests happened on March 20, 1996, when about 500 fishermen laid siege to cargo ship MV Reesa that was carrying raw materials for Sterlite. The ship had to be rerouted to Kochi from where copper ore was transported to Thoothukudi via road. They have been facing the depletion of fish stocks especially of some special varieties native to the region due to the pollution by the thermal power plants. (Sterlite incidentally has its own captive power plant.) Recently many chemical factories have been allowing untreated effluents to enter the sea and destroy the fish habitat. The population dependent upon fishing which ranges from traditional fishing communities to diverse kinds of traders have been badly hit. They form a major component of the anti-Sterlite movement.

As the plant became operational it began spewing toxic gases and contaminating ground water with toxic waste. After two incidents of gas

leak which affected the workers of neighbouring plants, the Tamil Nadu High Court ordered an independent investigation by National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI). Its report was highly incriminating. It found fault with Sterlite on many counts, including the following:

- * failure to develop a green belt;
- * producing products it was not authorised to;
- * contaminating groundwater with arsenic, lead, selenium, arsenic, aluminium and copper;
- * causing gas leaks that hurt people;
- * location, 14 km from notified islands in the Gulf of Mannar (violating the 25 km bar)

The High Court accordingly ordered the closure of the plant with immediate effect in November 1998. However within a few weeks Sterlite was able to persuade the court to allow it to resume production on the condition of conducting a fresh study by NEERI. It was also allowed to work to its full capacity to enable NEERI to conduct an Environment Impact Study (something that should have been done prior to the commissioning of the plant). This was to be funded by Sterlite. Subsequently NEERI gave a clean chit to Sterlite.

The residents of Tuticorin however continued to complain of release of toxic wastes in the water and unlicensed production by the company. In September 2004 a Supreme Court Committee inspected the site and found a number of irregularities and recommended that the plant should not be allowed to expand production further and that the appropriate regulating bodies should take cognisance of activities in violation of regulatory laws. A few months later the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) did confirm that Sterlite had built units without prior consent and was producing more than twice the sanctioned capacity. Nevertheless the Board was pressurised to overlook these violations and allow Sterlite to expand its production further. With every increase in production the polluting effect of the plant increased correspondingly. The residents persisted with the case in the High Court which ordered the plant to shut down in September 2010. However the Supreme Court set aside the order and allowed the plant to resume production till the apex court disposed off the case. It was in April 2013 that the Supreme Court finally gave its verdict. In the mean time at least three persons had died in accidents in the plant and a gas leak in March 2013 caused much harm and alarm in the city. However despite strong circumstantial evidences the TN Pollution Control Board was

‘unable’ to establish without doubt that the leakage occurred from Sterlite and not any other chemical factory.

The April 2013 judgement of the Supreme Court reads like a paradox. The apex court agreed with all allegations made by petitioners and the people of Thoothukudi, but refused to shut down the company. It agreed that *“the plant of the appellant did pollute the environment through emissions which did not conform to the standards laid down by the TNPCB under the Air Act and through discharge of effluent which did not conform to the standards laid down by the TNPCB under the Water Act”*. It also conceded that the company had continued production despite non renewal of licence by the TNPCB. The Court further agreed that when Sterlite moved the Supreme Court for staying the judgement of the High Court it had misrepresented and suppressed important facts. *“There is no doubt that there has been misrepresentation and suppression of material facts made in the special leave petition but..”* and here comes the twist in the tale - *“to decline relief to the appellants in this case would mean closure of the plant of the appellants.”* The Hon. Court was convinced that closure of the plant was undesirable. *“The plant of the appellants contributes substantially to the copper production in India and copper is used in defence, electricity, automobile, construction and infrastructure etc. The plant of the appellants has about 1,300 employees and it also provides employment to large number of people through contractors. .”*

Hence the Court decided to let off the company after a hefty fine of Rs. 100 crores.

“For such damages caused to the environment from 1997 to 2012 and for operating the plant without a valid renewal for a fairly long period, the appellant-company obviously is liable to compensate by paying damages. . .

“Considering the magnitude, capacity and prosperity of the appellant-company, we are of the view that the appellant-company should be held liable for a compensation of Rs. 100 crores for having polluted the environment in the vicinity of its plant and for having operated the plant without a renewal of the consents by the TNPCB for a fairly long period The aforesaid amount will be deposited with the Collector of Thoothukudi District,... The interest therefrom will be spent for improving the environment, including water and soil, of the vicinity of the plant ...”

Sterlite has since embarked on an ambitious expansion plan to build additional smelters on the agricultural lands of a nearby village in effect increasing its capacity to a whopping 8000 tons a year. Tragically most of

the statutory bodies which have to give clearance to this project have compromised public interest and caved in to the pressures of this colossal company.

This may have gone unnoticed but for the severe health impact faced by the people living in the villages around the factory and in Tuticorin. Indian health system is notorious for poor documentation and researches into morbidity. As such we do not have reliable health data and have to go by anecdotal evidence and perceptions of the residents of the area who strongly feel that death causing diseases like cancer have become rampant during the last two decades. A local resident summed up the complaints thus, "These villages situated close to Sterlite Copper have been witnessing deaths caused by cancer and respiratory diseases, birth of children with congenital disorders and increased instances of miscarriage. The villagers suspect that these are caused by liquid and gaseous effluents discharged from the copper-manufacturing unit. And this anxiety, fear and anger brought the people together against the mega project."

The dumping of toxic waste is said to have resulted in the pollution of water bodies in nearby villages leading to the death of livestock. It is also claimed that the tests by official agencies have proved that the waters are contaminated. A nearby village of Silverpura has seen a steep rise in cases of cancer and it is reported that a population of under 2000 people has more than 60 cancer patients.

Indeed all this may or may not have been due to Sterlite and no one is prepared to conduct a conclusive scientific study. However the fact remains that for the people of Tuticorin and nearby villages Sterlite merely represents in a concentrated form the threat posed by indiscriminate expansion of industries in the post liberalisation period. It happens to be the most brazen and powerful among the polluting plants and hence the need to target it.

This is not the place to recall the details of the hundred day struggle of the people and the demonstration joined by tens of thousands of people. It is also immaterial if agents provocateurs were at work to incite violence and police firing. The fact remains that in the face of solidarity of citizens of the region the state decided to side with Sterlite and target the protestors. Of course the national outrage forced the government to subsequently close down the plant.

In passing we may remark on the peculiar situation faced by the workers of Sterlite. In the reaction that followed the firing, large crowds entered the Sterlite complex and attacked the plants and residences of the workers. The workers have sought protection from the protestors and have also demanded

that the plant be allowed to function lest they lose their employment. This would make the protestors appear as some kind of Luddites determined to stop the process of industrialisation and set the clock back.

We are thus faced with a paradox. The workers of the plant appear as defenders of the company and peasants, fisher-folk, petty shopkeepers and others of the town who are fighting the company appear as reactionaries who are undermining the very existence of the industrial working class. What then should be the view point of the working class and its vanguard if we were to have one? We shall return to this issue at the end of this article.

Culpability of the Tamil Nadu and central governments in this is case is more than evident. Extending permission to Sterlite to set up the unit in Tuticorin, laxity in giving environmental clearance and subsequent monitoring, allowing the company to expand production with impunity without environmental safeguards, and above all complete silence for over hundred days preceding the massive protest march, the callous and brutal management of the protest and subsequent targeting of the common people of the city... All this points to complicity that goes beyond the paradigm of 'encouraging industries'. The brutal firing and repression let loose on the people of Tuticorin will forever remain a blot on the history of the Indian State.

Vedanta –Rags to Riches ... at whose cost?

It may be useful to briefly recall the history of Vedanta the holding company of Sterlite Copper. Mr Anil Agarwal started his career some decades ago as a scrap dealer in Mumbai. He persuaded some banks to finance his purchase of a sick cable company (Samsher Sterling) in 1979. He succeeded in turning around the fortunes of the company and also learn the art of running such firms. As his ambitions grew he decided to control the sources of his raw materials especially, copper and aluminium. The opportunities came in early 1990s as India 'opened out to the world' and eased state control over mineral resources. Sterlite Industries acquired Madras Aluminium Company and copper mines in Australia. That was also the time that Sterlite Copper was set up in Tuticorin. The idea was to ship imported ore to this port city and smelt copper. By the turn of the millennium the mineral policy of the Government of India was revised to withdraw the state monopoly over the mining sector and bring in private players. In 2001 the union government was ready sell off Bharat Aluminium Corporation (BALCO). Mr Agrawal swooped on it. In 2002 he purchased Hindustan

Zinc Ltd. a public sector company and the largest Zinc producer in India controlling several mines and a large smelting facility in Rajasthan. It was widely known then that the rulers of the day grossly undervalued the two companies and sold them for a song at a time when international zinc prices were at their lowest, but poised for a major rise. Anil Agarwal had put the same thing differently –

“When we took over Hindustan Zinc, we were told that we had a reserve for five years, and we made 1,50,000 tons of zinc every year. We opened the door and we put in the very best people. To cut this story short, today we are producing 1 million tons, we are about seven times bigger, and we have a reserve for 40 years. The company never used to produce silver; we are producing close to 1,000 tons of silver.”

(<https://www.bcg.com/publications/2014/anil-agarwal-simplicity-determination-vedanta-resources.aspx>)

It is said that the dominant share in this company was sold to him for less than the value of the scrap material the company complexes had. Interestingly enough these acquisitions were made possible by massive bank loans. So he purchased public assets using public money!

Today Hindustan Zinc meets more than 80 percent of India’s demand for zinc. It is the second largest zinc producer in the world and its cost of production is among the lowest in the world.

These acquisitions gave Vedanta (the holding company owned by Anil Agrawal) a major foothold in the mining sector. It now dreamt of global presence and got itself listed in London Stock Exchange, the first Indian company to do so. To access international capital markets, Anil Agarwal incorporated Vedanta Resources Plc in 2003. Vedanta Resources became the parent company of the group through a process of internal restructuring of group companies and their shareholding. The listing raised \$657 million, making it the second largest initial public offering (IPO) of the year. And suddenly Vedanta was among the large mining companies of the world.

In 2004 Vedanta Resources Plc acquired Konkola Copper Mines in Zambia, Africa. In 2007, Vedanta Resources acquired a controlling stake in Sesa Goa Limited, India’s largest producer-exporter of iron ore, and in 2010, the company acquired South African miner Anglo American’s portfolio of zinc assets in Namibia, Ireland and South Africa. The next year, Vedanta Resources acquired controlling stake in Cairn India, India’s largest private sector oil-producing firm. The merger of Sesa Goa and Sterlite Industries was announced in 2012, as part of the Vedanta Group’s consolidation. In 2017 Anil Agarwal became the single largest shareholder (20%) of Anglo

American the South African mining giant which among other things has a controlling share in De Beers the diamond miners.

These rapid acquisitions also meant reckless mining as if there was no tomorrow. Riding roughshod over rights of the tribal people of Odisha state Vedanta sought to mine bauxite (for aluminium) from the Niyamagiri hills. This met with stiff resistance of the Kondah tribes who despite every pressure exerted by the state and the Vedanta stood their ground and voted en masse to reject the acquisition of their traditional lands by Vedanta in a referendum conducted by the Supreme Court itself. A committee appointed by the court indicted Vedanta for terrorising the tribal people using private armies.

In a situation bearing eerie similarity to Tuticorin, 2000 persons from Chingola village adjoining copper mines operated by Vedanta in Zambia, went to High court in 2011 over its polluting activities. Vedanta dumped hazardous waste into a tributary of the Kafue river (itself a tributary of the Zambezi), from its copper mine there, according to a lawsuit filed by 2,000 residents, resulting in widespread human illness and the death of fish. A Canadian agency hired by the company to conduct private investigation apparently reported, "The water is acidic, and the copper and iron levels exceed permitted levels. The impurities can cause cancer. ... The people in those villages should be advised not to use this water for drinking." The 12 sq mile opencast mine has not only created one of the largest holes on African surface but also polluted streams and underground aquifers. These mines had been acquired by Vedanta in 2004 soon after listing in London Stock Exchange. It is said that it has been using old dilapidated plant facilities resulting in frequent leakages and overflow of effluent processing dams. The High Court in Lusaka found Vedanta guilty and ordered the company to pay the people a damage of \$ 2 million. Vedanta went to the Supreme Court which upheld the conviction of the company but curiously exempted it from paying any compensation. The villagers then went to London High court as Vedanta is listed as a London based company in 2016. Vedanta contested the jurisdiction of the court over the subsidiary company operating in another country. In October 2017, the Appeal Judges rejected this claim of Vedanta and the people of Chingola won jurisdiction of the London court over the companies held by Vedanta listed in LSE. This may explain Anil Agarwal's latest move to get the company delisted from LSE. While registering the company in London allowed him to access international capital, it also brought with it the jurisdiction of London courts with much stricter norms for environmental safety and payment of

compensation to victims.

Vedanta also entered the energy sector with the purchase of Cairn India and sought to set up thermal power plants in coal rich areas. Once again its reckless and callous approach was demonstrated by the collapse of a chimney tower under construction in Korba (Chhattisgarh) killing 40 workers in 2009. This is considered one of the largest industrial accidents in recent history. (Incidentally of the 12 mining companies listed in LSE, Vedanta has the highest fatality record with 67, followed by Anglo American with 20.) A judicial enquiry attributed the cause of the accident to poor design and use of substandard construction materials and indicted Vedanta for the collapse. This caused the company much embarrassment as the British Safety Council had to withdraw its 'awards' to Vedanta and several high profile investors like the Church of England and the Scandinavian pension funds withdrew their investments from Vedanta. Interestingly Vedanta tried to browbeat the judicial enquiry and when the report was finally submitted it got a High Court order to suppress its publication on the plea that the company was not given sufficient time to respond. Anil Agarwal, had told a shareholder meeting in London that the episode at Korba was an "unfortunate accident" and that "investigations have revealed that [the incident] was caused by severe thunderstorms and lightning." The judicial enquiry had clearly ruled out this possibility and the police had charged Vedanta officials with "culpable homicide not amounting to murder".

Its venture in iron ore mining in the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats and Goa too came up for severe criticism and which eventually forced the government to stop mining there in 2012.

According to the Forbes magazine Agarwal remains unfazed about these things. He invoked the holy cow to say, "This is an absolute myth that when mother earth has oil, gold, silver and other resources, you don't take it out. It's like taking out milk from a cow—you have to do it sustainably, with heart and soul to make sure you're not exploiting it." (Forbes India 29 December, 2017). Of course it is moot question as to whose cow he is trying to milk. That he is dispossessing the indigenous people of their cows and milking them for a world market is left unsaid.

Vedanta Philanthropy: Adulatory news reports tell us repeatedly how Anil Agarwal is an ideal capitalist who has committed a lion's share of his assets to philanthropy. Agarwal himself is on record regarding his concern for health and education which should be geared to make India a major player in world economy. Neo-liberal philanthropy is just beginning to flower in India and its various dimensions need careful examination. Super

profits generated by crony capitalism also means that individual capitalists are saturated with funds and need to find new avenues of investment to open up new markets. However, the funds should simultaneously strengthen the promoters of the corporation within the joint stock system of capital management. For example, Mr Ratan Tata controls Tata Sons without holding any substantial percentage of shares by virtue of control over the Tata Trusts (which were integrated and brought under the control of Mr Tata). These trusts in fact control the majority shares of the holding company. It is this leverage that Mr Tata used to outsmart Mr Cyrus Mistry the former CEO even though Mistry's family was one of the largest shareholders of Tata Sons. Similar philanthropy can be seen in WIPRO and also among the Ambanis. Mr Agarwal in committing his shares to a philanthropic trust will be following these footsteps.

'Primitive' accumulation in contemporary times

In the last chapter of Capital I, Marx discussed the question of pre capitalist sources of capitalism, the use of extra economic coercion to divest small producers of their means of production and livelihood and simultaneously creating a capitalist class with capital and a proletarian class dependent upon the former for its livelihood. Marx was careful to point out that the small producers depended not only on the means of production that they individually owned but also collective resources like forests, meadows, rivers etc. Thus primitive accumulation not only meant dispossessing the producers of means of production directly owned by them but also denying them access to common resources. This at once concentrated productive resources in the hands of the capitalists, created a class of resource-less proletarian workers and expanded the 'home market' as the proletarians had to resort to market to fulfil their primary needs like food, medicines and even water and air. In Marx's view this triple action could be achieved only through coercive power backed by the state and the legal system.

We can quite clearly see this process at work in the mining sector the world over. As developed countries have shut down their mines, it is the grossly undervalued minerals appropriated by dispossessing the indigenous people, (mostly small farmers, pastoralists, hunter gatherers and fisherfolk) which caters to the need of the exploding market. Pollution of natural resources may appear to be unconnected to this phenomenon. However, it should be seen in the light of Marx's insight regarding the appropriation of common resources by Capital. Pollution of drinking water,

destruction of coastal fishing has the multiple effect of opening diverse opportunities for capital. The depletion of soil and contamination of water sources has the effect of rendering the land unproductive, incapable of sustaining both agriculture and animal life. This would force the people to resort to market for such basic necessities. Illness caused by pollution too opens new markets for the medical corporations and insurance companies. Such dependence upon market for very survival would egg the people to seek employment in capitalist enterprises in both the 'industry' and 'service' sectors.

In Marx's formulations, primitive accumulation preceded the formation of industrial proletariat. Here we have a situation where primitive accumulation appears as an on-going process and hence the struggle against it co-exists with the struggles of the proletariat. Sterlite incidentally has witnessed a large number of deaths of workers due to accidents. Activists have documented at least a dozen cases of deaths of workers, most of them contract workers from North India without any local contacts. Even though Sterlite management claims that most of its workers continue to support it and are in its payrolls, the interests of the workers lie in joining hands with the people of Tuticorin. Yet the workers face a paradoxical prospect of supporting the closure of the company that gives them employment and face the unemployment if the company is closed permanently. Indeed, most of the contract workers have already been rendered unemployed.

The working class thus faces the problem of joining hands with the struggle against 'primitive accumulation' which will undermine the enterprises which employ it. However, this bitter choice has to be made if the working class seeks leadership in society and desires to challenge capitalism as a social system. At the same time the working class stands for socialisation of production and dissolution of pre-capitalist forms of segmented control over natural resources and labour. Only the working class can lead the rest of the society towards a less painful and less traumatic transition where socialisation of production is also just and paves the way for equitable growth and dignity of labour. Such a socialisation of production is possible only within the framework of Socialism.

Source: <https://sterlitecopper.com/know-us/> (accessed on 20th July 2018)

ABSENCE OF POLITICAL WILL TO SAVE THE INDIAN ECONOMY

A case study of Indian Finance Management

Dr. N. Bhattacharya

The National Democratic Alliance II (NDA II) led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed the government in Delhi in mid 2014. After subsequent state elections, the NDA captured power in 21 states and only 8 states remained with opposition parties. Mr. Narendra Modi as Prime Minister of India gradually started unfolding his government's economic agenda.

In 2016 the NDA government announced two controversial economic policies:

- a) Demonetisation from midnight of 8th November 2016 and
- b) Goods and Service Tax Act (GST Act) from July 2017.

A review of implementation process of these two policies gives an idea how his Government functioned during these 4 years.

I

a) Demonetisation

The entire country was in a Deepavali induced festive mood until the 1st week of November, 2016 and on 8th of November night the people were instructed by the Prime Minister that 'Demonetisation' of certain types of currency notes would take effect at midnight. It was said that all cash transactions with demonetised currency would officially stop by midnight. The press reported a constant stream of massive illegal transactions until early morning of 9th November and there was none to stop that. They rather claim that dark deeds are always better done in dark! The banking system of the entire country was brought to a halt by such unplanned and avoidable 'demonetisation' policies. Every one, poor and rich, old and young were punished for having cash at home of certain denominations of banned currency. If Government did some planning without leaking out the project some unfortunate deaths of people waiting peacefully in long queues in front of bank offices could be easily avoided!

The Reserve Bank India (RBI) being the custodian of banking system of this vast country surprisingly never bothered to make the demonetisation process more civilised even though it was affecting millions of people

coming from all social groups. Even minimum comforts were not made available in the long and painful waits. The elaborate and comfortable seating arrangements that are made in the election meetings of Mr. Modi was forgotten when 'demonetisation' policy was announced. Each customer of every bank pays cent-percent running expenditures of the banks. Banks are there for these customers and they pay for it. It is their right to get all the facilities while doing banking transactions. Banking regulators treated these customers as condemned beggars because they were compelled to come and change the notes declared illegal by their own government. These individuals were humiliated and harassed by compelling them to stand in infinite queues for unlimited hours in waiting. Total anarchy prevailed in ATM booths throughout the country with 'NO CASH' tagged on the doors. Bank employees were paid 'overtime wage' for working for unlimited hours for this unbearable work burden sincerely and faithfully and this work continued even after the *official* demonetisation transactions were over. However, the extra wage paid for extra time work was taken back by the bank management, as reported in press! The entire economy of our country with 1.3 billion people was subject to untold sufferings without any apology to the nation for such *awful economic policies* guided by dictatorial mind-set.

It has now been disclosed (after more than 20 months) that a lot of co-operative banks (especially in Gujarat and Maharashtra) received huge amounts of demonetised currency as deposits and these were shown as *non-taxable* agricultural income of the depositors. Well known politicians of these states were heading these cooperative banks for it is these affluent citizens that benefit from these tax rebates. There is no report by the RBI whether any enquiry was made on these deposits or not. Similarly, Zero Balance Jan Dhan accounts were opened some time prior to demonetisation scheme to help financially weaker sections and a lot of these accounts were reported to be overflowing with huge deposits of cash during the demonetisation process! No disclosure has yet been made to the public regarding whose money was deposited in these accounts. The net result is that despite maximum near-criminal torture of ordinary bank customers throughout the country and for nearly two months, more or less all the 'demonetised notes' issued by the RBI were returned (around 93 percent) and the government's attempt to unearth a 'huge quantity of black money' miserably failed! The RBI failed to point out names of those who were found to be defaulters in the demonetisation process. If the information on black money was correct, 'fake and illegal currency' collection should have

been much more than 7 to 10 percent.

The government will be well advised not to repeat such adventures without proper preparation even if it were warranted. After all the citizens deserve a decent treatment at the hands of the bureaucracy they pay for.

b) Goods and Service Tax 2017

When every sector of Indian economy was suffering from the disastrous effect of demonetisation, the Goods and Services Tax Act (GST Act) was implemented from 1st July, 2017. It is a new indirect tax which replaces all state and central taxes on goods and services produced in the country. The objective of this tax was to rationalise indirect taxation in the country and unify the tariff regime so as to strengthen the national market. The idea was also to widen the tax network so as to bring the unorganised and informal sector within the ambit of the tax net. However, it was so shoddily planned and implemented and its procedures so complicated and tedious that small and medium business units were compelled to close down. Both employers and lakhs of their employees returned back to their homes shortly after its implementation. Initially, it was torturing even to well organised traditional business units. Except the corporate houses, the rest suffered losses and many closed their units. Its working was bewildering requiring experts to handle them and it was time consuming. This adversely impacted small firms employing only family labour. After 12-15 months of its introduction, both traders and consumers are unhappy with the new indirect taxation system. Its complexity and administrative procedures are changing very fast and it is very difficult to adjust to them. The small scale business community are not habituated to such modern techniques. Both central and state governments are unhappy as actual tax collection is much below the projected figures. What is peculiar is that petroleum products for some reason have been kept out of the GST. That has proved a bonanza for both centre and states when the imported price of petroleum products went up. Naturally, the excise collection by the centre is going up as it is based on the cost of petroleum products. Pollution level in Delhi will thus be reduced drastically in the near future in the absence of private vehicles on road! Foreign trade is also affected by the confusions created by the introduction of the GST.

II

Foreign Trade of India

a) Imports of Petroleum products and Iran oil

The value of the US \$ is moving higher and higher because the US Federal Reserve is increasing the rate of interest and there is a mad rush to liquidate foreign direct investments (FDI) in India and invest back in USA Bonds. At the same time the prices of petroleum products are increasing in the international market due to the 'sanction policy' of USA on Iran oil from November 2018. Already hedging insurance on forward contract on Iran oil has stopped. The trade war between the USA and China has reduced exports from India. Stress on US Dollar supply has devalued the Indian Rupee and it is moving up and up with every hike in petrol price. Both petrol per litre in the Indian Rupee and Rupee per US Dollar may reach a figure of 100 in the near future. Inflation is seen all around but the Monetary Policy Committee of the RBI refused to take any measure in its bimonthly meeting held in October 2018. The current account deficit is also against the interest of India, hovering around 3 percent against 2 percent during this time last year. Dollar deposits with the RBI may temporarily work as buffer, but not for long. The Forex reserve dropped by \$ 5.14 billion in the seven days ending on 12.10.18. On 13.4.2018 the foreign exchange reserve of India was \$ 426.08 billion and it reached \$ 394.46 billion on 12.10.18 a decline of \$ 31.62 billion in around 6 months. The USA, as a super power orders India to stop import of petrol from Iran. There is no suggestion, however, whether USA will compensate India by increasing imports from India, so that India can pay for the increased oil bill. USA is self-sufficient in petroleum and can pressurise OPEC to increase the production of petroleum but its own interest will suffer. The USA pretends to fight with China on foreign trade issue, but these rich countries have no permanent enemies, nor any permanent friends. They bother only for their own narrow selfish interest. Let us wait and see how NDA Government reacts!

b) Tax heavens and accumulation of country's foreign exchange in foreign banks

It is now an accepted policy to carry on export and import trade through tax heavens. An Indian company, imports coal, for example, from Indonesia and those ships with coal from Indonesian ports come direct to India, but the papers submitted to Indian authorities are prepared not in importing countries but in tax heavens like Mauritius or Dubai. India pays a larger quantity of Foreign Exchange for the import of coal and on export from

India receives lesser foreign exchange. Everyone knows it but these traders are friends of our politicians. Almost all the power generating companies are in the red and they demand relief both ways, writing off outstanding bank loans and increasing tariffs on consumers. Politicians are collaborating with these corrupt businessmen. They don't want to send these businessmen to bankruptcy courts! The country wastes a huge quantity of scarce foreign exchange for such manipulative foreign trade business which is carried on for decades.

III

Unorganised Rural sector of India

a) Agriculture

The 2011 census reports that around 69 percent of Indians are living in Rural India and their main occupation is farming. Any discussion on the Indian economy in 2018 must include the state of affairs in rural India. Recently a large number of well to do farmers from some north Indian States like Punjab, Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh, etc. reached Delhi on cars, tractors, bikes, etc. Thousands reached the Delhi Border but the Central Government refused to allow them to enter Delhi. The Bharatya Kisan Union of North India led by Mr. Mahendra Singh Tikait 30 years back created complete nervousness in Indian Bureaucracy and the state had to accept all their demands. Many in the present Central Government were supporting the Kisan Union movement 30 years back, now they are in receiving end! Frequently farmers from various states are coming to Delhi with their charter of demands. It means people living in rural areas of the country feel neglected and ignored both by the states and the Centre.

Certain important information has been revealed by the recently published Agricultural Census data of 2015-16 by Government of India. The salient points are:

Table I Agricultural Holdings in India

Year	2010-2011	2015-2016	Result
Farming area ¹	159.59	157.14	Declined
Number of operational holdings (x10 ⁶)	138	146	Increased
Avg. size of operational holding ²	1.15	1.08	Declined

Table 1 Land holding pattern in Indian agriculture

The above figures clearly indicate the nature of the sickness of Indian Agriculture. The farming area has gone down due to urbanisation, road building etc. At the same time the number of land holdings has gone up resulting in the reduction of the average size of holdings to 1.08 hectares from 1.15 hectares. Thus the operational holding size is gradually becoming more and more uneconomical. There was a time when the demand was for the 'land to the tillers', it now appears that unless the land holding size is economical, it is difficult to earn a living. Though Co-operative farming is not liked here, in many states small and marginal farmers have to pull their holdings together to carry on cultivation with modern scientific mechanical techniques. The Report further explains the following as in 2015-16:

a) 86.21 % of holdings were small and marginal holdings (0 to 2 hectares) and their share in operational holdings was 47.34 %

b) Average Size of small and marginal holdings was just 0.6 hectares and it was mainly in UP and Bihar

c) Semi and medium holdings (2 to 10 hectares) —13.22% of holdings and its share in operational area was 43. 62%

d) Large holdings (Size 10 hectares and above) only 0.57 percent of holdings but the share in operational area was 9.04 percent of total area.

Based on the current Agricultural census data 2015-16, it is evident that land holding is uneconomical and even the rich cultivators of India are relatively poorer than their counterparts in urban areas. That suggests that in India agriculture alone cannot sustain a family and it has to be supplemented by other professional jobs for rural households. Moreover, to support many other occupations viz. industry, trade and professional etc. there are many organisations; for people engaged in agriculture there is hardly any scope for a supplementary job. Even timely supply of water in the fields cannot be assured without organised irrigation channels maintained by small and marginal farmers jointly.

While discussing cultivation in India an investigation is made about 'Tribals' still living in forests of India who account for around 9 percent of Indian population. Though tribals are still living in the forests of India, modern industry has virtually taken over their ancestral land, forest and livelihood. They are gradually being displaced by miners and industrialists. Though there is a law called the 'Forest Rights Act', passed by the Parliament in 2006, it is only in the statute books. Recently the Maharashtra Government showed some initiative and made some land allotments on paper. However, the bureaucracy as usual is issuing new orders just to harass them. Tribals

are humans in the rule book but they are treated as animals by the bureaucracy. Some human rights organisations are working hard in courts of the country for giving tribals their due share as per the laws of the country, but vested interests are putting these ‘human right activists’ behind bars. The Government has enough laws in the statute books to punish these activists and they are treated as ‘URBAN NAXALS’.

IV

a) The Banks are in the red and the criminals who looted them are safe abroad

Indian public sector banks never functioned under the strict control of the banking regulator, the Reserve Bank of India. Politicians played a very dirty role to make these banks sick. The result experienced during last 5 years is simply condemnable. One after another, the criminals of Indian Trade, Industry and Cricket cheated the Indian Banks and they were allowed by authorities to leave the country and honourably settle in foreign countries. These banks are now declared sick and Government is trying to arrange ‘first aid’ for some of these banks. The Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), a public sector insurance company is being misused to help these sick banks. The Government ordered the LIC to purchase majority shares of IDBI bank. Then three banks, Bank of Baroda, Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank were ordered to merge. It is hoped that after merger of the subsidiary banks with the parent bank, the State Bank of India will be economically sound. Table II will explain economic health of some of these banks in India for the three years starting from 2015 to 2017.

Table II Advances, NPAs and Operating Profits of Selected Banks

Year	Advances			Non-performing Assets			Operating profits		
	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Bank of Baroda	428	387.7	383.2	16.2	40.5	42.7	9.9	8.8	10.9
Punjab National Bank	380.5	412.3	419.4	25.6	55.8	55.3	11.9	12.2	14.5
Indian Overseas Bank	171.7	160.8	140.4	14.9	30.0	35.0	3.3	2.8	3.6
Syndicate Bank	202.7	201.3	199.6	6.4	13.8	17.6	4.0	3.3	4.2

Table 2: Sickness of public sector banks

Source: (INDIAN BANKS ASSOCIATION, MUMBAI) (Figures in 000 crores)

Table II represents the nature of commercial bank management in India. In India supervision of bank managements is the responsibility of the Government and the RBI is not allowed to meddle. Let us see how Public Accounts Committee of Parliament under Prof. Murli Manohar Joshi analyses the management issue of Public Sector Banks. An analysis of the above Table II shows:

1. Non-performing Assets of all the four banks or bad loans kept on increasing during the three year period.

- 2 Except Punjab National Bank, the other three banks reduced their advances. The Punjab National Bank increased its advances by another Rs 40,000 crores at the end of three years. Many well-known bank looters cheated this bank.

3. Regarding the declared profit of sick banks, 'no comment'. Window dressing is not exception!

Defaulters of banks were allowed to migrate and purchase citizenship rights in foreign countries. These people are well known in the business world, they never bothered to repay their bank loan in India and now they are happy in their foreign destinations. Banks under public and private ownership are 'shedding crocodile's tear' as if they are very honest. Even family members managing a private bank cheated that particular bank. Its law firm has refused to take up the case. One defaulter of these banks is a member of the Rajya Sabha supported by both the political parties. He collected huge loans, met his friends in the Indian Parliament and left for England. Now the Government is spending additional funds in foreign countries to bring him back. The cheater complains in court that Indian Prisons are dirty! He should be kept in his palace in England. In the same manner some criminals involved in iron ore smuggling and punished by courts were openly supporting candidates in the recent Karnataka election. Money was flowing like water. The law enforcing authorities were blind and dumb.

India has started western world's 'bankruptcy' proceedings, and as per press reports the gap between the market value of assets mortgaged and loan sanctioned is not according to normal commercial practices. There was a mutual understanding (definitely with proper quid pro quo) between the lender and the borrower. In one private sector bank 'the game of loan sanction and to transfer it to NPA appeared to be a nursery level sweet story'. The entire planning was done among family members and a close friend. It is a matter of chance that these 'worms' of modern business have

come in the open in devastating precision. These 'habitual criminals' have close dealings with politicians of both past and present.

b) Dark shadows of Lehman Brothers of 2008 in India in 2018

In 2008, the world economy felt the shock of an economic earthquake after the Lehman Brothers, the largest economic financier in the USA decided to close down business. Indians working around the globe felt the pain of total devastation. In 2018, however, the world economy lead by rich countries looks in better health than in 2008. The Indian financial industry, specially banking industry is behaving as if it is waiting to enter a 'gas chamber'. Loan advanced by banks in crores remains unpaid and many of our rich friends, the defaulting debtors of the banks have left India with all honour and are living in peace as respected citizens of their newly adopted countries where citizenship is traded as a commodity. In the list of sick banks, we may include almost all the banks in the public sector located throughout the country. There was no preparation by the Government to meet the 'growing financial crisis due to the overflowing 'bad debt of the financial institutions of India'.

Indian Banks are virtually sick for a long time and they should be properly 'Capitalised'. What stops the authorities from capitalising them as per requirement?

V

Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services

This financial organisation (NBFC) started its journey in 1987 and in 2018 it has stopped paying its creditors in millions. Recently after the press in India started discussing the economic viability of this organisation, the worms are overflowing all around. The latest one is the dream city called 'Gift City' in Gujarat started by present Prime Minister in 2005. It was supposed to be an International Financial Centre in India. Now it is in the law courts and people are charging IL&FS of 'financial mismanagement'.

Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS) started its journey in 1987 and its main capital was contributed by the Central Bank of India, HDFC, UTI and LIC. It has two small foreign stake holders, one in Dubai and other in Japan. Its main business was to provide finance to construct infrastructural projects. In 2015 the outstanding loan of IL&FS was around Rest 680 billion and it reached Rs. 995.5 billion in 2018. Out of all financial institutions in 2018 only LIC is expected to help with temporary relief. The rest have closed their doors. Recently the Government of India changed the management board and the new board is busy to find out ways and

means to revive this sick organisation. It is regularly defaulting on its liability to pay outstanding loan and interest. Under normal circumstances it should be referred to the Bankruptcy Tribunal and to let them decide how these organisations meet their obligations. Lot of skeletons may come out of the Almirahs of this once very rich organisation certified by all credit agency groups.

This discussion on role of Finance in a country of 1.3 billion people will remain incomplete if one very insignificant item is not mentioned. We have started hair cutting saloons in India for so called bankrupt companies who want to remain in business but cannot pay due liabilities. These ‘Bankruptcy Tribunals’ decide the ‘hair cut of creditors’ and if both creditors and debtors agree, they will carry on the business. Mr. President of USA went 3 times to Bankruptcy Courts to deceive creditors and save his own business from complete liquidation. (In business, accounts can officially be fabricated worldwide)

Question from Indian Farmers who failed to pay their loan!

The question is raised by rich farmers of India that when they fail to pay bank loan, the police sent them to jail. Why shouldn’t the ‘Bankruptcy Courts’ be extended to ‘farming business’ in India? Loan transactions will remain in business and in 2018, non-payment to creditors is nothing new and it should be solved according to accepted policies of modern business.

24.10.18

Footnotes:

¹ In million hectares

² In hectares

SEDUCING PEOPLE WITH PROMISES

Political Economy of Budget 2018-19

K.B. Saxena

The Budget for the year 2018-19 was awaited with a slightly greater interest than the Budget for the previous four years of the NDA government for several reasons. First is the slowdown of economy with a falling exchange rate of rupee, stagnant agricultural income and real agricultural wages for last four years, jobs not being created, private investment not forthcoming and sluggish credit growth and negative export growth. (Chidambaram, 2018)^{1&3} The second is the continuing agrarian distress with no respite from farmers' suicides and increasing restiveness of farmers due to low prices of farm produce. The third is declining priority to social development while privileging growth through fiscal consolidation which is reflected in deteriorating infrastructure and services in education, health, affecting coverage, availability, access and quality, and low level of social security. The fourth is the continuing marginalization of the marginalized groups both by economic policies and declining commitment to affirmative action evidenced by absence of targeted schemes and programmes and increasing physical insecurity resulting from cow politics. The budget also had a definitive political context in that, being the last budget of the NDA government's tenure, it was expected to be expansionary with a higher level of public expenditure to win in the election as against the contractarian one hitherto.

The Budget estimates 2018-19 presented by the Finance Minister has claimed to respond to these concerns. It is argued that the growth process has achieved momentum through structural reforms characterized by transparent allocation of natural resources, reform of the indirect tax system through GST, demonetization, use of digital technology, bankruptcy code and recapitalization of PSU Banks resulting in 'Ease of Doing Business' for investors. The agrarian crisis has been addressed by an increased allocation for agriculture, higher Minimum Support Price, enhanced provision for credit extension, shifting agriculture policy from 'production centrism' to 'value addition' and tapping fisheries and livestock sectors. (TOI, 2018) Social sector development has been focused with emphasis on learning outcomes (quality of education), training of teachers, and setting up an agency for Revitalization of infrastructure and system in Education (RISE)

in the Education sector, and introducing in the health sector, a mega health insurance scheme (Ayushman Bharat) to cover 10 crore poor families with a Rs. 5 lakh cover of medical expenditure per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization, setting up 1-5 lakh Health and Wellness Centres, upgrading 24 district hospitals into medical colleges and hospitals. Social Security is promised to be expanded by coverage by all poor households including SCs/STs under insurance schemes and bringing all sixty crore basic accounts within the fold of Jan Dhan Yojna. Marginalized groups have been given special attention by increasing the total allocation for welfare of Schedule Castes by Rs. 18,385 cr and Rs. 10,697 Cr for Schedule Tribes over the provision made last year. Women's development needs have been addressed by an additional 3 cr. poor women households to be provided benefit under Ujjwala scheme (LPG connection and cylinder), construction of additional 2 crore toilets, increased coverage of women self-help groups under MUDRA Yojna for provision of credit to self-employed and pushing up their formal employment through reducing their share of EPF contribution and enhanced period of maternity leave. This paper would scrutinize these claims with respect to Agriculture, Social Development and Marginalized Groups to see if the intended benefits are likely to materialize.

The Budget document is primarily a statement of the level of public expenditure as against resources available and its apportionment to different sectors of economy as well as the policies and programme proposed to be introduced to realize the objectives defined in the Budget speech. Since all the major concerns highlighted above call for higher level of public expenditure, the first indicator to test this commitment is whether the Budget Statement (B S for short) raises the level of public expenditure compared to the preceding four years when Government pursued fiscal conservatism combined with disinclination to tax the rich which had considerably squeezed the fiscal space and, therefore, public spending. The B S places this year's expenditure at Rs. 24.42 lakh crore which is higher in absolute terms than 2017-2018 (B E) of 21.46 lakh crore and even of 2017-18 (RE) of 22.17 lakh crore. But this rise of 10.1% with a slightly higher revenue expenditure of 10.3% is less than 11.75% increase in the GDP given in the document. When seen as a proportion of GDP, the Government expenditure expected to be 13% in 2018-19 is a decline from 15.8% in 2009-10 to 14.9% in 2011-12 12.9% in 2016-17 and 13.2% in the revised estimate for 2017-18. Revenue Expenditure has also gone down from 13.1% of GDP in 2011-12 to 11.1% in 2016-17. The rate of growth of total expenditure also was lower than rate of

growth of GDP (Raj Kumar, 2018). It is also the slowest rate of expenditure growth in last three pre-election years - 13.8% in 2003-04, 24.0% in 2008-09, 10.6% in 2013-14. It is also lower than 12.3% growth in 2017-18 over the RE of the preceding year (Magazine and Verma, 2018). Even this level of expenditure may not materialize considering the rise in crude oil prices and doubts in projected receipts from tax collections. (Rao, 2018; Chidambaram, 2018)¹ In such an eventuality, the axe will fall inevitably on social sector and welfare spending as it has happened in the past. The Budget has received polarized comments with media describing it as 'pro-poor and pro-farmer' (Outlook, 2018) and a prominent farmer organization viewing it 'as a step forward (Jakhar, 2018) while the social activists and left leaning commentators terming it as 'by the privileged for the privileged (Roy, 2018) 'anti-people and deceptive' (Peoples' Democracy), 2018, experts critiquing it as 'seeds of illusion (Ghosh, 2018) and too little too late (Himanshu, 2018) serving richest 1% of population (Trivadi, 2018). But there is convergence in the opinion of most commentators that there is a wide gap in the Budget between announcements and allocations (Karnik and Lalvani, 2018) and is, therefore, more manifesto less budget (Yashwant Sinha, 2018) with 'impossible promises to have -not's (Trivedi, 2018).

One of the two challenges underlined by Economic Survey 2017-18 is that of reviving agriculture and boosting of rural economy. The B S has responded by the hiking the allocation of Ministry of Agriculture by 12.9% with a slew of schemes. This level of expenditure cannot be termed as pro-farmer because as percentage of total expenditure of Union Government, this increase is only 0.1% over the preceding year. As percentage of GDP, the share of agriculture has stagnated at 0.3%. The major announcement in this sector is the increase in MSP to 1.5 times the cost of production, as promised by BJP in its manifesto, to give more income to farmers battered by crashed prices of commodities they produce. It has been claimed that for Rabi crop this year, this enhanced MSP was already being paid to farmers. This claim is however, contested in respect wheat, barley, gram, lentil, rape seed and mustard and safflower crops. But there is a lot of controversy about basis of calculating 'cost of production.' (CoP) There are three variations in this calculation 1) actual paid out cost in cash or kind plus cost of family labour 2) besides 1) above, the imputed rent on own land and imputed rental on own fixed capital 3) besides 2) above, the interest foregone in buying fixed capital and transport cost. Government's promise appears to be based on CoP in 1) above while Swaminathan Committee Report's recommendation of CoP conforms to the 2) above. The genuine

cost of production would be 3) above. The Budget allocation for MSP shows only 7% increase which cannot take care of payment even on the basis of CoP (1). There is also the problem that if farmers are paid 1.5 times the genuine cost of production, it would lead to food inflation and increase the cost to the consumer. If the latter has also to be protected, the level of subsidy would need to increase. (Patnaik, 2018) This would shoot up fiscal deficit which would hurt Government's strategy of growth. In any case, increasing MSP is not enough to increase income of farmers. More than 86% farmers fall under small and marginal category and most of them do not have a marketable surplus. There is no specific scheme for such farmers who cannot avail of benefit of MSP. Some mechanism would have to be evolved to compensate these farmers. Telangana model may address this problem partly as it has paid outright subsidy to all farmers @ Rs. 4000 per acre irrespective of the size of land and the crop grown. Besides, MSP is only notional as for most crops other than wheat and rice, there is no procurement mechanism in place and if such procurement is undertaken, it would create the problem of storage and disposal of commodities procured unless exported or PDS basket expanded. Export to also may not provide relief when there is a glut at the global level due to excess production as is already the case with some commodities as for example in milk powder. In any case, increasing MSP does not address the complex multi-dimensional agrarian distress and would require measures subsidizing input cost substantial government investment, non-farm employment sorting out bottlenecks in credit execution to small and marginal farmers, expanding PDS (Public Distribution System) basket and altering inequities of agrarian structure (De Roy, 2018).

The other dimension of agrarian distress is indebtedness of farmers and the reliance of a large section particularly small and marginal among them on non-institutional sources of credit. This problem is sought to be addressed in BS by the announcement of credit extension by one lakh crore. This, however, may not be of much help as the lending decisions are to be made by banks which are notoriously sceptical of extending credit to poorer sections. More important, even the 'Priority Sector Lending' norm does not help needy farmers due to wide definition of 'eligible' categories of persons for such credit as a result of which agri consortiums, other collectives and large farmers corner bulk of the loans. (Patnaik, 2018) Only cooperative credit could reach small and marginal farmers but cooperative credit institutions are in a bad shape due to defaulting loans, lack of capital, and mismanagement.

The Budget has completely ignored agricultural workers and other rural poor who are not cultivators in the ambit of those affected by agrarian distress. This category of persons needs wage work for sustenance. MNREGS was their only source of assured casual non-farm employment. But this programme has failed to provide 100 days of promised employment. In 2017-18 there was even a decline in the share of households that were provided work against demand and average days of employment. The latter were 39, the lowest under NDA dispensation (Kishore, 2018). The BS provides no increase in allocation of MNREGS over last year even though 56% of wages are unpaid and more than 15% of wage seekers did not find work. With the overwhelming emphasis on infrastructure creation including rural agricultural markets (IE, 2018) in MNREGS, provision of employment on demand has ceased to be its priority. PMAY (Prime Minister's Awas Yojna) has also shown slow progress with only 6.5 lakh houses built against target of 5.1 million by March 2019. In respect of Prime Minister's Gramin Sadak Yojna, (PMGSY) the allocations for last two years have not been utilized and there is shortfall in meeting the targets. Thus even on infrastructure spending, prioritized by this Government, there has been slack which is increasing rural distress (Kishore, 2018).

The other major programme to have received attention in the farm sector is the Crop Insurance Scheme (Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna) which has seen an increase of 23% in allocation from the RE of 2017-18. The scheme is intended to compensate farmers for crop loss. The scheme has failed to deliver the intended benefit despite its comprehensive revision 2 years back. In 2016-17, the insurance companies collected Rs. 22180 cr as premium but delivered only Rs. 12959 cr as disbursement for claims filed by State governments. In 2017-18, Rs. 24454 cr was collected as premium but only Rs 450 cr was paid to farmers till 23 months back. (Gulati and Hussain, 2018) The scheme suffers from a design flaw in that 50% of premium subsidy is to be paid by State governments (the other 50% by Central government) as per the time schedule fixed for each crop. States with weak financial position are not able to adhere to this time schedule and the farmers suffer as a result. States are also responsible for carrying out crop cutting experiments (CCES) to determine yield losses, 4 per village GP and 24 for every district within a month of harvesting and submit the results to Insurance companies by January for Kharif and July for Rabi. CCES assessment of yield loss is prone to questioning by Insurance companies. This results in a gap between claims estimated by State governments and those approved by companies. Adhering to timelines of CCE data gathering

and accuracy of data collected are the key to the success of the scheme. It is not easy to carry out 10 lakh CCES in a single season, particularly with staff shortage in many States. Thus the scheme as of now is enriching the insurance companies rather than compensating the farmers. (Gulati and Hussain, 2018).

The Finance Minister has also claimed to shift from 'Production Centrism' to focusing on value addition and tapping allied sectors and has therefore, included small schemes to boost agricultural growth such as specific funds for agri-markets, fisheries and animal husbandry, bamboo, medicinal plants, food processing and irrigation (TOI, 2018). These schemes may give long term results and do not provide immediate benefit to the farmers. 'Tax holiday for Farmer organizations' is unlikely to be of any use in most states due to skewed spread and vibrancy of such organization (Biswas, 2018). In view of the above and notwithstanding loan waiver in many States, agrarian distress is likely to persist with no cooling down of the anger of farmers.

Government administered twin shocks of demonetization and GST one after the other to the rural economy which crippled the unorganized sector. The expectation that it would announce compensatory measures and provide higher investment to revive this sector has been belied. The increase in loan amount in circulation by Self Help Groups and allocation of National Rural Livelihood Mission is unlikely to realize the laboured optimism in the Finance Minister's speech of boosting the rural economy.

Social Development

Contrary to the claims made by Chief economic Advisor in Economic Survey that expenditure on social sector has remained in the range of 6 per cent of GDP during the last five years but has actually increased to 6.6 per cent of the GDP from 5.8 per cent in 2015-16, this is not borne out of allocations in key social sectors of this budget. For example, in education, allocation has declined from 3.1 per cent of the GDP in 2012-13 to 2.7 per cent in 2017-18 and, in health, it has declined from 1.5 per cent in 2013-14 to 1.4 per cent in 2017-18. Union Government's expenditure on education has also fallen from 0.49% to 0.45% and on health from 0.37% of GDP to 0.29% in the same period. As a share of total expenditure (Central and States), it has declined to 10% in 2017-18 (BE) from 11.6% in 2012-13 in Education and to 5.1% (2017-18 (BE) from 5.6% 2016-17 RE) in Health. Revenue expenditure on Social Services not only continued to remain low at 1.2% of GDP in 2011-12 but has declined to 0.6% in 2017-18 (Rajkumar, 2018). There is also decline

in expenditure in key sectors highlighted in the Budget, from 2.49% in 2016-17 (A) to 2.73% in 2018-19 (BE) in Agriculture and allied sectors, from 6.77% in 2016-17 (A) to 5.6% in 2018-19 (BE) in Rural development, and a slight increase of 5.68% in 2016-17 (A) to 5.78 in 2018-19 (BE) in Education and Health taken together (Karnik and Lalvani, 2018). As a percentage of GDP, expenditure on agriculture and rural development has reduced from 1.15% last year to 1.08% this year (PD, 2018). Even where the allocation for a Programme has seen an increase, as for example in Crop Insurance Scheme, this has been offset by a decline in allocation to other schemes of Ministry of Agriculture. Similarly, in the Ministry of Rural Development, enhancement in allocation for the National Rural livelihood Mission has been offset by stagnant allocation under MGNREGS.

The Centre for Budget Governance and Accountability (CBGA) has calculated that social sector ministries (nearly 17 in number) continued to be in the range of 26 per cent of allocations of the Union Budget as last year while allocation to Ministry of Rural Development has stagnated over the last two years. (CBGA, 2018) The Budget has also reduced allocation for many critical schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna, National Drinking Water Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission, National Health Mission, Gram Jyoti Yojna etc. Therefore, the claim about thrust in social sector spending is also untenable (Chidambaram, 2018). In Social Sector, this paper would focus only on Education and Health, the two key sub-sectors.

Education

Ministry of Human Resources Development has been allocated Rs. 85010 cr. of which Rs. 50,000 cr is for School Education and Rs. 35010 cr for Higher Education. This represents a very low increase of 7% over previous year's RE. (Revised Estimates). But even this negligible increase in absolute terms camouflages the decline in budget allocation in real terms when seen in the context of GDP and total Union Government's expenditure. Union Government's expenditure on Education as a percentage of GDP has declined from 0.55 in 2014-15 (Actual) to 0.45% in 2018-19 (BE). It has even reduced from the previous year's 0.49% (RE). As a percentage of Union Government's expenditure in the Budget also it has declined from 4.1% to 3.6% during the same period and also declined from previous year's 3.8%. This lack of importance given to Education has also been acknowledged in Economic Survey and attributed to limited fiscal space. The problem is that, in the fiscal space, priority has been given to growth of physical infrastructuresuch

as roads rather than on building social capital. The Central Government is not embarrassed by this deprioritisation of Education as even the States have incurred higher expenditure than it has.

In respect of School Education, Finance Minister's Budget Speech follows the Niti Ayog's Three year Action Agenda which has assigned top priority to 'learning outcomes' the strategy of which is a shift in focus from inputs to outcomes and implementation of outcome based on incentives. (Kundu, 2018) This strategisation ignores the formidable problems of access and retention and continuing of quality gap in infrastructure of government schools. Economic factors influence access and retention while lack of adequate funding is responsible for infrastructural deficiency. Both are critical determinants in 'learning outcomes'. The latter is not an isolated phenomenon. Only 8% government schools are RTE complaint. The allocation from SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) is so pitifully low that there is little hope for significant improvement in school infrastructure. While the need for improvement in learning outcomes is not denied and the importance of professionally qualified teachers to achieve it, as acknowledged in the Budget Speech, cannot be over emphasized, it is not the only factor. 'Single teacher' and 'single classroom' schools, vacancies in teachers' posts, contract appointments, higher teacher – pupil ratio, teacher's attendance equally influence outcomes. Even in respect of teachers training the task is huge. There is a backlog of 11 lakh untrained teachers in public and private schools. First step to train them is for them to acquire a minimum required qualification which would, hopefully be facilitated by an integrated B.Ed. course announced in the Budget. The current practice is to train teachers through in service training courses / refresher courses. But there are not enough exclusive teachers training institutions to undertake this mammoth task. A mere Rs. 70 crore increase in the Budget over last year for establishing such institutions is too meagre for the purpose.

The announcement of combining school education from pre-nursery to secondary is welcome both from the view point of students as well as more efficient utilization of available resources. It is also, at least conceptually, a baby step towards universalization of elementary and secondary education. But this is an empty promise not followed by any schematic announcement or financial backing. When even the existing schemes of school education – Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid-Day Meal, Teacher's Training face accumulated deficits, integration of segmented schools turns out to be a rhetoric unlikely to be realized. Besides, holistic development of schools education is not a mere merger of existing

schemes of SSA, RMSA and Teachers Training but restructuring of entire school education system. This restructuring should first be conceptualized and debated and its form and process should be finalized after a lot of consultation with the stakeholders.

A significant element of Government's deprioritisation of education is to shift major portion of expenditure on to the 3% Education Cess which has been levied since 2006 and now being replaced by 4% Cess for Education and Health. More than 60% of the current expenditure on RTE (Right to Education) and MDM (Mid-Day Meal) has been met from this cess. The Cess was intended to provide additionality of resources to the budget provision and not to substitute it. This creates uncertainty over financing besides lowering the commitment of the Government to education and is a retrograde step.

In respect of Higher Education, the Government's increasing push towards privatization, obsession with skill development and preference for technical education are markers of its priority and reflects its narrow vision of education as an enabler of employability. A mere 5% increase in allocation over last's year RE which taking inflation into account would be a decline. One of the methods for this push towards privatization is increasing emphasis on candidates taking loan to pursue it rather than government providing it as a public good. This view is corroborated by increase of Rs. 2000 cr in the scheme on interest subsidy for education loan. Loan based pursuit of education has an inherent bias towards technical education as only candidates pursuing technical courses which can fetch good paying jobs would be inclined to take a loan. The bias towards technical education is also reflected in the scheme to set up two Schools for Planning and Architecture to be established in IIT (Indian Institutes of Technology) and NITS (National Institutes of Technology) as autonomous schools and setting up a Railway University at Vadodara as also launching a new scheme called the "Prime Ministers' Research Fellows" which would be available to 1000 best B.Tech students each year to do a PhD in IIT (Indian Institutes of Technologies) and IIS (Indian Institutes of Science) with a fellowship of Rs. 80,000 pm,. The bias is reinforced by a negligible increase of Rs. 100 cr in allocation for RUSA (Rashtrya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan) which caters to the vast ambit of higher education.

The push towards privatization is also reflected in the announcement to launch a Revitalizing Infrastructure and System in Education (RISE) by 2022 with an investment of 1 lakh crore. Centrally funded institutions such as IITS, IIMS and Central Universities will have to approach this funding

agency for expanding existing and building new infrastructure which would mobilise funds from the market and offer 10 year loans for this purpose. These Institutions would have to generate internal resources to pay back this loan. (Chopra, 2018) Government continues to withdraw its resources from higher education so much so that universities have been directed to generate specified percentage of their budget requirement from sources other than Government. This is a signal to the universities to seek funding from private agencies which would want courses to be self-paying and designed to serve their needs. As a result, the door for higher education would be further shut for the poor and lower middle class students.

Health

Public health system is in a bad shape and has been so for a long time. It suffers from shortfall in infrastructure, deficiency in human resources and a very high out-of-pocket expenditure by health care seekers. The shortfall in infrastructure consists of 19 per cent of sub-centres, 22 per cent of primary health centres, and 30 per cent of community health centres as on March 31, 2017. (CBGA, 2018). Besides, the existing infrastructure across states suffers from dilapidated condition and requires a thorough rejuvenation. Deficiency of personnel across different categories of health providers is glaring. There is 82 per cent shortage of required number of specialists at the community health centres. The vacancy level of ANMs at sub-centres and the PHCs is around 14 per cent. The out-of-pocket expenditure as per recent health statistics is 63 per cent of the total health expenditure which is in terms of consultation, diagnostics and medicines. In view of these deficiencies, it was expected that the budget would increase allocation for health sector substantially particularly because the National Health Policy, 2017 has recommended 2.5 per cent of GDP as health expenditure over the next few years inclusive of centre and states of which central share should have been at least 1 per cent but continues to be 0.3% of GDP. The increase in allocation for Ministry of Health including Ayush over the last year's B E (Budget Estimates) is a mere 12 per cent. But when compared to RE (Revised Estimates) figures of last year, the increase gets reduced to a lowly 2.5 per cent. This is disappointing because even the increase in 2017-18 budget over the budget of 2016-17 was higher at 27 per cent (CBGA, 2018). The highlights of current year's budget consist of three major announcements. The most important is *Ayushman Bharat*, a health insurance scheme, to cover 50 crore beneficiaries, as a major initiative towards universal health coverage. It is proposed to cover 10 crore families

per annum and provide insurance cover up to Rs. 5 lakh per family. No allocation has been provided for the scheme. The second major announcement is the conversion of existing 15 lakh sub centres into Health and Wellness Centres for which Rs. 1200 crores has been allocated. The third major announcement is setting up of 24 new government medical colleges and hospitals by upgrading district hospitals.

The scheme Ayushman Bharat is presumably a replacement of existing RSBY (Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna) which was renamed as RSSY (Rashtriya Swasthya Suraksha Yojna) in 2016-17 and NHPS (National Health Protection Scheme) in 2017 budget documents. Financial experts have calculated that going by the premium paid for a cover of Rs. 30,000 per family in the existing RSBY and taking into account the expectation that States would share 40% of the cost of premium, the Budget should have provided somewhere around Rs. 50,000 crores. (Patnaik, 2018) But officials expect that the annual premium for this programme would be around Rs. 1100-1200 per family which is slightly higher than the existing premium of Rs. 500 which is paid for existing coverage of medical expenditure of Rs. 30000 per family. This does not seem feasible. However, since the details of the scheme have not yet been worked out, more comments cannot be made at this stage. Besides, Government expectation that State governments would share 40 per cent cost of the premium is unlikely to be realised because 1) poorly resourced states may find it difficult to generate additional resources for contributing this share. 2) many states have their own health insurance schemes in operation and may not be inclined to replace their schemes with the central scheme. The scheme in any case would not significantly reduce out of pocket expenditure as insurance schemes both central and the state are only meant to cover hospital care, and that too, for only selected procedures while the major part of out-of-pocket expenditure is outpatient care i.e., consultation, diagnostics, medicines, injections and treatment of those diseases that do not require hospitalization (Sengupta, 2018). The Budget has provided a substantial increase in Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna from Rs. 471 crore into 2017-18 (RE) to Rs. 2050 crores in 2018-19 which is surprising because even the last year's allocation of Rs. 1000 cr (BE) was not fully utilized. Presumably this increase is intended to be used for Ayushman Bharat.

More important, the insurance scheme strikes at the root of the public health system. Health experts all over the world, including India are of the view that the best way of extending universal and cost effective health coverage is by strengthening public health system. The proposed health

insurance scheme as the earlier ones would do just the opposite. They allow public resources to be diverted to private health providers. All health insurance schemes operate on the basis of split between financing of health care and provisioning of health care. While financing is covered from public resources, treatment can be provided by any accredited facility: public or private. In practice, this would be largely private as accredited institutions in private sector are larger in number. This is the experience of States which are implementing such insurance schemes. Further, while the insurance schemes will cover a larger share of state's health budget, their coverage of burden of disease would be very small. Thus, public resources will go towards strengthening the dominant corporate health sector (Sengupta, 2018). More worrying aspect is the practice of irrational medicine and unnecessary procedures resorted to by private health providers and in some cases, frauds committed by private health providers in nexus with unscrupulous families.

The scheme for up-gradation of Sub Centres into Health and Wellness centres is problematic. This is because Government has invited contribution from private sector in establishing such centres in accordance with recommendation of National Health Policy, 2017. Therefore, the scheme's objective appears to be to purchase health care services from private players and not to strengthen public health system. The details of the scheme are not available and so far there have been no examples of such centres having been established. (CBGA, 2018) The announcement of 24 new medical colleges by upgrading existing district hospitals has not been matched by an increase in resources for it from the level of last year. Rather, the allocations for this programme within the National Health Mission has seen a decline of 12% from 2017-18 (RE). (CBGA, 2018) Is it because not much progress is expected in respect of this scheme?

The flagship programme of Ministry of Health i.e. National Health Mission has two components: rural and urban. The budget for NHM has declined from Rs. 31292 crores in 2017-18 (RE) to Rs. 30634 crores in 2018-19 (BS) which seems surprising because earlier NHM was confined to only rural areas and was called NRHM (National Rural Health Missions). The urban areas were added to it the year before last and the scheme was named as NHM. The composite budget for both should have seen a substantial increase. This has not happened. Within the NHM budget, the component of urban health has increased substantially while that of rural health has declined marginally between 2017-18 (RE) and 2018-19 (BE). The decline in rural component, in the context of deficiencies in the frustrate

and personal outlined above does not seem to have any rationale. Among the other three schemes, PMSSY (Prime Ministers' Swasthya Suraksha Yojna) which is for establishment of AIIMS-type super-specialty institutions and upgrading of state government hospitals has been given an increase of Rs 650 crores over 2017-18 (RE). But the allocation has actually declined by Rs. 150 cr. over BE of 2017-18 indicating underutilisation due to slow progress. The *Jan-Aushidhi scheme* renamed as Pradhan Mantri Bharatya Janaushdhi Pariyojna (PMBJP) which is to provide generic medicines at low cost has been given a very small increase of Rs. 9 crore. The coverage of the scheme remains very low with only 850 centres in operation across the country as against the target of 3000 centres. (CBGA, 2018) There are many bottlenecks in the operations as well. Now 1000 more centres are being added to the target. The very small increase in the budget shows that the scheme is unlikely to see a substantial spread and has only publicity value.

CBGA has also noted the decline in allocation of components of health schemes specially focused on women's health as for example in respect of the RCH (Reproductive and Child Health) component of NHM allocation by 33% and in respect of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojna (PMHVV) in 2018-19 (BE) by 8% compared to 2017-18 BE. This is surprising as we have not yet achieved even MDGS (Millennium Development Goals) let alone SDGS (Sustainable Development Goals) (CBGA, 2018) Thus the overall approach to addressing health issues and budget provisions do not provide any assurance about strengthening of public health system. Therefore, they are unlikely to lead to improved health outcomes for the poorer sections.

Marginalized Groups Scheduled Castes

Weaker sections (particularly SC, STs and Minorities) are not merely marginalized in the society but also remain marginalized in financial architecture of the country. Although in absolute terms, the allocation of the Department dealing with the SCs has increased by 12% and that of SC Sub Plan now termed as welfare of SCs by 7% over the preceding year's allocation. But this allocation is just 2.32% of the total Budget (PD, 2018) and is too meagre considering the level of under-development the community faces with 36 per cent of SC children not going to school and a high IMR of 45/1000 birth. The incidence of poverty in the group is also second highest which is reflected in their level of consumption expenditure. This small increase does not contribute either to the expansion of schemes

already in operation in the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment or to increase their unit cost after taking inflation into account not to speak of taking up new schemes. More important, in respect of SCs-STs as also other marginalized groups, the allocation for the ministry/ department concerned does not carry much significance as it deals with small gap filling schemes. These groups drive major share of resources for their development and welfare from the budget allocation of other ministries which deal with substantive programmes having a bearing on improving their conditions.

For SCs/STs, the Sub Plan arrangement was devised in the 1970s with a view to ensuring that adequate resources are assigned to the need based programmes for these groups which may not happen in programmes taken up by different ministries for the general population. This sub-plan strategy had four important features: i) earmarking of plan resources by different ministries for the Sub-Plan from their budget in proportion to the percentage of population of these groups. ii) spending those funds exclusively on schemes which directly benefit the members of these groups. iii) identification and planning of need based programme for this purpose. Iv) monitoring of these allocations and their utilization.

There has, however, been a shift away from this sub-plan strategy in the NDA government ever since it has abolished the distinction between Plan and Non-plan resources in the Union budget from the last year. Ministries are now contributing their share of allocation to this pool which has been given by the nomenclature of 'welfare' in place of 'Sub-Plan'. This change is not merely of name but of substance. The expenditure from this 'welfare' pool shifts away from 'targeted benefit approach' to 'incidental benefit approach' as there is no requirement that the allocation has to be exclusively spent on the target group. The funds may now be spent in a manner that does not necessarily benefit the concerned target groups. This makes the whole exercise of pooling of resources ineffective and irrelevant to the concerns of these groups. There is also no insistence on need-based planning for incurring expenditure from this pool. This means that the concerned ministry is not required to formulate specific schemes to benefit the target groups. As a result of these shifts in strategy, the monitoring of expenditure from this pool currently only tracks whether funds are released by ministries to the state governments and by the State governments to the implementing authority but does not monitor whether the implementing agencies have spent funds on the target group and if so, specific number of individuals benefitting from it. National campaign for

Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) has observed that the outlay of this pool for SCs is for 279 schemes. Only 31 of them are appropriate, accessible and available to the community. Other schemes are for general welfare and notionally benefit the entire population. (Divakar, 2018). In 2017-18 of out 36 new schemes in the Budget, only eight were for of direct benefit to SCs. Eight of the important schemes for them are severely underfunded (ET, 2018)

The most glaring injustice to the community in the budget is the reduction of Rs 350 crore under the scheme of Post-Matric Scholarship. This is despite the fact that there was already an accumulated arrear of Rs. 8000 crore at the end of 2016-17 which would have gone up further at the end of 2017-18 and the Department has been asking for one time clearance of this fund which the Parliamentary Standing Committee also recommended. The saddest aspect is that this is the oldest and most popular scheme for SCs where the benefits directly accrue to the members of SCs. The low allocation not only constrains expansion of the programme but may even be adversely affecting the completion of courses by SC students in the absence of regular payment of their scholarships.

The scheme for Self-Employment for Manual Scavengers for the purpose of their rehabilitation has been implemented for a very long time with a view to abolishing of this obnoxious practice. But the actual expenditure under the scheme has been zero during the last three years. Even the meagre allocation of Rs. 5 crore in 2017-18 budget could not be spent. (CBGP, 2018) The budget allocation this year has been increased to Rs. 20 crore. There is also a corpus available with the *Safai Karamchari* commission which implements the programme. This poor implementation of programme brings out various constraints which have not been sorted out. One of these constraints is lack of agreement on number of manual scavengers who need to be assisted and whose number differ in various surveys. There is a wide gap in the estimated number between surveys conducted by government agencies and those carried out by NGOs.

Scheduled Tribes

STs are at the rock bottom of all development parameters and have remained so for the past many decades. Even NITI Ayog in their Three year Action Plan has admitted that STs are 20 years behind average Indian population. 71 per cent of their households fall in lowest wealth quintile. They have highest incidence of poverty and lowest annual rate of reduction. They also have worst indicators of nutrition with 44 per cent of stunted children

and 45 per cent of underweight children. 60 per cent of their women are anemic. The incidence of child labour and trafficking is also very high.

The budget allocation for Ministry of Tribal Affairs has increased by 13% and for Tribal Sub Plan now called welfare of Scheduled Tribes by 20 per cent over the previous year. But the allocation for welfare of STs is below 1.6% of the Government expenditure (PD, 2018). The size of outlay is, however, misleading as the resources from this pool is for allocation of 305 schemes out of which only 52 schemes are appropriate, 'accessible or available' to STs (Divakar, 2018 cited in ET, 2018). Most schemes in this pool are mere extension of development schemes notionally benefitting the whole population and do not target STs such as support to IITs and IIMS, Project Tiger, solar power, grants to central universities, establishment of new medical colleges etc. Out of 70 new schemes, only 15 were benefitting them directly (ET, 2018). In fact, some of the benefits claimed for the tribals under this pool or erstwhile Tribal Sub-Plan are actually detrimental to them. For example, the Ministry of Coal has spent funds from this pool for exploration of coal and lignite in tribal areas. This by no stretch of imagination can benefit local tribals. Rather, this exploration leads to alienation of their land, loss of livelihood displacement from their habitat and pollution of their over-ground resources, thereby worsening their quality of life. Similarly, Department of Telecommunications (DoT) used fund from the pool for laying down optical fibre cable based network for the defence services and has claimed to benefits tribals. This, to say the least, is ridiculous and is actually diversion and misutilisation of fund. In such a situation, monitoring of how funds are spent under the Welfare pool does not carry any relevance unless it indicates how many tribal households / individual members have derived benefit from it.

This year's budget specifically focuses on promotion of residential schools in tribal areas at par with *Navodaya Vidyalyayas*. It has been announced in Finance Ministers' speech that by the year 2022 every block with more than 50% of ST population and at least 20,000 ST persons will have one Eklavya Model Residential School. But no funds have been allocated for it under the budget. The scheme is to be financed from statutory grant of Special Central Assistance under article 275 (i) of the Constitution. The allocation under this assistance has been increased by Rs. 300 crore.

Special Central Assistance (SCA) is a constitutionally mandated grant from the Consolidated Fund which the states with tribal population receive. They are required to spend these funds for strengthening administration

and welfare activities for tribals. By diverting these funds for residential schools, the States are deprived of the autonomy and flexibility to use this money as per requirement for each specific tribal area. This autonomy has been replaced by a centralized decision of uniform strategy of expenditure and a single item on which it would be spent. The funds for such a scheme should have come appropriately from the allocation of the M/O Tribal Affairs or from the allocation of Ministry of HRD. By transferring this expenditure to Special Central Assistance, the Central Government has deprived the tribals of their share from the Central budget. Besides, every State with tribal population has residential schools for boys and girls as well as hostels which are in a bad shape, suffering from dilapidated infrastructure, poor quality of food and absence of elementary facilities and required staff and mismanagement. But no allocation has been made to improve these schools. Therefore, before starting new residential schools, the first priority should have been to improve the functioning of existing schools.

The incidence of out of school children in tribal areas is quite large because of various factors and yet the implementation of Pre-Matric scholarship is very poor. Only 52.11 crore was spent till December 2016 during the last year out of the allocations made. This implies that bottlenecks in the implementation of the scheme have not been sorted out.

Minorities

Religious minorities constitute 21 per cent of the population but receive 0.49 per cent of the total budget. The budget for Ministry for Minority Affairs has increased by 12 per cent over the preceding year's allocation, a large part of which has been allocated to Multi-Sectoral Development plan and some to scholarship schemes. As in respect of other marginalized groups, development expenditure on minorities is carried out through 2 streams. One is the 15 point programme which requires certain identified ministries such as agriculture, commerce and industries, trade, small and medium enterprises to earmark 15 per cent of funds to the programme and physical targets, where possible, in their on-going schemes for members of minority communities. The second stream consists of programmes which are implemented by Ministry of Minority Affairs. The total expenditure on minorities by the central government through these two streams has declined from 1.93 per cent of the Union Budget in 2012-13 to 0.49 per cent in 2017-18. Last year also witnessed a decline in the utilization of funds from 97.8 per cent in 2016-17 to 74 per cent in 2017-18. The low utilization is primarily in respect of Multi-Sectoral Development Plan, the flagship programme for

development of infrastructure in minority concentration areas, due to poor completion rate of schemes sanctioned and many activities under the programme not having been started. But where the demand has increased and utilization is also good such as Pre-Matric Scholarship and National Minority Development Financial Corporation, there is a decline in the budgetary allocation.

Two important commitments were made in the 15 point programme: a) 15 per cent share in public employment and 15 per cent annual disbursement of credit under priority sector. The progress in respect of share in public employment is very dismal. Their share in public employment has seen a decline over the last four years. It has been only around 6 to 8 per cent in which of public sector enterprises, banks and postal department have registered a decline from earlier years, Except for Muslims, all other minorities got a share in employment higher than their population size. This is also true of share in credit. While overall share of minorities in credit has been able to achieve 15 per cent mark, the share of Muslims among minorities is low as compared to their size in population.

There are some significant deficiencies in the programme implementation for minorities.

1. the Central government not opening a separate minority head and budget statement on minorities related schemes on the pattern of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Sup Plan.

2. Unit cost of scholarship has not been revised. The current unit cost of Rs. 1000 per annum is insufficient and getting eroded by inflation.

3. Multi-Sectoral Development Plan is not need-based and specific to the area.

4. There is no provision for setting up of secondary and senior secondary residential schools.

5. Students are not able to submit online application for scholarship due to poor internet connectivity and lack of electricity. There is no provision for manual submission which deprives needy minority students to get benefits of scholarship.

The programmes for minorities suffer from inadequate budget allocations, inappropriate policy design and weak implementing capacity of implementing agencies. These have been known but not sorted out. The most glaring deficiency is the failure to target the Muslim among the minorities in the programmes as they constitute the largest percentage of population and have the worst human development indicators among religious minorities.

Conclusion

The foregoing brings out that the hype about pro-poor budget and pre-farmer lacks credibility. Finance Minister has settled for promises and announcements with no financial allocation in the hope that this would win his government popular support for the 2019 election. But he has not ceased to pursue his core reformist agenda of regressive taxation policy and aggressive pursuit of reducing fiscal deficit which reduce thrust on government expenditure. He cannot finance big ticket schemes announced with the receipts anticipated in the Budget (Chidambaram, 2018)² without resorting to borrowing which his macro-economic position would not permit him to do. (Chandrashekhar, 2018) The distressed peasantry and other sections of the poor would judge the Government by what is delivered on the ground rather than by grand announcements. We shall have to wait till May 2019 to see if the skill of packaging and advertising in the Budget speech and documents would win their support.

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THE AGRARIAN CRISIS AND WOMEN WORKERS IN RURAL INDIA

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The neo-liberal policy frame inaugurated in the Indian economy in the year 1991 radically restructured the Nehruvian development paradigm both in economic as well as in political terms. In the 1950s, India had assumed the leadership of the third world. India stood for peace and justice and anti-imperialist struggle. Now India is qualified as a fast growing Asian economy, which should get entry into rich men's club. True – in 1991, India did not have a single dollar billionaire and now there are 121 of them.

Our political and economic leadership complacent with fast growing wealth in metropolitan towns chooses to completely ignore the fact that 93 percent of our work force is employed in the unorganized informal sector largely characterized by abysmal living and working conditions. They choose to ignore the fact that more than 50 percent of our work force depends on agriculture for its livelihood and the agrarian economy is engulfed in a deep and intractable crisis for more than two decades. They choose to ignore the fact that over three lakh farmers have committed suicide in India since 1995.

In section I, we explain the agrarian crisis as we understand it and suggest its possible resolution. In section II, we situate women workers in the crisis ridden agrarian economy and discuss their pivotal role in resolving the crisis.

Section I

Crisis in Agrarian Economy and its resolution

The Employment and Unemployment Survey of NSSO enumerated the workforce in Indian economy in the year 2009-10 as 460 million: 332 million men and 128 million women. Of these 244 million workers (156 million men and 88 million women) were employed in agriculture and allied activities. To understand the basic premise of agrarian crisis, it is necessary to get an overview of the manner in which these 244 million men and women are integrated in farm production activities.

Land is the main resource base for farm production. First point to be noted is that total land available for household operational holdings in the country is limited and over past two decades, it has declined at an alarmingly

rapid pace. According to the NSSO surveys, the total area under household operational holdings was 125 million hectares in 1991-2. It declined to 107 million hectares in 2002-3 and further to 94 million hectares in 2012-3. There were 108 million operational holdings in the year 2012-3 and average area per holding was only 0.87 hectare. Naturally, 244 million men and women and their families cannot hope to get dignified livelihood space in these circumstances.

The second point to be noted is that the distribution of farm land has always been skewed and the liberalization era has further worsened the scenario. The NSSO survey on 'Household ownership and operational holdings' tells us that in rural India around 5 to 6 percent households do not have any land whatsoever i.e. not even house land. Then, 35 percent households have only homestead land but no farm land. Next 30 percent households, who own farm land have miniscule size holdings. The average holding size in this group is 0.2 hectare i.e. half an acre. After that 13 percent households have holdings of average size 0.7 hectare and 10 percent households have farm holdings of average size 1.3 hectares. In all, only 7 percent rural households have holdings greater than two hectares in size. But they own more than 47 percent of land area. The remaining 93 percent households are either without any farm land or have holdings characterized as marginal and small holdings. Their share in the total operational land is 53 percent.

It is clear from the above statistics that around 40 percent men and women workers in agriculture are not 'farmers'. These men and women belong to agricultural labour households. They do not have their own land to work on. They work on others' land as wage labourers. At the same time, majority of cultivator households have such small size holdings that neither can the farm accommodate the labour available in the households, nor can it provide sufficient income for bare subsistence. Income from farm activity has to be supplemented with other income - mostly wage income. In other words, the share of wage earners in the total agricultural workforce is much more than 40 percent.

Agricultural wages in India are low. In states like Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand they are around Rs. 180 for men and Rs. 130 for women in the year 2015-6. Further, agricultural work is not available throughout the year. It is available in spurts and mechanization has substantially reduced the demand for labour in agriculture. Most workers get agricultural work for around 100 days in a year. Migration of agricultural workers and small and marginal farmers from rural to urban areas, from one state to another, from agriculture to construction or from agriculture to trade and service is rampant.

Impact of Neoliberal policy frame

The neo liberal policies removed all tariffs from agricultural commodities and completely handed over the input and output markets of agricultural produce to multinational and domestic companies. State support to farmers in terms of irrigation, credit, marketing and seeds etc. got diluted over the years. The new markets erected by companies demolished the traditional community linkages and government's infrastructure. This affected the entrepreneurial space available to the farmers and increased the risk factor involved. Especially, the small and medium level farmers found it difficult to cope with new technology and new market structures. They took loans and became so vulnerable that slightest of perturbation led to a complete breakdown. The three lakh farmers' suicides have the same story repeated again and again. The farmers were not able to pay back the loans taken by them. Either their standing crops were destroyed due to weather fluctuations or pest attacks, or the markets of their produce collapsed. Individual loans were small in magnitudes but the income equilibriums of these farmers were fragile.

Suicide was one option but many others relinquished their farmlands and joined the group of landless wage labour households. Another cardinal feature of neoliberal policy frame has been to encourage transfer of agricultural land into non-agricultural uses. Under the neo liberal regime capital and its profits have acquired primacy over everything else. Industrial development and investment corporations of state governments invited multinationals and domestic companies to set up factories and large tracts of agricultural land were encroached in the process. Many state governments invoked the antiquated Land Acquisition Act of 1864 to forcibly evict farmers from their land. Farmers across the country resisted it. Corporate staff and government administration used force which led to violence and bloodshed in many places. Violent conflicts in Niyamgiri, Jagatsinghpur, Singur, Nandigram and Bhatta Parsaul made history during UPA rule.

The government was compelled to repeal the Land Acquisition Act 1864 and replace it with Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (LARR Act, 2013). Use of force was restricted and proper compensation was ensured, but the new Act is no barrier to transfer of agricultural land. It should be noted here that land that was transferred through use of force made news but much more land got transferred quietly through the market. The real estate market boomed and a large number of farmers surrendered their land, sometimes willingly and sometimes under financial duress.

Farmers' protests

Modi government's policies on agrarian front further aggravated the plight of rural households. Diluting the LARR Act, 2013 through ordinances or slashing the funds allotted to MGNREGS, were policy actions which hurt the rural households but did not result in explicit revolt. But demonetization in 2016 came as a shock. Just when kharif crops came to the market and farmers were to make preparations for rabi crops, the cash crunch was the prescription for complete ruination. The simmering discontent of the farmers exploded in open protests. The farmers are angry all over the country and are expressing their anger at local, regional and national level. Fifty thousand rural men and women walking bare feet in blazing sun from Nasik to Mumbai in March 2018, expressed most eloquently that agrarian distress will no longer be expressed in the form of individual suicides. When 50 thousand men and women come together then their collective strength is formidable and their voice is loud and clear. It cannot remain unheard.

From extreme north to down south in every agitation the demand is common. Farmers are demanding implementation of Swaminathan Commission's recommendations. To begin with, the farmers are asking for debt waivers from banks and a guarantee for Minimum Support Price which is 50 percent over and above the cost of production. These demands can provide relief to only a section of farm community. The institutional debt which can be waived by the government is accessible only to a section of relatively well off farmers. Agricultural labourers and tenant farmers are mostly forced to go to informal sources for finance where they pay exorbitant interests on their tiny loans. Similarly, higher MSP will benefit those farmers who sell their produce to a procurement agency. The procurement infrastructure is lopsided. A great many geographical areas and quite a few crops are outside its purview. Further, the agricultural labour households (comprising 40 percent of the rural population) and many small and marginal farm households are actually net buyers of food grains and other produce. For them, higher MSP will mean higher buying price in the market. Without access to a properly functioning PDS infrastructure, a higher MSP may have an adverse impact on many rural households.

National Commission for farmers was set by UPA I government under the chairmanship of M. S. Swaminathan in 2004. The Commission submitted a comprehensive report in 5 volumes. The recommendations implied a radical restructuring of rural economy and much beyond it. Neither the UPA government nor the NDA government could think of implementing the commission's recommendations. It is a great advance that the report is no

longer confined to government offices and libraries but is being talked about in the farm community at large.

One of the prime recommendations of the commission is to redistribute surplus land to the landless households so that maximum possible households have access to the main resource base.

A programme for resolution of agrarian crisis

“If resolution of agrarian crisis means that secure and dignified livelihood space is created for the 244 million men and women employed in agriculture and allied sector then land-labour relations in agrarian economy have to be restructured radically.”

With the above basic premise we put down a programme for resolving the agrarian crisis - for the perusal of activists, academic and the farm community.

1. As a first step, resolution of agrarian crisis demands an immediate moratorium on mindless transfer of agricultural land for non-agricultural uses. In the long run a people friendly land use policy has to be spelt out (also recommended in Swaminathan Commission Report). This is also absolutely necessary for ensuring food security at macro level. However, in a bourgeois democratic system, an administrative fiat cannot stop sale and purchase of property owned individually. This moratorium then has to be demanded by farmers themselves. For such a demand to arise from farm community, it is necessary that the majority households in agrarian workforce have ownership of land and the land owned by them promise viable farm operations.

2. The resolution of crisis then demands equitable access to the main resource base - the land. While the NSSO data gives an accurate picture of landless households and households with small holdings, it fails to capture dis-proportionate control over land and other resources by rich farmers and erstwhile landlords. There are farmers controlling land far beyond the ceiling levels imposed by respective states. Temples, trusts and plantation owners are exempted from land ceiling. Resolution of agrarian crisis demands that all the surplus land is recovered and distributed to the landless households. The agenda of land reforms needs to be revived.

3. Redistribution of land among maximum possible households is a necessary step but it is not sufficient for resolving the crisis. Numerous holdings with miniscule size land is not a tenable proposition in the long run. As already mentioned, very small holdings can neither make use of the labour hours available in the households nor can they generate sufficient

income to fulfill basic demands of the household. A certain minimum size farm is required for mechanization, optimal water management and optimal crop choice. Miniscule size land holdings have to be pooled together to obtain optimal size cooperative (collective) farms. To persuade the farmers to willingly convert their individual holding into a collective holding requires patience and persistence. The farmer has to be convinced of immediate material advantages that would accrue to him by joining the cooperative farm. From Lenin to Fidel, all leaders in socialist societies offered concrete material incentives to farmers for joining a cooperative. In Brazil, when MST occupies land and gives it to landless households, it also gives training to ensure that the land given to them promises a viable productive venture.

4. When sufficiently many cooperatives are formed, they need to be federated at village level and then at district, state and national level. Again, to federate the cooperatives into bigger and bigger groups at district and state levels is another uphill task. To overcome the caste and communal cleavages in a society where violent conflicts on these grounds are being actively promoted seems an absolutely naïve proposition. But if these cooperative farms are federated at village level and then district, state and national level, then a robust cooperative sector can emerge as an alternative institutional form of land and production relations.

A national level movement to cooperativise small and marginal farm holdings is indeed a herculean project but the impact it can have on farm economy is unimaginable. Already, the households with small and marginal holdings control 53 percent of household operational land. If proper land redistribution takes place, this share will further increase. If the small and marginal holdings can be brought together and decisions are taken not on the basis of profit consideration of individual units but according to what is desirable and sustainable at macro level, then markets will change, technology will change and cropping pattern will change. We will realize an alternative agrarian economy where small farmers will be producing what is needed by the people.

We must also note here that once the land is integrated in a cooperative structure, it will not be possible to snatch it away for nonagricultural uses - neither by the state nor by the market.

5. The picture is not yet complete. Land redistribution and cooperativisation of small and marginal farmers will not be able to include all the 244 million men and women. Notwithstanding the most appropriate designing and most efficient implementation, the land reforms programme cannot provide land to all the landless households mainly because land

available is limited. These households have to be included in the programme by forming labour collectives which are coordinated with producer cooperatives. Labour collectives would take up entrepreneurial activities to provide inputs required by farm cooperatives. The labour collectives can take care of watershed requirements, seed requirements and organic manure and pesticide requirements, also requirements of farm machinery. Similarly agro processing, storage and transport and distribution of farm produce can be taken care of by the labour collectives.

The concrete demand from the state should be to throw big companies out of input and output markets of agricultural produce and reserve this sector for the cooperatives and labour collectives. Direct financial support or subsidized loan should be given to labour collectives for modest capital requirements of their enterprises. This will enable them to fulfill the input requirements of cooperative farm sector and channelizing the output forward. Thus, resolution of agrarian crisis demands expanding the employment space beyond agriculture. This employment space will be created around the backward and forward linkages of farm produce.

Feasibility of the above programme

The economic programme that I have sketched above may sound like a pure fantasy which has little political relevance.

Lenin talked of introducing cooperative movement in a country where political power was in the hands of working class and this political power owned all means of production. In this basic premise the cooperative movement meant a transition to a socialist society. Lenin was categorical that overthrow of the exploitative ruling class and political power in the hands of working class was the necessary premise within which to build the cooperative movement.

When Chavez talked of the cooperative movement in 21st century Venezuela, he had the state power although not complete control over means of production. The Venezuelan economy is in crisis today. We do not know in detail the role which is being played by the cooperative infrastructure built in Venezuelan economy in early 21st century.

We are canvassing a cooperative movement of small and marginal farmers and their coordination with labour collectives from landless households when there is no state support. We are canvassing a political programme in which cooperative movement would arise from the ground and demand its space in production sphere. The state representing the interests of the domestic and international capital will not offer any support.

On the contrary, there would be an all out effort by the vested interests to suppress and liquidate the movement.

It is necessary that with every new obstruction the political movement becomes stronger and more impervious. And in the end the crescendo of demand as well as action is pitched so high that either the existing government yields to the masses or gets replaced by a more democratic and people friendly government.

To sum up - resolution of agrarian crisis demands a revolutionary project which restructures the character of the state and transforms the identity of India in the world theatre. Nothing else can resolve the crisis.

Section II

Women workers in the crisis ridden agrarian scene

We sketched the agrarian crisis in terms of households not having access to the main resource base - the land. Obviously women workers participation in farm production depends on the category of households to which they belong.

Forty percent of women workers would belong to landless agricultural households where they would be working on others farms for wages. The remaining 60 percent would belong to households where farm land is available. The women who belong to households cultivating their own land should be classified as farmers. Of course, when one's own field brings little income then women farmers also do wage work.

Women as Agricultural wage labourers

When sugarcane was harvested in Sonnakhota village in Beed district in Maharashtra, 10 couples worked in a field from 5.30 in the morning till 7 pm in the evening with a short lunch break. Umesh Kedar slices the sugarcane plants one after another with his sickle. Cutting requires strength and force. His wife Mukta picks up the stalks, makes a bunch of 10, ties them together and carries them on her head to the truck standing nearby. The couple gets Rs. 228 for every ton of sugarcane they cut. They manage to cut two tons in a day. Mukta wakes up at 4 in the morning, finishes cooking for the day and reaches the field at 5.30. Sugarcane cutting season is heavy work but it fetches income. (from People's Archives of Rural India).

In the overall marginalized employment space of agricultural workers, women workers are further disadvantaged due to gender bias. There are tasks only done by men. These are ploughing, well digging, cane crushing

and others. Wage rates for these tasks are higher. There are tasks where men and women both are employed. For these tasks wage rates are lower and for the same tasks wage rates received by women are lower than that for men everywhere.

All India agricultural wage rate for field labour for the year 2015-6 is Rs. 281 for men and Rs. 218 for women. In all the states, the wage rate for women is lower but in some states the difference is unbelievable. Maximum difference is in Tamilnadu. For men the daily wage rate for field work is Rs. 334 and for women it is Rs. 142. In Kerala the wage rate is highest for men as well as women. However, the gender bias remains and is also large. The wage rate is Rs. 576 for men and Rs. 427 for women. At the lower end is Chhattisgarh where men get Rs. 181 per day and women get Rs. 134 per day.

Shrinking employment space for rural workers compelled the UPA I government to enact Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2005. The Act provides 100 days employment for unskilled rural workforce. The women workers have taken employment under MGNREG Scheme with much greater zeal than men. There are many stories from different quarters about malfunctioning of MGNREGS. This one from Munagapaka village of Andhra Pradesh is reported in PARI.

T. Lakshmi worked for 95 days in a MGNREG project. Her wages were not paid because government decided that from April 2015 onwards MGNREG job cards would have to be linked with Aadhaar cards. The computer operator made a mistake in linking the numbers of T. Lakshmi's two cards. T. Lakshmi's payment got transferred in the account of P. Lakshmi from Ganaparthi village. Both the women could not withdraw the money from the bank. Bank accounts are also to be linked with Aadhaar cards. Around 700 MGNREG workers in Munagapaka village and 294 workers in Ganaparthi village are waiting for their payments of 10 lakhs and 4 lakhs for last three years. Is anyone going to be punished for the non-payment of hard earned wages of these poor and unskilled workers? Will T. Lakshmi and others get interest for the waiting period? A Farmer commits suicide because he/she is not able to payback the loan taken from the bank. With the same logic the state administration, which cannot pay what it promises to pay, has to be dismantled.

Women farmers as unpaid family labour

Women categorized as cultivators are largely those who work on family farms as domestic labour. The land is invariably in the name of their

husbands or sons or brothers or in laws. Traditionally, women in cultivator households take care of seeds, cattle and poultry. They are also involved in agro processing activities for subsistence needs. Exact description of their work varies with region, farm size, crops grown and cultural norms dictated by caste and religion.

However, what is common is the fact that in most cases they have no control over means of production, hardly have any say in decision making and consequently have no control over the income received from farm operations. Women participate in family farm work not as principal workers but as subsidiary workers. In fact, their participation in the family farm work is quite flexible. Their work has no separate account and of course no separate remuneration. When required they are available for work and when not required they withdraw themselves quietly. In other words they constitute the reserve army of labour for subsistence work.

Inclusion and withdrawal of women offering domestic labour in farm production activities is manifested in the fluctuations in total count of female workforce in agriculture. Between 2004-5 and 2009-10, 20 million women withdrew from agriculture. They did not engage themselves in any other occupation. They withdrew from the workforce altogether. A large proportion of these 20 million women belong to the category of subsidiary family labour. When men moved out of agriculture in search of better employment leaving their fields to the women, the women moved in to look after family farms. After 1999-2000, the male workforce increased in agriculture, land available and women moved out. If need arises for additional labour they may again pool in their lot.

Women as cultivators: their de facto control over land and farm operations

The neo-liberal policies leading to farmers' suicides and migration of small farmers in search of better employment brought new protagonists on the agrarian scene. The women, who would have remained as unpaid helpers and unseen workers on their family farms, were forced by new contingencies to come forward and join the community of main cultivators – a community which has traditionally been dominated by men.

Vidya More lived in Kalamb taluk in Osmanabad district of Maharashtra with her husband Sahadev More and two children. Sahadev More had 2 acres of land. Repeated crop failures compelled him to mortgage his land for Rs. 30,000. His inability to repay the debt and regain his land led to a breakdown. Sahadev doused their tiny hut in kerosene and set it ablaze. But Vidya refused to end her life and her

children's lives in this manner. When she saw the hut on fire, she threw her children out of the hut and jumped out herself. Vidya survived with some injuries. She recovered and decided to rebuild her life from ashes.

It was not easy. There was no support from family. Vidya did wage work in others' farms. She also did sewing work at night to get additional income. With years of hard work she managed to continue children's education and also repay the debt taken by her husband. Vidya finally got the land back and became a 'cultivator'. Joining the cultivator community was not simple either. People resented, 'She acts like a man'. They stopped water in her field. She says, 'I am only acting like a responsible mother.' Ten years hence her son is studying in 11th standard and daughter in 9th standard. (TOI 29 October 2017)

There is another story of Kamalabai Gudhe from Lonsawala village in Wardha district.

Kamala bai is a dalit farmer in her mid 60s. In her younger days, she and her husband Palasram worked hard as wage labourers. For additional income, Kamala bai walked kilometers and brought fodder from forest and sold it to farmers for their animals. With their hard earned money they bought 4 and ½ acres of land at the edge of the forest. They along with their children worked on the farm, dug a well there but farm was 6 kilometers from the house and exposed to wild animals. The crops were again and again destroyed by wild boars. The couple could never manage the money required to put fence around their 4 and ½ acres. Kamala bai and her husband continued to take wage work to supplement their income. One of their sons died, their debts mounted and then crops on their farm failed. Palasram could take it no more and one day he consumed pesticides and killed himself.

Kamala bai continued working on their farm and also continued doing wage work on others' farms and continued repaying old debts. She lives in a half broken hut with her son, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren. People think of her as an old woman, as a dalit woman, as a widow, but she thinks of herself as a farmer and walks 6 kilometers to her farm along with her grandchildren with great deal of pride. (PARI).

In the above two cases the husbands died leaving their land and their debts to their widows. In other cases, farm widows have to fight for their right to cultivate the land which was being cultivated by their husbands. Brothers or other male relatives are quick to come forward and take control

of the land. The widows are promised a share of the returns from their husbands' land. But more and more women want to know the entire economics of farmland left behind by their husbands and take control of the assets and liabilities themselves.

Taking de facto control over land is one part of a farm widow's struggle but other prolonged and complex battle remains, which is to get land title transferred in her name. Without land title in her name the women farmer cannot apply for institutional loan or any other governmental assistance. She cannot sell the land and use the money for some other investment or for any contingency. Transfer of land title in the name of farm widow is then necessary for making the farm operation viable. Unfortunately, it constitutes a real uphill task. In many cases, the papers are not in order. Land is owned jointly by the family and the land cultivated by the husband is only an understanding among male members. Land title in husband's name does not exist. In other cases the in-laws refuse to give the papers to the widow. And there are, of course, cases where the woman finds that registration fees and required bribes to the officials concerned is far beyond the finance available to her. The claimant woman has to wage a long drawn struggle without a definite promise that she will succeed.

De-facto control or responsibility of land is also given to women when husbands move out in search of better jobs. Farmer's suicide is an individual act but migration of able bodied unskilled labour from a village is a mass phenomenon. The labour contractor collects men and sometimes husband and wife both and takes them in a group to another village or town for agricultural wage work or construction work. Even otherwise, unskilled migrant labour moves in a group. There are several such villages where women, children and old people are left behind and all the younger men have moved out.

Betara village of Jashpur district in Chhattisgarh is one such village. In May 2004, after two years of drought all men moved out to Nagpur for work. Even farmers with more than 10 acres of land left (there were only 3). Women are left behind to take command of the nonviable farms and bad weather, with scanty resources at their disposal. Women farmers call women workers to work in the farms. Men workers have also gone to Nagpur. From the neighbouring village also, only women workers are available. Again, women don't have land title in their names and so remain deprived of official assistance. Women workers and women farmers do not have training to operate farm machines so farm operations at all levels are carried out manually. Interestingly, in many cases, women take care of ploughing,

sowing, weeding, irrigation etc., but at harvesting time men return back to take charge. Many such villages can be identified in Bihar, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh also.

Beena Agarwal in her book, 'A Field of One's Own' has given an apt description of women workers in Indian agriculture. She calls them "Dispossessed farmers and disadvantaged workers." We feel that the subordinate status given to women in a patriarchal society places them in situations where they acquire immense resilience to face adversities. At the same time, they also develop confidence in their collective action. Hence, their apparently weak position can also be viewed as their strength.

Revolutionary potential of dispossessed farmers and disadvantaged workers

Historically, whenever peasantry has risen to struggle for its land rights and a fair share in the agrarian economy, the women in the community have valiantly stood up in the frontline. Women's participation in historical uprisings of Telangana, Tebhaga, Punnapra-Vayalar and others are well documented. In the contemporary scene, women's role in Narmada Bachao Movement, and their participation in struggle against the mighty multinational POSCO in Odisha have been celebrated again and again. Women are in the forefront in fighting against draconian laws like AFSPA.

In the recent long march of farmers from Nashik to Mumbai, Adivasi women farmers from Nashik, Palghar, Dahanu, Ahmednagar and other districts, along with women farmers from Marathwada and Vidarbha participated in large numbers. Adivasi women came from families with small holdings and were also engaged in wage work. Joining the week long march meant losing 1/4th of their monthly wage income. This was a big sacrifice.

The peasant struggles are directed against feudal lords, state authorities and corporate units. Incidentally, the demands for land rights or other benefits are made for the household as the unit. Women have fought bravely along with their partners to protect and enhance the households' livelihood space. But their participation in struggles does not automatically grant them equal status in the household or in the village society at large. The structures of dominance and inequality and gender relations within the household and in the society remain unaddressed during and after the struggles. Women's struggles against patriarchal economic and social relations have to be fought independently. It is important that along with political and social empowerment women are given equal position in household production structures, in the village economy and beyond.

Women's land rights is indeed a central issue in the unfair and warped agrarian structure and should be addressed on a priority basis in any programme which sets out to resolve the agrarian crisis.

Having emphasized the need to prioritize the agenda securing economic space for women, it is necessary to examine the overall agrarian structure within which this economic space has to be secured. As we mentioned in section I, only 7 percent of rural households have land holdings bigger than 2 hectares. Ninety three percent households have either no land or have holdings which are not viable. Especially, economic space available to agricultural labour households, share croppers and marginal farmer households is very small. So far as women's rights are concerned, getting a miniscule share from miniscule whole is no solution.

As we spelt out in section I, the economic space of these households has to be expanded by pooling their resources together and pooling their labour together. As a first step, expansion of economic space requires converting individual spaces into a collective space. Women who stand in front rank when militant struggles are undertaken against feudal lords, state authorities and corporate units can also take up vanguard position in this revolutionary move of converting individual economic spaces into a collective space.

In both initiatives i.e. pooling land together for joint production and pooling labour together to form a labour collective women farmers and women workers will come forward more willingly than men. When de facto control of land comes to a woman, on which there is a loan and there is not enough family support then an offer collective venture is generally received enthusiastically. It offers the security and support that she needs. As women do not the experience of individual ownership of land, they have less hesitation in joining a collective than men.

In the case of labour collectives also women's response will be more enthusiastic. In agriculture, the division of work between men and women is such that men do individual work like ploughing, irrigation and marketing and women do work in a team like planting, weeding and harvesting. A broad based movement to form labour collectives is more plausible among women than men.

Our expectation that women by virtue of being in weaker position are better placed to take a lead in formation of collective economic base is not just an empty conjecture. The expectation is based on specific performance of collective farming by the rural women in Kerala under Kudumbashree Mission.

Kudumbashree means glory of the family. The programme started in Kerala in 1998, as a poverty alleviation programme. Poor women were first persuaded to form neighborhood groups which were thrift and savings groups. Neighbourhood groups were federated as Area Development Societies at the ward level and then as Community Development Societies at the Panchayat level. The three tier structure is coordinated at district and then at state level. The programme now covers all the districts of Kerala and has 4 million members.

Apart from thrift and savings, the women in the neighbourhood groups are encouraged to take various income generating activities. The activities range from small scale manufacturing to conducting weekly markets to providing eating joints and transport service and so on. One of the very important income generating activity taken up by Kudumbashree women is farming on a collective basis. Joint farm operations have been taken up by around 2 lakh women. They are cultivating around 30 thousand hectares of land spread across the entire state. Most of these women belong to landless labour households or small farmers' households. Generally, 4 to 10 women get together to form a Joint Liability Group directed under the NABARD scheme. They either pool together their households' small holdings or jointly lease in land from a third party. In Kerala in every village, one finds land which is lying fallow because the landowner is either not interested in farming or is unable to do so because of lack of resources.

Women's groups lease in these fallow holdings and work hard to make them cultivable. With their scanty resources they have worked wonders on Kerala's agrarian scene. They lead the organic cultivation of vegetables, they grow special varieties of banana, they build a green army of women workers to revive paddy fields. These are material achievements in agriculture, but more importantly this experiment of collective farming or other group work has radically transformed their world view. They have acquired immense confidence in their capability to handle any contingency collectively. Their universe has extended far beyond their immediate family. It, of course, includes their fellow workers irrespective of caste and religious differences. But their extended universe also encompasses Kudumbashree members across the state, the village people in general and in a way all those people who belong to the underprivileged community. They express solidarity among themselves and with others. It makes them feel stronger. They put in all their might in rebuilding flood ravaged Kerala. They came all the way to Delhi to express solidarity with Rohingya refugees. Kudmbashree women willingly include transgenders in their community. One looks

forward to growth in their strength and their progressive thinking.

Conclusion

We have argued that women workers in agriculture have revolutionary potential not just to protect and enhance their land rights within the given institutional arrangements but to transcend to an alternative institutional arrangement in land ownership and operations. Further, forming a collective economic base is pivotal in translating this potential into a meaningful programme. We argue this fully knowing the limitations of collective entrepreneurship or cooperatives in a capitalist economy where the state represents the capitalist ruling class.

However, living in a third world country and witnessing the shrinking working class surrounded by a vast unorganised sector we are convinced that allies have to be found from this reserve army of labour. Women in agriculture constitute an important ally. True, the Kudumbashree performance cannot be replicated everywhere. Kudumbashree mission gets state support with Left Front heading the government alternatively. This support is not available in other states. But women will evolve their own path depending on specific constraints they face and specific strengths that they have.

In the end we request you to consider the above analysis and the suggested a programme keeping in mind the famous quote from Che Guevara:

‘be realistic- demand the impossible’

**MONTHLY URDU PUBLICATION OF
PAKISTAN MAZDOOR MAHAZ:**

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WHAT TO DO WITH THE FOUR MILLION STATELESS IN ASSAM?

Santosh Rana

The Mughal army under Man Singh occupied Assam in the sixteenth century but they considered it a “non-revenue” area. The cost of maintaining cantonments was more than the earnings in land revenue. This was so because the vast “Char areas” of the great river Brahmaputra were flooded for four-five months in a year and the flood water was several feet deep. The Assamese peasants did not know the technology of cultivation in “inundated Char” areas.

In the mid -nineteenth century, when the British started tea-gardens in Assam, Lakhs of workers from Jharkhand region were taken to Assam. Supply of foodgrains to this huge population was a real problem. The British rulers had observed that the peasants in Mymensingh and nearby districts of Eastern Bengal knew the requisite technology of paddy cultivation in inundated areas. They encouraged the Bengali-speaking Muslims and low-caste Hindu peasantry of Eastern Bengal to settle in the “Char” areas of Assam and start cultivation.

Drums were beaten in the villages of Mymensingh and it was announced that anybody going to Assam would get as much land as he could till, get a pair of bullocks free and Rupees Five as grant. Encouraged by the British, the peasants went to Assam in large numbers and settled in the “char” areas of Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Nagaon and other districts. With their hard work, they converted the fallow lands of “char” into cultivable lands. The flood was found to be a blessing as it fertilized the land every year. The prosperous agriculture of the “char” areas in Assam is the contribution of these peasants.

In the fifties, sixties and seventies of the last century there were many riots, many settlers had been killed and their houses burnt. In the eighties, genocides were carried out in Nellie in 1983 and in other areas.

The more than four million people who have been declared non-citizens in 2018 are the descendants of the peasants who had migrated from one province of British India to another province in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Because of floods and riots, whatever documents they had had been destroyed. It is not possible for all of them to prove residence in Assam before 1971.

What does the state want to do with these four million people? They cannot be pushed back to Bangladesh, the government has stated. Then, they will be forced to live in Assam without any right, right to food, right to work, right to education, right to healthcare or even right to life. The Assamese ruling classes want them as slaves, who can be forced to work with a pittance as wage. If they don't submit, they will be subjected to genocides sponsored by the state. The Assamese chauvinists have joined hands with the pan-Indian Hindutva fascists to declare a war against the peasants who had transformed Assam into a prosperous land.

This Land is Their Land
A Revolutionary Working People's History
Of the United States
By George Gruenthal

A brief, 130 page, working people's history of the United States from the wars against the Native Peoples to the War of Terror against the peoples of the world. Each of the 38 chapters is short, with illustrations and songs.

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MANIPUR AGAINST CORPORATE PLUNDER

An Interview with Jiten Yumnam

Malem Ningthouja

Manipur is a strategically militarised economic zone of an expanding empire of the *finance* corporates. It is strictly regimented and indirectly ruled by centrally funded local *kleptocracts*, who function in collusion with elements of finance imperialism. Unrestrained extraction of super-profits by external forces causes heavy loss for the indigenous masses and diversion of their nation from progress. Corporate plunder and loot are, however, covered up by deceptive propaganda about capitalist growth model as the only ultimate *schema* to achieve development, equity and peace. This deception traps many into perpetual ignorance, oblivion and misadventures. Many are seduced into a fantasy of building development, equity, peace and democracy. Such fantasy could not hold on for any longer as vexed crisis and unrest are exploding. Take the case of India's Act East Policy and its impact on Manipur. AEP is a finance project, that, in practice, partially materialises temporary economic relief for some local vested sections. Larger chunk of the relief is accumulated by a *coterie* of socially parasitic *kleptocrats*, who shamelessly eulogise self-aggrandisement for a tiny share of the trickled down spoils of the overall corporate plunder. Many took for granted a leap towards *development* by misreading the deceptive face-value of the ongoing projects such as railways lines, dams, mining, oil drilling, militarisation, administrative and commercial buildings, sports university and finance intrusion. The bitter truth is imperilment in various forms —perpetuation of economic underdevelopment, ecological destructions, domination by settlers, suppression, exploitation, institutionalised terrorism and concealed *pogroms*, deprivation and pauperisation, and the overall organic murder of Manipur, *i.e.*, its history, current pillars and future. Precisely, the propaganda hype surrounding Act East Policy, as it is enforced in a militarily occupied territory to achieve maximum extraction of *super-profit* at the cost of the colonised, could not satisfactorily redress the deep rooted crisis cited above. On the contentious edge, therefore, are, frustrations with the existing growth model, evolution and dissemination of revolutionary hope, democratic struggles, and the consequential vicious cycle of State repression and mass resistance. The views of Mr. Jiten Yumnam¹ to throw some light on the basis of his grass root experiences.

Editor: You are critical about the ongoing ‘development’ projects in Manipur.

Jiten: Yes, the government is constructing a series of projects in the name of development. This includes a series of extractive investments, hydro-power projects and other massive infrastructure projects. These projects have benefited corporate bodies and a section of elites. On the contrary, these projects are responsible for large scale displacement, environmental catastrophe, militarization and suppression of fundamental rights. These projects are practically exclusive, undemocratic and incompatible with the wishes of communities. The state and corporate bodies enforce these projects through repressive force, including military. But I have a different understanding. Development, I believe, should address the needs and wishes of communities. Communities must be involved in decision making. Their rights must be recognised and respected. Projects must cater to the need of fulfilling environmental sustainability. There should be accountability of all stakeholders. There should be justice.

Editor: So, you are confident about the *locus standi* of your activism!

Jiten: The *locus standi* is to keep people at the centre of development process. It means, projects must adhere to universal development and human rights standards. Communities should be consulted and involved their consent taken for any ‘development’ processes, affecting their rights, land and future. Any development process suppressing community rights, voices and space is simply arbitrary. There are several examples. The initiatives to exploration and drilling of oil has been done arbitrarily, without the consent of the peoples, initially by Jubilant Energy, and continued by AlphaGeo and others, in collusion with the State. It involves corrupt and manipulative practice, causing confusion and tensions amongst people. On the other hand, the 105 MW Loktak Multipurpose Hydroelectric Project has caused havoc. It had caused large displacement. More than 80,000 acres of agriculture land are still submerged under water. People are demanding decommissioning of the controversial Ithai Barrage to reclaim their land. But the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation continues to insist on construction of another 66 MW Loktak Downstream Project. The project destroys ecology and diminishes food production.

Editor: Can you theoretically interconnect ‘developmental’ projects, militarisation, and repression?

Jiten: One can analyse it in this way. First, there is an armed liberation

movement to create a sovereign Manipur. The State invests in militarisation to suppress this movement. A repressive law known as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 has been enforced to empower the State's repressive forces to function with impunity. Second, several projects are extensively taken up for the purpose of capitalist extraction and exploitation. Many people are badly affected by these projects and they are rising up against the projects. In this scenario capitalist projects, militarisation and repression are reinforcing one another. The military, para-military, police and other auxiliary forces are the handy tools for defending capitalist project and suppression of democratic agitations. The project sites are fortified and heavily guarded by them. They indulge in targeting mass leaders and activists.

Editor: Your phrase “developmental aggression” sounds very powerful. Would you like to elaborate it?

Jiten: Selfish and greedy agenda of the exploiters are manifested in various forms of aggression. In other words, capitalist (or finance) corporate expansionism incorporates militarisation and repression. It comes, as mentioned earlier, in the form of destructive projects. Corporate elements, in collusion with State, adopt aggressive tactics to enforce their projects. They are least bothered about promoting ecological balance, community rights, and equity. They violate constitutional fundamental rights and other universal human rights standards. In short, when capitalist growth model, that primarily serves the interest of finance imperialism, are enforced, devoid of mechanisms to deliver equity, transparency and justice, then such process becomes “developmental aggression.”

Editor: It seems you are unhappy with the Mapithel Dam.

Jiten: The Mapithel Dam stands out as a significant edifice of corporate plunder that was carried out in collusion with local collaborators. It is a dam created by means of blocking the Thoubal River; on the pretext of fulfilling electric supply, water supply and irrigation. People have demanded proper impact assessments with regards to ecology and the rights of those who would be forced located in either upstream and downstream areas. However, the State has constructed the dam in a hasty and arbitrary manner. People rose in protest. The State suppressed it, and, subsequently fortified and militarised the dam site. Politicians, contractors and construction companies like Ansal and Progressive Construction Limited, Coastal Private Limited have benefited from it. The longstanding delays of project and cost overruns

involved massive corruption. The overall consequence is devastation. Community customary norms and Indian Forest Rights Act, 2006 were violated. Affected peoples have not been adequately compensated and rehabilitated. The ecological destruction remains irreparable.

Editor: You seem to be saying that *Finance* is global in character. In that case, is there a Corporate violation of international human rights norms?

Jiten: First, ICCPR/ICESR 1966 and UNDRIP 2007 were created in the spirit of promoting and defending the principle of UDHR 1948. The UDHR principle, in a broader sense, includes the right to self determination of nations (nationalities or indigenous communities). Second, Manipur belongs to the indigenous peoples inhabiting it, and, accordingly their political, economical and socio-cultural rights had to be protected and promoted. They must enjoy the rights to self-determination over their land, resources, and the environment to enjoy free prior and informed consent making. Manipur, however, has been in a state of military occupation, under whose protection corporate plunder are carried out with impunity. Plunder, in whatever sense and forms, violates the universal humanitarian principles and norms cited above.

Editor: Don't you think India's Act East Policy can be used as a privilege to speed up the defensive strategy of the people?

Jiten: Corporate onslaught or finance imperialism is deeply rooted in Manipur. India's aggressive push for the Act East Policy is revealed in several Memorandums of Understanding that were signed for oil exploration, laying of oil pipelines, mining, and road construction. The North East India Business Summit on 21st and 22nd November 2017 exemplified, that the Asian Development Bank, Japan International Cooperation Agency, and World Bank were making an inroad in an unprecedented scale. Manipur must rise up, if it has to withstand the challenges. It must pursue struggle: (a) to assert for self-determination over their land and resources, (b) to strengthen the indigenous economy for sustainable management of land and resources, (c) to adopt a model of equity in economic organisation of the people.

Editor: What holds back the movement for people's democracy?

Jiten: The obstacles are manifold: (a) State repression on democratic movements and mass leaders; (b) State divisive policies; (c) sectarianism and communalisation amongst the mass organisations and leadership, and (d) rapid spread and consolidation of external market forces at the cost of

the indigenous polity, economy, social fabric and communal harmony. To overcome these obstacles, there is need to: (a) understand the overall context, agenda and strategy of Finance imperialism; (b) respond at multiple levels according to the changing tactics of the State and market forces; and (c) building strong mass base solidarity and unity across the communities of Manipur and beyond.

Editor: Lets hope for development, peace and democracy sooner or later!

Jiten: Thank you very much.

End note:

¹ JitenYumnam is a journalist, human rights advocate and environmental activist from Manipur (India). He is the Secretary of the Centre for Research and Advocacy, Manipur (CRAM). He was arrested in 2009 for his active role in the protest against fake encounters. He played an important role in establishing CRAM in 2004. The objective of CRAM is to contribute to advancing the human rights of the indigenous peoples of Manipur, through research and advocacy.

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SAIL: THERE IS A LITTLE DEATH IN EVERY STEEL

The New Trade Union Initiative condoles the death of 11 workers and stands with the 14 others who are grievously injured due to the blast at the gas pipeline on 9 October 2018 at the Bhilai plant of the Public Sector giant Steel Authority of India Limited. The blast occurred around 10 am in the Coke Oven Battery Complex No 11 during a scheduled maintenance job. Around 24 employees, including contract and regular, were working in the area when the blast occurred. Injured workers are being treated at the Bhilai Steel Plant Hospital.

Established in 1955 the Bhilai Steel Plant (BSP) was India's first manufacturer of steel rails and remains the largest and most profitable production facility of SAIL.

SAIL and the Government refuse to learn

Chhattisgarh government following the advisory of the Commerce and Industry Ministry did away with compulsory and random inspections in 2015. Since 2015, the BSP alone has reported 31 deaths, excluding the blast that happened yesterday.

A preliminary report of the Industrial Health and Safety Inspector points out anomalies in following protocol for the repair work and for not following Standard Operating Procedure and concluded that haste and lack of planning led to the blast. The inspection report also notes that the gas pipeline was in use while it was undergoing repairs. This is also in violation of the norms of quality management set by ISO 9001:2000 certification for its core processes, ISO14001 for Environment management system, SA8000 certification for social accountability and **OHSAS18001** certification for occupational Health and Safety.

This is the fourth major incident since 2017 at a Public Sector Undertaking and second at BSP when accidents during routine maintenance and repair work have cost workers their lives. On 12 June 2014 a gas leak at the BSP had resulted in asphyxiation of 6 workers and severely injured 50 others.

The SAIL accident is yet another incident of culpable homicide in a Public Sector since the deliberate attempt of the BJP government to implement 'minimum government, maximum governance' through dismantling of the labour inspection machinery, in violation to the ILO

Convention 81 to which India is a signatory, and through its implementation of 'self-certification', 'self-regulation' and 'third-party certification' policies. Clearly, SAIL and the government have failed to learn from its past experiences of fire at BHEL and fatal accidents at Cochin Ship Yard and NTPC.

Kill in India

In 2017, India jumped 30 places and made it to the list of top 100 business friendly countries while it slipped on all lists for human development indices. Not surprisingly, in the same year, India reported 695 workplace related deaths only in its factories. The government now is aiming to make it to the list of top 50 countries by pushing through over 90 'reforms' along with the labour codes. The increasing use of contract workers and contracting out of core activities is being used to avoid accountability and responsibility in cases of accidents. The knee-jerk dismissal of senior managers at BSP without following due process is an attempt to push the burden of responsibility on to individual managers rather than holding accountable the undemocratic policies that led to the incident.

New Trade Union Initiative calls upon the Government of India to:

1. Ensure that the families of the workers killed are compensated with amounts that equal to the life-time earnings of each worker, irrespective of tenure, based on the principle of equal pay for equal work.
2. Ensure that the workers, both regular and contract, grievously injured are compensated and rehabilitated adequately in accordance to the Workman's Compensation Act.
3. Charge of criminal negligence be brought against the management of SAIL and all third party agencies and involved in the manufacture, installation, operation and maintenance of the pipeline and related equipment and not merely labour contractors.
4. Appoint a National Commission on workplace safety.
5. During the pendency of the national commission, repeal all laws and amendments since 2014 allowing employers the power of 'self-certification' and reintroduce the mechanism of compulsory certification.

Gautam Mody,
General Secretary,
New Trade Union Initiative.

October 11, 2018

IMMEDIATELY STOP THE UNLAWFUL ARREST OF TRADE UNIONISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The New Trade Union Initiative condemns the arbitrary raiding of residences of human rights activists and their arrest in a parallel operation across the country by the Maharashtra police. The Pune police have raided the residences of human rights defenders and trade union activists in Ranchi, Delhi, Goa, Mumbai and Hyderabad and arrested Comrade Sudha Bharadwaj from her Delhi residence and confiscated her phone, computer and other electronic devices, books, periodicals. The raids and arrests are all connected to Case number 4/18 registered by Vishrambaug police station in Pune linking them to the Bhima Koregaon incident.

Comrade Sudha Bharadwaj, advocate and leader of the Pragatisheel Cement Shramik Sangh and Jan Aadharit Engineering Mazdoor Union, have been arrested from her Delhi residence this morning for her alleged involvement in the Bhima Koregaon incident under sections 153(a), 505 (1)(b), 117, 120 (b), 34 of the IPC and sections 13, 16, 17, 18, 18(b), 19, 20, 38, 39, 40 of the UAPA. Sudha has been under attack recently as part of an ongoing campaign both in government and through regressive forces in civil society to create an atmosphere of fear amongst those speaking up and standing against the attack on democracy, justice and equality.

This is the second round of arrests that the government has conducted in connection to the Bhima Koregaon attacks of human rights defenders. In the first round the Pune police had arrested 5 activists. None of these activists have been given bail. While on the other hand, leaders of two right-wing organisations identified as the prime provocateurs of the original attack on the dalits, Manohar aka Shambhaji Bhide or 'Bhide Gurji' of the Shiv Pratishthan Hindustan and Milind Ekbote of the Hindu Ekta (Aaghadi) Manch, though were booked by the Pune Police for inciting violence and under provisions of the SC/ST Atrocities Act, have been released on bail.

The definitive politicisation of Dalits against the Hindutva agenda of the BJP and its allies, particularly after the Una violence in Gujarat, has been a cause of serious concern for the BJP government at the centre which is preparing for election. This concerted attack against all democratic and progressive forces shows that the BJP government at the centre is nervous and is lashing out at all voices of dissent.

The NTUI joins with all progressive forces in fighting this attack as it stands in solidarity with Comrade Sudha Bharadwaj and the members of the Pragatisheel Cement Shramik Sangh and Jan Aadharit Engineering Mazdoor Union who continue to face the gravest attack on their rights as workers and citizens.

This is our common fight and a fight we must win.

N Vasudevan
President, NTUI.
August 28, 2018

PRESS STATEMENT OF FIVE PETITIONERS IN ROMILA THAPAR & OTHER. VS. UNION OF INDIA & OTHERS. IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

(Decided, 28th September 2018)

We approached the Supreme Court when five well-known lawyers, journalists and civil rights activists were arrested across the country on 28th August and charged with abetting acts of terror under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Our intention was to draw the attention of the judiciary to what we believe is a case of gross misuse of the state's powers under draconian laws like the UAPA. Our history as a republic shows that, if left unchecked, such misuse causes grave injustices and endangers the civil liberties of all Indians.

Those arrested on 28th August have been accused of being implicated in acts of terrorism. However, we believe that there are two kinds of terrorism both of which create fear and undermine the foundations of our democracy:

The violent acts of those described as terrorists, who plant bombs, instigate people to be violent, engineer riots and deliberately spread fear through their acts; and the illegal or unjustified acts of state functionaries who, instead of pursuing the actual perpetrators of violence, misuse their powers to harass those who do not conform to the politics of their current masters.

When the state uses anti-terror laws without adequate proof against persons known to be working for the rights of the weaker sections of society, it is also spreading a kind of terror. Arbitrary arrests on implausible charges, like those of 28th August, are a source of anxiety for us all. They mean that the police can walk into our homes and arrest us – either without a warrant, or a warrant written in a language we don't understand – and then accuse us of activities about which we know nothing.

It has always been assumed that a genuine democracy will respect the constitutional and legal rights of every citizen, including the right to hold opinions different from – or even in opposition to – those of the government of the day. Since these arrests follow similar arrests made in June, the arrests of 28th August point to a continuing attempt to erode these rights.

Our petition was essentially an appeal to the Supreme Court to check this erosion of rights and protect the liberty and dignity of human rights

activists.

Today's judgment has provided protection to the activists for a further period of 4 weeks and has given them the liberty to seek remedy from the appropriate courts. Our stand in this case finds vindication in the dissenting opinion of J. Dr. DY Chandrachud who has categorically held that liberty cannot be sacrificed at the altar of conjecture, and that the police had been taking liberties with the truth and besmirching the reputation of the activists by doing a media trial. Under such circumstances, the police's ability to conduct a free, fair and impartial investigation is in serious doubt, as has been held by J. Dr. DY Chandrachud.

We, the Petitioners, are pleased to note that at least the liberty and dignity of the human rights activists has for the time being not been jeopardized and the Supreme Court has protected the same.

Signed, Delhi, 28th September 2018:

1. Romila Thapar
2. Devaki Jain
3. Prabhat Patnaik
4. Satish Deshpande
5. Maja Daruwala

REPEAL THE UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES PREVENTION ACT, 1967

A vengeful and duplicitous BJP Government in Maharashtra moved the Supreme Court after the Delhi High Court quashed the remand order and therefore the arrest of Gautam Navalakha. At the same time, the champions of Hindutva, Milind Ekbote and Sambhaji Bhide, against whom demonstrable evidence exists for their role in inciting the attack against Dalits at Bhim-Koregaon, continue to roam free and the FIRs against them have been closed.

In the petition filed by Romila Thapar, Prabhat Patnaik and others before the Supreme Court, against the simultaneous arrest of 5 human rights defenders on 28 August in different parts of the country, the court granted relief by extending the house arrest while specific legal remedy maybe sought. Insofar as the Supreme Court, in a 2-1 majority verdict, left the question of anecdotal and circumstantial evidence open, leaving both the union and state governments the right to use the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967 (UAPA) against those who disagree with it or oppose it, the robustly argued dissenting view of Justice D. Y. Chandrachud is a reminder that the defence of democracy cannot be left to the courts alone and involves people's struggle.

Following the victory of the Left Unity candidates in the just concluded JNU Students' Union election, the Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman charged them with identifying themselves with those who are 'waging a war against India' making it very clear that the BJP-RSS and its multiple fronts alone represents 'national' interest.

UAPA-NSA being used to Silence Dissent:

June 2017: Chandrashekhar Ravan, Sonu and Shiv Kumar of the Bhim Army, were booked under the National Security Act 1980 (NSA) for their alleged role in the 5 May 2017 alleged caste clash in Saharanpur between Dalits and the Thakurs and have only been granted bail after 14 months of incarceration.

July 2017: P. Ramesh Chander, B. Durga Prasad, Dhansari Samiah and Badri, were arrested under UAPA in Telangana.

December 2017: Mazdoor Sangathan Samiti, a registered trade union in Jharkhand, was banned and its leaders arrested.

January 2018: Shankar Gunde, Ravi Marapalle, Saidulu Singaponga, Babu Shankar and Satyanarayan Karrela, all contract workers of Reliance Energy in Mumbai and members of the Mumbai Electricity Employees' Union, were arrested under UAPA.

February 2018: Bandari Illiah was also arrested in Telengana under the UAPA.

June 2018: Sudhir Dhawale, Rona Wilson, Surendra Gadling, Shoma Sen and Mahesh Raut were arrested for their alleged involvement in the Bhima-Koregaon violence and later charged with 'planning the murder of the Prime Minister'.

July 2018: Avnunoori Narayanswami was re-arrested in Telengana under the UAPA, after having arrested and released in 2017. In addition he was charged under the Preventive Detention Act 1950.

August 2018: Thirumurugan Gandhi, who has been campaigning against land acquisition for Chennai – Salem green corridor project and the police firing in Thoothukudi, was arrested under UAPA from Bengaluru airport.

September 2018: Ashiq, Ismail, Salavuddin, Jafar Sadiq Ali, and Shamsuddin were arrested in Coimbatore under the UAPA allegedly for their involvement in a conspiracy to kill some leaders of two right wing organisations Hindu Makkal Katchi and Hindu Munnani.

28 August 2018: The Maharashtra government sought to arrest Sudha Bhardwaj from Faridabad, Gautam Navlakha from Delhi, Varavara Rao from Hyderabad, and Arun Ferreira and Vernon Gonsalves from Mumbai, who were all subsequently placed under house arrest by an order of the Supreme Court for their alleged links to the Bhima Koregaon violence and for seeking to 'overthrow the government'.

Many of these activists have been arrested previously under the UAPA, have spent years in jail and have been acquitted. The National Crime Records Bureau data that has just become available shows that only a minute number of those arrested under these provisions are ever charged. An overwhelming number of UAPA detainees are acquitted after years of incarceration. This is robust evidence that government merely uses UAPA as a means to victimise democratic dissenters.

In the meantime BJP government is allowing BJP-RSS promoted vigilantes and others to roam free.

These are only some of the innumerable cases of arrest under the UAPA, the NSA, and other such draconian laws across the country. The arrested are those who resist and those who defend them. Defending the rights of workers, dalits, muslims is viewed by the BJP government, both at the

centre and in the states, as a direct opposition to their policies of sectionalism, sectarianism and communalism and to protect the interest of capital. Anything that does not fit into the BJP-RSS scheme of things has become 'anti-national'.

Acche Din for Corporations and Vigilantes

The BJP government has in the last four years systematically tried to dismantle the existing laws that protect the rights of working people, small and marginal farmers, of dalits and adivasis, of religious minorities and of women in order to take away even their legal right to defend themselves. The BJP government has failed to create jobs, has deepened the agrarian crisis and pushed the economy into an unsustainable situation. As it has become clear that 'Acche din' is as elusive as the 'India Shining' slogan of 2004 of the BJP, there is a growing people's resistance. The BJP has no response to this resistance. Hence the BJP government is misusing its executive power to create false cases, based on fabricated evidence, against well recognised lawyers, trade unionists, writers, poets and journalists to distract us all from the failures of the government. To instil this fear in every citizen the government has unleashed the UAPA, the NSA wherever it sees any sign of dissent. The arrests under these draconian laws is not just to punish those arrested, it is as much an effort of the BJP government to create an atmosphere of fear.

Our constitution allows citizens the right to free speech and therefore the right to dissent. The right to dissent with government policy and actions has been upheld by the Supreme Court. Our country has adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and India has also ratified the International Covenant of Political Rights (ICPR). These together bind government to not just allowing the right to dissent but also bar it from using unlawful arrests to put down protests. The ICPR and, in the case of trade unions and trade unionists being falsely charged, along with the Conventions of the International Labour Organisations, the actions of the BJP government amount to a violation of Freedom of Association.

It is not a crime to defend the spirit of our own constitution. It is not a crime to resist exploitation of workers, of our natural resources, an attack on our civil and democratic rights. It is also not a crime to defend those who resist this exploitation and attack against our constitutional rights. Opposition of a government and its policies is not an 'anti-national' act – making policies that takes away the right of people to live a secure life with affordable food, healthcare, education and livelihood is 'anti-national'. The

BJP is preparing for the next general election. So must we. We must reclaim our rights, our democratic space and importantly our right to dissent and defend those unfairly charged.

* Let us unite against this Attack on our Right to Dissent.

* We demand the withdrawal of fabricated charges against those arrested under the UAPA and the NSA and the release of all those arrested under them.

* We demand the repeal the UAPA, the NSA, and other draconian laws that are used to suppress democratic rights and criminalise democratic dissent.

* We will join together to resist this attack on our democratic rights and our right to democratic dissent.

Rajiv Dimri, *General Secretary, AICCTU*

Amarjeet Kaur, *General Secretary, AITUC*

Aparna, *President, IFTU*

N Vasudevan, *President, NTUI*

October 22, 2018

Brazil

THE MAJORITY OF THE ELECTORS DID NOT VOTE FOR THE FASCIST MILLIONAIRE

“Revolution develops not in a straight ascending line, not in a continuously growing upsurge, but in zigzags, in advances and retreats, in flows and ebbs, which in the course of development steel the forces of the revolution and prepare for its final victory.” (Joseph Stalin, Works, Volume 7)

Luiz Falcão

After spending the whole election campaign fleeing debates and spreading lies through Twitter and WhatsApp, the retired captain Jair Bolsonaro – considered by the Army itself as a liar, undisciplined and a bad military man – was elected President of the Republic with 57,797,000 votes. Fernando Haddad, of the PT-PCdoB-PROS [Workers’ Party, Communist Party of Brazil, Republican Party of the Social Order] coalition, had 47,040,000 votes. As Brazil has 147 million voters, adding Haddad’s votes to those who abstained, voted null or blank, the vast majority of the Brazilian people, more than 89 million Brazilians, refused to vote for the candidate of the extreme-right.

But how could a captain with a mediocre career in the Army and the National Congress, who advocated torture, sterilization, and vasectomy instead of building popular housing, become president 33 years after the Brazilian people put an end to the fascist regime imposed by a coup in 1964? Why did the PT candidate fail to make aware 42 million electors who refused to vote for Bolsonaro?

There is no true democracy under capitalism

As we know, in a capitalist country elections are far from being democratic, because they are held under an economic system in which only a small number of very wealthy people own the major media (TV, newspapers, radio and internet), industries, shops, agricultural enterprises, farms, etc.¹

With this power, the bosses, during the election period, in addition to psychological pressure and harassment, threatened to lay off workers if the candidate they supported did not win the election. Proof of this was the video shown by Luciano Hang, owner of the Havan chain of stores, to his employees and sent to hundreds of other business owners, in which he states that if Bolsonaro is not elected, he would close his stores, leave the

country and lay off his 15,000 employees: “Are you prepared to leave Havan? ... Havan can close its doors and lay off its 15,000 employees?!?”²

If this was not enough, as the bourgeoisie is the class that appropriates the profits from the sales of the products (surplus value), owns the banks, has the state at its service and controls the money, it can use various means of financing electoral campaigns. For example, the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) is investigating the accusation that business owners made 12 million reales [about \$3.25 million US] worth of contracts with companies such as Quickmobile, Yacows, Croc Services and SMS Market to send mass messages on WhatsApp in favour of the campaign of millionaire Bolsonaro. A worker, on the other hand, has only his salary, with which he can barely pay the bills. If he is a candidate he would have to convince his brother and sister workers that his proposals are the best. For these and others, it is a mistake to overestimate bourgeois elections.

Although this is the reality, some say that even under this system, the PT won four elections for President of the Republic: Lula was elected in 2002 and re-elected in 2006, and Dilma Rousseff was elected in 2010 and re-elected in 2014. However, remember that, before winning these elections, Lula and the PT made a commitment to maintain not only the private ownership of the means of production, to protect the interests of agribusiness, foreign and financial capital and to pay the public debt.

The question again is: why did not it continue winning the elections since it made concessions to the rich classes? Or worse: why did it lose precisely to the most reactionary candidate that it faced and by a 10 million votes?

A foretold defeat?

There is, of course, not one single reason for the defeat of the PT-PCdoB slate in the 2018 elections.

The fact is that, after the accusations of corruption in the governments of Lula and Dilma came to light, the PT was unable to respond in depth to each of the allegations. In 2014, the first to be imprisoned were the black marketer Alberto Youssef, former director of supplies at Petrobras Paulo Roberto Costa and former director of Engineering and Services of Petrobras Renato Duque. Then came the arrests of and accusations against the CEOs Marcelo Odebrecht of Odebrecht, Otávio Marques de Azevedo of Andrade Gutierrez, José Aldemário Pinheiro Filho of OAS and Ricardo Pessoa of UTC/Constran [Odebrecht, Andrade Gutierrez, OAS and UTC/Constran are major Brazilian conglomerates in construction, engineering and other fields],

among others. Successive reports in the mainstream media showed how the corruption scheme in Petrobras and the diversion of money to the electoral campaigns of the PT, MDB [Brazilian Democratic Movement], PP [Progressistas] and other parties took place. With each new accusation, the PT became more defensive and lost credibility. This situation was aggravated by the plea bargain for PT campaign strategists, João Santana and Monica Santana, both of whom stated that they received a slush fund to campaign for the party. This plea bargain used to convict Lula, who preferred to give himself up, saying he trusted in the system of justice. Convicted on appeal, Lula was not allowed to run in the election and supported the election of a candidate who, in times of economic crisis, had not hesitated to lower salaries and cut social expenses.

More recently, Antonio Palocci, former Finance Minister in Lula's government and former Chief of Staff in Dilma's government, considered the intellectual author of the letter to the Brazilians, had his plea bargain accepted and widely publicized on TV, radio and newspapers, and repeated hundreds of times in the broadcast of the PSDB [Brazilian Social-Democratic Party], and, in the second round, in Bolsonaro's broadcast. In it, Palocci stated that Odebrecht's owner, Emílio Odebrecht, made a "blood pact" with President Lula at the end of 2010 that Lula would favour his company and, in return, he would receive 300 million reales [\$81 million US] for political expenses, the land where the Lula Institute would be built, besides paying 200,000 reales [\$54,000 US] for speeches by the former president.

Such accusations made the PT, a party that began by saying that it would put an end to corruption, lose the confidence of a good part of the electorate, as was clear in the electoral defeats it suffered in the main regions of the country except for the Northeast.

The economic crisis closed thousands of companies

On the other hand, by leaving the national economy under control of the capitalist monopolies and finance capital, it was only a matter of time until the economic crisis that shook the world economy beginning in 2008 would also affect Brazil. In fact, capitalism is a system that constantly produces economic crises that result in the closing of industries, mass unemployment and poverty. Well, after a few years of growth, a serious economic crisis broke out in the Brazilian economy.

When, in Dilma's second government in 2015, after campaigning against banks and bankers, and making a speech against the fiscal adjustment plan, the president appointed as Finance Minister Joaquim Levy, Bradesco's

strongman, and adopted the neoliberal adjustment plan that was so much criticized during the election, her government lost support even among the voters who elected her.

The fiscal adjustment plan of Dilma's government had disastrous consequences and deepened the crisis. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), an organ of the Federal Government, between 2013 and 2016, no fewer than 13,800 industries were closed in Brazil. In 2014 and 2015 alone, during Dilma's government, 10,500 industries were closed, resulting in thousands of workers laid off. (G1 news portal, June 21, 2018).

This is an astounding but true number, showing the whole destructiveness of crises under the capitalist system. The number of unemployed grew by 27.35% in 2015, reaching 8.59 million workers. With the increase in those searching for jobs, wages fell, and many small companies in the service sector also closed their doors. The official inflation rate was 9.28%, the purchasing power of the population declined, the GDP fell and the economy registered a 3.9% drop, domestic debt increased by more than 70% and the interest payments to bankers left the State with few resources for public and social investments.

The enormous expenses incurred by the PT governments to build stadiums for the World Soccer Cup in 2014, when society lacked health care, education and paid dearly for poor public transportation, led to increasing distrust in Dilma's government and the PT, which preferred to blame the demonstrations in June 2013 against abusive fare increases instead of facing the real causes of their political weakening.

In addition to the increase in the army of the unemployed, largely made up of young people, the middle strata also paid their share for the crisis. Those who opened small businesses saw their stores without customers, their capital going up in smoke and debts growing, as the banks celebrated the increase in their gigantic profits.

As a result, there has been a steep increase in crime and violence, something that happened slowly in the pre-crisis years. The insecurity of the people in the big cities became a cause for conversation on the street, families felt helpless watching daily assaults and killings on TV and they became receptive to a discourse that promised to put an end to criminality with greater punishment and killing of bandits. Such a discourse on protection of the family, with more public safety, gained support among the middle strata of society, but also among the working population that associated the social and economic problems of the country not with its

true cause, the economic system, but with corruption and impunity. Let us remember what G. Dimitrov wrote in his important work *The United Front*: “under cover of social demagoguery, fascism has managed to gain the following of the mass of the petty bourgeoisie that has been driven out of its course by the crisis, and even of certain sections of the most backward strata of the proletariat. These would never have supported fascism if they had understood its real class character and its true nature.”

The economic crisis, unemployment, poverty, violence and criminality are not the work of the devil but the result of the way society is organized economically. When the system is capitalist, as in Brazil, only a minority of people, the bourgeoisie can become rich and succeed in exploiting the labor power of the working class and other laboring people and using the resources of the state for their benefit. In fact, according to a report of the Swiss bank UBS released on October 26, just 42 Brazilians have a fortune of US \$176.7 thousand million, while according to the IBGE 27.6 million people are out of work.

The lack of work in developing consciousness

One should also note that the PT, during its 14 years in the Planalto Palace, in several state governments and hundreds of city halls, did not carry out any work to create consciousness among the people, it did not make clear who really profits from the growth of the capitalist economy or how damaging was the fact that finance capital dominates the state. In fact, during these 14 years, the PT, as well as the PCdoB, the social organizations and the movements that were in the leadership, sought the greatest degree of class conciliation.

A few days before the election, at a pro-Haddad act in Rio de Janeiro, the singer and songwriter Mano Brown, a member of the group Racionais MC's, made exactly this analysis: “If the people here have failed, now they will pay the price. Because communication is the soul, and if you are not speaking the language of the people, you are going to lose, right?!”

The practice of conspiracy

Even after the parliamentary coup that removed Dilma from the Presidency and enthroned Temer, the PT continued with its policy of mobilizing and then putting the break on the movement. Thus, during the height of the demonstrations against impeachment, Lula said that he would adopt the “peace and love politics of little Lula” and would assume the position of Chief of Staff. This was also the case during the general strike against the

labour and Social Security reforms, with only a one day strike, despite the full support of the workers. There was also the decision not to call a new general strike months later, against the pension reform.

Moreover, the real causes of the economic crisis were never revealed by the mass media and the revisionist and social democratic parties, as the PT now defines itself; they prefer to create illusions that it is possible to improve the people's lives even in a capitalist economy. As a result, the workers and the poor do not realize the direct relationship that exists between the economic problems experienced by society and violence, and that the same capitalist system that concentrates wealth in the hands of a few is the system that launders drug money in its banks and that the politicians who promise more repression do not intend to repress crime, but to repress the people's struggle for their rights.

Another decisive element that led the retired captain to reach the second round and be in a position to defeat Fernando Haddad was the stabbing that Bolsonaro suffered on September 6 during a campaign event in the city of Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais. Despite being surrounded by private security guards, Federal Police and his supporters, and with all his military experience, Bolsonaro achieved the feat of being the only presidential candidate ever stabbed during a campaign. Strangely, the stabbing inflicted on the retired captain an expression of pain and satisfaction. From that moment, the candidate, who only had a few seconds of TV and radio propaganda, became the candidate with the most time on all the media. There was a full day of media coverage of his surgery, his transfer by plane to Sao Paulo, making him one more victim of insecurity and violence in the country. Nothing could better serve the candidate whose main issue was public safety than to be stabbed in broad daylight. All the other candidates declared a truce for the candidate-victim and suspended their campaigns. An unprecedented situation occurred: one single candidate campaigned while the others watched his rise in public opinion polls on TV. Who would stab such a mediocre candidate? No one dared ask the question on the broadcasts of the other candidates. The man who managed, with the salary of a captain and a deputy in parliament, together with his sons, to build a fortune of 16.5 million reales [\$4.5 million US] in real estate alone, who had a ghost employee in his parliamentary office and received housing assistance, even though he owned his own apartment in Brasilia, was unassailable inside a hospital.

Unfortunately, the PT campaign spent the entire first round without unmasking Bolsonaro. It did not denounce any of his lies or what his

candidacy actually represented. The justification for such behaviour was that no one knew that Bolsonaro would go on to the second round. But this is not true. The newspaper A Verdade, in issue 209, appearing in early September, already pointed out the main enemy to be fought in the elections with the headline: “Millionaire Bolsonaro voted to do away with workers’ rights.” (See: www.averdade.org.br)

In the second round, Haddad’s campaign decided to reveal the true face of the former captain, his commitment to foreign capital, his defence of torture, and his position that was always against the rights of the workers and the poor. But there were less than 20 days left until the election, and he said nothing about the interests behind Lula’s arrest, he was silent on the accusations of corruption in the PT governments and did not make clear why the growth of unemployment in Dilma’s government had occurred. Worse, he abandoned several of the proposals he had presented, showing vacillation about what he really advocated for the country.

It was in this environment that lies like “bandits kill and are released and the cops can do nothing,” repeated by the media, turned into false truths. In fact, Brazil has the third largest prison population in the world: the total number of prisoners in the country reached 726,712 in June 2016. In 2002, the number of prisoners in Brazil was 239,345. There was a growth of almost 500,000 prisoners, so all prisons are overcrowded. In the last ten years, the Military Police of São Paulo has killed 5,000 people and those of Rio de Janeiro killed 8,000, according to the National Survey of Penitentiary Information (Infopen).

In fact, we do not have a fake news campaign only in the election campaign, but all 365 days of the year, because this is how the mass media acts to instill in the masses the view that capitalism is the best system in the world, that socialism has failed and that revolution is impossible. Precisely for this reason, we revolutionary communists, with all our energy, have rigorously published the newspaper A Verdade [The Truth] every month for 19 years. We would like it to be daily or weekly, but we have few resources and we know that in order to maintain our political independence, we have to depend on our own resources.

The worst blind

After the election results, several bourgeois commentators spread new lies: the Bolsonaro government will not be fascist because it was elected by the vote and it will respect the Constitution and democracy.

These ladies and gentlemen forget that the fascist and murderer Hitler

was also elected by a significant portion of the German people. In fact, after the profound economic crisis of 1929, in the 1930 elections the Nazi party obtained 107 seats in Parliament. In the July 1932 elections the Nazis became the largest party in the Reichstag [German Parliament] with 230 seats. A year later, with Hitler in power, the Nazi party eliminated all other parties and established the Nazi regime in Germany. Also, the makers of the 1964 coup, after deposing João Goulart, vowed to comply with the Constitution, but then they ripped it up.

It is not necessary to have master's degree in political science to understand that Bolsonaro is a fascist, and the worst kind of fascist there is: a cowardly fascist and a liar. He is a fascist because only a fascist would say that he would close the National Congress or that they can easily close the Federal Supreme Court (STF).

Bolsonaro is a fascist because only a fascist does not accept that people have the right to choose their sexuality, because he wants to impose his old and rotten morals on the whole Brazilian population. He is a fascist because only a fascist says that a woman deserves to be raped and does not accept other opinions. He is a fascist because only a fascist says what he said on October 21, a week before the election, in a video released at public acts of his supporters:

“These red fringe elements will be banished from our homeland....

“Wait. Haddad will also end up there. But not be to visit you, no. He will be at your side for a few years.

“Since you love each other so much, you're going to rot in jail. For the place of a bandit who robs the people is behind bars.

“You members of the PT are all finished. You will not stay in our homeland any longer because I will cut off all your privileges. You will not have any more NGOs to feed you sausage. It will be a cleansing such as has never been seen in the history of Brazil....

“MST [Landless Workers' Movement] bandits, MTST [Homeless Workers' Movement] bandits, your actions will be considered terrorism. You will no longer carry out terror in the countryside and cities. Either you fit in and submit to the laws or you're going to keep company with the drunkard in Curitiba.”

This is a fascist speech made by a fascist, and he will continue to be one even if he had millions of votes.

Moreover, how can one believe that there will be no attempt to impose fascism in our country if several days before the vote several courts order the police to storm universities to suppress freedom of expression, to seize

posters, leaflets and manifestoes denouncing fascism: in the UFMG [Federal University of Minas Gerais], UFRJ [Federal University of Rio de Janeiro], Ufersa (Rural Federal University of Semi-Arido), UFCG (Federal University of Campina Grande) and Uerj [State University of Rio de Janeiro]. The Police even removed the inscription “more books and less arms” from the State University of Paraíba, and public debates and lectures on fascism were banned at the Federal Universities of Grande Dourados and of Rio Grande do Sul.

If this is not fascism, then what is it? Authoritarianism? Despotism? Violence and a tendency towards authoritarian or dictatorial forms of government?

Fascism will be defeated

The fact that Bolsonaro is a fascist does not mean that all who voted for him are fascists. Of course they are not! It is necessary to separate the wheat from the chaff. As the poet Mano Brown said, many people have to be won over and this can only be done with patient work at the base.

He will not be able to impose fascism because there is a people in the way who love freedom and have always fought for it. Proof of this are the broad demonstrations held on September 29 and October 20, as well as the fact of the ballot: 89 million refused to vote for the millionaire who is against domestic workers having a formal contract.

In addition, as the banker and future Minister of the Economy Paulo Guedes has already stated, Bolsonaro wants to privatize all state-owned companies. But 67% of the Brazilian population consider that the sell-off of Brazilian companies will bring more harm than benefit to the nation. The privatization of Petrobras is rejected by 70% of Brazilians and 78% are against the participation of foreign capital in Petrobras and also in the Amazon.

Bolsonaro’s discourse that he will make the economy grow and create millions of jobs is nothing more than a fairy tale. The big bourgeoisie and their media also said that the Temer government would make the country better and it was a government a hundred times worse than Dilma’s. In fact, unemployment has reached unbearable levels, many workers’ rights have been suppressed and corruption has grown. Just one former minister of the Temer government, Geddel Vieira Lima, was caught with 50 million reais [\$13.5 US] in suitcases in an apartment in Salvador.

The lies of the retired captain that he will put an end to the bandits with violence and all his reactionary demagoguery will be exposed to the extent

that his government shows what it really is: a government that supports international and national finance capital, the capitalist monopolies and the large landowners. Its policy of national betrayal, of handing over our wealth, our territory, such as the base at Alcantara and the Amazon to the United States and other imperialist powers, will reveal him as the traitor to the homeland that he is.

This does not mean, however, that the Bolsonaro government will fall by itself. To overthrow it requires a patient and daily work of developing the consciousness of the masses, in particular of the working masses. The working class, as we know, is the main revolutionary class of society, because it is this class that produces wealth and only it can build people's power. Therefore, In order to defeat fascism, we must be much more present in factories and companies, in schools, in universities and in poor neighborhoods. Also, in this struggle against Bolsonaro's fascist government, it is fundamental to put aside all sectarianism, to defend unity in order to weaken our main enemy, who has, at the moment, more strength and relies on the whole state and means of communication in his favor.

It is true that repression will grow; it is true that there has been a change in the balance of forces in society in favour of the extreme right and the national and foreign big bourgeoisie. But, as a well-known law of physics establishes: "For every action there is always an equal and opposite reaction." The struggles of the people, of the workers and students, will therefore grow as well.

The student and combative youth will certainly take to the streets against every repressive and arbitrary act of Bolsonaro's fascist government and its plan for the destruction of public education. The poor families will continue to fight for their right to have children, to raise their children and to fight for the human right to live in dignity. The working masses, who today have a large contingent of unemployed, will demand their right to work, to live; they will fight, as they have always done, for a decent wage; they will hold assemblies and organize strikes to defeat the ferocious exploitation of the bosses. The peasants have no way out: if they want to have land to till they will also have to fight with pride against the authoritarian ravings of this government of lies.

It is not a matter of being adventurous. We have accumulated strength and have built up in the last two years, this powerful instrument that is Popular Unity without a cent from the bourgeoisie and relying on the unselfish and unlimited dedication of our militants, although this battle is not yet over and continues to demand our attention.

There is, therefore, no reason for discouragement. We are heirs of the bloodshed by Manoel Lisboa, Emmanuel Bezerra, Manoel Aleixo, of revolutionaries who did not tremble before the executioners. We are heirs of Zumbi, Iara, Olga Benario Prestes, Helenira, Tina Martins, the Mirabal sisters, Lenin, Stalin, the Red Army; we are heirs of Comandante Che Guevara, and as such we are comrades of all those who fight against injustice anywhere in the world. Our cause is the cause of the liberation of our people from centuries of suffering; it is the cause of socialism and communism; it is the cause of humanity that is struggling to destroy a system that kills almost one billion people from hunger and causes imperialist wars.

Today, we are much stronger and more organized than at any other time in our history. If we overcome the spontaneity that still exists, if we overcome the individualism that often leads us to abandon our organization, if we develop an even greater work among the people and integrate ourselves with them, the future will belong to us and victory will be ours.

A Verdade, November 2018

Translated from the Portuguese by George Gruenthal and Antonio Artuso

Endnotes:

1) Billionaire Mark Zuckerberg owns and controls the entire world network of Facebook and WhatsApp. In 2016, during the presidential elections in the United States, more than 87 million users of Facebook had their personal data leaked in order to support the campaign of Donald Trump.

2) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=BedvF5ye6w>

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ABOUT THE ELECTIONS IN BRAZIL: DID FASCISM FALL ON US?

Guido Proaño Andrade

The worst thing has happened. Brazil chose Jair Bolsonaro (PSL [Social Liberal Party]) as its new president; Fernando Haddad (PT [Workers' Party]) was ten points behind. There is concern about the implications that these results will have in that country and internationally.

In his first public presentation after his victory, Bolsonaro said he will respect the Constitution and head a democratic government. He has said this to curb the unease that his own contrary statements caused among the people. "We cannot continue to flirt with socialism, with communism, with populism and with leftist extremism," he said, so that there is no doubt about his political position on the extreme right. A few days earlier he said he would "erase these red bandits from the map," referring to his political opponents. He reaffirmed his neoliberal proposal to reduce the size of the central state and criticized the South-South politics of previous governments instead of the traditional alliance with the US and Europe.

When asked about his commitment to the rule of law, Bolsonaro gave an answer with connotations that go far beyond the meaning of words. He cited as an example the Duke of Caxias, leader of the Brazilian Army and head of the armed forces of that country in the Paraguayan War. "I am not Caxias, but I follow the example of that great Brazilian hero; we are going to pacify Brazil and under the Constitution and the laws we are going to build a great nation," he said.

Luis Alves de Lima e Silva, the Duke of Caxias, was an officer of the Empire of Brazil, commander of the Army during the War of the Triple Alliance. His father was regent of the Empire of Brazil.

In 1831 he acted to repress the disorders that were produced by the abdication of Pedro I; in 1839 he commanded the imperial troops during the revolution known as *balaiada*, initiated by the ruin that the cotton crisis caused among the population. In 1842 he crushed two new uprisings against slavery in Minas Gerais and Sao Paulo. In 1851, as commander of the Army of the South, he invaded Uruguay.

During the Paraguayan War, as commander of the occupation forces, he sent a report to Pedro II in which he stated: "How long, how many men, how many lives and how many elements and resources will we need to end

the war. To turn the Paraguayan population into smoke and dust, to kill the fetus in the womb of the mother.”

That is the example that Bolsonaro says inspires him and allows us to understand how far he could advance in his project, which does not mean that he will necessarily be able to do so.

The most reactionary right is returning to power in Brazil. It took advantage of a political scenario from which it is impossible to exclude the responsibility of the PT for what it did wrong, for what it said it would do but never did, and for what it said it never would do but did. The perspective of a radical economic-social transformation that, in general terms, the PT offered to the workers and peoples of Brazil since its emergence as a political organization and during its first administrations was fading. The people have given an answer to what they lived through in recent years; the gradual but constant abandonment by PT voters happened because of frustration and disenchantment, as we said in a previous article about these electoral results. This is a vote of punishment of the PT, a vote that shows the rejection of the main political forces of that country, but there is also a sector of the population that has voted in favour of the programme of the right, those who think that an aggressive neoliberal policy will resolve the country's serious problems and praise the anti-communist discourse of the president-elect.

There is a strengthening of the right-wing positions in the world. The electoral results of recent years in Europe show the growth of the most conservative and even fascist parties in some countries. The main thing in their discourse is the fight against immigrants, the threats of terrorism and the lack of employment; through that, they gain followers among the poor people. Gabor Vona, leader of a far-right movement in Hungary that has been gaining ground, said that as soon as possible he will eliminate universal suffrage, although that is not the general policy of all those movements.

Donald Trump won the White House with a reactionary discourse and during his term in office we can see fascistic positions. Bolsonaro praised the US president, as did Norbert Hofer of the Freedom Party and President [of the National Council] of Austria until a year ago, who cited him as one of his sources of inspiration. Despite this and other examples, we cannot state that fascism has fallen on us, which does not mean that this cannot happen.

Practically everywhere, the rhetoric of the far right uses and legitimizes backward, racist, xenophobic, hateful criteria and discourse, etc. that are already in the minds of the people. They appeal to fear and anger.

Bolsonaro exploited popular dissatisfaction to the point of anger; He convinced people that the established moral values and beliefs (family, religion) were about to die out.

Fear and anger provoke changes in the behaviour of people, their manipulation is meant to dominate their will and undermine the ability of individuals to make decisions for their freedom. They are commonly used by groups in power as instruments of control, domination and mobilization. “Many have a price and others are afraid,” said Joseph Goebbels.

Polarization and dispersion

What will happen in Brazil does not depend only on the will and desires of Bolsonaro and the group that surrounds and supports him; there is a social and political scenario that must be taken into account.

Due to the way the campaign developed, emphasis has been placed on the existing polarization, but little attention has been given to the fragmentation of forces that also exists.

Thirty parties will be represented in the Congress. The Social Liberal Party of the new president will occupy 52 seats, representing 10% of the 513 total, and has become the second bloc. The PT lost 19% of its seats, but still has 56 seats. The Brazilian Social Democracy Party [PSDB] of former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso fell from 54 to 29 legislators and the Brazilian Democratic Movement [MDB], of the current president Michel Temer, fell from 65 to 34. The Socialism and Freedom Party of Councilwoman Marielle Franco, who was recently assassinated, increased its bloc by 100% and will have ten seats.

Together all the right-wing parties that have expressed their support for Bolsonaro in one way or another would have 301 deputies, that is 59% of the total.

The Senate will have the greatest fragmentation in its history, with 21 parties present; until now, there have been 15 political formations represented. The MDB is still the largest party of the minority with 12 senators, having lost 7 seats; the PSL won 4 seats; the PT is now the fifth minority party, falling from 13 senators to 6; the PSDB lost 2 seats, leaving it with 9. Three out of every four senators who ran for re-election did not win.

This fragmentation is a major problem for the new government, because it will be forced to negotiate with various parties and movements in order to implement its proposals; this means concessions, blackmail, deferment of proposals etc. In other words, the ultra-reactionary right does not have

hegemony in Congress and that limits what it can do. It is not good for some of these parties to show that they are surrendering to a president who shows off his right-wing extremism and, from that point of view, we cannot lose sight of the fact that over time actions of the bourgeois opposition will emerge

And there will be popular resistance and opposition. The people will not sit idly by when the new government begins, for example, to apply its neoliberal program, to privatize and affect the social security system, when it carries out its labor policies that will make work precarious and limit or do away with the rights of the workers, or when they begin the process of privatization of companies and mass layoffs. The Brazilian workers, the peasantry, the youth have a great tradition of struggle, they will know how to resist and win.

Let us not assume that a shadow of darkness has already fallen over the Brazilian people; this is what the ultra-reactionary and pro-fascist sectors want, but they do not have a clear path. What we can foresee is that there will be a period of sharpening of political and social confrontation, of the unity of the popular, democratic and left forces. International solidarity will encourage the people's struggle.

Source: <http://kaosenlared.net/nos-cayo-el-fascismo-encima/>

Translated from the Spanish by George Gruenthal

TRACKING BHAGAT SINGH AND JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Amar Kant

Introduction

The contradictions between the national-revolutionaries and the national-reformists before the ‘independence’ of India are well-known. These were clearly demarcated in the resolution of the League against Imperialism in June 1931. In this there was a call for the expulsion of Nehru from the organisation for his having come out in favour of ‘Dominion Status’ for India and for having reneged on his understanding of complete independence for the country by supporting the agreement between the Viceroy and Gandhi. The Indian revolutionaries were further warned against the deceitful manoeuvres of Nehru, Subhas Bose and M.N. Roy. This same resolution lauded the memory of Bhagat Singh and his comrades who were heroic martyrs who had been murdered by British imperialism. At the same time the League Against Imperialism cautioned the national-revolutionaries that the national independence of India could not be won by the heroic acts of individual heroes but only by the conscious mass action of the workers, peasants and the revolutionary youth.¹ This reflected the Marxist position on questions of terror which distinguished between individual terror and the terror exerted by the masses and wholly opposing the former. The international communist movement over decades has had to criticise the individual terrorism of the national-revolutionaries and the communists in the sub-continent.

In his letter to Johnson in 1926 Stalin pointed out:

I think that the Communist Party of India must wage a resolute struggle against individual terrorism practiced in some left circles of Swarajists. Communist Party must constantly explain that the tactic of individual terror is deeply contrary to party policy, aimed at winning the masses. Communist Party must constantly explain that the tactics of individual terrorism hinders the development of initiative of the masses, the masses develop passivity, develop a sense of fetishism in relation to individual heroes- terrorists and, therefore, it plays into the hands of the enemies of the revolutionary movement in India. I know that at first it will be difficult to carry out such a policy. But I also know that without a struggle against the policy of terror there will be no opportunities to put the liberation movement in India into really revolutionary tracks.²

The question of the CPI and the question of terror came up during the course of the meetings of the leadership of the CPI with the CPSU (b) in 1951 in Moscow in which the programme and tactical line of the Indian communists was elaborated at the instance of the CPI. Here is what Stalin had to say on this:

If you ask us, the Russian comrades, about this, then we must say to you that amongst us the party is always trained in the spirit of negating individual terror. If our own people struggle against a landlord and he is killed in a skirmish we would not consider that to be individual terror in so far as the masses participated in the skirmish. If the party itself organises terrorist detachments in order to kill a landlord and this is done without the participation of the masses, then we always come out against this as we are against individual terror. Such active operations of individual terror when the masses are in a condition of passivity murders the spirit of the self-activity of the mass, trains the masses in the spirit of passiveness, and, moreover, the people judge matters in the following way – we cannot engage in activity, it is the heroes who will work on our behalf. Thus, there is a hero and on the other side is the crowd which is not participating in the struggle. From the point of view of the training and organisation of the activity of the masses such a view is very dangerous. In Russia there was such a party – the SRs – which had special detachments to terrorise the main ministers. We always came out against this party. This party lost any credit among the masses. We are against the theory of the hero and the crowd.³

And of course the practice of the CPI ML at its inception under the leadership of Charu Majumdar was associated with individual terrorism in the countryside and the towns. Indeed it is apparent that these traditions still continue.

Amar Kant analyses the distinctions between the national-revolutionaries and the national-reformists. At that time some of the national-revolutionaries openly described themselves as ‘terrorists’. The discussion between Chandra Shekhar Azad and Nehru are of interest as they reveal that the revolutionaries considered that terrorist methods had come to a dead end. As is known thereafter the national-revolutionaries began to orientate themselves towards the Communist Party of India.

Vijay Singh.

Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh, as he is often and rightly called, had a short life of a little more than 23 years, having been born on September 27, 1907 and, martyred on March 23, 1931. He has been honoured with the title of “Shaheed-e-Azam” (the greatest martyr). It happened without any award ceremony at a Convocation Hall or ‘Bhawan’ and there is no ‘Sannad’ or a Degree. His grateful countrymen did so spontaneously and quietly residing in their villages, towns and cities alike with humility and pride.

Nevertheless, he is generally called and written simply ‘Bhagat Singh’. Whenever he is called or written so, thereby, shearing him of his title, we feel something missing and there is a feeling of guilt of showing him disrespect. Yet he continues to be often called and endearingly written shorn of his title. But when we do so, in our consciousness, sub-consciousness and even in our unconscious mind, he, for ever, is etched as ‘SHAHEED-E-AZAM’. It is an extraordinary and unique honorific, superior to and higher than any ‘Nobel Prize’ and ‘Bharat Ratna’.

He was born in a revolutionary family, in which the spirit of sacrifice ran in their blood and bones. It was natural for Bhagat Singh to imbibe the same while he was still in his teens. While he was yet in his early youth, his life was cut short by the cruel-hearted British imperialists and, thus, his political career too could not be long. In this short but meaningful life, every day of his few years was full of valour and daring actions confronting the vicious British rulers in various ways.

Bhagat Singh soon acquired the stature of an all-time iconic revolutionary, inspiring young and old of every generation. He was praised for his courage and bravery by one and all. Mahatma Gandhi felt privileged to listen to his story of patriotism calling his courage reckless and his daring unequalled. So did Pt. JawaharLal Nehru, Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and many others, soon after he and his two comrades were executed by the inhuman colonial rulers. Here, a thought comes to one’s mind and also a question?

How and why it is Bhagat Singh alone who has been highlighted with so much praise and admiration, while there have been hundreds and thousands others who had kissed the gallows as bravely and courageously as Bhagat Singh for the cause of country’s emancipation. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru felt amazed at his popularity and wondered how a mere chit of a boy had become a guide to others and why, he asked, with a tinge of regret, even the creed of non-violence had to pay the highest tribute to Bhagat Singh. The reason, Pt. Nehru went on, at the AICC Session at Karachi held at the end of March 1931, was, his sacrifice and bravery had reached the upper limit.

But so was the sacrifice and bravery of Chandra Shekhar Azad, a legend and inspiration to his countrymen with reward on his head running into tens of thousands and gallows frowning at him throughout all his revolutionary life. And yet a terror, sending shivers down the spine of the police officials having killed a number of them and injuring many others through bomb explosions and the Viceroy miraculously escaping traveling in a train in December 1929. Betrayed by a traitor, Azad was killed in a prolonged shooting encounter with the police, seriously wounding two of them in the Alfred Park of Allahabad where Azad had gone to see one of his associates. And there have been numerous others whose bravery and sacrifice was no less than that of Bhagat Singh and Chandra Shekhar Azad. ‘Roll of Honour — Anecdotes of Indian Martyrs,’ a book in two volumes by Kali Charan Ghosh from Calcutta, gives an account, of all those valiant freedom fighters, who sacrificing their lives without a sigh, challenged the vicious British imperialists - right from the conquest of Bengal by the English in 1757.

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had attributed the popularity of Bhagat Singh to the “upper limit” of his sacrifice. How had he determined the “upper limit”? There is no measure to do so and it is difficult to quantify the “upper limit”. But if there is any such “upper limit”, then one would find many heroes such as Gopi Nath Saha, Birsa Munda etc. reaching the “upper limit” through the sacrifice of their lives at the altar of freedom. Pt Nehru, who was not only a freedom fighter, politician, statesman and the First Prime Minister of India, was also an historian having authored works like ‘Glimpses of World History’ and ‘The Discovery of India’ and his own ‘Autobiography’. He was not expected to have missed the glimpses of the role played by the Indian revolutionaries in their country’s freedom struggle, ultimately, forcing the British imperialists to think of the impossibility of continuing to rule India after the Second World War, but these ‘Glimpses’ found little space in his, a thousand pages great history book.

Whatever the “upper limit”, the sacrifice and bravery could not be the only reason of Bhagat Singh’s popularity. Getting popularity and praise was not his or other revolutionaries’ aim. How casually, calmly and lightly, the impending execution of their death sentences was being taken by them while at the same time feeling deeply concerned at the plight of so many other political prisoners rotting in jails, is apparent from the following extract of a letter of ‘Mahaatma’ Sukhdev written to Mahatma Gandhi a few days before they were executed.

“Since your compromise, (Gandhi – Irwin Pact signed on March 6, 1931)

you have called off your movement and consequently all of your prisoners have been released. But what about the revolutionary prisoners? Dozens of Ghadr Party prisoners imprisoned since 1915 are still rotting in jails inspite of having undergone the full terms. Scores of Martial Law prisoners are buried in those living tombs. And so are dozens of Babbar Akali prisoners. Deogarh, Kakori, Machhua Bazaar and Lahore Conspiracy Case, 1915 prisoners are among those numerous still locked behind bars. More than half a dozen conspiracy trials are going on at Lahore, Chittagong, Bombay, Calcutta and elsewhere. Dozens of revolutionaries are absconding and amongst them are many females. More than half a dozen prisoners are actually waiting for their execution. What about all of these people? The three Lahore Conspiracy Case condemned prisoners who have luckily come into prominence and who have acquired enormous public sympathy, do not form the bulk of the revolutionary Party. Their fate is not the only consideration before the Party. As a matter of fact, their executions (and Sukhdev was one of the three) are expected to do greater good than the commutation of their sentences". (Going through this moving letter, one's eyes become brimful)

In a first tribute to the three martyrs, immediately after their execution when he said, "now all is over", Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru began saying, "I have remained absolutely silent during their last days, lest a word of mine may injure the prospect of commutation." One would ask, "why he remained silent? And how his word demanding commutation of their death sentences would have injured the prospect of commutation? As the President of the All India Congress Party, popularly also called the "Rashtropati", (President of the Country), was it not his duty to make all-out efforts to save those precious lives while thousands of petitions signed by lakhs of people demanding commutation of death sentences were being sent to Lord Irwin, the Viceroy ? He should have been the first not only to sign such a petition but also think of other steps demanding commutation of their life- sentences. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, as the then President of the All India Congress Committee could have asked Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, for a meeting with him, for the purpose of requesting him for commuting the death sentences of the three patriots. He could have also requested Mahatma Gandhi to launch a civil disobedience movement for the commutation of their death sentences.

Then in the same short tribute, and in a feeble attempt to redeem himself for his inaction, Pt.Nehru says, "when England speaks to us and talks of settlement, there will be the corpse of Bhagat Singh between us lest we

forget.” And forget he did, this resolve of his, when within a week, he, as the main speaker at the AICC Session at Karachi, endorsed rather strongly, the Settlement, called ‘Gandhi-Irwin Pact’, ensuring its approval by the Congress delegates, thereby, exposing his own duplicity and his crocodile tears.

Mahatma Gandhi and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru must have known about the several stirring posters such as, “Beware ye Bureaucracy, J.P Saunders is dead, Lala Lajpat Rai is avenged”. “Long Live the Revolution” and “Down With Imperialism”, pasted on the walls all over Lahore just after the Saunders’ killing in 1928. ‘Red Leaflet’ - “It Takes A Loud Voice to Make the Deaf Hear”, thrown along with the two bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly on April 8, 1929 by Bhagat Singh and B.K.Dutt must have been also read by them. Further, their thrilling statements, given in the Courts extensively reported with banner headlines on the front pages in the Media and read with rapt attention by the people, beside numerous other documents must have been viewed by Mahatma Gandhi and Pt.Jawaharlal Nehru. These “actions” articulating their ideology and their aims on every available occasion, were meant to arouse the revolutionary socialist political consciousness of the people. To run away after the murder of Saunders or to escape after throwing the bombs in the Central Assembly was not their plot as clarified by Sukhdev in his well-known half - written letter. Their aim in all these “actions” was to enlighten the public and that the Saunders’ murder as well as bombs in the Assembly were “political actions” and were the result of the government’s policies and for which it (the government) was responsible. Mahatma Gandhi and Pt.Jawaharlal Nehru must have understood the significance of their “actions” as well as the inherent threat to the Congress posed by the ideology expressed by Bhagat Singh.

The valiant revolutionary fighters, who sacrificed their lives with the cry of “Long Live The Revolution” and “Down with Imperialism” on their lips, had made the lives of the British and Indian bureaucrats serving the British imperialism vulnerable and unsafe. They have been dubbed “terrorists” and “anarchists” akin to some sort of criminals. Should Bhagat Singh’s daring act of avenging Lala Lajpat Rai’s death be dubbed merely an act of terrorism? Calling it an act of terrorism, as Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru did, condemned it to be some damnable act, although the ‘act’ had vindicated the honour of the Nation as acknowledged by Pt. Nehru himself.

The bulletins of the revolutionaries received wide publicity all over the country through six column headlines on the front pages of many newspapers and spread by word of mouth throughout the country.

Soon after the first revolutionary action, another one followed on April 8, 1929. Every patriot Indian remembers the famous 'Red Leaflet' bearing the headline: 'The Hindustan Socialist Republican Army' and beginning with "LOUD EXPLOSION NECESSARY TO MAKE THE DEAF HEAR" thrown in the Central Legislative Assembly Hall after dropping the two harmless bombs. The 'action' in the Central Legislative Assembly Hall was followed by the historic statement in the Court of the Sessions Judge, New Delhi on June 6, 1929 that Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, as a General Secretary of the Congress Party had thought appropriate to publish in his 'The Congress Bulletin' acknowledging it to have received wide appreciation from the Congress rank and file. A letter of Pt. Nehru addressed to Mahatma Gandhi on the 13th of July 1929 reveals their attitude towards Bhagat Singh and his comrades. Disapproving of its publication, Mahatma Gandhi appears to have reproached Pt. Nehru for doing so. In this letter the relevant extract of which is being reproduced, Pt. Nehru apologised.

"I am sorry you disapproved of my giving Bhagat Singh and Dutt's statement in the 'Congress Bulletin'. I was myself a little doubtful as to whether I should give it but when I found that there was very general appreciation of it among Congress circles, I decided to give extracts. It was difficult, however, to pick and choose and gradually most of it went in. But I agree with you that it was somewhat out of place. I think you are mistaken in thinking that the statement was the work of their counsel. My information is that the counsel had nothing or practically nothing to do with it. He might have touched up the punctuation. I think the statement was undoubtedly a genuine thing....."

How was it out of place? Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru should have stood by it. The Congress leadership including Mahatma Gandhi should have felt proud of his statement and rather should have owned it. It was "a practical protest against the institution of the Central Legislative Assembly," [The so-called Indian Parliament]. There should have been no reason to disagree with what had been stated by Bhagat Singh and B.K.Dutt in their statement before the Sessions Court. The rank and file of the Congress had amply shown their agreement with the views expressed in the same. Pt. Nehru himself seemed to have appreciated the statement and that's why he published it in 'The Congress Bulletin'. Mahatma ji too should have approved the same. 'The Congress Party meant its rank and file, not just its leaders. 'The Congress Bulletin' represented not only the Party's ideology, programme and its activities but also the sentiments, opinions, thoughts, reactions, ideas, impressions of the people in general and Congress men in

particular.

One witnesses Bhagat Singh's phenomenal brilliance in another statement before the Lahore High Court Bench wherein he, like a legal luminary, emphasised the importance of 'motive' arguing that the 'motive of action' should be the main consideration while judging the offence of an accused.

His letter to the Punjab Governor, his last writing in which he had declared that "the state of war does exist between the Indian Nation and the British Nation and shall exist so long as the Indian toiling masses.....are being exploited by a handful of parasites – who may be purely British capitalists or mixed British and Indian or even purely Indian.

There are, of course, numerous other writings of Bhagat Singh equally important such as "An Address To The Young Political Workers"; "Why I Am An Atheist?"; His Party's [The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association] Manifesto; "The Philosophy of the Bomb", authored by Bhagat Singh and typed, got printed, published and issued by the Party's Propaganda Secretary, Bhagwati Charan Vohra in response to Gandhiji's; "The Cult of the Bomb"; Many of Bhagat Singh's writings were issued under the name of Kartar Singh and Bal Raj, fictitious names to mislead the British authorities and to prevent the documents falling into their hands.

A passage by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in his "Autobiography" [page 261-262] gives a glimpse of how poorly he thought of the revolutionaries. He called them terrorists having definitely the fascist mentality. It is being reproduced here.

"I remember a curious incident about that time (February, 1931) which gave me an insight into the mind of the terrorist group (The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association of which Chandra Shekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh were the prominent members) in India. This took place after my discharge from prison either a little before father's death or a few days after.(Pt. Motilal Nehru died on February 6, 1931). A stranger came to see me at our house and I was told that he was Chandra Shekhar Azad. I had never seen him before but I had heard of him ten years earlier when he had non-cooperated from school and gone to prison during the N.C.O.(Non-Co-operation) Movement in 1921. A boy of 15 years of age or so then, he had been flogged in prison for some breach of gaol discipline. Later he had drifted towards the terrorists (revolutionaries) and he became one of their prominent men in North India. (Chandra Shekhar Azad was the Commander-in-Chief of 'The Hindustan Socialist Republican Army'). All this I had heard vaguely and I had taken no interest in these rumours. I was surprised,

therefore, to see him. He had been induced to visit me because of the general expectation (owing to our release) that some negotiations between the Government and the Congress were likely. He wanted to know if in case of a settlement, his group of people would have any peace. Would they still be considered and treated as outlaws, hunted out from place to place with a price on their heads and the prospect of the gallows ever before them? Or was there a possibility of their being allowed to pursue peaceful vocation? He told me that as far as he was concerned as well as many of his associates, they were convinced now that purely terrorist methods were futile and did no good. He was not, however, prepared to believe that India would gain her freedom wholly by peaceful methods. He thought that sometime in the future, a violent conflict might take place, but this would not be terrorism. He ruled out terrorism as such so far as the question of Indian freedom was concerned. But then, he added, what was he to do when no chance was given to him to settle down, as he was being hounded all the time? Many of the terrorist acts that had occurred recently, according to him, were purely in self-defence.”

“I was glad to learn from Azad, and I had confirmation of this subsequently, that the belief in terrorism was dying down. As a group notion, indeed, it had practically gone, and individual and sporadic cases were probably due to some special reason, - act of reprisal or individual aberration, and not a general idea. This did not mean, of course, that the old terrorists or their new associates had become converts to non-violence, or admirers of British rule. But they did not think in terms of terrorism as they used to. Many of them, it seemed to me, have definitely the fascist mentality.”

“I tried to explain to Chandra Shekhar Azad what my philosophy of political action was and tried to convert him to my view - point. But I had no answer to his basic question: what was he to do now? Nothing was likely to happen that would bring him or his like any relief or peace. All I could suggest was that he should use his influence to prevent the occurrence of terrorist acts in the future for these could only injure the larger cause as well as his own group.”

“Two or three weeks later, while the Gandhi-Irwin talks were going on, I heard at Delhi that Chandra Shekhar Azad had been shot down and killed by the police in Allahabad. He was recognised in the day-time in a park and was surrounded by a large force of police. He tried to defend himself from behind a tree; there was quite a shooting-match and he injured one or two policemen before he was shot down.”

Pt. Nehru dubbed the revolutionaries not only as terrorists but also thought of them as fascists and, thereby, did a great injustice to the country's martyrs and revolutionary freedom fighters. Revolutionaries' actions were repeatedly called terrorist acts which according to him were countered by the creed of non-violence as stated below:

"Terrorism, inspite of occasional recrudescence, has no longer any real appeal for the youth of India", asserted Pt. Nehru. He, then, flattered himself by proudly declaring in 1936 in his 'An Autobiography':

"Fifteen years' stress on non-violence has changed the whole background in India and made the masses much more indifferent to, and even hostile to, the idea of terrorism as a method of political action."

But did Pt. Nehru realise that this "indifference of the masses and their hostility to the idea of terrorism" as a result of his and Gandhiji's preaching of non-violence, as claimed by him, had the effect of strengthening and perpetuating the British rule. Pt. Nehru had slighted the contributory role, terrorism played in bringing about revolution. Bhagat Singh had stated:

"Terrorism instills fear in the oppressors. It brings hopes of revenge and redemption to the hearts of the oppressed masses. It gives courage and self-confidence to the wavering. It shatters the spell of the superiority of the ruling class".

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had analysed the phenomenon of Bhagat Singh and his popularity in more than two pages (174-176) of his autobiography, published in 1936, well, more than five years after his (Bhagat Singh) and his two comrades-Sukhdev and Raj Guru's execution. After giving a deep thought, he reached a conclusion as follows:

"he [Bhagat Singh] did not become popular because of his act of terrorism, but because he seemed to vindicate, for the moment, the honour of Lala Lajpat Rai, and through him of the nation. He became a symbol, the act was forgotten, the symbol remained, and within a few months, each town and village of the Punjab, and to a lesser extent in the rest of northern India, resounded with his name. Innumerable songs grew up about him, and the popularity that the man achieved, was something amazing."

It goes to Bhagat Singh's credit that Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, an eminent leader of the Congress Party, had to think it necessary to discuss Bhagat Singh phenomenon in his autobiography. Pt. Nehru, must have felt compelled to do so. Bhagat Singh's popularity had been proving to be too

“amazing”, bewildering and uncomfortable to the bourgeois nationalist leadership of the country and it had to be downplayed and he did try. But could he do so?

Dr. Shalley K.Gupta had made some pertinent observations as follows:

“Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru always appeared, and it was most probably deliberate, to fluctuate between the two extremes of political ideology, the role of revolutionary action versus non-violence and the future economic basis of a free India. This was to wean away the youngmen’s mind from thinking of joining the revolutionaries by creating an impression that he [Pt. Nehru] too is a revolutionary and, thereby, prompting them to follow him. He did his best to underplay Bhagat Singh and his Party’s revolutionary role and his true Marxist ideology. Even the epic hunger-strike lasting more than 110 days by Bhagat Singh and his comrades and the country-wide upsurge against the British rule was shrewdly obliterated by Pt. Nehru in evaluating the revolutionaries”.

Should Bhagat Singh’s daring act of avenging Lala Lajpat Rai’s death and vindicating nation’s honour be dubbed an act of terrorism? Calling it an act of terrorism, as Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru did, meant it to be some damnable act. Was it not a just and revolutionary act? Again no Indian has forgotten this justified and valorous act. May be Pt. Nehru did.

Had this been the only reason of Bhagat Singh’s popularity, then Sardar Udham Singh should have been equally, if not more, popular than Bhagat Singh. He had killed Sir Michael O’ Dwyer, then Lt. Governor of Punjab, responsible for the diabolical crime of butchering hundreds of innocent young and old, women and children, in the blood-bath at Jallianwala Bagh in 1919 at Amritsar. Sardar Udham Singh too had vindicated the honour of the nation as well as of those got butchered by Sir Michael O’ Dwyer and that he did even 20 years after the massacre. There were others such as Madan Lal Dhillon who vindicated the honour of the nation. But they are almost like foot-notes in the history of the country.

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, while discussing Bhagat Singh phenomenon in his Autobiography, neither took into consideration his (Bhagat Singh) and his Party – “The Hindustan Socialist Republican Army’s” other revolutionary actions nor their revolutionary writings issued in the form of notices, leaflets, statements, articles, booklets, letters etc.

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru did not see or did not like to see the revolutionary movement in India and saw only terrorism and terrorists in various parts of the country. He swept aside all the daring “actions” and writings of Bhagat

Singh and his Party's Revolutionary Army. He remembered only the murder of Saunders, that too, as it avenged the death of Lala Lajpat Rai and vindicated his and the nation's honour, but regretfully, at the same time, labeled it 'an act of terrorism'.

Did Mahatma Gandhi or Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru or any member of their own Congress Party dare to think of avenging Lala Lajpat Rai's death and vindicate his and the nation's honour through the creed of non-violence or otherwise? Lala Lajpat Rai was one of the tallest leader not only of the country but was of the Congress Party also. Only the revolutionaries, such as Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh, Udham Singh, Madanlal Dhingra and many others, had thought of doing so putting their lives at stake and displaying a rare courage to vindicate the honour of the nation. The Congress leadership should have felt proud of them.

The revolutionaries had made a unique impact upon the masses. People were over-awed by their courage, fearless patriotic spirit and sacrifice of their lives and showered admiration of their marvelous actions. They thought of them as 'revolutionary freedom-fighters' and not 'terrorists' as Pt. Nehru and some other historians had designated them.

In his two and a half pages, probing Bhagat Singh phenomenon and his popularity, Pt. Nehru asserts another fact that, "he [Bhagat Singh] did not become popular because of an act of terrorism. Terrorists have flourished in India, off and on, for nearly thirty years, and at no time, except in the early days in Bengal, did any of them attain a fraction of that popularity which came to Bhagat Singh"... And another "fact", which is again "obvious" to him, is that can any patriot Indian forget Sukhdev's brilliant letter to Mahatma Gandhi written just a few days before his execution. This letter was written in the context of his [Gandhiji's] compromise with the British Indian Government known as 'Gandhi-Irwin Pact'. Under this compromise, Gandhiji's civil-disobedience movement prisoners were got released, Sukhdev, in his letter, a part of which already reproduced in foregone pages in this Chapter, reminds Mahatmaji of the fate of Ghadr Party, Babbar Akali and various revolutionary conspiracy cases prisoners rotting in jails. But Mahatmaji did not speak to Lord Irwin, the Viceroy about them. Nor Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Congress President ever pleaded their case.

The epic hunger-strike lasting more than 110 days by Bhagat Singh and his comrades and the mass revolutionary movement resulting in a country-wide revolutionary upsurge against the British rule created by them while locked behind the prison walls, was shrewdly obliterated by Pt. Nehru in

evaluating the revolutionaries in his more than 600 pages of his "Autobiography." Pt. Nehru observes, "and within a few months each town and village of the Punjab and to a lesser extent in the rest of northern India, resounded with his name. It was not "to a lesser extent in the rest of the northern India" as asserted by Pt. Nehru. Bhagat Singh's name, fame, daring acts and the news of how smilingly he and his comrades kissed the gallows spread in no time throughout the nook and corner of India and "was as widely known all over India and was as popular as Gandhiji." Articles, editorials, poems, in newspapers such as 'The Hindu'. 'The Deccan Chronicle' of South India, 'Amrit Bazar Patrika' of Bengal, 'Free Press Journal' of Bombay and in many other newspapers in all parts of the country, began to be published.

Pritam Singh, Professor at Oxford Brookes University, UK, in his research found that in states as different as Assam and Andhra Pradesh, there are folk songs and rural craft works celebrating Bhagat Singh's bravery.

Mr. Periyar E.V.Ramasami, then well-known and popular literary personality in the South, wrote an important article/editorial in 'KUDIARASU', on March 29, 1931. His long editorial/article began stating, "There is no one who has not condoled the death of Mr. Bhagat Singh by hanging. There is none who has not condemned the British Government of India for hanging Bhagat Singh. Besides, we now see several people known as patriots and national heroes scolding Mr. Gandhi for the happening of this event". Mr. Periyar's article has been included and published in almost every book on Bhagat Singh. 'The Modern Rationalist' thought it appropriate to publish it again in its issue as recently as in November, 2006. Reports and articles on Bhagat Singh's execution were published as far as in 'Daily Worker' in New York, USA and Berlin in Europe.

And it was Bhagat Singh and his 'The Hindustan Socialist Republican Army' and not the Congress Party led by Mahatma Gandhi and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru who made this people's "anger" and "indignation" and "national humiliation", a serious and a major issue and in practice, an act of "terrorism" on the Indian people to be avenged with "counter-terrorism" on the British imperialist rulers. They, the Congress Party and its leadership, on the other hand, condemned the revolutionaries calling them 'lunatics' and 'madmen'.

This new revolutionary development highly unnerved not only the British rulers but also the bourgeois nationalist leadership of the country. The people, however, were secretly very happy. The action and the notices of the revolutionaries were got etched in the eyes and the minds of the people and never forgotten. It was a master-stroke by the leadership of

revolutionists that reverberated among the young and the old of the Indian Nation. This could not be cherished by the Indian bourgeois nationalist leadership. Another claim proudly flaunted forth was; “Fifteen years stress on non-violence has changed the whole background in India and made masses much more indifferent to, and even hostile to the idea of terrorism as a method of political action.” This is Pt. Nehru in his “Autobiography”.

One sees grudging “glimpses” of Pt. Nehru in his conflicted views, in his “Glimpses of World History.”

“To the tiger of imperialism, there will only be fiercest opposition and today our country has to deal with that ferocious animal. It may be possible to tame the wild tiger of the forest and to charm away its native ferocity, but there is no such possibility of taming Capitalism and Imperialism when they combine and swoop down on an unhappy land”. And India is one of such unhappy lands in the World where not the tigers of the forest but tigers of Capitalism and Imperialism had been and are still swooping down upon in the 21st century since 1757. Could these tigers be got tamed with non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements and Mahatma Gandhi and Pt. Nehru’s “non-violence”? They, in the actions of the revolutionaries, saw the potentialities of the growth of a new phenomenon of revolution against the British rule. This new development started weighing heavily on the minds of the collaborationist leadership of the country as this could affect the interests of the Indian bourgeoisie and their political leadership, the Congress, adversely.

Pt. Nehru, therefore, thought of writing about Bhagat Singh phenomenon in detail eulogizing him individually and that too on the basis of avenging Lala Lajpat Rai’s death and for his bravery in sacrificing his life, excluding him from all the other revolutionary actions as well as his writings. He even ignored the formation of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, a real revolutionary socialist Party articulating the Marxist ideology. This was Pt. Nehru’s masterful stroke.

Many of the writers of the history books have toed the ideology of social democracy sanitized, sanctioned and followed by mainstream nationalist leaders including, especially, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. The role of the valiant revolutionary fighters, who, by sacrificing their own lives, had made the lives of the British and Indian bureaucrats, serving the British imperialism, vulnerable and unsafe, was usually either undervalued or deprecated, calling them terrorists. The significance of the formation of organizations such as Naujawan Bharat Sabha, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association and the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army was

ignored. Their manifestoes had never found any space in their history books. Terrorism was condemned in its totality without acknowledging its promotional role in inculcating revolutionary fervour and in bringing about revolution. In recent years as Bhagat Singh's popularity had grown all over the country, his moorat [statue] had been installed within the premises of the Parliament Complex in New Delhi. The 'moorat', however, is a feeble substitute for understanding and following his true ideology. The ideology and political views of Bhagat Singh were outlined in his numerous writings and statements which were never mentioned by Pt. Nehru. The historians, while eulogizing Bhagat Singh's bravery and sacrifice of his life, also ended up eulogizing and glorifying Pt. Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi.

The author of 'Glimpses of World History' would write about Karl Marx and Lenin devoting about nine chapters on Marxism and the Soviet Union and about hundreds of kings, queens, social reformers, philosophers and religious men but not about the countless lion-hearted revolutionaries, the Anushilan Samiti, the Ghadr Party, The Hindustan Republican Association and Bhagat Singh's The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association and their dauntless actions which shook the foundations of the British Empire, in his internationally acclaimed book of more than a thousand pages.

Endnotes:

¹ <http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv20n1/league.htm>

² <http://revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv20n2/HindMusl.htm>

³ <http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv12n2/cpi2.htm>

** This is a chapter from the book entitled 'Walking with Bhagat Singh Soon after Independence' which is to be published by Aakar Books, New Delhi.*

Correspondence

From Rajasthan, India

Dear Comrades,

I am a P.B. member of MCI (IU) and a regular reader of *Revolutionary Democracy* I have been given the responsibility to publish the Party Organ 'People's Call' and regular issues have come out. After your due permission, we have earlier also printed some articles in the paper.

I have recently received the April, 2018 issue of the *Revolutionary Democracy* and getting enriched by the articles published. I would like to express that the issue is a true teacher of the Marxism today in Indian

circumstances and draws guidelines for the People's Democratic Revolution.

Comrades, we are wishing to publish an article on Karl Marx 's centenary in our forthcoming issue. After going through the Editorial of *Revolutionary Democracy* on Karl Marx I have felt that it is most comprehensive and ideological article on the subject and time. I think that our party cadre and readers will be enriched by going through it. Therefore, you please render your permission to publish it.

With Regards

Comradely Yours
Mahendra Neh

A COMMUNIST APPROACH TO THE QUESTION OF THE RIGHT OF NATIONS TO SELF-DETERMINATION IN THE ERA OF IMPERIALISM

The Party of Labour of Iran (Toufan)

In theory:

In his analysis of the right to self-determination of nations in the era of the old colonial system, Lenin had a harsh confrontation with the national chauvinists of the Second International who defended the rule of imperialist Europe over its colonies. They saw the colonization of other nations as a natural right of their countries and were generally unwilling to recognize the right of self-determination for other nations. This right has bourgeois content, and its implication is an expression of the realization of democracy or recognition of bourgeois democracy in a country. For the communists, however, democracy is not a pure, absolute, unassailable, class-independent, or holy principle. Democracy has always had social and class content, and the approach to this concept always has to be from the point of view of class struggle. This is why the dictatorship of the proletariat is the most democratic form of rule for the majority of the population, namely the working people. Lenin, within the debates over the right to self-determination of nations, which took place at different times and stages, makes two fundamental points:

1. Lenin's first discussion in his work "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination" is about those who do not recognize this right in principle. This discussion takes place in an era when the modern nation-states were emerging and were beginning their fight for independence. In the debate on the right of nations to self-determination, which goes back to the time of the bourgeois democratic revolution, Lenin, argues that those who do not recognize this right in principle and who instead defend the interests of oppressing nations are not Social Democrats. These are colonialists and are actually anti-democratic. The recognition of this right as well as the recognition of the fact that all nations of the world must have the same rights and sincere recognition of the right of nations to secession is the demarcation line that should be drawn between democratic and socialist forces on the one hand and the anti-democratic and colonialist forces on the other hand, as well as between the interests of the oppressing and oppressed nations. However, there were also those who in principle were

not against the right of nations to self-determination but did not acknowledge the right to secession. Naturally, the recognition of the rights of nations to self-determination encompasses the recognition of the rights to secession. However, Lenin, contrary to the arguments of his opponents, has stressed that the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination does not always necessitate support for secession. Though the communists recognize these rights, they may or may not, after considering the concrete circumstances and the interests of class struggle at the time, support secession of this or that people.

Those who do not recognize the rights of nations will definitely support the principle of national domination.

This view of Lenin refers to his dispute with the leaders of the Second International before the First World War and before the great October Socialist Revolution. These leaders did not recognize the right of the colonized nations to self-determination. They did not have the view that the fate of the struggle of the proletariat in the colonizing states is tied to the fate of liberation movements in colonized countries. For this reason, Leninism created the slogan **“WORKERS AND OPPRESSED NATIONS, UNITE!”**.

2. Lenin’s second discussion is not with anti-democrats, with anti-socialists, nor with defenders of colonization in Europe. His discussion is about the conditions of secession. He draws a demarcation line with the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations. The communists support secession of a nation when it serves the interests of the class struggle and does not harm the unity and the interests of the proletariat. The communists are not allies of one side or the other in the fight between two bourgeoisies.

The communists’ support for the fight of one faction of bourgeoisie against another faction is always conditional; this fight must have a democratic content, and it must be directed against oppression.

Of the proletariat of oppressed peoples, who will be exploited as wage labour in any capitalist system, Lenin says that it makes no difference to the hired worker which faction of the bourgeois exploits him.

“In any case the hired worker will be an object of exploitation. Successful struggle against exploitation requires that the proletariat be free of nationalism, and be absolutely neutral, so to speak, in the fight for supremacy that is going on among the bourgeoisie of the various nations. If the proletariat of any one nation gives the slightest support to the privileges of its “own” national bourgeoisie, that will inevitably

rouse distrust among the proletariat of another nation; it will weaken the international class solidarity of the workers and divide them, to the delight of the bourgeoisie. Repudiation of the right to self-determination or to secession inevitably means, in practice, support for the privileges of the dominant nation.” (Lenin, Collected Work, Volume 20, “The Right of Nations to Self Determination”)

Therefore, the proletariat of the oppressing nation should recognize the right of nations to self-determination and combat national chauvinism of its nation. Accordingly, the proletariat of the oppressed nation should fight against national chauvinist forces of its own nation in order to consolidate the democratic unity of the entire proletariat and to pave the triumph of proletarian internationalism over bourgeois nationalism.

Lenin states that:

“What every bourgeoisie is out for in the national question is either privileges for its *own* nation, or exceptional advantages for it; this is called being “practical”. The proletariat is opposed to all privileges, to all exclusiveness. To demand that it should be ‘practical’ means following the lead of the bourgeoisie, falling into opportunism.

The demand for a “yes” or “no” reply to the question of secession in the case of every nation may seem a very “practical” one. In reality it is absurd; it is metaphysical in theory, while in practice it leads to subordinating the proletariat to the bourgeoisie’s policy. The bourgeoisie always places its national demands in the forefront, and does so in categorical fashion. With the proletariat, however, these demands are subordinated to the interests of the class struggle. Theoretically, you cannot say in advance whether the bourgeois-democratic revolution will end in a given nation seceding from another nation, or in its equality with the latter; *in either case*, the important thing for the proletariat is to ensure the development of its class. For the bourgeoisie it is important to hamper this development by pushing the aims of its “own” nation before those of the proletariat. That is why the proletariat confines itself, so to speak, to the negative demand for recognition of the *right* to self-determination, without giving guarantees to any nation, and without undertaking to give *anything at the expense* of another nation.” (Lenin, Collected Work, Volume 20, “The Right of Nations to Self Determination”)

“Insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, we are always, in every case, and more strongly than anyone

else, *in favour*, for we are the staunchest and the most consistent enemies of oppression. But insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for *its own* bourgeois nationalism, we stand against. We fight against the privileges and violence of the oppressor nation, and do not in any way condone strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation.”

“The bourgeois nationalism of *any* oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed *against* oppression, and it is this content that we *unconditionally* support, at the same time we strictly distinguish it from the tendency towards national exclusiveness; we fight against the tendency of the bourgeoisie.....” (*Ibid*)

Lenin makes it clear that the struggle of the oppressed nation against the oppressor nation may be assessed not only in the context of the fights in the camps of the bourgeoisie, but on the basis of the extent these struggles serve democracy and are against oppression also. This orientation helps to support the struggles of the proletariat within the oppressed nation. The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation must deepen the content of these democratic and anti-suppression struggles and extend them to the society. Otherwise, the communists, by not taking into account the interest of the proletariat in these struggles, only support the demands of the bourgeois class. This would mean that communists, as the fifth column, occupy a propagandist role for the bourgeoisie.

These points of contention on the right of nations to self determination that Lenin had with the leaders of the Second International were raised in the discussions before the First World War and before the Great Socialist October Revolution. These discussions were about the right to self-determination of the peoples in the colonies.

After the First World War, after imperialism consolidated its worldwide extensive presence, and after the victory of socialism in the Soviet Union, the old colonial system collapsed and new forms of domination and oppression of peoples emerged. Thus, the character of developments changed during this stage. Based on the new objective situation, Stalin concluded that the solution to the national question can no longer be achieved in the framework of the rivalries between the factions of the bourgeoisie within a country, and that the struggle for self determination must be carried out as a part of the whole proletarian and anti-imperialist struggle.

“Formerly, the national question was usually confined to a narrow circle of questions, concerning, primarily, “civilised” nationalities. The Irish, the Hungarians, the Poles, the Finns, the Serbs, and several other European nationalities—that was the circle of unequal peoples in whose destinies the leaders of the Second International were interested. The scores and hundreds of millions of Asiatic and African peoples who are suffering national oppression in its most savage and cruel form usually remained outside of their field of vision. They hesitated to put white and black, “civilised” and “uncivilised” on the same plane. Two or three meaningless, lukewarm resolutions, which carefully evaded the question of liberating the colonies—that was all the leaders of the Second International could boast of. Now we can say that this duplicity and half-heartedness in dealing with the national question has been brought to an end. Leninism laid bare this crying incongruity, broke down the wall between whites and blacks, between European and Asiatics, between the “civilised” and “uncivilised” slaves of imperialism, and thus linked the national question with the question of the colonies. The national question was thereby transformed from a particular and internal state problem into a general and international problem, into a world problem of emancipating the oppressed peoples in the dependent countries and colonies from the yoke of imperialism.” (Stalin, *Collected Work*, Volume 6, *Foundations of Leninism*, *On National Question*)

“Formerly, the national question was regarded from a reformist point of view, as an independent question having no connection with the general question of the power of capital, of the overthrow of imperialism, of the proletarian revolution. It was tacitly assumed that the victory of the proletariat in Europe was possible without a direct, alliance with the liberation movement in the colonies, that the national-colonial question could be solved on the quiet, “of its own accord,” off the highway of the proletarian revolution, without a revolutionary struggle against imperialism. Now we can say that anti-revolutionary point of view has been exposed. Leninism has proved, and the imperialist war and the revolution in Russia has confirmed, that the national question can be solved only in connection with and on the basis of the proletarian revolution, and that the road to victory of the revolution in the West lies through the revolutionary alliance with the liberation movement of the colonies and dependent countries against imperialism. The national question is a part of the general question of the proletarian revolution, a part of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.” (Ibid)

In response to some development, Lenin reentered the discussions on national question in July 1916:

“The various demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not an absolute, but a *small part* of the general democratic (now: general socialist) *world* movement. In individual concrete cases, the part may contradict the whole, if so, it must be rejected.” (Lenin, Collected Works, Volume 22)

In the discussion of the national question in Yugoslavia in June 1925, Stalin criticized the views of those who mistakenly thought that the national question was a competitive struggle between bourgeoisie of the different nationalities, and that in Yugoslavia this struggle is between Slovenian and Croatian bourgeoisies on the one side and Serb bourgeoisie on the other side. Stalin’s respond is:

“What is the essence of the national question today, when this question has been transformed from a local, intrastate question into a world question, a question of the struggle waged by the colonies and dependent nationalities against imperialism? The essence of the national question today lies in the struggle that the masses of the people of the colonies and dependent nationalities are waging against financial exploitation, against the political enslavement and cultural effacement of those colonies and nationalities by the imperialist bourgeoisie of the ruling nationality.” (Stalin, Collected Work, Volume 7, “The National Question Once Again”)

The point of this Stalin’s statement in fact applies to the countries in the Middle East region. For the solution of the national question in Iran, Iraq or Syria, one should not look at it from the point of view of the struggle between bourgeoisies of different within these countries; between Persian and Azeri, Kurdish and Persian, Kurdish and Arab, or between Persian and Arab bourgeoisies. In the era of imperialism, we should consider the importance of the united struggles of peoples against imperialism and Zionism. We should look for national liberation within democratic and anti-imperialist states, states in which grounds for making democratic decisions for secession as well as for unity would exist. The national question is not resolved by dissension, division and hostility between these peoples but through democratic and combative unity. The recognition of the right of nations to self-determination is for and has significance in building mutual trust and in strengthening association. We refer to Stalin’s statement about

his work “Marxism and the National Question”, written in 1912, before the October Revolution and before the First World War. Stalin considered his work as a historical approach to national question and warned the communists who still invoked this work in the era of imperialism. In the treatment of the national question in Yugoslavia in 1925, Stalin considered the fight between bourgeoisies of various nationalities of Yugoslavia insignificant but the common struggle of peoples against imperialism very important. He writes:

“Semich refers to a passage in Stalin’s pamphlet *Marxism and the National Question*, written at the end of 1912. There it says that “the national struggle under the conditions of *rising* capitalism is a struggle of the bourgeois classes among themselves.” Evidently, by this Semich is trying to suggest that his formula defining the social significance of the national movement under the present historical conditions is correct. But Stalin’s pamphlet was written before the imperialist war, when the national question was not yet regarded by Marxists as a question of world significance, when the Marxists’ fundamental demand for the right to self-determination was regarded not as part of the proletarian revolution, but as part of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. It would be ridiculous not to see that since then the international situation has radically changed, that the war, on the one hand, and the October Revolution in Russia, on the other, transformed the national question from a part of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a part of the proletarian-socialist revolution. As far back as October 1916, in his article, “The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up,”³ Lenin said that the main point of the national question, the right to self-determination, had ceased to be a part of the general democratic movement, that it had already become a component part of the general proletarian, socialist revolution.

Read the following passage from Semich’s speech in the Yugoslav Commission and judge for yourselves:

“What is the social significance of the national movement in Yugoslavia?” asks Semich, and he answers there: “Its social content is the competitive struggle between Serb capital on the one hand and Croat and Slovene capital on the other” (see Semich’s speech in the Yugoslav Commission).

There can be no doubt, of course, that the competitive struggle between

the Slovene and Croat bourgeoisie and the Serb bourgeoisie is bound to play a certain role here. But it is equally beyond doubt that a man who thinks that the social significance of the national movement lies in the competitive struggle between the bourgeoisies of the different nationalities cannot regard the national question as being, in essence, a peasant question. What is the essence of the national question today, when this question has been transformed from a local, intra-state question into a world question, a question of the struggle waged by the colonies and dependent nationalities against imperialism? The essence of the national question today lies in the struggle that the masses of the people of the colonies and dependent nationalities are waging against financial exploitation, against the political enslavement and cultural effacement of those colonies and nationalities by the imperialist bourgeoisie of the ruling nationality. What significance can the competitive struggle between the bourgeoisies of different nationalities have when the national question is presented in that way? Certainly not decisive significance, and, in certain cases, not even important significance. It is quite evident that the main point here is not that the bourgeoisie of one nationality is beating, or may beat, the bourgeoisie of another nationality in the competitive struggle, but that the imperialist group of the ruling nationality is exploiting and oppressing the bulk of the masses, above all the peasant masses, of the colonies and dependent nationalities and that, by oppressing and exploiting them, it is drawing them into the struggle against imperialism, converting them into allies of the proletarian revolution. The national question cannot be regarded as being, in essence, a peasant question if the social significance of the national movement is reduced to the competitive struggle between the bourgeoisies of different nationalities. And vice versa, the competitive struggle between the bourgeoisies of different nationalities cannot be regarded as constituting the social significance of the national movement if the national question is regarded as being, in essence, a peasant question. These two formulas cannot possibly be taken as equivalent.

I do not even mention subsequent works on the national question by Lenin and by other representatives of Russian communism. After all this, what significance can Semich's reference to the passage in Stalin's pamphlet, written in the period of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, have at the present time, when, as a consequence of the new historical situation, we have entered a new epoch, the epoch of *proletarian* revolution? It can only signify that Semich quotes outside of space and time, without reference to the living historical situation, and

thereby violates the most elementary requirements of dialectics, and ignores the fact that what is right for one historical situation may prove to be wrong in another historical situation. In my speech in the Yugoslav Commission I said that two stages must be distinguished in the presentation of the national question by the Russian Bolsheviks: the pre-October stage, when the bourgeois-democratic revolution was the issue and the national question was regarded as a part of the general democratic movement; and the October stage, when the proletarian revolution was already the issue and the national question had become a component part of the proletarian revolution. It scarcely needs proof that this distinction is of decisive significance. I am afraid that Semich still fails to understand the meaning and significance of this difference between the two stages in the presentation of the national question.

That is why I think Semich's attempt to regard the national movement as not being, in essence, a peasant question, but as a question of the competition between the bourgeoisies of different nationalities "is due to an un-der-estimation of the inherent strength of the national movement and a failure to understand the profoundly popular and profoundly revolutionary character of the national movement" (see *Bolshevik*, No. 7).

That is how the matter stands with Semich's second mistake.

It is characteristic that the same thing about this mistake of Semich's was said by Zinoviev in his speech in the Yugoslav Commission:

"Semich is wrong when he says that the peasant movement in Yugoslavia is headed by the bourgeoisie and is therefore not revolutionary" (see *Pravda*, No. 83).

Is this coincidence accidental? Of course, not!

Once again: there is no smoke without fire.

Finally, on the third question I stated that Semich makes an "attempt to treat the national question in Yugoslavia in isolation from the international situation and the probable prospects in Europe."

Is that true?

Yes, it is, for in his speech Semich did not even remotely hint at the fact that the international situation under present conditions, especially in relation to Yugoslavia, is a major factor in the solution of the national question. . The fact that the Yugoslav state itself was formed as a result of the clash between the two major imperialist coalitions, that Yugoslavia cannot escape from the big play of forces that is now going on in the surrounding imperialist states — all this remained outside of Semich's field of vision. Semich's statement that he can fully conceive of certain changes

taking place in the international situation which may cause the question of self-determination to become an urgent and practical one, must now, in the present international situation, be regarded as inadequate. ..." (Stalin, Collected Work, Volume 7, Concerning the National Question in Yugoslavia and National Question Once Again)

The study and review of these communist concepts on national question could be continued. However these quotes make it clearer that the approach to resolving the national question should be different in the era of colonial wars before the First World War and before the October Revolution and in the era of worldwide expansion of imperialism and proletarian revolution after the October 1917. The wheels of history cannot be turned back.

The view of the Party of Labour of Iran (Toufan) on the solution to the national question in Iran, Iraq, and Syria

1. The national question in Iran

Iran is a country created from various nations. After the Arabian conquest of Iran, Persians and Turks (both Azeri and other Turkish peoples) have always ruled and dominated Iran and had bloody hands in the suppression of the other nationalities in the region. Iran's economy is primarily dominated by the Azerbaijanis and Persian bourgeoisie. In Iran, national oppression manifests itself mainly in the education system and in the inequality of the use of native languages. Persian is the official language of Iran and is taught in schools and universities as well as applied in the workplace. This is an expression of national oppression in Iran, against which our Party is fighting. Along with Farsi as the common national language, we demand the recognition of equal treatment of the other languages of the Iranian nationalities for their respective regions.

The liberation path for the Kurdish people and other peoples in Iran is in their common struggle to topple the capitalist and anti-democratic Islamic Republic as the biggest obstacle to the realization of democracy and the right of nations to self-determination. The realization of the genuine equal rights of peoples in Iran is possible only in a socialist Iran, which will be a result of the struggle of the Iranian working class. This means that we must advocate and fight for the unity, under the leadership of the Party, of the peoples and the working class of Iran. For the establishment of a socialist Iran, ties and solidarity with all the revolutionary forces of Iran's nationalities are necessary. For victory in the fight against imperialism and Zionism,

which are the enemies of revolution in Iran, we must wage a common struggle and have a clear political line in order to expose their sinister intentions in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and throughout the entire region. We must advocate and strengthen the single party of the Iranian proletariat and a national trade union. The idea of establishing an independent and democratic Kurdistan without a fight against the entirety of the Islamic Republic and without solidarity with the working class and its single communist party is an absurd idea whose promoters are an accomplice to imperialist and Zionist schemes for Iran. The bourgeois national chauvinists are mistaken when they imagine they can separate their destiny from the destiny of other peoples in the country.

In 1970, at the time when the Shah as the stooge of U.S. imperialism and the gendarme of the Middle East was in power, *Toufan*, the Organ of the Marxist-Leninist Organization of Toufan, wrote under the title “On the Discussion of the National Question”:

“In today’s world, in the era of imperialism, self determination of Iran’s nationalities can be achieved only through the defeat of imperialism and its puppet in Iran. Such prevalence over reaction can be realized only through consistent, long, and unified struggles of all nations in Iran.

Any division of the combative forces of these nations, any split in their mass organizations, or any disruption in the unity of their working-class party, harms the national and anti-imperialist struggle in favor of colonization and further postpones the solution to the various problems of society including the right of nations to self determination.

We condemn the views of national-chauvinistic and fascist circles in power who attempt to deny existence of different peoples in order to deny the existence of national oppression in Iran. Their views are malicious and anti-revolutionary. We are of the opinion that the victorious national democratic revolution, under the leadership of the working class, provides the foundation for the solution to the national question on the basis of the right of nations to self-determination.”

Marxist-Leninists recognize the right of nations to self-determination. The repudiation of this right stems from bourgeois nationalism. It is obvious the “right to secede” is not the same thing as the “necessity of secession.” Marxist-Leninists, while recognize the right to secede, favor secession only when it is in the interest of the development of the proletarian revolution.

Lenin compared the “right to secession” to the “right to divorce” in a marriage. Just as accepting the right to divorce for couples does not mean breaking the family, but rather the means of consolidating it as much as

possible, the right to secede does not mean encouraging secession, but rather a means of consolidating their unity.

“The closer a democratic state system is to complete freedom to secede the less frequent and less ardent will the desire for separation be in practice, because big states afford indisputable advantages, both from the standpoint of economic progress and from that of the interests of the masses and, furthermore, these advantages increase with the growth of capitalism.” (Lenin, Collected Work, Volume 20, “The Right of Nations to Self Determination”)

In 1975, *Toufan* wrote under the title “What does the uprising of the Kurdish people in Iraq teach us?”:

“The solution of the national question in Iran necessitates the total elimination of the influence of imperialism and of social-imperialism in Iran, the elimination of internal reaction, and ending the rule of the forces that are hostile to the freedom for the Iranian nationalities and that have no regard for their right to self-determination. Only a national democratic revolution under the leadership of the working class can solve the national question in Iran once and for all. The triumph of this revolution requires the revolutionary unity of the working class of the country and national unity of their trade union organizations. Division in the party of the working class and their mass organizations on the basis of specific national characteristics will cause discord and division among the revolutionary forces and their leadership and thereby will hinder the revolution. Consequently, the national question will remain unresolved. All Iranian Marxist-Leninists, regardless of the nationality they belong to, have the duty to commit to the Leninist principles of a single party, which must assume the leadership of all national mass organizations. They must gather in this party, take guidance from it, and organize the common struggle for the victory of the national democratic revolution under the leadership of the party. This is the only path to the solution of the national question in Iran, to the liberation of nationalities from subjugation and suppression, and to development and prosperity and national dignity.”

2. The National Question of the Kurds in Iraq

As we have mentioned in the theoretical part, we do not consider the solution of the national question in Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria detached from the anti-imperialist struggles of people today. Therefore, we do not support the fights that take place among different bourgeoisies of the region; such fights are not in the service of the interests of the proletarian revolution.

Historical experience has shown that these battles have always been in the interest of imperialism and of Zionism in the region.

Iraqi Kurds have tried to secede from Iraq at a time when they have achieved their national rights in the form of autonomous Kurdistan on the basis of Iraq's Constitution. They have even recognized the Constitution. The attempt by the Iraqi Kurds to use the "right to secede", which resulted in a disgraceful defeat, was an act against the democratic unity of the Iraqi proletariat and in the service of discord and in the interest of imperialism and Zionism.

The collaboration of the leaders of the Iraqi Kurds with the Israeli Zionists has a long history and has always been against the interests of the peoples of the region including the Palestinian people. The political leaders of the Iraqi Kurds have always received and continue to receive assistance from Israel in the form of financial and military expertise to help them for their "struggle" for Independent Kurdistan. This aid is directed against the Arab and Iranian peoples. Iraqi Kurdistan has presently become a base for hidden and public activities of imperialist and Zionist agents. The support for this "independence" is a support for the Kurdish bourgeoisie who backed the U.S. economic blockade of Iraq that resulted in the deaths of nearly one million Iraqi children. The support for this "independence" is the support for those sellout Kurdish leaders who celebrated the invasion of Iraq. This so-called independence was against all peoples of the region, and it served to stir national hatred between those same people. Due to these blind national chauvinist activities, the peoples and the proletariat of the region have put under suspicion the Iraqi Kurdish leaders who act against the interest of all peoples of the region and who see them as stooges of imperialism and Zionism.

Toufan wrote in June 1970 under the title "Once Again on the National Question of the Iraqi Kurds":

"As it is known, the uprising of Iraqi Kurds under the leadership of Mustafa Barzani, from the first day and during the entire nine years, has been purely nationalistic and not a part of a national democratic revolution in Iraq. Mustafa Barzani has repeatedly said that he was ready to accept arms from anyone, whether from Russia or the United States of America, to advance the fight for Kurdish self-determination. This statement is a manifestation of a clear reformist and conciliatory approach to the national question, a manifestation of a wide gap between the Kurdish rebellion and the anti-imperialist struggle."

Mustafa Barzani did not raise a finger in the days when Abdul-Salam Arif carried out a coup and started to brutally suppress and murder the Iraqi communists and democrats. Barzani allowed Arif to consolidate his bloody dictatorship in the hope that he may get an exclusive deal for the Iraqi Kurds. He has always acted similarly with subsequent Iraqi governments.

Some time ago, the representative of the Iraqi government in Paris revealed that Mustafa Barzani had sent a congratulatory letter to Israel officials in June 1968 on the occasion of winning the war in the Israeli invasion of Arab countries. This is not an unlikely act by Mustafa Barzani as he considers the Israeli conflict with Arab people as the conflict of the national minority with the ruling nation, similar to the conflict of the Kurdish people to the Arabs in Iraq. The least we can say is that Mustafa Barzani has never allied himself with the Arab peoples in the fight against Zionists and imperialists.

At the time when a problem developed between the Shah and the Iraqi government, Mustafa Barzani turned to the Shah and, in the name of the fight for national rights, received weapons to use against the Iraqi government. This fact was often mentioned in various newspapers and was confirmed by the Shah in an interview with French Radio-Television.

When the anti-imperialist government of Abdul Karim Qasim took power in Iraq and set up a plan to nationalize the oil industry and to carry out a land reform in favor of the farmers, the Iraqi Kurds, due to their tribal, feudal, national chauvinistic, and reactionary characters resisted the plan. And when the United States of America and the United Kingdom carried out a coup against the progressive government of Qasim, the Iraqi Kurds launched an armed struggle against the government to help the coup to succeed.

The Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan sent some Kurds, including two sons of Mustafa Barzani -Masoud and Idris Barzani-, to Israel for training in military and information services. Also, Mustafa Barzani personally visited Israel in 1967 and 1972 and concluded agreements for cooperation with Zionists. Israelis provided the Kurds, in the context of military aid against the Iraqi government, the Russian-made weapons, which had been seized during the 1967 war.

The Iraqi Kurds cooperated with imperialists and Zionists during the invasion of Iraq against the legitimate and sovereign government of Saddam Hussein. Therefore, they bear responsibility for the consequences of the economic blockade and the invasion that was based on lies and fabrications

about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

When the Israeli Government and its intelligence service Mossad played a major role in the arrest in Kenya of Abdullah Ocalan, the national leader of Kurds in Turkey, and delivered him to the fascist police of Turkey, the Iraqi Kurds did not protest his kidnapping.

Clearly, Iraqi Kurdistan, with this history and such policies, would have been a basis for anti-revolutionary forces.

Obviously, an “independent” Iraqi Kurdistan, with this history and such policies, does not serve the interests of the Kurdish people, the Kurdish proletariat, or the people of the region but will instead be a base for counter-revolutionary activities. The Kurdish national chauvinists are not willing to support the rights of the Palestinian people nor condemn the occupation of Palestine by the Israeli Zionists. In fact, they acknowledge the occupation of the Palestinian people.

In the mid-1970s, the Shah gave military aids to Barzani Kurds to fight the Iraqi government, which at that time was under influence of the U.S.S.R. At that time, the Shah called the Kurds true Aryans. To achieve “the rights of Iraqi Kurds,” Barzani relied on the Shah and on U.S. imperialism. In 1975, when the Shah and Saddam Hussein signed a treaty mediated by Algeria, the Shah dropped his support for the Kurds and victimized them. The Kurdish uprising, which had relied on imperialism and its puppet the Shah, collapsed, and Barzani fled to Iran.

In July 1975, *Toufan* wrote:

“Barzani did not base his movement on the power of Kurdish masses; rather, he relied on the Shah, the enemy of the Kurdish people. The shah sided with Barzani on the surface, but he was secretly against the Kurdish movement and eventually stabbed it in the back.”

In June 1975, *Toufan* cited from the article “Kurds and Israel” published in *Newsweek* in April 07, 1975:

“One of the reasons for Israel’s anger and distrust of the United States during the recent negotiations on the Middle East is the fact that the Americans knew about the Shah’s decision to cut assistance to the “rebellious Kurds” in Iraq and hid it from Jerusalem.

Israel took over the supply of weapons, military equipment and dispatch of military advisers for the Iraqi Kurds in a trilateral agreement with the Americans and the Shah for five years. Before this time, the support for the Kurds was left to the Shah, but insufficient weapons and military equipment were sent to Iran by the Americans, so the Shah

could not provide the assistance the rebellious Kurds needed. Therefore, the American weapons and military equipment for the Kurds were delivered by Israel, of course, via Iran.”

The journal *Aftab News* wrote on April 2, 2017:

“The Kurdish leaders in Iraq still have good relations with Israel. For example, Mustafa Barzani and Jalal Talabani travelled to Israel in 2004 and have met with former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. In order to prevent the participation of the Iraqi military in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the Kurds started an extensive armed insurrection in the north of Iraq. In October 1980, Menachem Begin, the former Prime Minister of Israel, confirmed that Israel gave the Kurds humanitarian and financial assistance, as well as weapons between 1965 and 1975 (when the Shah signed the Algerian agreement with Iraq), but the fall of the Shah ended Israel’s presence in the north of Iraq. These events forced Israel and its secret service Mossad to focus their attention on the Iranian Kurds. After the occupation of Iraq by the U.S. and the U.K. in 2003, Israel could once again have a foothold in the northern Iraq, this time pursuing the goal of destabilization and harming Iran.”

In March 2012, *The London Times* reported that the Mossad has a base in Iraqi Kurdistan where it infiltrates Iran and spies on Iran’s nuclear facilities. This report has even claimed that the Israeli commandos infiltrate from Iraqi Kurdistan into various Iranian regions in which there are nuclear research facilities.

The French newspaper *Figaro* reported in January 2012 that Mossad agents give the exiled Iranians, particularly the Kurds, military and espionage training to carry out acts of sabotage in Iran. The training takes place in the Kurdish region in the north of Iraq. According to *Figaro*, part of this training is for attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities and for the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists. *Figaro* reported that this training and the presence of Mossad agents in northern Iraq are not secret and are totally known in the region.

3. The Kurdish National Question in Syria

After the Syrian Kurds gained praise after resisting attempts by the U.S., NATO, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and ISIS (Daesh) to divide Syria, they now operate as American Stooges. Like the Kurds in Iraq and Iran, the Syrian Kurds see the destiny of the fight for their national rights, not in the

combative unity with the peoples of the region and in the fights against imperialism and for socialism, but in separation from the path of the revolutionary forces. They have been looking for allies among world reactionary forces. They do not wage a united struggle with the Syrian revolutionary and democratic forces for a free, democratic, and anti-imperialist Syria, but instead take the path of secession and split from the revolutionary forces. They claim that they tactically cooperate with the U.S. forces. This means that the leadership of the Syrian Kurdish movement sees their enemies, not in the policies of the U.S., Turkey, and in the Syrian reactionaries, but in the struggle of the Syrian people for political independence and national sovereignty. They want to establish a “socialist-soviet or the like” state in a sea of reactionary states based on their powerful imagination and the myth of “temporary” assistance from the United States of America.

Does U.S. imperialism agree with the establishment of such a government in the region? Does American imperialism prefer Rojova-type socialism to the capitalist regime of Bashar al-Assad? It must be asked whether it is the left-wing of the Syrian Kurds who fool American policy-makers or they are the sly American officials who fool the Syrian Kurds using Kurdish blind chauvinism and propagation of national hatred. The U.S. imperialists, after their failure in the ISIS project, initiated a new project, the “Free Syrian Kurdistan” project as a base for the U.S. in the region. The right-wing of the Syrian Kurds, who are more frank than the self-deceptive “left” wing, state plainly that the United States is their strategic ally on which they must rely.

The German paper *Zodwetchetzeitung*, in its January 19, 2018 issue, referred to comments made by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson:

“The U.S. troops will remain in Syria for an indefinite period. They must establish security so that the severely suppressed terrorist group ISIS cannot reorganize. At the same time, the presence of U.S. troops in Syria must oppose Iran’s influence in Syria and must help bring about a process of political transition under the leadership of the United Nations in Syria. He [Tillerson] denied that they are organizing a military group with the participation of People’s Protection Units (YPG) to protect the northern borders of Syria....”

On May 31, 2017, the *Times of Israel* reported: “The United States of America has begun delivering arms shipments to the Syrian Kurds.”

This group of Syrian Kurds who are organized into “People’s Protection Units” consists of a conglomeration of Syrian Kurds and Arab “democrats,”

some of whom were in the so-called “Free Syrian Army.” In northern Syria, they are engaged in dislocating Arabs. They intend to grab a section of Iraqi Kurdistan and unify it with the Syrian Kurdistan and then extend it to the Mediterranean Sea in the service of U.S. imperialist strategy. According to a report by Al-Arabia, the United States Department of Defense has announced that Donald Trump has ordered the delivery of arms to the Kurdish forces affiliated with “Syrian Democratic Forces.”

In September 2017, Thierry Meyssan wrote in an article entitled “The Anarchist Brigades of NATO”:

“Presented in the West as the realization of a nice utopia, the brand new “Rojava” is actually a colonial state, wanted and organized in blood by Washington. This time it is to hunt people in Northern Syria and replace them with people who are not born there. To achieve this ethnic cleansing, the Pentagon and the CIA mobilized fighters in the far-left European circles. Thierry Meyssan reveals this crazy project has been in progress for a year and a half.”

<http://www.voltairenet.org/article197821.html>

This policy of U.S. imperialism is not new. In February 2016, Brett McGurk, the “anti-terror czar” of the White House, was sent by President Obama to monitor the battle of Ain al-Arab (Kobane). McGurk received an honorary award from YPG. This visit was protested by Turkish president Erdogan and made the tension between the U.S. and Turkey more vivid.

Recep Erdogan also condemned the award and made the following statement:

“He (McGurk) has traveled to Kobane and has received an award from a Kurdish general exactly at the time of Geneva negotiations. How can we trust you? Are we or the Kobane terrorists your ally?”

The separatist Syrian Kurds have already allowed the U.S. to build a huge military base and further facilitated the U.S. violation of the territorial integrity and the right to sovereignty of all the countries in the region. Such a policy is reactionary and is directed against the revolutionary movements of the region.

The solution to the Kurdish national question does not lie in an alliance with imperialist forces under the cover of “revolutionary tactics”; instead, it lies in an alliance, as a strategic policy with revolutionary and progressive forces in establishing a democratic Syria.

On Thursday March 20, 2016, in an article entitled, “After declaring autonomy, Syrian Kurds open to ties with Israel,” *The Times of Israel* reported that:

“[The Syrian Kurds] are a community of people who are willing to cooperate with Israel,’ Professor Ofra Bengio, head of the Kurdish studies program at Tel Aviv University, told *The Times of Israel* on Thursday.

Israeli Professor Ofra Bengio says Jerusalem should endorse Kurdish aspirations in war-torn Syria, which can help defeat the Islamic State. Bengio believes Israel should move quickly to give behind-the-scenes support to the nascent Syrian Kurdish polity. There have not been any pro-Israel public declarations by Kurdish Syrian leaders, Bengio said, ‘but I know some that have been to Israel behind the scenes but do not publicize it.’ The Kurdish expert said that she has made personal contacts with Syrian Kurds who would like to send the message that they are willing to have diplomatic relations. ‘This is like the Kurds of Iraq behind the scenes. Once they feel stronger, they can think about taking relations into the open,’ she said.” (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/after-declaring-autonomy-will-israel-embrace-syrias-kurds/>)

The Syrian journalist, Tamar Hussein Ibrahim, who now lives in the city of Erbil in Kurdistan of Iraq, said that neither Israel nor the Syrian Kurds should be required to hide their mutual support. He added that Israel should clearly endorse and support the ideals of the Kurds in Syria, and the Syrian political groups should clearly declare such relations. Such action is a step forward for stability and coexistence in the region.

On Wednesday, May 31, 2017, in an article titled, “As the ISIS headquarters progressed, the United States began to send weapons to Syrian Kurds,” the *Times of Israel* reported:

“The U.S., along with the advance of armed Kurdish forces (known as the ‘People’s Protection Units’) to the capital of ISIS Rakka, began delivering weapons to this group within 24 hours.”

Pentagon spokesperson *Adrian Rankin Galway* has said:

“We have begun the delivery of light military equipment and transport vehicles to the Syrian Kurdish force and Syrian Democratic Forces. The military forces of the Syrian Kurds (The People’s Protection Units) in the ‘Syrian Democratic Forces’ and the Syrian Arab militias are

already advancing, under the leadership of the U.S., in the direction of ISIS capital Rakka.”

The “Communist Party of Iran,” which is in fact a Kurdish party, in issue 365 of their political paper “Jahan e Emrooz,” (December 2017), wrote about Mr. Saleh Muslim who belongs to the left-wing of the “Democratic Unity Party-PYD”:

“He, in an Interview with ‘Washington Kurdistan Institute (WKI) ‘on September 2, 2015, has said that the United States of America is a superior power in the world which strengthens democracy everywhere in the world and strives to spread it all over the world.”

After one year of silence about his already widely-distributed and widely-read interview with the WKI, Mr. Salih Muslim has made the comment to a concerned sympathizer of the Communist Party of Iran in a private meeting: “I did not give such an interview.” Mr. Salih Muslim’s comment, if in fact he made it, has no political importance, since it is only a personal reply to a personal request. Mr. Salih Muslim is unwilling to issue an official statement denouncing WKI and exposing its lie and its imperialist connections.

Thierry Meyssan wrote in his article “The Anarchist Brigades of NATO”: “However, on October 31, 2014, one of the two co-presidents of the YPG, the Syrian branch of the PKK, Salih Muslim, participated in a secret meeting at the Élysée Palace with French President François Hollande and his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. He was promised to become head of state if he agreed to commit to recreating Kurdistan...in Syria.

Immediately, the International Coalition, which the United States had recently created against Daesh (ISIS), committed support for the YPG, providing it with money, training, weapons, and mentoring. Forgotten, then, are the imprecations against Washington, now a good ally. The Kurdish organization began to expel the inhabitants of the regions on which it had set its sights.” <http://www.voltairenet.org/article197821.html>

After Salih Muslim was arrested in Prague at the request of Turkey, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (No. 48, Tuesday February 27, 2018) wrote under the title “Erdogan hopes for extradition”:

“The political consequences of the arrest in the luxury hotel are, however, explosive; Salih Muslim, who was arrested, is ex-chairman of the Syrian

Kurdish Party PYD. Sixty-seven-year-old Muslim resigned from his post last year .He acts as a kind of foreign minister of the virtually autonomous Kurds in northern Syria. In this function, Muslim was invited to an annual secret conference in Prague, where representatives of the E.U. and the U.S. discussed security and defence policy in the Middle East and in Turkey. The government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan had received Muslim, who had studied and worked in Turkey in 2013 for talks in Ankara. Two weeks ago, however, an international arrest warrant was issued against him. When a Turkish conference participant photographed him at the hotel, Ankara notified the authorities in Prague.”

Conclusion

The Party of Labour of Iran (Toufan) is opposed to these types of “independence,” which are against all the peoples of the region, against the democratic unity of the proletariat of the region, against all democratic principles, and against democratic or socialist revolutions in the region. We are not willing to sacrifice the interests of the class struggle in the region for the hollow struggle under the title of self-determination with the help from Imperialists and Zionists. We are not going to be silent for the establishment of the Second Israel and new U.S. imperialist military bases in the region. We never recognize such a “self-determination” that serves the enemies of the proletariat and the people of the region. Furthermore, we strongly fight against such “self-determination”. We will never be enticed by hollow slogans.

The devastating effects of Kurdish national chauvinism in Iran are already evident. The Kurdish political leaders, wearing a variety of “communist” or “democratic” masks, request support and help from Israel and the United States to split Kurdistan from Iran. They have created a united front with the other secessionists in our country. They did not and are not willing to condemn the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The Iranian national chauvinist Kurds supported the Israeli-instigated referendum of Iraqi Kurdistan to secede from Iraq and have introduced Israel to the Kurds as a friend of the people of the region. No one has the right to act against the people of other nations under the cover of a fight for self-determination.

In Kurdistan of Iraq and Syria, the task of Kurdish democrats and revolutionaries is not to promote national hatred and divisions. They have to fight alongside with other Iraqi and Syrian peoples against the intervention and occupation by foreign powers, whether the U.S., Israel, Saudi Arabia, or Iran, and to secure the independence of their countries.

The struggle of people in these countries is a national, anti-imperialist, and anti-Zionist struggle, not a struggle between the Kurdish bourgeoisie and the Arab bourgeoisie. The revolutionary and communist forces must promote national solidarity for a democratic and independent Iraq and Syria and try to get the initiative and leadership of this struggle to lead the entire people. Without such a strategy, the “independence” of the Kurdish people in Iraq and Syria, would be gained at the expense of the peoples of the region.

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THE LABOUR PARTY (EMEP) CHAIRWOMAN SELMA GÜRKAN WILL BE ON TRIAL, ON OCTOBER 9, BECAUSE OF CRITICISING THE ERDOĞAN GOVERNMENT'S WAR POLICIES.

Turkish government started a military intervention in Afrin in January 2018; fanning the flames of war in Syria. This was an operation named 'Olive Branch'.

The **Labour Party (EMEP)** has always been critical of this intervention in a neighbouring country, as other democratic forces in Turkey. **EMEP** stated and ran a campaign of propaganda that this intervention will contribute to turning the region into a quagmire of war; that all military forces, primarily the imperialist forces, must withdraw from the region; that peoples of the region must determine their own futures.

However, the government defined this intervention as war and attempted to silence all those that are opposed to it. 16 members and administrators of **EMEP** had been arrested for sharing news bulletins and statements on social media; they have been freed after their first hearing.

EMEP chairwoman, **Selma Gürkan**, speaking prior to a hearing against their local representatives Neslihan Karyemez ve Bilal Karman, again criticised the Afrin operation and prosecution of members. This speech has been deemed to be "terrorist propaganda" and **Gürkan** is also being prosecuted.

Selma Gürkan said, "This is a prosecution of Turkish peoples' demand for peace and democracy".

Revolutionary Democracy from India sent a solidarity message on the case of Selma Gürkan.

"It is shocking to learn that **Selma Gurkan**, Chairperson of the **EMEP**, an internationally well-known democratic person, is being prosecuted for "terrorist propaganda."

Her "crime" is to put forward the democratic position that Turkey should stop its military intervention in Afrin, Syria which began in January 2018. It is the common understanding across the globe that Turkey and other powers should depart from Syria and permit the peoples of Syria to decide their own future.

We express our solidarity with the democratic position of **Selma Gurkan** and call upon the Turkish government to withdraw its charges.”

**THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS AND MATERIALS
may be viewed on the website of the journal at:**

**the website of the journal at:
www.revolutionarydemocracy.org**

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Links

ARE THE POPULAR FRONTS NECESSARY?

Raul Marcos

Preface

The need for Popular Fronts today in the situation of rising fascism across the planet is convincingly argued here. The original formations of the Popular Fronts which arose in France and Spain after the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935 were prompted by the victory of Nazism in Germany in 1933. The Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928 had envisaged a period of revolutionary advance to the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet power. The balance of forces in the world changed with victories of fascism in Germany, Italy and Japan. From the offensive the international communist movement now orientated itself to the defensive (whilst envisaging advances in the future). Stalin and Dimitrov were instrumental in making this transformation before the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. Stalin later indicated to Thorez that the French communists through their united front with the socialists against fascism had shown the way forward. In Spain Jose Diaz played a pivotal role in forging the popular front against Franco and fascism. The popular fronts required the broadest possible unity against fascism and so incorporated the middle classes, the small property owners and their political parties. The correlation of class forces at the time did not permit victories of the democratic forces in France and Spain before the Second World War. The popular fronts did however provide a fund of political experiences which were utilised around the world. The anti-fascist fronts and the new democracies established in central and east Europe after the war drew from this political practice. Jose Diaz in 1937 argued for the establishment of a new type of democratic parliamentary republic in which the economic foundations of the financial oligarchy, the bankers, the manufacturers, the semi-feudal classes and power of the Church were destroyed. Historians of the people's democracies have traced their origins to Jose Diaz and the struggle for a Spanish revolutionary democratic republic. With the rapidly expanding and rising fascistisation of the Indian state the experiences of the fascistised countries of the medium level capitalist development in the interwar eastern European and the Iberian states, where semi-feudalism and clerical fascism were pronounced are of particular value. The widest possible united front from below and above

in society and in the electoral field are a categorical political imperative in contemporary India if the process of fascisation is to be halted and beaten back. The experience of Germany around 1931 reveals that it is necessary to fight the ultra-left errors, a subjective reflex of right-opportunist practices, of proclaiming the coming to power of fascism before the actual establishment of a terrorist dictatorship which violently liquidates the system of parliamentary democracy. In India the five decades-long history of individual terrorism, which denies the differences between the major bourgeois-landlord political parties, and negates the necessity of revolutionary parliamentarism of the Leninist type forms the background to this. The German communists around Ernst Thaelmann were compelled to battle the erroneous theory and practice of ultra-leftism on the question of differentiating between fascism and fascisation. In current conditions there are many lessons also to be learnt from Dimitrov and Jose Diaz on the popular and united front against fascism.

Vijay Singh

Are the Popular Fronts Necessary? The answer is a resounding YES. They are necessary and indispensable given the condition of oppression and exploitation that are worsening, and which the people are suffering. The proletariat, with its party at the forefront, should be at the head of the popular masses, to organize and lead its struggles. It is not an easy task, but all difficulties can be overcome. For that to be, it is necessary to work to link up in a broad manner with the advanced masses, win their recognition.

The fundamental contradictions of the period in which we live and struggle, are perfectly defined: *The contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie; the contradiction between capitalism and socialism; the contradiction between oppressed peoples and nations on the one hand and imperialism on the other; the contradiction among imperialist and financial powers.* The last contradiction manifests itself in the local wars, the aggressions against the peoples, the disputes for geostrategic zones and the exploitation of the neo-colonies, the manipulation of the democratic and patriotic sentiments of the peoples. It is a rapidly growing contradiction.

We live in the period which Lenin defined, but with new characteristics and forms. Presently, we see the expression of a tendency towards fascism as organized groups of neo-Nazis carry out actions in various countries, and this should concern us. In many cases they are protected by the

governments (such is the case in Greece, Hungary, Spain, etc.). Power and state apparatus, with some exceptions, are in the hands of parties and governments which are reactionary and anti-popular. The big powers and their puppet governments speak of democracy, of human rights, of peace among the people... while they are savagely subjugating and exploiting the people who are oppressed, in many cases through force of arms.

This is a general situation, not in every country: in different degrees and different forms and intensity; it is a general tendency. The communist parties must daily confront situations of repression, of struggles for social conquests, against laws which encroach and suppress labour and social rights which had been achieved through many decades of struggle.

In his report to the VII Congress of the Communist International (1935), and with a similar situation at hand, Dimitrov focused on the importance of creating popular fronts against the conditions which arose with the growth of Nazi- fascism (Italy, Germany, Portugal, Japan...). Despite the years which have passed and the events that have taken place, the report is still very relevant and can serve as a general orientation to parties. It is evident that the present circumstances are not the same as the 1930s. The context in which we live is very different from that period, and it is enough to recall the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, the opportunist degeneration of many of the parties then, and that today, with some rare exceptions, Marxist-Leninist parties are very weak, without much influence upon the broad masses.

The importance of Dimitrov's writing is undeniable, yet we should keep in mind that the international situation is not the same, although there are problems of a similar nature (which are reflected in the fundamental contradictions), and it is also necessary to act according to the particular circumstances of each country and party. The work of a front cannot be carried out in the same manner in every country, since we have to take into consideration the inevitable unequal development of the political forces as well as the Party and of society itself. Its undeniable that we cannot compare the situation which Ecuador is living under (in all of the aspects pointed out) with that of Germany. For example, in Spain, Denmark, Turkey, Morocco, France, Venezuela, etc. etc., there are different conditions and therefore, tactically there will be differences, secondary differences, but in the end differences.

Defending the importance and the present aspects of Dimitrov's speech should not lead us to apply every detail of each and every aspect which his text considers. To study, analyze and discuss the writings of great communist

leaders, and Dimitrov is one of them, should not lead us to convert them into catechism, infallible doctrines, something which is opposed to the Marxist Leninist dialectic.

Each of our parties should consider these questions. There are no prefabricated answers. Only the dialectical examination, that is of the moment which can change from one day to the other, without separating ourselves from tomorrow's strategy, the course of which cannot be predicted nor defined, will allow us to assume tactical positions and measures to confront and attempt to solve the problems.

The Important thing is to keep in mind at all times the reality in which our parties live and evolve, work and struggle. Therefore, we must keep in mind a decisive fact: In almost all countries, with different levels of development, the working class is the most revolutionary and its advanced members are at the head of the struggles for justice. But the working class is not the only class exploited by capitalism. There are sectors of the small and middle bourgeoisie which also suffer oppression. And although its mentality is not that of the conscious proletariat, we should take into consideration those sectors and try to get closer to them. We should keep in mind that if the working class and its party do not try to unite the other working classes, including certain patriotic and democratic sectors of the middle classes, these could be manipulated by some faction of the bourgeoisie. Undoubtedly, the working class must win over, in the ideological and political combat, the role of vanguard of all those exploited and oppressed sectors and defend their demands.

This could be the basis for forging tactical, momentary alliances. But we should not confuse or counterpoise those *tactical* alliances of a given moment, to the *strategic* alliances. That is, we do not subject establishing strategic alliances to questions of the moment, circumstantial, but neither do we subject *tactical* alliances to the establishment of possible *strategic* alliances, so long as this does not imply the abandonment of essential questions. To be more clear: we should be vigilant so as not to confuse tactical, partial, or momentary alliances, in many cases local or of a city, region or province, including agreements with special sectors, but which cannot include the most advanced general sectors.

The Popular Front should respond to the general needs of the struggle, to political questions which are proposed, and above all, to mobilize the advanced masses to incorporate them into action.

The working class, theoretically the proletariat, should be the principal force of the Popular Front. *It means that in practice it should also be the*

leading force. We should keep in mind that theory without practice is just empty words, and that practice without theory is like blindly striking blows.

Given the broad political nature of the forces which become part of the Front, the Party should strive to be at the head, be the leader (in relative terms depending on the circumstances) so that the proletariat can exercise its influence as the main force. That leading role is not achieved by force of will or by a decree, it must be won by the daily practice, by the clarity of our political proposals, with the respectful and faithful application of agreements.

If the party does not fulfil that role, in the long run it will be left behind the petty bourgeoisie and that would be a grave error. Here we should keep in mind the "law of unity and struggle of opposites".

This leads us to the question of the *ideological independence* of the Party. A Popular Front, built upon minimum agreements (depending on the circumstances), cannot assume all our proposals. But that should not lead us to renounce our political and ideological positions. Within the framework of the tasks of the Front, communists are, and will be, very careful at the time of meeting our agreements even if these are not exactly what we would have preferred.

The policy of unity in any alliance, and also in the Popular Front, should not lead us to forget the class struggle. In fact, the alliances, agreements or tactical compromises with other political forces should help us to reinforce the strength of the Party and not the other way around. That is not always understood, so that if the Party, communists, become diluted as a result of some alliance, that would result in a grave weakening and possibly the disappearance of the Party.

With much ability and tact, and without prepotency or strange manoeuvres, the Party should, as Lenin affirmed, lead everything. This forces us to carry out a clear work which is sincere with the forces which make up the Front, to respect and meet the agreed-upon commitments and programmes, but without forgetting:

"...only the political party of the working class, that is, the Communist Party, is capable of uniting, training and organizing a vanguard of the proletariat and the whole mass of the working people that will alone be capable of withstanding the *inevitable petty-bourgeois vacillations of this mass.*" (*Lenin, Preliminary Draft Resolution of the Tenth Congress of the R.C.P. Our emphasis.*)

We should be with the advanced masses, becoming more and better, mobilize in the heart of the Popular Front and in all the fronts created which

include the masses. That requires overcoming the relative weakness of the parties (without forgetting the inevitability of unequal development), since without a strong party we can do very little; and It is also necessary to be conscious of the fact that regardless of how big and powerful a Party may be, we will always be a minority in society:

“...We Communists are but a drop in the ocean, a drop in the ocean of the people”, but “without a party of the proletariat we cannot even consider the defeat of imperialism, the conquest of the dictatorship of proletariat...” and also the Party “is the vanguard of a class and its duty is to guide the masses, and not to reflect the average mental state of the masses” Lenin affirmed sharply.

For communists it is a priority to carry out a constant and face-to-face work among the masses. But this must be well planned and we should not speak of the masses in a superficial way, without being precise: we should communicate with the advanced masses and keep in mind that there are various levels of understanding among them regarding the struggle. Dimitrov said that “*Sectarianism finds expression particularly in overestimating the revolutionisation of the masses...*” and he quoted Lenin, “...we must not regard that which is obsolete for us as obsolete for the class, as obsolete for the masses.”

Lenin, like Stalin, Dimitrov, the great leaders, was constantly concerned about the work towards the masses. Lenin specified and warned:

“There is nothing more warranted than the urging of attention to the constant, imperative necessity of deepening and broadening, broadening and deepening, our influence on the masses, our strictly Marxist propaganda and agitation, our ever-closer connection with the economic struggle of the working class, etc. Yet, because such urging is at all times warranted, under all conditions and in all situations, it must not be turned into special slogans, nor should it justify attempts to build upon it a special trend in Social- Democracy. A border-line exists here; to exceed the bounds is to turn this indisputably legitimate urging into a narrowing of the aims and the scope of the movement, into a doctrinaire blindness to the vital and cardinal political tasks of the moment.

“But for the very reason that the work of intensifying and broadening our influence on the masses is always necessary, after each victory as after each defeat, in times of political quiescence as in the stormiest periods of revolution, we should not turn the emphasis upon this work into a special slogan or build upon it any special trend if we do not wish to court the risk of descending to demagoguery and degrading the aims of the advanced and

only truly revolutionary class.” (*On Confounding Politics with Pedagogics. 1905*)

To overestimate the role of the masses is as dangerous as to underestimate it, since both errors misrepresent the role of the Communist Party. This also has to do with the Popular Front since its work is oriented precisely towards the popular masses. One of the conditions for considering an alliance as a Popular Front is that it include, as a minimum, sectors of the exploited and oppressed classes whether they are organized or not organized.

It is necessary to pay attention, so as not to confuse, in all our activity, the Leninist Communist Party, leader of the proletariat, of the advanced sectors of the working class, with the “mass party” which is amorphous and includes the revisionists and right-wingers of every type. There exists a demarcation line which must not be underestimated. For communists, what we define as “mass line” is to implement outside of the Party our politics and proposals in a manner which is decisive and capable. We should not limit ourselves just to our own members and close friends.

It is important to have a clear understanding of the lines of demarcation between Marxist-Leninists and opportunists, Khrushchevites, Maoists, including those who preach socialism of the 21st century. Does this mean that we should not have agreements, compromises, and unity pacts with all those who do not share our principles? Clearly, not! If we only unite with those who share our ideas and principles, we would not be talking about alliances, of popular fronts, etc. We would only be talking of unity with communists. And that is a different problem.

Presently, many of our parties have a problem which is a history of weak organizing, which is trying to fulfill the role of leaders. This is not achieved through decrees; there are no magic formulas. That will be achieved, depending upon the circumstances, through our work and dedication. Alliances are proposed to us, tactical agreements, etc. with other political forces or groups. We are not in a situation in which we can impose our position. However, we should not refuse the offer because of that. On the contrary, we should participate loyally in the discussions, present our political proposals; we should discuss and confront opinions and little by little go about winning political and ideological space.

A very simple question, but which we do not always keep in mind, is that alliances of broad fronts are not meant to last forever. They must be seen as developing; there are no static alliances; what today we propose and approve as just and valid, can stop being so in another moment.

The Popular Front is created depending upon the circumstances and we do not create circumstances; we find ourselves in them and we must assume them always keeping in mind the evolution of these circumstances, and as Dimitrov warns with a great deal of reason: "...it is particularly dangerous to confuse the wish with the fact. We must base ourselves on the facts, on the actual concrete situation."

The Popular Front is an important task which must be considered under all circumstances in which the political struggle is developing; it is not an option, it is a necessary task. To promote it and to advance in completing that task, the revolutionary party of the proletariat must elaborate a correct revolutionary policy which takes into consideration concrete conditions and always keeping in mind the strategic objectives. The application of that policy depends not only on its correctness, but also on the potential of the Party, of its forces. A just and correct revolutionary policy can remain as a proposal if there is not a firm decision to carry it out with the advanced sectors of the masses.

The experience of the International Communist Movement leads us to seriously consider the danger of deviations which can occur. Generally, the existing opportunism has been, and is, of the right. But we cannot forget that there is also an opportunism of the left; both are particularly harmful to the work of a broad front. It is convenient to remember Marx's warning in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*: "*no bargaining about principles,*"

Right-wing opportunism tends to appear with the following expressions or characteristics: make concessions of principles in order to make allies; reduce the level of the struggle for fear of the enemy; lag behind the level of consciousness of the masses instead of going in front of them; exaggerate the importance of national or regional peculiarities without taking into account the general principles; and liberalism in matters of organization, of which the most dangerous is to *hide the Party* as if it did not exist. We should always keep Lenin in mind: "*enter into agreements to satisfy the practical aims of the movement, but do not allow any bargaining over principle.*" (*What Is To Be Done?*)

Opportunism of the left has the following main characteristics: the false criteria of all or nothing; not knowing how to make the needed concessions and the useful compromises for the development of work; not knowing how to adapt Marxism-Leninism to the particular conditions of the reality in which we live, allowing us to be influenced by the experiences of others, which leads to not knowing how to adapt or to making mistakes about the level and forms of the struggle and the objective conditions of the masses;

in adopting rigid criteria in matters of organizing.

In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx criticized opportunism. To quote the young Marx: “*Et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas*”, in other words, “And for the sake of life to lose the reasons for living.”

Let’s not forget this old lesson.

Note: Raul Marcos is a leader of the Communist Party of Spain (Marxist-Leninist.

LETTER OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF
THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE RCP
(B.), I. V. STALIN, TO THE SECRETARY OF
THE TSARITSYN PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE
OF THE RCP (B), B. P. SHEBOLDAEV

(January 25, 1925)

SECRETARY OF THE TSARITSYN GUBKOM

Comrade Sheboldaev.

I have learned that some people want Tsaritsyn to be renamed Stalingrad. I have also learned that Minin is seeking to have it renamed Miningrad. I also know that you have postponed the Congress of Soviets because of my absence, and you are thinking of performing the renaming procedure in my presence. All this creates an awkward situation for you, and especially for me. I beg you to keep in mind that:

- 1) I did not seek and do not seek the renaming of Tsaritsyn to Stalingrad;
- 2) This matter was begun without me and apart from me;
- 3) If it is necessary to rename Tsaritsyn, call it Miningrad or something else;

- 4) If you've made too much noise about Stalingrad and now it's difficult for you to abandon the case, do not drag me into this business and do not demand my presence at the Congress of Soviets, otherwise you may get the impression that I am seeking the renaming;

- 5) Believe me, comrade, that I do not seek either fame, or honour, and would not want the opposite impression to be created.

With communist greetings,

I. Stalin

Istochnik, 3, 2003, pp. 54-5,

RGASPI. F.558, Op.11., D. 831., L. 44. Typed, Facsimile Signature.

Courtesy: Jochen Hellbeck, <https://www.greanvillepost.com/2018/10/08/facing-stalingrad/>

RESULTS OF THE YOUTH CONFERENCE OF SOUTH-EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES

N. Mikhailov

All-Union Leninist Young Communist League
Central Committee
March 22, 1948

For the Secretaries of All-Union Communist Party (b)
Comrade Zhdanov A.A.
Comrade Kuznetsov A.A.
Comrade Suslov M.A.
Comrade Popov G.M.

Preface

The Youth Conference of Southeast Asian countries was held in Calcutta in February 1948. It was jointly organised by the World Federation of Democratic Youth and the International Union of Students. The former organisation had its headquarters in Budapest and the latter in Paris. It must be said that very little is known about the conference. From the memoir of the late Ashok Mitra who attended it we learn about the pivotal role in the conference of Ketayun Boomla (Kitty Boomla, later Kitty Menon) and Carmel Brinkman (later Carmel Budiarto) who were based at that time in England. (Kitty Menon was to be active in the Indian communist movement whilst Carmel Brinkman was to devote her life to the Indonesian communist movement). ('Kitty Boomla, The South-East Asia Youth Conference: Memories', Social Scientist, July-August 2012, pp. 3-12). The document presented here is perhaps the most detailed account we now have of the conference. As is known after the 20th Congress of the CPSU the attitude of the reformist sections of the communist movement regarding Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose swiftly changed. This account as that of Ashok Mitra gives a picture of the divisions of the conference on its penultimate day on the question of Bose. It was not just the Soviet delegates who were critical of the role of Bose, who was regarded as have been close to Hitler and Tojo. The delegates from China, Vietnam, Malaya and Indonesia who were aware of the links of Netaji with Japanese fascism and could not be blind to the brutal genocidal

history of the Japanese and their local collaborators to the people in their own countries demurred from giving support to positive references to Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army as demanded by a minority section of the Indian delegation headed by Aurobindo Bose, the nephew of Netaji. This contretemps led to violence in which two artists of IPTA were to be killed. The events of the Youth Conference of Southeast Asian countries, as Ashok Mitra pointed out, became blotted out of the historical record. This account by the Komsomol Secretary may help to set this omission right. Nikolai Aleksandrovich Mikhailov (1906-1982) was a member of the Orgburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) between 1932 and 1952. In 1938-1939 he was the responsible editor of the Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper and between 1938 and 1952 he was the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League. (Yu.V. Goryachev: Central”nyye Komitet 1917-1991, Istoriko-biograficheskiye spravochnik, ZAO”Parad”, Moskva, 2005, ctr. 301).

Vijay Singh.

We are reporting to you on the results of the work of the Youth Conference of Southeast Asian countries.

The conference was held in Calcutta, India, from 19 to 26 February 1948. It was attended by 93 people, representing various democratic youth organizations in 25 countries.

Representatives of youth organizations attended the conference: 18 delegates from India, Pakistan - 9 delegates, Burma - 7 delegates, Malaya - 1 delegate, Indonesia - 5 delegates, Vietnam - 6 delegates, Ceylon - 1 delegate, Philippines - 2 delegates, China - 7 delegates. There were 56 delegates total with the right to vote.

Representatives of youth organizations attended the conference as observers: Nepal - 1, Australia - 1, North Korea - 4, Mongolian People's Republic - 3, Kazakhstan - 1, Uzbekistan - 1, Kyrgyzstan - 1, Azerbaijan - 1, Tajikistan - 1, Turkmenistan - 1. There were 15 observers in total.

Representatives of youth organizations took part in the conference as guests: USSR - 3, Canada - 1, England - 1, France - 1, Yugoslavia - 1, Czechoslovakia - 1, India - 1, Pakistan - 13. There were 22 guests in total.

The All-Indian Student Congress refused to attend the conference and only sent a guest of a certain Meimang. The head of the Congress of Burma, explained his refusal by saying that, supposedly, the delegation from India was elected in an undemocratic way.

The Conference approved the following order of the day, proposed by the Preparatory Committee of the World Federation of Democratic Youth and the International Union of Students:

(1) The struggle of the youth of Southeast Asian countries against imperialism, for national independence and freedom, peace and democracy. Reports of the Vietnamese and Chinese delegations.

(2) The situation and needs of the youth of Southeast Asia struggling against imperialism. Reports of the Indian, Pakistani, Malay and Burmese delegations.

(3) The tasks of strengthening the unity of the youth movement within countries and developing connections with democratic youth throughout the world through the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) and the International Union of Students (IUS). The reporter was the representative of WFDY Vidya Kanuga.

The conference opened on February 19, 1948, with the welcome speech of the Mayor of Calcutta in the presence of 9,000 young people. After the announcement of the welcome telegrams from WFDY and IUS, reports on the first issue of the day were given. Reports on the second and third issues of the agenda were also read out in plenary sessions, in the presence of eight to nine thousand young people. The announcements and discussions about the main reports (1) - (3) were held in the presence of delegates, observers, and guests - representatives of youth organizations of foreign countries.

Representatives of the student organizations of Ceylon, the trade union youth of India, the socialist and communist youth of Burma, the League of Democratic Youth of Vietnam, the All-India Trade Union Federation, the youth section of the Nepalese National Congress, the Student Congress of Pakistan, the All-Indian Student Federation (Pakistani organization), the Muslim Student Federation of Pakistan, the democratic youth of the League of Pakistan.

All speeches were of a militant anti-imperialist character. The speakers spoke of the treacherous character of the national bourgeoisie which entered into a deal with Anglo-American, French and Dutch imperialism. The majority of presenters spoke about the work of democratic youth organizations and presented data characterizing the growth of democratic youth organizations in the countries of Southeast Asia.

The head of the Soviet delegation, Comrade Kharlamov, greeted the conference at the second meeting in the presence of 9,000 young people.

His words about the Soviet Union and Comrade Stalin were greeted with a stormy ovation, with numerous exclamations in honour of the Soviet people and Comrade Stalin.

Youth representatives of the trade unions of Pakistan, the youth of the Nepalese national congress, the Burmese student league, the women's youth of Pakistan, the peasant union of India, the student federation of Pakistan, the socialist youth of India, and the youth of the Revolutionary Communist Party of India took part in the discussion of the second point on the agenda.

The speakers talked about the hard disenfranchised position of working, peasant, and student youth. The delegates from India and Indonesia told us how women's and children's labour is widely exploited at enterprises in the presence of a huge army of unemployed men. At many enterprises, children as young as six to eight years old are employed. Young people are deprived of the opportunity to receive basic medical care. The majority of workers and peasants (over 90%) do not have the opportunity to attend any school and thusly remain illiterate.

The participants listened, with great attention, to the speeches of representatives of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan who spoke in detail about the life of the youth of the Central Asian Soviet republics.

The third question on the agenda was addressed by the representative of the youth league "Eureka" (Australia), Revolutionary Union of Youth (Mongolian People's Republic), the student organization of Canada, the People's Youth of Yugoslavia, the Democratic Union of Youth of North Korea.

Despite the fact that the discussion of reports on all issues was held in an atmosphere of mutual understanding, an acute struggle developed in the commissions for the drafting of resolutions. The representative of the student congress of eastern Pakistan, Girah Jalinden, proposed that the resolution on the first issue should mention the merits of the "leader of the Indian national liberation movement" Subhas Chandra Bose in the struggle against imperialism. This proposal caused a sharp protest from the participants of the conference. The delegates of Vietnam, Indonesia, Burma, China, as well as the representative of the democratic student's league of eastern Pakistan Shamsul Haque, correctly characterized Subhas Chandra Bose as a traitor who cooperated with the Japanese imperialists and German fascists. After a lengthy discussion, Girah Jalinden withdrew his amendment to the resolution.

Representatives of the so-called Revolutionary-Communist (Trotskyist)

Party of India tried to pull out the formulation that the war of United Nations against German fascism and the Japanese imperialism was not progressive for the countries of South-East Asia, since, allegedly, this war strengthened the positions of Anglo-American imperialism. This proposal was rejected.

On the night before the plenary session, at which the draft resolutions of the conferences prepared for the commissions were to be approved, the leader of the so-called left wing of the All-India Student Congress, Aurobindo Bose (nephew of Subhash Chandra Bose), stated to the preparatory committee of the conference the ultimatum requirement: if the resolution on the first question will not indicate that the struggle of the youth of Southeast Asian countries against imperialism must be under the banner of Netaji (Führer) Subhas Chandra Bose, then he, Bose, will leave the conference and his people will disrupt all activities of the conference through violence. Knowing the gangster antics of these young men, the members of the preparatory committee were confused and were ready to accept Bose's demand. After talking with the leadership of the delegation of the Soviet youth, the members of the preparatory committee realized their mistake. The meeting of the preparatory committee together with those with the right of decisive vote rejected the ultimatum demand of Bose. In response to such a decree, Bose, and the Trotskyites he influenced, the youth of the All-India Trade Union Congress, the All India Youth League, the so-called Indian National Army (volunteers) and the All-India Muslim Students Federation, left the conference.

The preparatory committee reported on this escapade of Bose and on its decision on this issue to the plenary session of the conference. The decision of the preparatory committee was unanimously approved by the conference. Attempts by the reactionaries to subordinate the work of the conference to their influence or to disrupt it has failed.

The Conference adopted resolutions on all issues that corresponded to the instructions given to the Soviet delegation.

On the question of the struggle of the youth of the Southeast Asian countries against imperialism, for national independence and freedom, peace and democracy, the Conference unanimously adopted a resolution supporting the national liberation struggle of the youth of the countries of South-East Asia against imperialism for national independence, democracy and freedom of peoples of the colonial and dependent countries. The conference called on the democratic youth of the world to support the just struggle of the peoples of the colonial countries against imperialist oppression, which is part of the common struggle for peace and democracy.

The conference condemned the policy of the Dutch and French imperialists, which, with the support of the Anglo-American imperialists, conducted criminal colonialist wars in Indonesia and Vietnam, and called on the democratic youth of the countries of South-East Asia to suspend the supply of weapons for the imperialist armies in Indonesia and Vietnam, and help the youth struggle of these countries, as well as and the young people of China by all possible means. The Conference sharply condemned the provocative policy of British imperialism aimed at inciting racial and religious hostility between the peoples of India and Pakistan and appealed to the youth to expose the intrigues of reaction and to wage a struggle against it.

On the issue of the situation and the needs of the youth fighting against imperialism, the Conference adopted a resolution aimed at fighting for the realization of the rights and urgent needs of the youth of South-East Asian countries.

The conference put forward the following general requirements of the struggling youth of the countries of Southeast Asia.

For all youth: granting political rights that ensure the active participation of youth in public life; the right to free education in one's native language; providing young people with the conditions necessary for physical and cultural development.

For working youth: work opportunity; equal pay for equal work; receiving qualifications during working hours; labour protection and free medical care; prohibition of work for children under 14; improvement of living conditions.

For peasant youth: endowment with land; legislative restriction of the exploitation of youth labor in landed estates; simplification of taxation; expansion of state aid to peasants in improving land cultivation.

For students: immediate and complete departure from the imperialist educational system; teaching in their native language; elimination of anti-national and anti-scientific ideas from textbooks; the establishment of a fee for tuition available to the entire population in high school and higher education; providing the necessary number of buildings for schools, colleges and dormitories; guaranteed job placement in accordance with the received specialty and qualification.

The conference stressed that the struggle of the youth of Southeast Asian countries for their needs is an inseparable part of the struggle of these countries in achieving true independence, the destruction of the feudal system of land use, and the nationalization of key industries.

On the issue of strengthening the unity of the youth movement within South-East Asian countries and expanding ties with the democratic youth of the world through the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) and the International Union of Students, the resolution says: "Young people must fight with all attempts to split up its ranks and establish a solid unity between the working, peasant, and student youth, among the youth of all countries, nationalities, and religions. In its struggle for freedom and people's democracy, the youth of Southeast Asia have strong allies in face of the youth of the whole world, united in the World Federation of Democratic Youth and the International Union of Students. The continuous struggle led by the democratic youth of the whole world under the leadership of the WFDY against the American warmongers who are preparing the third world carnage is a direct and great help to the youth of Southeast Asia."

The Conference unanimously adopted an appeal to the youth of the world, in which it vowed to strengthen the unity of the youth of the whole world in the struggle against imperialism and its agents. The conference in its appeal calls on all democratic youth organizations to unite in the ranks of the World Federation of Democratic Youth and the International Union of Students.

The Conference expressed fraternal solidarity of the democratic youth of China, Spain, and Greece, fighting together with the peoples of their countries for freedom and independence. The Conference sent messages to the democratic youth of China, Spain, and Greece.

During the conference work in Calcutta mass events were held with the participation of a large number of young people.

On February 21, a youth demonstration was held under the slogan "Hands off Asia". Following the column of the conference participants were columns of various student and workers' organizations in Calcutta, as well as several thousand peasant youths who came from the villages. The demonstration began in the centre of the city and passed through the city a distance of 9 kilometers. Demonstrators shouted slogans in Bengali and English: "Hands off Asia", "Down with Dollar Imperialism", "Long Live the Soviet Union!", "Long Live the World Federation of Democratic Youth!", "Youth of the World, Unite!", "Youth: Unite, Fight, Attack, and Win!", "Long Live People's Revolution!".

The procession through the city ended with a rally numbering twenty thousand people, at which participants of the Conference made short speeches. When a representative of the Soviet youth Nina Zhvania rose to

the podium, the assembled people held a stormy ovation in honour of the Soviet Union, lasting for several minutes. The slogans were shouted from the audience: “Long live the Soviet Union!”, “Long live Comrade Stalin!”.

The rally ended with the burning of the cartoon dummy of the Anglo-American imperialists. The burning of the dummy was accompanied by exclamations: “Down with the imperialists”, “Long live full freedom and independence!”.

On February 22, in honour of the Conference, a mass sports festival of the youth was held at the Calcutta-Maidan stadium. The celebration was opened by a parade of participants of sports performances. About four thousand people participated in sports performances. The participants of the parade, shouting slogans in honour of the World Federation of Democratic Youth and foreign delegations, voiced their slogans past the central grandstand. The youth welcomed the Soviet delegates especially warmly.

On February 24 the festival was held. More than 5,000 young people attended the festival.

That same evening, Aurobindo Bose, in opposition to the events of the conference, tried to hold a mass protest, but nothing came of this undertaking. This time only about 300 people gathered in the hall where eight to nine thousand young people gathered at the plenary sessions of the conference in the previous days. The slanderous speech of Bose at the conference was repeatedly interrupted by exclamations: “Down with the schismatics”, “You had no right to declare you were leaving the conference on our behalf “, “We protest against hooliganism”. The rally was hastily closed.

On February 26, the day after the conference ended, the final meeting of the youth was again held on the square of Calcutta - Maidan. About seven thousand people gathered for the rally. A speech on the outcome of the conference was made on behalf of the preparatory committee of the conference by Vidya Kanuga. Then, speeches were made by the heads of delegations of Pakistan, Australia, Malaya, the USSR, Vietnam, and China. After the representative gave the floor to the head of the Soviet delegation, all those present at the meeting applauded stormily. At this time, at the back of the square, two explosions were made by the Bose people in order to disrupt the rally. This provocation was not successful, there was no panic at the rally. The participants of the meeting collectively repeated the slogan several times: “Long Live the Soviet Union”. During the speech, there was complete order, and after the end, a stormy ovation and cheers in honour of

the Soviet Union, Comrade Stalin, began again. The meeting ended with the adoption of a short resolution, which supports the decisions of the conference.

The conference played an important role in bringing together the democratic youth organizations of South-East Asian countries around the World Federation of Youth and the International Union of Students, showed the growing unity of the progressive youth of these countries in the struggle to strengthen the anti-imperialist camp.

On February 27, foreign delegations attending the conference were invited by the Indian People's Theatre Association and the Society of Friends of the Soviet Union. Members of the Society of Indian Friends of the Soviet Union, including prominent scientists, writers and art workers of India, warmly received delegates.

Then the conference participants went to the Association of Indian People's Theatre. This meeting was foiled. Immediately upon the arrival of the participants of the conference, the Bose people carried out an armed raid on the premises of the association. Six Indians, members of the association, were wounded from the pistols, two of whom died shortly. None of the foreign delegates were injured. Two hours later, the Bose people threw sticks and stones at the barracks, where the delegates of the conference lived.

In connection with these gangster antics, foreign delegates appealed to the governor-general of Bengal, and the personal representative of the president of the World Federation of Democratic Youth sent a protest to Prime Minister of India Pandit Nehru. Immediately after the raid, the police did not take any measures to search for the bandits. However, on March 1, the newspaper *Statesman*, published by the British, proclaimed that early in the morning a special department of the Calcutta police searched 35 places in connection with an armed raid on Dixon Lane during a reception hosted by the Indian People's Theatre Association in honour of foreign delegates to the youth conference. In one of the houses, cartridges and materials for manufacturing explosives were found. 11 people were detained, including Aurobindo Bose and his brother Ranonit Bose.

The Soviet delegation held talks with delegations of young people from other countries. These talks provided an opportunity to get acquainted with the youth movements in South-East Asian countries, as well as talk about the life of the Soviet youth. At the request of the conference participants, our delegation made a report on science, culture, and education in the Soviet Union. Talks were held with the peasants of Bengal who

arrived in Calcutta for a demonstration (there were more than a thousand young peasants) and students of the University of Delhi.

The participants of the conference screened the Soviet colour film "Parade of Youth" in one of the central movie theatres of the city. The auditorium was crowded. There were about a thousand spectators. The film made a terrific impression. The stormy applause, cheers in honour of Comrade Stalin, were repeatedly distributed. After the end of the picture, no one adjourned. At the request of the audience, the film was shown again.

The Government of India was far from being friendly towards the conference. Newspapers controlled by the government silenced the conference. However, they gave the speech of the Soviet delegation in detail, without distorting the essence.

India is experiencing an acute crisis. Steel, for example, is only 65-70 percent melted to existing capacities. Because the country is divided into India and Pakistan, the already weak railway communication has been undermined. There are no locomotives and rolling stock. The agriculture is brought to complete decline due to the impoverishment of the peasants. Three-quarters of all peasants are landless. Tenants are forced to give from 75 to 90 percent of the harvested yield in the form of various taxes and levies. All government measures to raise crop yields do not produce positive results. According to official data, more than 20 million people are starving in Madras province. In fact, the number is much higher than is indicated in the official data. In one of his public statements, the minister of food supplies said that hunger threatens more than the Madras province. Every year, food supply standards decrease while the population grows. In 1947, the number of people supplied by welfare cards reached a huge figure of 170 million people, and the supply rate fell from 18 ounces to 12 and even eight ounces a day.

The reluctance of the Indian government to carry out democratic reforms provokes sharp protests from the workers and peasants. According to official data of the Indian Association of Industrialists, only in the first half of 1947, over 9 million days were lost as a result of strikes and protests. In the second half of the year, the number of days lost as a result of strikes is much greater than in the first half of 1947. It is noted that from 40 to 60 percent of the strikes ended with the victory of the workers.

In the principalities, there are mass protests of peasants against feudal lords and princes. In the Indian press, it was officially declared that 1/6 of the province of Hyderabad is in the hands of the peasants. In the United

Provinces, the peasant movement is less developed, in lieu of the fact that many peasants still believe in demagogic statements about the proposed land reform. In fact, there are no land reforms. It is supposed to “liquidate” landlord land use by buying land from the landlords for very high prices. Under the draft reform, the peasants will have to pay the landlords one billion 30 million rupees for 40 years.

Recently, the Indian bourgeoisie, warmed up by the British imperialists, are becoming more reactionary. Even the Gandhian ideology of passive resistance has become a hindrance to it. This caused the killing of Gandhi, who enjoyed great popularity among the people. Gandhi’s murderer, Godse, is a member of the semi-fascist military organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, which is led by one of the most reactionary parties in the National Congress – the Hindu Mahasabha.

After Gandhi’s assassination, the struggle between the political parties-members of the National Congress and between the leaders of the government - Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel - has sharply escalated. Nehru and Patel try to hide the ongoing struggle between them from the public opinion.

Immediately after the assassination of Gandhi, spontaneous riots broke out in many cities of India. The people beat and exterminated members of the organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. In the first week, police and troops shot the people. Then, when the riots began to take on a larger scale, the government formally declared Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh outlawed.

The other day a draft constitution was published in print. The project is reactionary, modeled on the constitution of Canada, England, and the United States. Two potential nominees for the governor-general and, later, the president positions are the current president of the National Congress, Rajendra Prasad, and the Governor-General of Bengal, Rajagopalachari.

The All-Indian National Congress, which now has four to five million members, changes its charter and structure. The Congress will consist of electors (about 150 million) and the Congress staff. Throughout the country, it is planned to create panchayats (local committees) - one panchayat for two thousand electors. The huge bureaucratic apparatus of the Congress is selected only from people devoted to the government.

The Socialist Party of India (whose leader is Jayaprakash Narayan) has considerable influence among the petty-bourgeoisie. For example, in the elections in Bombay, the National Congress received 40 seats, the Socialist Party - 26 seats, the Communist Party - 5 seats. After the assassination of

Gandhi, the Socialist party changed its tactics. The Congress of the Socialist Party is going to take place in the city of Nasik on March 19, 1948, where the party is expected to leave the Congress. The Socialist Party is hostile to the Communists and does not ally with the Communist Party of India.

The Communist Party of India has great influence among the people. The party is now essentially semi-legal. On the eve of the Congress, the police carried out a number of raids and searches of the committees of the Communist Party in Bombay, Madras, and Delhi. Since the arrival of the Soviet Embassy in Delhi, 5 police raids were committed on the Delhi Committee of the Communist Party. There have been numerous arrests of active Party and trade union workers. The government did not allow representatives of the foreign press to attend the Congress of the Communist Party, which opened on February 28 in the city of Calcutta.

Americans and Englishmen force their agency upon everyone and seek to cultivate public opinion. Immediately after its arrival in India, the American embassy opened its libraries in large cities and spread slanderous books and pamphlets about the Soviet Union. The embassy of the Soviet Union in India does not yet have a single library, although a considerable number of intellectuals and students have a great interest in Soviet literature.

There is a great interest in Soviet movies in India. However, the screening of Soviet films is not organized even though there is an opportunity for it. During the stay of our delegation in Calcutta, only English and American films were shown in movie theatres.

In our opinion, it would be expedient to allow the Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Youth to invite a delegation of various youth organizations to the Soviet Union this summer. This will play an important role in strengthening democratic youth organizations and expanding their influence on young people.

During the stay of the delegation of Soviet youth in India, the Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam Dr. Ram Nook Tak addressed us. On February 27, 1948, in the city of Calcutta, Dr. Tak expressed the following considerations.

About the situation in Indonesia. The latest developments in Indonesia, Dr. Tak stated, and in particular, the signing of the Renliff Agreement, testify to the opportunistic and capitulatory policy of the Indonesian party, which failed to lead the mass movement and handed over the leadership to the bourgeois parties. Dr. Tak believes that everything that was won with blood has been lost. In Indonesia, during the war, the progressive forces engaged in too much international propaganda, the establishment of diplomatic relations, etc., but did not engage in real unity of internal forces, and eventually lost them.

////////The situation in Burma is quite good, according to Dr. Tak. Everything is guided by the “Marxist League”, along with which there is a Communist Party. There is no fundamental difference between them, according to Tak, — the programmes and slogans basically coincide, but there are disagreements and enmity of a personal matter in the leadership of the League and the Communist Party. The Marxist League is ready to dissolve itself if the Communist Party does the same, for the purposes of establishment of a unified organization.

In modern Southeast Asia, Burma is the most advanced democratic country, except for Vietnam, according to Tak. It is very important, he stressed, to establish diplomatic relations between Burma and the USSR, since Vietnam is closely connected with Burma. The Vietnamese people’s troops are advancing to the Burmese border, in order to be able to receive the weapons and materials promised by the Burmese unhampered.

Dr. Tak considers that the parties of Southeast Asia to be characterized by an abundance of “ultra-left” groups in them, an inability to see the difference between questions of strategy and tactics, between principles and tactics. Having learned the ABC’s of Marxism-Leninism, they suffer from the infantile disorder of “leftism”. There are quite a few open Trotskyite elements who are hostile to the Soviet Union. Almost all communist parties, Tak stated, feel an acute shortage of trained and mature cadres, they are very weakly connected with Information Bureau of the Communist Parties (located in Yugoslavia) and do not have the opportunity, due to lack of currency, to receive a sufficient amount of the newspaper “For a Lasting Peace, for People’s Democracy”. Tak asked to help with this.

The Communist Party of Vietnam, Tak reported, is at the very beginning of the revolution, and taking into account the experience of the CPSU (b) and world history, physically destroyed almost all the traitors. Experience showed that this was done correctly. Those of the traitors who managed to survive, now cooperate with the French.

Further, Dr. Tak asked us to convey whether the Soviet Union has the opportunity to provide Vietnam with foreign exchange assistance (US dollars, pounds sterling), citing the fact that it is possible to acquire a sufficient number of weapons in China and the Philippines.

Tak also spoke about the extreme need to get help in form of party and military cadres, because only a semi-partisan-type struggle has been conducted so far. Now, when the decisive phase is coming, experienced military people are needed. The French, says Tak, must be smashed militarily and then the question of the possibility of a compromise will disappear by

itself. A special shortage is felt in aviation (there is none) and in the heavy artillery.

The French currently occupy only in large centres. The political and moral state of the French troops (150-200 thousand) is extremely bad. The Vietnamese have about 100,000 active bayonets. If there were weapons, one could arm up to two million people with rifles. The food situation is good. Dr. Tak asked to do everything possible to promote the Vietnamese constitution throughout the world and distribute other materials by printing them in France, Belgium, Switzerland or the USSR, since it is impossible to do so from Vietnam (due to lack of people and means).

As Tak reported, in the case of the defeat of the French, the Communist Party seriously fears an open invasion by Americans under the pretext of preserving "security" in South-East Asia.

He said that he was instructed to enter into negotiations with the Americans in order to find out how much one can hope for their neutrality in the event of a victory over the French invaders. He had a conversation with the American ambassador in Siam.

Dr. Tak himself arrived in India with an official order to express his condolences to the Nehru government in connection with the assassination of Gandhi. In passing, he was instructed by the party to direct the work of the Vietnamese delegation at the Conference of Youth and establish contact with the Communist Party of Burma and other countries.

In India, he talked with Nehru (whom he regards as a politically incapable figure, the Indian edition of Leon Blum). According to the local Indian millionaire Birla, with whom Tak has also talked, the United States deeply penetrates into the life of India.

In conclusion, Dr. Tak gave fraternal greetings to the CPSU (b) and to the great leader Comrade Stalin.

Tak gave some materials in French, which the head of the delegation Kharlamov A.E. handed to Comrade Baranov L.S. during a conversation in the Central Committee of the CPSU (b). Comrade Baranov was also given the theses of the II Congress of the Communist Party of India and other materials.

Secretary of the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League Central
Committee
N. Mikhailov

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Translated from the Russian by Polina Brik and edited by Leonard Zorfass.

THE LETTER OF NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE – A REVIEW

(23rd July 1950)

Jyoti Basu

This statement by Jyoti Basu was written in the period when the ‘Trotskyite-Titoite’ line identified with B.T. Ranadive, Bhowani Sen and G. Adhikari had ended in 1950 and when the Andhra line led by Rajeshwara Rao and Basuvapunniah had come to the fore. Jyoti Basu summarised many of the problems connected not just with the BTR line but also with the shortcomings of the new and short-lived Andhra programme and tactical approach. The critique of the two lines retains its value in the contemporary world as the adherence to socialist revolution as the immediate stage of revolution is prevalent in the interstices of the democratic movement in India today whilst the limitations of the Andhra line re-emerged with the formation of the CPI ML in 1969 and have become a generalised idée fixe which is dominating amongst communist revolutionaries for half a century. Both approaches were negated by the CPSU(b) and Stalin in the 1951 discussions with the CPI leadership which were held in Moscow. In the post war period the CPSU(b) rejected the advisability of socialism as the immediate stage for any country, including the United States, and recommended People’s Democracy as the universal immediate objective. In his response to the Andhra line Jyoti Basu accepted the need for armed struggle in India. At the same time in common with other CPI leaders involved in the working class movement Jyoti Basu, who was a national leader in the railway workers unions, adverted to the absence of a role for the working class and working class unity in the projected revolutionary programme of activities of the Andhra communists. While lauding the role of the struggle in Telengana, he stressed also that conditions for guerilla warfare were not present in large areas of India. Further unlike the writings of Mao and the CPC at that time the centrality of the Soviet Union, the democratic camp and the world working class in the revolutionary process was ignored by the Andhra communist leaders, as was the importance of the national bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie in the revolutionary process. Jyoti Basu also noted that the Andhra committee came out with its theses only some months after the Cominform editorial of January 27th, 1950 had assailed the line of B.T.

Ranadive. The CPI programme and tactical line adopted in 1951 went far beyond the limitations of the Andhra line and suggested the necessity of armed revolution combining working class insurrection and partisan warfare. It took several years of sustained effort in the period 1953-1969 for the main three streams of the communist movement, including the endeavours of Jyoti Basu himself, to demolish, from different angles, the revolutionary programme and tactical line elaborated in 1951.

Vijay Singh

Inner party struggle in Bengal

23.7.50

The letter of new central committee – a review

By Jyoti Bosu (P. Name Bakul)

1. The CC letter purports to give in brief some of the main features of our new political line and understanding of situation in India. It also contains in a summarised way an analysis of the Titoite crimes of the leadership in the sphere of methods adopted and new organisational decisions are suggested. My review will deal in a summarised way with the main points in the letter.

2. Since the publication of the Information Bureau editorial on India, the party members in general in Bengal have been carrying on intense political discussions and reading basic Marxist and Soviet, Chinese and international literature as never before, in order to bring back our party on the correct rails at this critical juncture. All of us began to understand the enormity of the mistakes made and crime committed by the PB and PC and as a last resort a bold lead was expected from at least a section of the CC with regard to our organisational and political task in this situation. But for 5 months the CC was silent and allowed the PB and PC to further worsen the inner party situation. Now when the long waited letter of CC has come, it has failed generally to fulfill our expectations. It will be my endeavour to deal mainly with the weak points and wrong formulation as they appear to me. The points with which I agree I shall mention. Only in passing.

3. POLITICAL: Main formulations on the present situation (p 4, English letter). The role of the Soviet Union, as it has been formulated here, does not stand out as of decisive significance in the national liberation struggle of colonies including China and India. As neither in our Thesis nor other

subsequent PB documents this point was correctly pointed out, I think it is imperative to do it now. The role of the Soviet Union cannot be equated with other favourable factors which have arisen after 2nd world (sic), Com. Li Li Sang (sic) pointing out the favourable international conditions for the victory of the Chinese people makes the following formulation:

“But with simply those conditions there could be no victory, which must also have favourable international conditions. And they are the existence of the Socialist Soviet Union and the sympathy and support of the Soviet Union and world working class. The victory of the Russian October Socialist Revolution pointed out to the Chinese working class the road to liberation and gave them great inspiration and encouragement. The victory of the anti-fascist second world war led by the Soviet Union resulted in the defeat of the German-Italian Japanese-fascist bloc and the establishment of the various new democracies in East Europe, and inspired the heroic struggles of the working class in the west and of the oppressed nations in the East. The main attention of the imperialists was drawn to Europe, thereby enabling China to break through the imperialist and its running dog Chiang Kai-shek, and win and complete victory. Just as Chairman Mao Tse-Tung said: “If the Soviet Union did not exist, if there were no victory of the anti-fascist Second World War and no defeat of Japanese imperialism, if the various new democratic countries did not come into being, if there were no rising struggles of the oppressed nations in the East, if there were no struggles of the masses of the people in the United States, Britain, France, Italy, Japan and other capitalist countries against the reathese (sic) things, could we have won victory? Obviously no. It would owe us therefore to express here our gratitude and respect to the working class of the Soviet Union! Our gratitude and respect to the working class of the whole world. Our gratitude and respect to the great teacher of the world working class – Stalin! (*China Digest* Vol. VII, No.6 p.20).

It is correctly emphasized that India is colonial country and the bourgeoisie junior partners of imperialism and the only change is from direct to indirect rule. This colonial character and dominance of imperialism was denied by od (sic) PB as was done in China by the Trotskyites.

The two essential characteristics of the Chinese path (a) united front of all anti-imperialist classes – the broad masses of the peasantry intellectuals, petty-bourgeoisie who suffer from vexations and restriction from imperialism and (b) armed struggle of the country side etc., are generally correctly stated in line with the Information Bureau editorial.

But I think the formulation on Middle Bourgeoisie is confusing and

incorrect. It is clear that the dominating purpose of the CC is to restrict and negate the united front with this section of the bourgeoisie. There is only a formal recognition that they must be treated as allies in the national liberation movement. This (sic) continuation of the left sectarian policy. Intimate connection with feudalism and big bourgeois interests does not by itself make the middle bourgeoisie enemies of the democratic revolution. It is necessary to warn that the middle bourgeoisie are not stable or reliable members of the anti-imperialist camp and to point out that there are rightist elements among the middle bourgeoisie and blows must be delibered (sic) at their reactionary political tendencies. But it is also necessary to state why it is also necessary to state why it is a basic task to unite and struggle with them (middle bourgeoisie as a whole) with unity as the main point for whatever temporary period of time and that it is possible to do so. I can do nothing better than quote some relevant passages from Stalin and Li-Li-san on the question of a alliance with the middle bourgeoisie, Stalin in refuting the Trotskyite line on the Chinese problem said: "The principle of the necessity for the Communist Party in every country of utilising the smallest possibilities of seeking mass allies for the proletariat, even if they are temporary, vacillating, wavering or unreliable. "Further; "It is necessary to have a flexible and well considered policy of the proletariat and to be skilful in utilising every fissure in the camp of the enemy in finding allies for oneself." (Stalin; Comment on Current affairs on China; quoted by Chen Po-ta; *China Digest*, Jan '50.)

Comrade Li-Li-san on the basis of this policy recounting why the working class could lead the revolution to victory said among other things the following:

"Finally, the Chinese working class could built up the mighty national united front and establish the leadership in the national united front because it found the correct policy on dealing with the Chinese national bourgeoisie, differentiating the national bourgeoisie who oppose imperialism from the comprador bourgeoisie who have capitulated to imperialism, not opposing the national bourgeoisie as a national enemy but treated them as allies in the national liberation movement, and adopting the policy of both uniting and struggling with them with the former as the main point. This is because, generally speaking although the national bourgeoisie in a country like China have many connections with imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism, they have at the same time suffered from their fettering, exclusion and restriction. That is why, although the national bourgeoisie are prone to wavering and compromising in the rational liberation movement it has

been possible to unite with them and win them over to the side of the revolutionary masses of the people while the struggle against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism were going on. In this connection, it is required of the working class on the one hand to be skilful in using tactics of winning them over and uniting with them, while on the other hand, to be skilful at all times in exposing and opposing their wavering, compromising, and even designs of betrayal by a certain part of them.” (Li Li san (sic): *China Digest* Vol. VIII, No. 6’ 49: pp.18-19).

It is because of the dual nature of the National bourgeoisie the following conclusion is drawn by Yu Huai in the article in Peoples China on the National Bourgeoisie; “It is exactly because of this fact that struggle must necessarily continued in an appropriate manner against the national bourgeoisie while uniting with it.

The contrast between CC’s formulation and the above formulations are quite clear.

Whilest (sic) it is correctly emphasised that feudal relation are dominate and agrarian revolution is the axis in India at the present stage and armed struggle is on the agenda, the way armed struggle and prevailing conditions have been explained is to my mind misleading and confusing. I do not know what other fuller documents will certain on these points but my criticism is based on what is written in the letter.

It is correct to state that in India at the present time armed struggle is the main form of national liberation movement and Telengana, Andhra, Hajong areas of Mymensingh point the way. It is dangerous to have illusions the attack of the Nehru Govt. can be defeated and national liberation achieved in any other way but armed struggle as the main form of struggle. Guerilla war is not only necessary but possible in many parts of India because of 1) terrible economic condition of all sections of the people - workers have seen their conditions deteriorating all their democratic rights trampled underfoot by the Govt. The politically advanced workers are conscious that the Congress Govt. is responsible – peasants lack land, are oppressed by feudalism and famine conditions prevailing many parts the petty bourgeoisie in towns are pauperised and have seen the Congress government depriving the people of all democratic liberties – the middle bourgeoisie similarly have experienced during last 3 years, the mounting restrictions from big bourgeoisie and imperialists and their business is declining. They have been the hoax of all reconstruction schemes and so called planning.

Together with these the refusal of the Congress government to solve

the question of nationalities and linguistic provinces, the highly centralised administration etc. are embittering large sections of the people.

The people in general do look forward to some change and there has been a rapid disillusionment with the Congress government. Hence it is true to say that these are sufficient grounds for revolutionary action of these masses in many parts of India contrary (sic) that “the national liberation movement in Indian has entered into a new and higher phase of its development and that it will develop at an even more quickening pace” (*Balabushevich*). But it is untrue to say that the illusions with regard the Congress have been completely shattered (underline mine). It is untrue to say that it is only the leadership of the Socialist Party who are spreading Gandhian ideology. This is all oversimplification and a refusal to see the difficulties which have to be overcome. It is carrying forward the left-sectarianism of the party and will again lead to adventurist actions. The following warning of Balabushevich must be given serious attention.

“It must, however, be noted that in spite of the fact that the peasant movement has in certain districts attained a high level, it is still distinguished by great unevenness and does not bear an all India character.”

Dyakov, similarly, in ‘Crisis of British Rule in India and the new stage in the liberation struggle of her peoples’ points out that “the unity of the present movement has been won to an even lesser danger”.

And again:

“The working class and the Communist Party of India have to overcome serious difficulties in the fight for the peasantry. The influence of reactionary Gandhism is still strong amongst the peasants. In spite of the treachery and the betrayal of leading top sections of the National Congress, the Congress still continues to retain considerable influence amongst the peasant masses and the fact that the disruptive All India Kisan Congress led by the protégés of Patel and Nehru (Ranga and others) finds soil for its treacherous activity amongst the peasants can be explained by the illusions with regard to the National Congress which have not yet been dispelled. The Socialist leaders are also trying to carry out their disruptive activity amongst the peasant masses. Not long ago they formed a parallel peasants’ organisation aimed at undermining the developing revolutionary struggle of the peasantry and the growth of the influence of the Communist Party”. (*Balabushevich: Colonial Peoples struggles for liberation. p. 52*)

“It is impossible not to take account the fact that the National Congress will enjoys a certain influence among the masses. This can partly be explained by tradition since in the course of a long period of time the Congress was

considered to have been in considerable opposition to the policy of British imperialism in India. This can also partly be explained by the nationalist demagoguery of the Congress leaders by which they are trying to screen their compromise with British imperialism. But the reactionary policy of the National Congress in beginning to arouse greater and greater dissatisfaction and indignation amongst the Indian workers. With the exposure of the reactionary Gandhism, the influence among the masses of the National Congress is being more and more rapidly dispelled.” (Ibid; p.59)

Hence unless these 2 factors are borne in mind 1) that the big bourgeoisie through Congress leadership are spreading Gandhian ideology together with the Socialist leadership, 2) that there is ‘unevenness’ in the peasant movement, we are likely to seriously minimise our task and plunge into adventurist actions.

The CC has refused to see the whole reality and not understood all the tasks and hence it says that only certain organisational (underline mine) tasks have to be fulfilled, party machinery smashed by left sectarianism as to be reorganised and comrades educated on new line in order to start armed actions. The C.C. forgets that one of the factors of Trotskyite deviation was that we had forgotten the peasantry; we had split up the peasantry and made enemies where allies should have been mobilised; we had not systematically fought against Gandhian, not only reformist ideology; we had liquidated the Kisan Sabhas and party organizations. To see only the organisational side and not the urgent political tasks and other important factors will lead to failure again. This does not mean that propaganda alone can fulfill these tasks; it means that propaganda, different forms of mass struggles, armed guerilla resistance and organisation of Party and Kisan organisations have to be combined and carried on simultaneously. There cannot be any stereotyped, hard and fast scheme. I cannot understand what is meant by the CC formula that “We cannot sit quite (sic) when either the enemy attacks us or the masses are on the move under the plea of not having fulfilled the above mentioned minimum jobs. In that case, we have to fulfil them while leading masses and carrying on resistance against the Fascist attack of the enemy”. When the masses are on the move, we certainly lead them but does it mean that if we are attacked by numerically superior and armed forces of the enemy then in every case we resist face to face? Does it rule out manoeuvre retreats etc? I am sure it does not mean so but the formulation can be misinterpreted.

To sum up by point on this section. Armed struggle is on the agenda in the sense that it is no longer a remote possibility but has started in a few

places in India and can be rapidly extended to many places provided the party performs its political and organisational jobs. The favourable objective factors are there for the masses to learn quickly from their experience and they are learning. But to oversimplify this and assert that all over India and Pakistan everything is ready for armed guerilla action and only some organisational tasks have to be fulfilled is blindness to reality and will lead to dangerous adventurist conclusions. It must be remembered that there are other forms of actions besides guerilla actions, which must be used to resist and oppose the enemy and prepare the masses. The forms of struggle will depend on an estimation and analysis of the concrete situation.

With regard to our task in cities and industrial areas, there is practically nothing in the letter. There is no recognition of the disunity in the working class, the influence of national reformism among a section, the smash up of all our trade unions due to the policy of the PB. It is not realised that the CPI does not command influence over the majority of the working class. These are various obstacles in the way of effectively building up working class hegemony. Hence Balabushevich warns:

“The Indian working class and its Party in its fight for the masses will have to overcome serious difficulties and above all, it must fight to establish unity within its own ranks. In the Indian Union, the reactionary leadership of the National Congress and Socialist Party are trying to split the trade union movement. Apart from the All India Trade Union Congress which is led by progressive leaders, including Communists, since the time of partition three new parallel trade union centres have arisen inside the country – the National Trade Union Congress, which is a Government owners’ organisation and is the creation of the leaders of the national Congress and the Pt.ed-Nehru Govt. (sic) the Hind Mazdoor Sabha which was formed at the initiative of the leadership of the Socialist party and the United Congress of Trade Unions which has recently been formed in Calcutta, An notwithstanding the fact that these latter three organisations are considerably weaker than the All India Trade Union Congress, the disruptive and splitting activities of their leaders constitute an obstacle in the way of the struggle of the working class. A clear example of this is the disruption by the Socialist leaders of the general strike of the eight hundred thousand railway workers, scheduled to take place in March 1949, and for which 95% of the members of all the trade unions of the railway workers had cast their vote. The trade union movement in Pakistan is also split”. (*Balabushevich*: p. 45-46).

Lessons must be drawn from Chinese history. Maslennikov writes the following in the article ‘On leading role of working class in the National liberation movement of the colonial peoples’:

“The hegemony of the proletariat in the Chinese revolution would have been impossible if the Communist Party of China had not from the very beginning of its activities created powerful mass proletarian organisation if (sic) these organisations, and above all the trade unions, and not succeeded in leading the working class movement and leading along the revolutionary path, the path of uniting it with Socialism”.

Other factors also which we must overcome must not be minimised. In China the bourgeoisie was weak and unorganised unlike in India and national reformism had never such a strong influence as in India.

The Peking Manifesto is correctly quoted with regard to tactics in the working class front. It is also true that political general strike and insurrection is not exclusive methods of establishing hegemony over the peasant masses and in the struggle for national liberation. But the concrete situation in the working class front is not takes into account stall (sic). Where is there the call for building up working class unity, mass organisations of workers and establishing the ideological and organisational leadership of the CPI over the working class and its organisations.

The old PB had deliberately in the name of proletarianisation, fostered enmity against the petty bourgeoisie. It is surprising therefore that the CC letter of contains no mention of the role of the petty-bourgeoisie. Li Li san said the following in the Peking Conference.

“In the second place, it united with the broad masses of the petty bourgeoisie in the cities, specially the revolutionary intelligentsia: In countries which suffer from imperialist and feudal oppression and which are culturally backward like China, the intelligentsia frequently play a particularly important role. They are not only the initiators and propagandists of an anti-imperialist, anti-feudal ideology but are also frequently vanguards of the revolutionary movement. The working class should pay special attention to uniting this revolutionary force though attention should be paid to taking precautions against the tendencies of hastiness, flightiness, running to extremes and adventurism etc. inherent in their class origin so that they cannot affect the whole revolutionary movement.” (*China Digest*: Vol. VII. No. 6: p.18.).

Similarly the old PB and declared all left parties as enemies and saw it that they leave our organisations as soon as possible. In this letter also it is stated that we must contend against the leadership of the left parties and

groups, but nowhere is there a call for uniting all parties, groups and individuals opposed to imperialism. Left sectarianism dies hard.

Lastly I feel there should have been a paragraph clearly stating that we are fighting for Peoples Democracy and not a socialist revolution or a mixed revolution.

ORGANISATIONAL:

From the organisational steps taken, I think neither the old nor the new CC have realised the nightmare that was created by the Trotskyite politics and Titoite methods, nor the consequences which followed therefrom. Of course some hard words against the old leaders have been used but in practice the whole affair has been treated most light heartedly.

It was second after the 2nd Congress that Titoite methods were put into operation in Bengal i.e. BTR, Babi, Gour. The Bengal PCMs generally were opposing the highhandedness of the PCMs and hence had to be dealt with. Truths, half freely used to save Gour and Robi in Ananta Singh affair. Reports about him were known to Robi and Gour but were hidden from other PCMs for a long time. Whilst the PBMs went scot free, other PCM were reprimanded for delaying actions. In S.K. Acharya's case the whole truth was not revealed and he was expelled by PB flouting the opinion of PCMs who recommended lesser punishment. Robi his adviser made him the scapegoat and himself became the hero. It was deliberately arranged that no PC meeting be called despite our requests, Robi wrote a document to prove the necessity for dissolving the PC. Some of us demanded a PC meeting on it, and circulation of our opinion. But no such thing was done and the elected Bengal PC was dissolved, in a summary fashion. Thereafter through a nominated PC of the PB's choice, systematically all DCs in Bengal were broken up and reorganized. Later after 9th March other provinces were similarly dealt with. Besides lies, slanders, intrigue, a system was evolved by PB for perpetrating mental agony on comrades confining them in Dens under certain shock trooper and surrounding them with suspicion. Then when their spirits broke self-criticism was wrung out of them. The other Titoite methods of PB are mentioned in the letter. It is revolting. Yet as a sort of concession this (is) written in the letter that "Titoite methods of the PB had not yet reached the extreme form as in the Yugoslav Party." What a consolation: what else could the PB do I wonder, without a state power. Whilst on the one hand this was happening, documents were being suppressed by Adhikari who was reprimanded for doing it previously in the 2nd Congress. It also seems that Tito's explanation after the expulsion

from Cominform, was circulated to PBs and Tito's trade agents visited our Bombay head quarters. Mao was slandered in line with the imperialist press. The letter is written in such a way that ultimately just as in the 2nd Congress Joshi alone was the scape-goat, so now BTR alone is being made the culprit as a GS he does bear the gravest responsibility but what about the other PBMs on the spot? What about Adhikari? What about Gour the PBM attached to Bengal PC. Bengal PC will have to go for having acted as the shock trooper committed of the PB but Gour continues in CC. Why this double standard again? Gour is not a child he is one of the oldest leaders of the party - he knew what was happening. He was more left at times than the PB. He himself shares equally with the Bengal PC the crime of establishing terror and other Titoite methods inside the Party. If cynicism, indifference and vacillation are certificates Gour deserves them. Hence the least that should have been done is to mention by name BTR, Robi, Gour Adhikari and their guild pinned down. But Gour is taken in the CC and Robi is not even mentioned.

In the letter the ranks are eulogised for their criticism and vigilance as was done in the 2nd Congress. But it is stated that the 2 vacant places may be filled up amongst others by members of the old CC on the basis of further discussions and practical work. Similarly old members of PB and CC are again specially mentioned in point 4 of principles and assurance given that they will be taken to CC and PB when they move they are fit. Why particularly mention old CC at PB members? Anybody may be elected in CC by ranks. Why this special consideration? The point is that their crimes are not taken seriously and it is thought that such people can easily correct themselves. The principle of correction is right and comrades should not be punished in the old PB but are CC and the higher committee the only places where correction may take place?

It is also stated in p 3 that the criticism of the ranks enabled PB to come out of its bureaucracy and brought it to its senses and helped CC to make a complete turn. This it is claimed is a hopeful sign for the great future of our Party. I think such complacent, light and casual remarks are signs of great danger. Trotskyism and Titoism must not be treated so lightly. Comrades who have practised this for a long period of time have to be seriously watched and will take a long time to come health.

The old CC have laid down 4 principles which must be kept in view for selecting personnel of a new CC. Why were such high principles laid down when it is obvious that except to some extent 2 or 3 of members of CC from Andhra, no other comrade inside or outside CC could be found to fit these

principles? More modest principles would have been better. These sound so hollow though sonorous. I think the 1st 3 principles fit to some extent only about 3 comrades of Andhra but not Sundarayya and Namboodripad (Kerala). They do not fit any other member of the old or new CC. The 4th principle in the main fits BTR, Robi, Gour, Professor, Jatin Raghu as far as I know.

Anyhow, there are serious questions about Madhab, Parulekar and Sundarayya and their self-criticisms are urgently required. Azad is the only member from Bengal who can be in the CC because of his leadership of the Hajong struggle.

Basically it is a wrong decision not to hold the party congress and has to be altered. Once again it is clear that the effects of Trotskyite policy and Titoite methods are not being treated seriously. The Party has been brought to such a pass that fullest inner-party democracy and discussion, conference in Provinces and Central Party Congress can unify the party politically and organisationally. Without these iron discipline and strict centralisation have no meaning even if on a restricted scale, conferences and Congress must be held. It is the political necessity of the time. This alone in one of the basic guarantees that a correct policy will be followed. I am doubtful whether CC can thus reorganise itself without a Congress when there is a change in the basic policy. Gradually seeing the inner party situation I have come to the conclusion that party Congress is necessary.

It surpasses my imagination why the old CC did not pass a resolution condemning itself for its criminal inactivity and for betraying the trust reposed in it by the 2nd Congress. Many of the CC members were those old CC members who had readily fallen under the spell of Joshi and having got rid of him fell under the spell of BTR and Co. They seem to be rather unfortunate. I do not think they should be taken in CC.

There is no pledge in the Letter to electing a Control Commission who are to deal with the cases of individuals and PCs against when action was taken by PB?

Decision of the new central committee

The CC should circulate the self-critical reports of PB members and minutes of old CC meetings to all comrades and not only to PCs. This along will help in pol-org unification.

The CC thinks that the methods of the old PB created ideal ground and fertile soil for the growth of disrupters, careerists and spies. But no commission is set up to investigate into this matter specially on top

beginning with some old PB members. A commission is appointed with a vague term of reference about lack of vigilance against Titoite spies. What this means I do not understand.

Nowhere in the letter is it admitted that section of PB has violated the party Constitution 1) by arrogating (sic) to themselves all powers of CC and not convening CC meetings, 2) by reorganizing all PCs under the plea of exceptional circumstances (when in fact there was no such circumstance and by not getting then endorsed either by CC or a party Congress or Conference, 3) by forming one PC for East Bengal and West Bengal. The resolution of 2nd Congress does not allow this. A co-ordination committee might have been elected for unity of movement.

It is reported that the new CC has allowed a shock trooper to act as the PCs in Bihar. No comments are necessary on this unprincipled decision.

I am of opinion that the new CC has not understood the necessity and urgency of the fight against Trotskyism-Titoism. Hence guarantee for inner party democracy is unreal and the present CC as a whole cannot yet get the confidence of the ranks.

In conclusion I must say that though the Andhra comrades have gained our respect for their creation Telengana and for saving Andhra from the evil designs of the PB. But they have not done their duty as PB or CC members and it was not until the Information Bureau Editorial came out, that they dared to move for a correct line for our whole party. Even now their efforts seem to be halting the conciliation and liberalism on the question of both organisation and political principles seem to be their watchword. This bodes ill for our party.

BAKUL

23.7.50

Typed Copy

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Note:

Full forms of mentioned names:

BTR, B.T. Ranadive.

Joshi, P.C. Joshi.

Namboodripad, E.M.S. Namboodripad.
Parulekar, V.S. Parulekar.
Sundarayya, P. Sundarayya

Party names mentioned in the text (in alphabetical order):

Azad, Moni Singh;
Bakul, Jyoti Basu;
Gour, Somnath Lahiri;
Jatin, Arun Bose;
Madabda, Biresh Mishra;
Professor, G. Adhikari;
Raghu, Sunil Mukherji;
Robi, Bhowani Sen.

ON THE QUESTION OF LAVRENTIY BERIA -I

(2nd July 1953)

V.M. Molotov

Here we give the first part of the contribution of Molotov at the July Plenum of the CPSU of 1953. The role of Beria in Soviet history has been the subject of considerable discussion and opinions of the Marxists on Beria have been divided. In this context the views of Molotov are of interest.

Bulganin: Comrade Molotov has the word.

Molotov: Comrades, we are discussing such an issue, in relation to which both the special circumstances, in which we have lived in recent period, in recent months, and the special position, in which Beria had found himself as the manager of the Ministry of Interior Affairs and one of the members of the core of the leadership, must be taken into consideration. The special nature of the circumstances, as the comrades here have told already, was that in the aftermath of Stalin's death we had to demonstrate unity. It was necessary from both the internal and the international perspective.

The special nature of the circumstances, in which Beria had found himself, the stakes he took upon himself after Stalin's demise - all this shows clearly that he was making his way through to the position of the Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, and he had recommended exactly this path. What was done in the beginning - in the days of March - for him was, of course, only a stage of transition.

But the essence of the matter is that we have in front of us, as a result of the 3.5 months, the fact that a traitor in the leadership core of our party and government has been exposed.

Before I start talking about some bigger issues, I will share several of my personal observations with the comrades. Here is one little fact. You, the members of the Plenum of the Central Committee, know who recommended the Prime Minister at the Plenum of the Central Committee. It was Beria. The Supreme Soviet was about to meet. Who assigned Beria with the task of recommending a Prime Minister? He assigned himself. None of us objected. When the Supreme Soviet met on March 9, I called Beria on the phone in a comradely manner. We were still comrades at that time. Before that, a conversation within our leading group was held as to

his desire again to be the one who recommends a Prime Minister at the Supreme Soviet session. I called him on the phone and told him: we had agreed so, but was that really good? Why, indeed, the Prime Minister offered by the Party was not being recommended by the Secretary of the Central Committee, Khrushchev. The three of us spoke on the Mausoleum - Malenkov, Beria, and myself. A session was scheduled. The Plenum decided to recommend a Prime minister. Why not Khrushchev? "No, I will".

Unity of the Party, Unity of the leadership core – and the thing was silenced. That was one thing.

Now, I am asking you - you must have read the minutes from the Presidium - why is there no signature of the Secretary of the Central Committee? There is a no-name signature - "Presidium of the Central Committee". It had not happened this way, never. Such practice only came when too many signatures by comrade Stalin started to appear on all the documents. But the old rule was - under Lenin or Stalin - the chairman of the Council of Ministers presided, and the secretary of the Central Committee was responsible for the minutes. So, we also needed the signature of the Secretary of the Central Committee. I called comrade Khrushchev at the end of May, because I viewed this as a disorder and understood that it was not accidental. I asked comrade Khrushchev - why was there no signature by the Secretary of the Central Committee under the minutes of Presidium - look, this was not normal, as there had been no such rule in the Party? "Yes", - he agreed, - "this is not normal, and what we need is the proper order". I called Malenkov - he agreed. I called Beria and asked - "Why do not we have a signature under the minutes of the Presidium?" And he answered: if this issue was to be decided, other issues had to be decided, too. And what those issues were - he never answered. Again, it was unclear. And it turns out that he called Khrushchev and told him: "Why is there no signature of the secretary of the Central Committee under the minutes of the Secretariat? Sign your name". And from that time, the signature under the minutes of the Secretariat appeared.

His statement about the necessity of solving some other core issues together with the issue of the signature under the minutes of the Presidium was unclear to me. When on the 26th of June the whole Presidium sat and scolded Beria for two and a half hours for the numerous sins of his, we asked him to explain, what "other core issues" he had meant. And he said: "Maybe, putting together the agenda". A core issue? Really? Lying like a worst by-passer, and unable to answer anything.

There were further deviations from the rule. An old, established tradition

was that all the questions of international politics, related to the Ministry of International Affairs, were to be decided in the Politbureau. Now, this had been transferred to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, including comrades Voroshilov, Saburov, Pervukhin - the closer circle.

At that time, there was no desire to dispute all those issues with him. I was myself talking, and then making a retreat, thinking that time was needed to clarify things. But this could no longer continue. If we valued the Party and understood what our Party of Bolsheviks was, the Leninist party of which Lenin and Stalin would always remain spiritual leaders, we could not go along such path for a long time.

To fully paint the picture, I need to touch upon the question which, as it seems to me, ultimately uncovers Beria's face. It was the discussion of the German question. In two years and three months, more than half a million people ran from East Germany away to the West - that is, from the socialist part to the capitalist one. Clearly, this was an indicator of big disorder in East Germany. The disorders were most obvious, and they have been revealed thanks to our help. An excessively high rate of industrialization had been taken up - excessively huge construction plan. Plus, the costs of occupation by our army that they had to bear, plus the reparation payments... And there were only 18 million Germans - next to them, there is a decaying capitalist environment of West Germany. Plus, the significant impact of the Hitlerite upbringing.

And one has to understand on his or her own that the issue of how to correct this clearly ultra-left path was standing there, mature and immediate. We did correct it. But I have to say - when we were correcting it, we discussed the whole German question. And here it was for the first time that Beria's speech could be heard - "of what use is this socialism in Germany to us, what socialism could we possibly talk about", - "were it to be a bourgeois Germany, and just only the one that would be peace-loving". Our eyes were bulging upon that: there could be a peace-loving bourgeois Germany? Could the eyes of a member of the Politbureau of our party envisage a bourgeois Germany that had imposed two World wars? Could there be, under current conditions of further development of Imperialism, a peace-loving bourgeois Germany? Who, among the Marxists who stand on positions close to Socialism or the Power of Soviets, could, at all, consciously judge, think of some bourgeois Germany that would be peace-loving and under the control of the Four powers? Well, we disputed over this for a while, and then time came to formulate [a statement]. It seemed to me that it could just be a slip of the tongue, a blooper; maybe, an inexact

expression, polemic exaggeration, or the man just did not count properly what he was saying in a temper. But after some time, I got the draft of the decision upon this question – as a result of the discussion. This draft of the decision was then formalized as Protocol No. 27 from May 27, 1953. It was formalised correctly. But here is what was written there, the main guideline. I have written about how Beria's decision on this problem was made. To work out a proposal, we had to elaborate a detailed statement on the German question – on the basis of a short proposal. The basic guidelines for working out the proposals had to proceed from the fact that the main cause of the unfavourable state of affairs in the German Democratic Republic was the erroneous – under present day's circumstances – course upon the construction of Socialism that was being followed in the GDR. I called Beria: if the course upon the construction of socialism is erroneous, then the course is upon what? And he says: "it has been stated – "in present day's conditions". And what did this mean, in present day's conditions – in present day's conditions, the initial course is upon capitalism, and then upon socialism? I told him that I proposed to correct this whole phrase, but to say – "the erroneous in present conditions" was the course upon acceleration of the socialist construction. I would agree. And so it has been written now. It was the course upon the construction of Socialism that was wrong, erroneous – and now it turned out to be that the course upon the acceleration of the socialist construction was erroneous, wrong. Such an amendment was approved after some talks.

It means that those talks that took place at the meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers – "what Socialist Germany could be talked about, what does the Socialism in Germany have to do with all this, let there be a bourgeois, but peace-loving Germany" – this is precisely what has to be stressed. It was not a simple talk. It was the talk of a man who has nothing in common with our party – a man from the bourgeois camp, an anti-Soviet man. This is his meaning, the meaning of everything that Beria is.

A Soviet man cannot talk against having a course upon construction of Socialism in the GDR. The 18 million Germans conquered by our blood should then be given up to the bourgeoisie, to capitalism. And who could give up, where such a man could be found – a traitor in our ranks, after whom our party or whoever of the honest communists and honest workers could go. It was an attempt to impose a new course, but it failed.

And then – it was already 27th May – the preliminary clash already took place on a principled and deep issue. He had stepped close to this question,

but this is a fact, and not a small thing – not some kind of quibbling at our side.

Here is why, when we talk about the political portrait of Beria, let us say: we understood this business poorly, we did not have good competence on the issue of who Beria was, and he was an alien man, he was not of our camp, he was from the anti-Soviet camp.

Voices: That is correct.

Molotov: And here I say: how could this come out in the end, that he would be sitting – this man. See, 3.5 months passed – I reckon, it is to the merit of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Party, that in these three months – when he got unleashed – when he showed himself more openly, when he came to the outside with all of his guts – we exposed him, arrested him, and jailed him. I think, such a decision of the Plenum of the Central Committee should be approved. (Stormy ovation).

Voices: That is correct.

Molotov: Comrades, now we are trying to clarify, to make ourselves familiar with this man's biography, and we see that there is much dirt we have to rub off our hands and off our body. The extent to which he is a dirty type, a morally corrupt, alien and rotten man. You will yet get to know these facts.

And this man set up his goal – to put the Internal Ministry above the Government and the Party. All the misdeeds he conducted through his staff come down to creation of such a state of affairs that the real power was in his hands, and that he controlled the Central Committee and the Government, that he was watching every step of ours, that he was listening upon us. Those were his tools – the tools on which he counted.

I have to add that the whole thing would be unclear, had he not adhered to the course away from the socialism, and towards capitalism. For what did he need all this? Whoever wants to build Socialism together with us, why aren't we comrades to this man, and where would he find better comrades? And if one went not on this path, then one would to have a different support, a different staff, - then one would need to do what he planned, but could not yet tell about this openly. This is how I understand this business.

I think, comrades, that this fact – comrade Malenkov has read the draft of the letter to “Comrade Rankovich”, for “Comrade Tito”, - by this fact the

traitor gave himself up red-handed. The thing is handwritten by him, and he never wanted the Presidium of the Central Committee to discuss this issue. So, what kind of man is that?

It is true, however, that we have exchanged the ambassadors.

Malenkov: We also wanted to normalize the relationships.

Molotov: We want to normalize the relationships, and we in the Central Committee formulated in written form our current attitude towards Yugoslavia. It is clear that as the head-on attempt failed, then we decided to conquer it by other means – we decided that the same relations as with the other bourgeois states have to be established: ambassadors, telegrams exchange, business meetings, and so on.

And what is this? “Taking the opportunity, in order to pass to you, Comrade Rankovich, kind greetings from Comrade Beria, and to inform Comrade Tito, that if comrade Tito agrees to this point of view, then it would be expedient...” – and so on, and so forth.

What kind of thing is this?

Voice: Without the Government’s decision.

Molotov: He did not want a government’s decision. He was whirling, but he got caught.

Bulganin: It is the same camp’s hand.

Voice from Presidium: In the hands of the same camp.

Molotov: It is, unconditionally, of the same camp. The first thing that we have to say for ourselves: Beria is an agent, a class enemy.

Voices: That is right.

Molotov: He crawled inside our camp, and, hiding in here, tried – upon comrade Stalin’s death – to make use of the conditions – as though the Party has been weakened, caught in dismay, and does not know how things should be done. He crawled ahead and conquered the staff – as though it could be useful to him. I will honestly say: the staff of the Internal Ministry would not follow him: it is also made up of communists.

Voices: That is so true.

Molotov: It is made up of people who are devoted to the Party. It could be that scoundrels alone would follow. Then, what did he orient upon? What forces could support a stinky bug – Beria? What inside forces – the class of workers, of peasants, of intellectuals could support this scum – in our Soviet Union? Who could support? He had no forces on the inside. He could find support from foreign capitalists – titos-rankoviches – he is an agent of the capitalists, and he was learning from them. He jumped out of there, and found his way to us. We studied his biography too little – now we will occupy ourselves better with it. How could this happen, that a man like Beria could get into our ranks? Out of insufficient vigilance of the Central Committee, of course, including comrade Stalin. He found certain human weaknesses in comrade Stalin – who does not have them? And comrade Lenin, and comrade Stalin, and each and every one of us has them. He skillfully adapted to them, skillfully exploited them. It is not my first year of working. Since the time when Beria came to Moscow, the climate got bad: plenums ceased to be called, the Congress had to wait for 13 years. It all started after the 18th Congress – exactly up to the moment of Beria's arrival to Moscow. A coup-d'etat was not done by him, but everything that could be done was done by him. He spoiled the air, he intrigued. It was not always that comrade Stalin trusted him, especially recently he has had little trust in him, but weakness has been shown by all of us without exception. How could this happen? Because there is one party in the Soviet Union; because we, in the Soviet Union, were having one Communist party, our party. We talk a lot that, as we do not have antagonistic classes, this is at the root of the issue. The international circumstances should not be forgotten. We, in our country, cannot have a second party; being in the capitalist encirclement, we could let no single hole that could rot our country, our state. Capitalists would give any sum of money – not millions, but billions – to breed a little camp, organization that would have a left-wing face – centrist, pink, whatever you want – only not a communist one, only that it would differ in some way from the VKP(b), from the CPSU. For this, they would embark upon anything. In our country, any other party could be nothing but an agent of foreign capital, an agent of the imperialists.

And then, comrades, when the new organization for us is plotted, planned and so on – then these people would be dreaming of either the way that Tito and his gang went, or they would dream to create something similar to that, because Tito up until now is considered a communist. Why could not Beria be considered a communist, and at the same time do things

differently from the Party? Any such agent would be showered with gold by the bourgeoisie, by the capitalism, only if one could be found.

And the significance of this international moment, at which our struggle reaches special heights, is that the capitalism, which is worried for its fate, is searching – where to find such a rotten place, such a man that could be a provocateur, a traitor – whatever you want – a venal self-skin-interest, but only to fulfill this order, only to have such a little hole in the Soviet Union.

And this was the job that provocateur Beria was doing – to create such a fissure, and on such basis to undermine our Soviet Union.

Merits are something that we talk about: personalities are very often judged by us according to their merit, according to their work etc., or according to their so-called dogmatic loyalty. We find it very often that instead of genuine partisan approach, instead of genuine partisan work, one restricts him or herself to considering someone who says alleluia, or knows citations, to be an ideologue who can express our party's opinion.

We have to struggle against these features of dogmatism, which in essence creates a showcase of partisanship, while it is fake and out of accord with genuine partisanship.

This part, of course, was exploited by Beria quite well. He wrote a brochure on Comrade Stalin. Some say, it was written not by him, but by a chief assistant of his – someone like Sharia, who is an alien man. It was mainly a correct brochure, although a series of things had been let in that unusually flatter to a certain kind of man – to make the attitude towards the author as beneficial as possible, in terms of attention. Here the dogmatic side was kept quite skillfully. Imitation of partisanship is quite good, citations are good, facts are good – because what is related to the history of Comrade Stalin's work in the Trans-Caucasian region is something that not only the Trans-Caucasian region was brought up upon, but our whole party. But to think that this work reflects a genuine partisanship would be – from our side – naïve.

Another side: We often get caught when someone has merits: when someone works, implements huge tasks. Beria belongs to this kind of persons. He implemented huge work, he was doing talented work organising a series of national economy undertakings; but look, even wreckers are being used and forced to work when needed; we make useful humans out of former wreckers, saboteurs, when they see the impossibility of following the former path.

Khrushchev: Ramzin got awarded with a Lenin Order.

Molotov: Tupolev was jailed as a wrecker for a while, and now makes airplanes for us. When he saw how things were going – that working together with this regime [literally “power” – V.P.] was needed – then he started to work, and may he be blessed with health, let him work.

Now he is already a different man, a new man. But a man who is not simply interested in narrow fields and wants to be amongst the leading statesmen – must necessarily be a communist. He necessarily must win trust by something, bring himself up. There is no other way. We have only one party, which puts people forward, assigns them, popularizes them, gives them jobs. This is the path that Beria made himself absolutely clear about, and he followed this path tenaciously. And now, when we look upon him, and upon how he hid everything inside himself, and moved forward tenaciously, to finally get on top – we have seen what kind of man he was. This man is breathing with an alien spirit, he is alien to our party, he is of a different root, he is an alien man. He is an alien and anti-Soviet man. From the facts that we have now, we have to conclude that our partisan work is weak in many aspects, and it is not at the level at which it has to be. And this is not only about Beria, but also about Sharia finding himself as Beria’s ideologist. I will read the statement by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, issued in 1948 and approved by the Central Committee of the Party. Up to the last day, some Sharia was Beria’s ideological aid. Who is this Sharia?

Here is the decision by the Georgian Central Committee from 1948:

“The Bureau of the Georgian Central Committee considers this as a verified fact that in 1943, Sharia wrote an ideologically harmful product of poetry, full of deep pessimism and the mood of religious mysticism, in relation to his son’s death. Having retreated from the main principles of the bolshevist materialist world view, Sharia writes in it that he does not see a better world... His life upon his son’s death (of tuberculosis) became torture only... And closer towards end, he goes as far as to acknowledge the immortality of the soul and the reality of life after death”.

We restored this man in the Party due to misunderstanding; due to misunderstanding, we approved an incorrect decision by the Georgian Central Committee. It turns out that up until Beria’s arrest, Sharia was his aide on ideological questions. Here is what he [Beria] was breathing with.

Attention must be also paid to the fact that we have written hasty decisions on Lithuania and Ukraine, which instigated anti-Russian mood

among Ukrainian and Lithuanian nationalists. We approved Beria's decision to remove Patolichev, the secretary of the Belorussian Central Committee, and replace him with another person. That decision was also taken in a rush, and corrected only later on, on the way, when Patolichev himself asked not to send him to the Plenum because the Plenum would support him, and one could get caught in an awkward situation. And indeed, the Plenum decided to leave Patolichev as the Secretary with great unity; and the one whom we marked as the First Secretary – the former Second Secretary, a good comrade, comrade Zimyanin – was made the Chairman of the Council of Ministers by us. This corresponded to the common thinking of all the comrades at the Plenum of the Belorussian Central Committee.

This “hero” Beria, who decided to replace the Ukrainian first secretary, the Belorussian first secretary, then to produce fundamental changes of the cadres in Lithuania, and so on – what has he done? Thanks to our hasty decisions, he caused a lot of trouble, and strengthened the hostility between nationalities in these republics.

Molotov:... and we, comrades, have to admit – this is another indicator of how weak our partisan work is. One new, hasty, and not completely correct decision saw the world – and the nationalists already found themselves in a great mood, and everyone turned into motion. And where did we and our partisan work go? To which extent our partisan work must be behind, if our partisan work could be spoiled so easily by just a few separate decisions.

Malenkov: True.

Molotov: I think, we need to look carefully at what we have been doing, to really talk about self-criticism, and not to forget that we are responsible for certain things that need to be corrected carefully and without rush, which we have still practiced in very recent times on a series of issues; and without this, we cannot correct the business in earnest.

And now – what could this man count upon in the Soviet Union? I think, comrades, on our internal forces' side, our country is at such a bloom that anyone would envy how we get stronger economically year after year, growing fast, going up, strengthening up, creating top-notch things technically, breeding immense quantity of new trained qualified people. But, comrades, let us not forget that we have such amount of drawbacks and disorders in our work that we will have to work on this strongly and seriously.

In a rush, we have taken a series of decisions in recent years which have to be corrected. For example, we were forced to decisively correct and cancel the decision to build the Turkmen canal. It started with the fact that the canal cost several billion rubles. This is a useful thing, but it turns out that if we build it, it will cost us thirty billion rubles without direct benefits in the coming period. Is this really the most urgent of all tasks for the Turkmen and everyone else in the Soviet Union? It had to be corrected. We corrected this business. And concerning the series of other construction works. Take what comrades Malenkov and Khrushchev says about agriculture, for instance. We have an intolerable state of affairs in agriculture – especially animal farming, vegetable farming – concerning most necessary things. Here comrades were correct in saying that a person like Beria not only was not helpful in correcting and improving the economic work – he hampered, pushed the brakes, created obstacles to the straightening out of this business in every possible way. In the meantime, we have every opportunity to provide ourselves within short period of time with vegetables, and potatoes, and cabbage, and bring animal farming to really high levels. If only we could occupy ourselves with this without postponement, and not be scared to correct something in our work.

Voice from the audience: That is correct.

Molotov: Because we did not occupy ourselves seriously with this business, and we were too satisfied with decision-making and thinking that everything would be done by itself, but things do not work in this way.

Now, on the international situation. The fact is that it is now that we have such period in which the capitalist states, including major ones, are fearing for their existence, for their state of affairs, for what will happen to them tomorrow.

Indeed, an unprecedented historical event happened after the World War II – 800 million people find themselves united in the Soviet Union and around the Soviet Union. Two world markets have been formed, as comrade Stalin defined so spectacularly and exceptionally scientifically in his “Economic Problems”. It is not simply the market of the Soviet Union and the market of the capitalist states, but two world markets. It means that those states that have been united around the Soviet Union with the above-mentioned 800 million people – the Soviet Union, China, North Korea, Poland, GDR, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Albania – these states make up such mighty, unseen power that capitalism in this very

period fears for its own tomorrow.

And it in this very period that new and new adventurisms are being prepared against the Soviet Union. See, how the Korean ceasefire is being held back, delayed – nothing can be done. Our policy went such way – they are faced with the fact, they are forced to go to peace. The Chinese and Koreans went such way to provide for peace in the East. And at this very moment, all kinds of obstacles are being created on this way. It is such a period when the opportunities that have not been used at our side – the opportunities we had at our hands and used very poorly in certain ways – we now use them more actively, use the reserves that have been lying idle, change the tactics and create a series of new difficulties for them.

By this time we have created a gigantic economic base, which is represented not only by the Soviet Union, but also by the 500 millions of Chinese and 100 millions of other peoples. This is indeed a colossal base for Socialism, on which Socialism is undefeatable and moves forward irresistibly. At this time, someone who would step forward as a disorganizer of our work was needed. Here the class agent of our class enemy was sent to our country to bring the elements of disorganization into our work at this important time.

I think that Beria grew too insolent and started to hurry too much – he hurried too much, and this is how he gave himself up. Now we make use of having discerned in three and a half months what we could not discern in him for 15 years – because someone rushed him too much, and he started to get too insolent, to reveal too many claws – and we saw that he was a predator, an alien man, who had to be grabbed by his hand and put to the place where he belongs.

This was done by us, comrades, and I think that no weakening of the leadership of the Party and the country can be talked about: we have cleaned ourselves of agents of our class enemy, and made the Party stronger [Stormy ovation.]

We now stand on our feet as firmly as never before. In our environment, in our leadership core, at last we have honest relationships: we are not scared to talk to each other, unlike one and a half weeks ago – and it was precisely that. Maybe, you did not notice anything, but it could also be that you did notice something.

In my opinion, a simple conclusion follows from all this: we have to be firm, principled and unshakable in relation to our partisanship. In addition to that, we have to be vigilant in all our work – more vigilance in all our work.

[Ovation]

To be continued.

Lavrentiy Beriya. 1953, Stenogramma iyul'kovo plenuma TsK KPSS i drugie dokumenty, sosaviteli V. Naumov, Yu Sigachev, Moskva, Mezhdunarodnyye fond 'Demokratiya', 1999, pages 100-109.

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SERIOUS MISTAKES AND SHORTCOMINGS IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

M.Mitin

Preface

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik) carefully followed the course of developments in the Communist Party of Great Britain in the time of Lenin and Stalin. As is known Stalin played a cardinal role in working out the party programme known as the British Road to Socialism in his discussions with its leader Harry Pollitt.⁽¹⁾ Between 1950 and 1953 the programmatic concretisation of this can be scrutinised in the major CPGB party documents.⁽²⁾ The report by M. B. Mitin has to be seen in this context.

M.B. Mitin (1901-1987) was a leading theoretician of the CPSU(b). He was a member of the Central Committee from 1939 to 1961. In the years between 1930 and 1944 he was the main editor of the journal 'Under the Banner of Marxism'. In the years 1939-1944 he was the Director of the Institute of Marx-Engels-Lenin under the CC of the CPSU(b). And in the period 1950-1956 he was the chief editor of the Cominform journal 'For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy' and it was in this capacity that this document was written.⁽³⁾

In his report Mitin argues that the CPGB under Harry Pollitt had side-lined the party programme the British Road to Socialism and projected it into the future. The party had misjudged the attitude to be adopted vis-à-vis the Labour Party and it had not faced the question of the national independence of Britain from US imperialism. Mitin noted that organisationally the party in its party-building had dropped the territorial-productive basis. The CPGB had not become a Marxist Leninist Party, it considered that socialism would come about peacefully, it had not engaged in building up the peace campaign. Mitin's report is a serious indictment of the CPGB in the 1953 period and will be of value in tracing the origins of the development of rampant revisionism in the party. Although British Marxists such as Michael McCreery sought to comprehend the reformism of the CPGB, and even correctly pinpointed the refusal of the party to organise at the point of production⁽⁴⁾ their evaluations were far removed from the Leninist-Stalinist framework. Today

there are no parties in Britain which stand by the understanding of Stalin on the British Road to Socialism.

Vijay Singh

- ⁽¹⁾ J.V. Stalin, 'On the British Road to Socialism', <http://revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv13n2/britroad.htm>
 - ⁽²⁾ People's Democracy in Britain: 'The British Road to Socialism' (Britain, January, 1951); Britain Arise, *Report to the 22nd National Congress of the Communist Party*, Harry Pollitt; 'People's Democracy for Britain', *Report to the 22nd National Congress of the Communist Party*, John Gollan (Britain, Easter, 1952) in Archival Materials at www.revolutionarydemocracy.org
 - ⁽³⁾ Yu.V. Goryachev: Central"nyye Komitet 1917—1991, Istoriko-biograficheskiye spravochnik, ZAO"Parad", Moskva, 2005, ctr. 300.
 - ⁽⁴⁾ Michael McCreery, 'Organise at the Place of Work'.
<https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/uk.firstwave/mccreeryorganize.htm>
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To the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Comrade Khrushchev N.S. To the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Comrade Suslov M.A.

In the post-war years, the political influence of the Communist Party among the English workers has been falling. One of the indicators of the serious weakening of the party's influence among the masses are the results of parliamentary and municipal elections. Whereas in the parliamentary elections of 1945, 102,780 votes were cast for 20 candidates of the Communist Party, and the party won two seats in the parliament, only 91,815 and 21,610 votes were cast for 100 candidates in 1950 and for 10 candidates in 1951, respectively. In the same eight constituencies for parliamentary elections, 26,923 votes were cast for candidates from the Communist Party in 1950 and 17,974 in 1951. Since 1950 the party has not had representatives the parliament.

In the municipal elections of 1946, the Communist Party won 206 seats in municipal councils of all levels. At the municipal elections in 1953, the party not only did not receive a single new place, but also lost all its seats in London. Currently, there are only a few municipal councilors among the communists throughout the country.

The fall in the party's influence among the masses is also evidenced by the stagnation of growth in party ranks over recent years, as well as by the reduction in the *Daily Worker* newspaper circulation.

Meanwhile, favourable conditions for the work of the Communist Party are increasingly growing.

In the postwar years, British imperialism weakened further. The growth of the national liberation movements of the colonial peoples and the penetration of American capital into the British Empire have caused a sharp reduction in general revenues from the investments of British monopolies in the colonies of the empire, which constitute one of the main sources of strength of British imperialism. Thus, in 1949, for example, these revenues amounted to 112 million pounds sterling, compared with 205 million pounds sterling in 1938. At the same time, the costs of retaining the colonial countries in the subordination of British imperialism increased in the postwar years to 200 million pounds sterling a year, against 16 million pounds a year in the pre-war period. It is also necessary to add the military expenses on top of the costs of British imperialism, which considerably exceed the pre-war level.

One of the most important consequences of the general weakening of British imperialism is the actual loss of England's national independence. An increasing number of Englishmen of all political convictions are outraged by the fact that for the first time in the history of England, the troops of a foreign state - the USA and their military bases - are located on its territory in peacetime, that the country can not freely conduct its own independent political course, nor conduct trade with other countries at their own discretion.

An important consequence of the general weakening of British imperialism is a reduction in the possibilities for traditional "bribes" of the so-called labour aristocracy, "bribes" that over a long historical period were the economic basis of opportunism in the English labour movement.

A serious factor contributing to modern conditions in England is the continuing decline of the living standards of the working people after the Second World War. This is evidenced, among other things, by the fact that in the post-war years the general consumption in England decreased considerably compared to the pre-war level. In the country, prices are rising and taxes are increasing in larger amounts than in the pre-war years. The real wage of workers in 1952 was 20 percent lower than the pre-war level. For the period from 1946 to 1950 indirect taxes grew by 355 million pounds sterling.

An undoubted favourable factor for the work of the Communist Party is the desire of the working class of England to achieve fundamental changes in the political and social structure of English society. The sentiments of the main body of the organized workers of England - miners, workers of the steel industry, machine builders, shipbuilders, railway workers and other transport workers, builders - are absolutely determined: they firmly and categorically oppose all the Conservatives in all elections. By voting for the Labour Party, they hope to liquidate capitalism in England and carry out serious socialist reforms.

In the postwar years, the workers have been increasingly determined to fight for their vital interests. Whereas in the pre-war five-year period, there was an average of 660 strikes per year in England, in the postwar five-year period their number increased to 1,880. The fighting mood of the masses is also evidenced by the recent powerful strike of workers in the machine-building and shipbuilding industries, which swept over two million workers.

Along with the people's desire to end capitalism and defend their economic interests, there is a determined desire for peace, a desire to ensure normal relations with the Soviet Union and the countries of people's democracy. The policy pursued by the government of the Conservatives, as well as the Labour Party, is fundamentally contrary to this desire of the masses.

Finally, in the post-war years, the Communist Party of Great Britain for the first time in its existence received a clear Marxist programme, which gave answers to all the questions of the party's politics in the past. The programme clearly defined both the prospects for the development of the labour movement in England, and the conditions necessary for the implementation of this programme.

The fall of the political influence of the Communist Party among the masses in the presence of such favourable objective conditions for its work testifies to the presence of serious mistakes and shortcomings in the activities of the Party. What are these mistakes and shortcomings?

I. Mistakes and Shortcomings in the Political Course of the Party

In the programme *The British Road to Socialism* published in January 1951, a clear description of the party's general line is given in the current historical conditions. The most important condition for the establishment of the people's power in England, as indicated in the programme, is the formation of a broad popular coalition, an alliance of all strata of the working people, which can be created on the basis of a united working class as the decisive and leading force of this coalition.

The experience of communist parties in countries with people's democracy, as well as the Communist Parties of France and Italy, shows that the people's coalition and serious success in the struggle for the unity of the working class can be achieved only if the Communist Party is active among broad sections of the people.

The struggle for the unity of the working class in England and for the creation of a popular coalition based on a clear political platform can be successful only as a result of the active participation of the broad masses in the struggle against the current policy of the reactionary leadership of the Labour Party. One of the main slogans around which a broad popular coalition could arise is the struggle for national independence against American domination in England.

All this requires the Communist Party of England to develop an active and daily struggle for the implementation of its programme, which outlines present and future tasks. However, the leadership of the Communist Party immediately characterized its programme mainly as a "future programme." In August of last year Harry Pollitt wrote in the magazine *World News and Views* that *The British Road to Socialism* is a programme that "will especially respond to the interests of the youth, for it is precisely these young people who will devote most of their life to the cause of its implementation."¹ By assigning *The British Road to Socialism* the role of some "future" programme while putting forward various works of Harry Pollitt as the "current" programme, the party leadership thus takes a very ambiguous stance regarding the struggle of the present time for the political course outlined in the programme.

As many active members of the party admit, this can explain the absence of any serious work around the programme in the party, as well as a lack of understanding that the party, if really guided by the programme, could work with zeal that "would encourage many thousands with hesitancy to join the party now."²

The party leadership is not fully aware of the need to transform CPGB into a political leader of the workers' movement in the country in its day-to-day practical activities. While recognizing in words the need to achieve the leading role of the Communist Party in the working class, the Communist Party's Executive Committee clearly overestimates the role of the Labour Party and in fact gives the Communist Party only an auxiliary role. Thus, in April 1953, Harry Pollitt wrote that the task of the British working class and, consequently, of the Communist Party is to "turn the Labour Party into a genuinely class party."³

The same idea was reflected in a number of documents of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party. In a statement of September 26, 1953, in connection with the Labour Party conference, the Executive Committee stated that “the eyes of the whole world are turned to the Labour Party conference,” which “can have a decisive influence in the struggle for peace,” and that “the conference in Margate should speak from the name of England and end a situation when our country resembles a ship without a rudder.”

Such statements have nothing to do with the programme of the Communist Party and mean nothing more than planting harmful illusions about the leaders of the Labour Party in the working class.

As is known, the programme of *The British Road to Socialism* notes that “the talk of Peace and Socialism by the Labour leaders has proved to be a fraud and a deception,” that the Labour leaders “have nothing in common with Socialism or the interests of the working people,” that they are “in reality only a left-wing of the Tories.” “If the people are to advance”, the programme says, “both the Tories and their allies in the Labour Movement, the right-wing Labour leaders must be fought and defeated.”

Even at the February plenum of the Executive Committee in 1949, Harry Pollitt admitted that as a result of the reassessment of the role of the Labour Party, the Communist Party, after the war, was in captivity among people like Ernest Bevin and other “centrist preachers.” However, no serious conclusions were drawn from this recognition, and the Communist Party continued reassessing the possible role of the Labour Party in the matter of serious social transformations in England. Such a line does not in fact mean nominating the Communist Party for the role of political leader of the labour movement, but rather reducing the role of the Communist Party either to the left wing of the Labour Party, or to the role of the opposition to the leadership of the Labour Party. The Communists of England do not understand the independent role of the Communist Party and its special tasks. The Labour Party becomes for them, as it were, the centre of all their aspirations, as a result of which part of the communists view the Communist Party as “a necessary group working from the inside, in order to win the Labour Party to the side of progressive politics so that it can lead England to socialism.”⁴ This, in turn, does not draw the masses closer to the Communist Party, does not involve them in the Communist Party, but, on the contrary, forces them to withdraw from the Communist Party, to see power only in the Labour Party, and creates illusions among the masses about the Labour Party and its leaders. That is why in their practical activities,

aimed at ensuring unity of action with members of the Labour Party, the organisations of the Communist Party continue to concentrate their efforts only on the adoption of critical resolutions of the Labour Party and some trade unions. There is no persistent, systemic work with labour-workers on factories and enterprises. Calls that some Labourists use for peace, against the arms race and the policy of subordinating England's national interests to US dictates are not used enough in the political work of the party.

As a result, a broad political working class movement directed against the treacherous line of the top leadership of the Labour Party, disappears in the country.

The current campaign for a "new Labour government that would conduct a working internal policy"⁵ and "in support of a group of communist parliament members (it is unlikely that they will get any seats in the parliament, considering the current course of the Communist Party) would be in charge of a policy and programme that would remove England from the American-conservative path leading to destruction, and send it along a broad path to peace and socialism"⁶. This also objectively means nothing more than an intensification of illusions in the working class in regards to the Labour Party. Such a slogan only plays into the hands of the leadership of the Labour Party, for it helps to keep the working class and the broad masses under its influence.

The erroneous position of the Communist Party against the demands of the programme in relation to the Labour Party leads to the consolidation of the broad masses of the working class not around the Communist Party, but around the reactionary leadership of the Labour Party. This is also confirmed by the fact that the size of the Labour Party has been growing in recent years.

The national organizer of the Communist Party, M. Bennett, points out in the *World News and Views* magazine that there are only a few examples where the party leads an active struggle of the masses, that "our proposals for the deployment of the struggle are often routine and inadequate and sometimes do not have any connection with reality." He also claims that the party "does not understand what is happening in the minds of the people enough.... Too often we ask general appeals to our members to do this and that, but at the same time we do not think and help develop the mass struggle." "Instead of trying to consistently move from one stage to another, we often invent such forms of struggle that absolutely do not correspond to the situation."⁷

The separation of the party from the struggle of the masses is evidenced, for example, by this clear fact. In recent months, the movement against

rising prices has intensified in the country. Women's cooperative guilds collected signatures under a special petition to members of parliament, demanding measures to reduce the cost of living. Over two million signatures were collected. The cooperative movement unites about 11 million people, yet the party organisations did not direct their efforts to support this movement.

The party does not fulfill the other basic political requirement of the programme - to work to rally all the democratic forces of the country around the working class. The party did not deploy a purposeful and persistent campaign in defence of national independence, against the American occupation of England. None of the Executive Committee's decisions have a clear indication of the need to deploy work with the middle strata of the population, which should constitute the bulk of the democratic strata unified around the working class in the popular coalition.

Meanwhile, discontent with US dominance over England and British hostility towards US troops stationed in different parts of the country are well known. The absence of any addresses of the party leadership on this crucial issue led to the fact that the anti-American sentiments of the British people are rather heavily used by such demagogues as Bevin, Attlee and other leaders of the Labour Party, who are trying to channel these sentiments into a safe channel for the Americans.

Thus, serious mistakes in the political course of the party. The actual departure from the most important provisions of the programme hinder the transformation of the party into a mass organisation, into the political leader of the working people of England.

II. Errors and Shortcomings in the Organizational Work of the Party

The most important condition for fulfilling the tasks set in the programme of *The British Road to Socialism* is strict adherence to the Leninist organizational principles of building a Marxist party and the norms of party life.

The present organisational condition of the Communist Party is largely determined by mistakes made by party leadership in the first years after the end of the war due to a misunderstanding of the role of the Labour Party in the labour movement. The erroneous course taken by the 18th Congress of the Communist Party (to abandon the territorial-production criterion for party building and to replace it with an administrative-territorial criterion) was the result of a Social-Democratic deviation in the party.

Structuring the party based on the place of residence was conducted

under the slogan of strengthening the influence of the party in the electoral districts, led to the almost complete liquidation of party organisations on the prefronts. So, in 1949, the party had only three out of 1,300 party organizations located in factories. In 1952, the number of factories increased to 200. In addition, there were about 800 industries with three party members in each of them.

The Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain declared in February 1949 that it was necessary to return to the territorial and production criteria of party building. However, the Executive Committee began to implement practical measures to eliminate the mistakes made in the organisational structure of party organizations only in 1952, after the 22nd Party Congress. By the beginning of 1954, the number of party organizations had reached 476 even though there were about 200,000 industrial enterprises in the country.

The transfer of the centre of gravity of all Party work to the Party organisation, created on the basis of the residence of Party members, led to the fact that in some large industrial regions, the Communist Party still does not have its own organizations and enterprises. For example, in Lancashire, the centre of the cotton industry, factories have almost no party organisations. Until recently, there were no party organisations in Yorkshire steel foundries, nor in the factories in the woollen industry.

The erroneous attitude of the party leadership towards the organisational question led to the separation of the first party organisations from enterprises, and to a significant weakening of the political influence of the Communist Party in the working class of England. If before the war the party consisted mainly of workers in the main branches of industry, then, according to the composition of the delegates of the 21st and 22nd Party Congresses, as well as the London District Conference of 1953, the workers of the main branches of industry in England comprised only about 50 percent of the total number of delegates.

The table below shows the dramatic changes that have occurred in the numerical composition of the party during its existence.

Year	Members
1925	5,000
1926	10,370
1927	7,377
1935	6,500
1937	12,250

1938	15,750
1939	15,000
1942	50,000
1948	43,000
1950	38,853
1951	35,124
1952	35,674
1953	35,054

The number of members increased due to events such as the general strike of 1926, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, and the struggle of the party for the opening of the second front. However, the party did not consolidate the successes achieved in the growth of the party and each time after this growth, experienced a decline in its numbers.

Currently, the party has about 35 thousand members, which is 15 thousand less than 10 years ago.

Despite the unsatisfactory situation with the numerical composition of the party and the great fluidity, the Party has an incorrect, sectarian attitude toward the tasks of party growth. Many members of the party believe that “the new members of the party are a burden who must be pampered, attended, registered and re-registered.”⁸

The weakening of the party’s influence among the masses is also due to the fact that inner-party life in the primary party organisations does not ensure the upbringing and training of Communists as active fighters for the political line of the party. Thus, in May 1951 the Executive Committee noted “the absence of a struggle for party policy” and “an underestimation of the importance and misunderstanding of the essence of communist politics” as general shortcomings in the work of all Party organisations.

The nature of the current practical activity of party organizations gives grounds to conclude that many party organizations are still in fact purely propaganda organisations. “Many primary party organisations conduct active propaganda work, distribute *Daily Worker* and other literature, are active in industrial enterprises, but still do not lead workers on all issues, both local and national, but only conduct some agitation in connection with these issues. In other words, these party organisations have not yet achieved the self-realisation as the leader of the workers.”⁹

Despite the instruction of the 22nd Congress on the need to transform the meetings of primary party organisations into genuine centres of political education for the Communists, these meetings in a number of party

organizations are of an abstract nature, they are not connected with the vital interests of the working masses. As a result, the role of assemblies is diminished, many party members do not even consider it mandatory for them to regularly attend party meetings. Because of the lack of proper organisational ties between party members in most factory party organisations and the underestimation of the importance of the collective work of Communists among the masses, many party members work alone as “lone soldiers”¹⁰. In a number of primary party organizations, the whole work boils down to discussions on trade-unionist work. As a result, in September 1953, when the struggle of workers for increasing wages was growing in the country in the Scottish district organisation (one of the largest in the party), according to the secretary of the county of Locken, “an insufficient number of Communists and primary party organisations was won over by this campaign”.¹¹

The weak work of primary party organizations is due primarily to the fact that the leaders of district party committees do not have a permanent, lively connection with the factory party organisations and party groups, and poorly manage their work. The secretaries of the primary party organizations do not receive adequate assistance in practical work: “there are many requirements but too little practical advice.”¹² Hundreds of party organisations, according to the national organiser of the Communist Party, Bennett, do not attend members of the district party committees for several months. Regional committees substitute bureaucratic correspondence to live communication with grassroots organisations in a number of cases.¹³

The decision to move the most active workers of the party to supervising work in the factory Party organisations is not being carried out. Instead of actively assisting the work of the factory Party organisations in their own areas, some of the district committees are indifferent to their activities, and in some cases even inhibit the activities of the factory party organisations by transferring the promoted cadres into the districts without taking into account local conditions.

The work on the upbringing and growth of party activists in the party is unsatisfactory. At its plenary sessions, the Executive Committee hardly considers these issues. So, the February plenum of the Executive Committee in 1953 did not draw the Party’s attention to the need to cultivate the party asset when considering the question of strengthening the party and increasing the circulation. In his speech at this plenum, John Gollan was forced to say: “It’s amazing how few people talked about cadres here.”¹⁴

The Party leadership does not pay due attention to the education of

secretaries of grassroots party organisations. “Our attitude towards the secretaries of factory party organisations is directly criminal,” the member of the Executive Committee Finlay Hart said in his speech at the February plenum.

The mistakes made by the Communist Party after 1945 in matters of party building, as well as in connection with the misjudgement of the role of the Labour Party in the working-class movement in England, led to the fact that the Communist Party did not conduct serious work to ensure the unity of the working class and the conquest of the masses of the working people to their side which, as indicated above, is evidenced by the results of the parliamentary elections in England in 1950 and 1951.

The weakening of the party’s influence among the masses is explained not only by the insufficient work of the party to ensure the unity of the working class in the course of the mass struggle, but also the shortcomings in the work of the party in the electoral circles. Many local party organisations, capitulating when faced with difficulties, are against the proposals for nominating candidates from the Communist Party in their regions. Factory party organisations, having experience of mass work, are hardly connected with the party’s electoral activities.¹⁵

Despite the presence of about 8 million working women in England, the Communist Party does not pay due attention to political work among working women and does not use this great power in the struggle for peace and in the protection of the vital interests of the working people.

Party organisations continue to underestimate the value of work among young people. As a result, the English Komsomol, currently numbering only about 4,000 people in its ranks, does not actually influence the character of the youth movement in England.

The Executive Committee’s underestimation of the value of the peace movement certainly did not help to strengthen the party’s influence among the masses.

For a long time the Communist Party did not consider the struggle for peace as its central task despite the clear emphasis on it in the programme of *The British Road to Socialism*. The Communist Party did not develop the struggle for peace at workplaces and did not create a group of supporters of peace there. “We did not fight where we needed, because we could not base the struggle for peace in factories and trade unions, where there is a huge working class force and where military products are actually being created.”¹⁶ As noted during the pre-Congress discussion in 1952, the party as a whole was not convinced that the collection of signatures under the

Appeal for the Peace Treaty between the five great powers was of paramount importance, and therefore the party did not show the necessary activity in this sphere.¹⁷

One of the reasons preventing the Communist Party from strengthening its influence among the masses is the erroneous orientation of the Executive Committee towards the backward sentiments among the workers, and not the advanced, most conscious part of the working class, in order to fight for influence over the entire working class with the help of this part. The above orientation prevents party leadership in time to discern internal processes in the labour movement, in time to notice new phenomena in the mood of the working class and, accordingly, to build their daily activities.

An important reason for the stagnation in party work is also the fact that throughout the history of its existence, the Communist Party of Great Britain has never been the undivided political leader of any national movement. Because of mistakes in its political course, the Communist Party, in the eyes of the masses, is not a very serious political force, which is skillfully used by the leaders of the Labour Party, as well as the Conservatives. The working masses of Britain exert a certain confidence in the Communists for the most part only in trade union work. But as soon as it comes to some general political issues, they prefer to give their votes to the Laborites.

This is confirmed, in particular, by the statements of the Labour leaders and the bourgeois press. They recognise some political weight of the party and its influence only in the trade unions. That way, *The Daily Herald* most often expresses fears in connection with the work of the Communist Party in trade unions and in connection with the activities of communist workshop supervisors at the enterprises. *The Manchester Guardian* in the issue of November 14, 1953, characterizes the Communists of England as “harmless English Communists.” The newspaper *Times* in a special article in the issue of November 20, 1953 wrote that in England “communism has no significance in the political sphere, but has some influence in the trade union movement.”

There are significant manifestations of sectarianism in the activities of the Communist Party of Great Britain, which have found their expression in the party’s separation from the working masses. Speaking at the meeting of the Executive Committee in November 1952, Harry Pollitt pointed out that the struggle for unity of the working class will be successful only when “we can destroy all remnants of right opportunism and sectarianism that still exist in our party.”¹⁸

A serious obstacle to overcoming all the above-mentioned

shortcomings is the presence in the party of an atmosphere of complacency, the absence of a principled, effective self-criticism and, most importantly, the absence of a genuine struggle of the whole party for eliminating the revealed shortcomings.

The articles published recently in *World News and Views* on the work of district party organisations do not contain an expository criticism of the serious shortcomings in the activity of these circles, based on the results of the discussion by the Political Committee of the reports of secretaries of district committees. The articles note only some shortcomings and simultaneously express gratitude to the Political Committee for the district committees “for the excellent report and for the year of the beautiful selfless work for peace and socialism.”

The presence of elements of smug complacency in the party is also evidenced by the following. During his presentation at the February plenum of the Executive Committee in 1953, Harry Pollitt spoke of the “striking achievements” of the Communist Party in 1952. This evaluation of the party’s activity is clearly exaggerated.

During the campaign for re-registration of members of the party in 1953, some senior officials from the Executive Committee and the newspaper *Daily Worker* announced a significant increase in the party membership last year, in 1952. However, after the end of the registration campaign, *World News and Views* announced the membership of the party of 35,054, that is, less than last year .

It is known that the newspaper *Daily Worker* has a number of significant deficiencies, but the executive officers of the Executive Committee call it “our beautiful newspaper” only, suppressing its shortcomings.

Along with this, it should be noted that collective leadership, the highest principle of party leadership, is violated in the activities of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party. There are manifestations of personality cult in the party, as evidenced by the fact that the programme of the party for the next period was Harry Pollitt’s brochure *Which Way for the Workers?*¹⁹

In the party press, as well as in the speeches of party leaders, the decisions of the congresses and the plenary meetings of the Executive Committee are rarely mentioned, and most of the quotations come from the reports or speeches of Harry Pollitt. Pollitt himself rarely mentions the decisions of the party in his reports and speeches, more often referring to his own statements.

The party leadership constantly notes shortcomings in the party’s

activities, but as a rule, it does not take decisive and timely measures to eliminate them.

The analysis of errors and shortcomings in organisational work testifies to the gap between word and deed in the activities of the party, which is one of the indicators of the deep-rooted social democratic, reformist remnants in the Communist Party of Great Britain.

III. Errors and Shortcomings in the Ideological Work of the Party

One of the reasons for the stagnation in the Communist Party of Great Britain is the low ideological-theoretical level of its members, the level which does not correspond to the tasks facing the party, and seriously hampering the implementation of the programme of *The British Road to Socialism*.

The English workers' movement is deeply rooted in social democratic "ideas" that socialism will be achieved peacefully, that the class struggle must be rejected, that the state is a neutral organism standing above class that can serve any party that comes to power; that workers will always depend on entrepreneurs; that foreign policy is a "national" issue facing the classes, and that the goal is to "continue" the foreign policy of liberals and conservatives; that in order to preserve the living standards of the working people, it is necessary to continue to dominate and exploit the countries of the empire.²⁰

Mistakes committed by the Communist Party in relation to the Labour Party, as well as errors in the organisational construction of the party are largely due to the insufficiently high ideological, political and theoretical level of the leadership of the party itself. The current illusions of the Executive Committee of CPGB regarding the "new Labour government" that can allegedly be forced to carry out a truly socialist policy, an underestimation of the movement of the supporters of peace, a weak struggle for the implementation of the party's programme show that the party leadership itself has not yet been freed from the remnants of social democracy.

Until now, the leadership of the Communist Party has not deployed any serious ideological struggle against the social-democratic ideology. Moreover, there is an underestimation of the importance of raising the ideological and theoretical level of party members, which is inherent in social-democracy. Only in October 1950, the Executive Committee discussed at its plenum the state of party enlightenment in the party and outlined measures aimed at improving this work, for the first time after the war.

However, up to the present time there has been a tendency to ignore political studies in the party.

The leading workers of the party disregard independent study. In the past, during the 1952-1953 school year, many party leaders who joined in independent study under the programme of the drafted type did not finish their studies, and some of them did not even begin.

The Executive Committee, noting this shortcoming, instead of resolutely fighting the disregarding attitude of some leading Party workers to study, suggests that "the advanced programme for the new school year should not be issued; instead more developed comrades should advise those engaged in the beginner programme".²¹

As before, the level of study in the primary party organizations is low. There are some organisations where classes are conducted irregularly, from time to time only.

There are shortcomings in the party classes as well. The term duration of classes is extremely small - all central party courses function only one week. Classes are conducted in a hurry, students are deprived of the opportunity to devote sufficient time to independent reading and preparation for classes. The term of study in district Party organizations is very short - not more than a week; part of these courses are only functioning one or two days.

Party press is used weakly. The pages of the party press rarely publish articles on the issues of party enlightenment. Rarely are there any articles exposing the ideology of the leadership of the Labour Party.

The political level of the newspaper *Daily Worker* currently does not meet the requirements for the central organ of the Communist Party. While giving a significant place to the sports chronicle and various reports of a sensational nature, the newspaper still does little to illuminate and analyze the struggle of the working class in England. The *Daily Worker* very rarely talks about the life and activities of the party. There is no coverage of the tasks of party building. Often, *Daily Worker* publishes messages that do not correspond to the party's political line, which indicates that the Executive Committee has no permanent political control over *Daily Worker*.

The Executive Committee does not criticize the shortcomings in the newspaper's work during its meetings. Thus, at a meeting on November 14-15, 1953, after hearing the report of the editor *Daily Worker*, the Executive Committee adopted a special resolution to increase the circulation of the newspaper, but the issues related to raising the political level of the newspaper were completely avoided.

The unsatisfactory ideological and political work of the party among the masses is also evidenced by the following fact:

Immediately after the publication of *The British Road to Socialism* in January 1951, the party began its explanatory work among the masses, but at present the popularisation of the programme's ideas has almost ceased. Insufficient work on explaining the programme and underestimation of this work are the result of the fact that many members of the party do not understand the programme, do not understand its role and significance. "The entire party organization, from top to bottom, did not fully understand the role and significance of our prospects and of *The British Road to Socialism* for a long time." However, the programme was met with enthusiasm at first, and more than 15,000 copies of the programme were distributed, but then the recognition of the role of the programme declined.²²

By pushing the so-called "short-term programme", the party leadership thereby introduced disbelief in the possibility of implementing the programme of *The British Road to Socialism*, which weakened the struggle of the party for its programme and the struggle for introducing the Marxist-Leninist ideas set forth in the programme to the masses.

IV. Conclusions and Suggestions

Analysis of the situation in the Communist Party of Great Britain after the adoption of the programme of *The British Road to Socialism* leads to the following conclusions:

1. The leadership of the party underestimated and abandoned some of the programme's most important features of practical activities. As a result, the political attitude towards the Labour Party is essentially old and opportunistic. The leadership of the party is not thinking about an active mass political struggle leading to the unity of the Communist workers and the Labour Party. Instead, it adopts a "top-down" process of unjustified hopes of the possibility of adopting the slogan of unity by the leaders of the Labour Party and trade unions. This also explains the fact that the party does not conduct an energetic struggle on two fronts - against the Conservatives on the one hand, and against the top leadership of the Labour Party, on the other.

2. The Party in fact has not become a Marxist-Leninist party, a party of a new type, a militant avant-garde of the working class. Party organisations are absent in most of the country's biggest enterprises. Those that exist are poorly connected with the working masses, and all their inner-Party work does not ensure the proper training of active Communist members struggling

to carry out party policy among the masses.

3. The strong remnants of Social-Democracy on the one hand and sectarianism on the other are deeply rooted in the activity of the Party. The fact that for its more than thirty years of existence, the Communist Party has achieved a certain very limited recognition of its role only in trade union activities speaks of the party's forgetfulness of serious political activity among the masses.

4. The party experiences a violation of the Leninist norms of party life and party leadership. There is a separation of the party's central organs from the lower-level party bodies and primary organisations. Criticism and self-criticism are not developed. The principles of collegial leadership are violated. There are manifestations of the cult of personality.

5. The low ideological and theoretical level of party members, as well as the underestimation by the party leadership of serious and systematic work on the Marxist tempering of party cadres and the education of party activists, is one of the main reasons for the unsatisfactory struggle against the social-democratic remnants and sectarian sentiments in the party.

The Communist Party of Great Britain will be able to accomplish its tasks successfully only if there is a radical restructuring of all the Party's activities accompanied by resilient elimination of serious mistakes and shortcomings.

The 23rd Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain is to be held in the near future. In order for this congress to play its role and turn out to be a turning point in the activity of the party, it is necessary on the eve of the congress and at the congress itself to strongly criticize the existing mistakes and shortcomings in the activity of the party and work out the necessary measures to overcome them.

To render practical assistance to the party, in our opinion, it would be expedient to carry out the following measures:

1. To discuss the situation in the party with the leadership and recommend them to come forward with detailed criticism of mistakes and shortcomings in the work of the party at the plenum of the Executive Committee before the upcoming congress and at the congress itself.

2. In connection with the fact that one of the most important issues in the activity of the Communist Party today is the struggle for the national independence of Britain, for domestic and foreign policy independent of American imperialism, for the policy of peace, against the arms race, it is advised to recommend to the Executive Committee of the Communist Party

to express itself on this issue with an appropriate political statement or declaration. Such a document, drawn up on the basis of the programme of *The British Road to Socialism*, containing a correct political evaluation of England's international and domestic situation and raising issues of relevance to the broad masses, could be the basis for uniting the broad strata of the population of England to fight the subordination of the economic and political life of England to American dictates.

3. In order to facilitate and intensify all practical activities of the Communist Party, it is advisable to instruct the Executive Committee to involve more new, young, and capable party cadres in the leadership who, if correctly combined with the old cadres of the party, could materially assist the Executive Committee in carrying out the necessary restructuring of the party's work.

M. Mitin
January 21, 1954

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Translated from the Russian by Polina Brik and edited by Leonard Zorfass

Endnotes:

¹ *World News and Views*, Issue 35, August 22, 1953

² *World News and Views*, Issue 40, October 10, 1953

³ *Communist Review*, April 1953

⁴ From a letter of the Secretary of the Yorkshire District Party Committee of December 5, 1952, addressed to the leading party workers.

⁵ See the Statement of the Executive Committee of September 26, 1953 in connection with the Labour Party Conference. *World News and Views*, Issue 39, October 3, 1953.

⁶ See Harry Pollitt, *Which Way for the Workers?*

⁷ *World News and Views*, Issue 40, October 10, 1953

⁸ From the speech of John Gollan at the February plenum of the Executive Committee in 1953, see *World News and Views*, Issue 9, February 28, 1953

⁹ An article by John Gollan in *World News and Views*, Issue 39, October 3, 1953

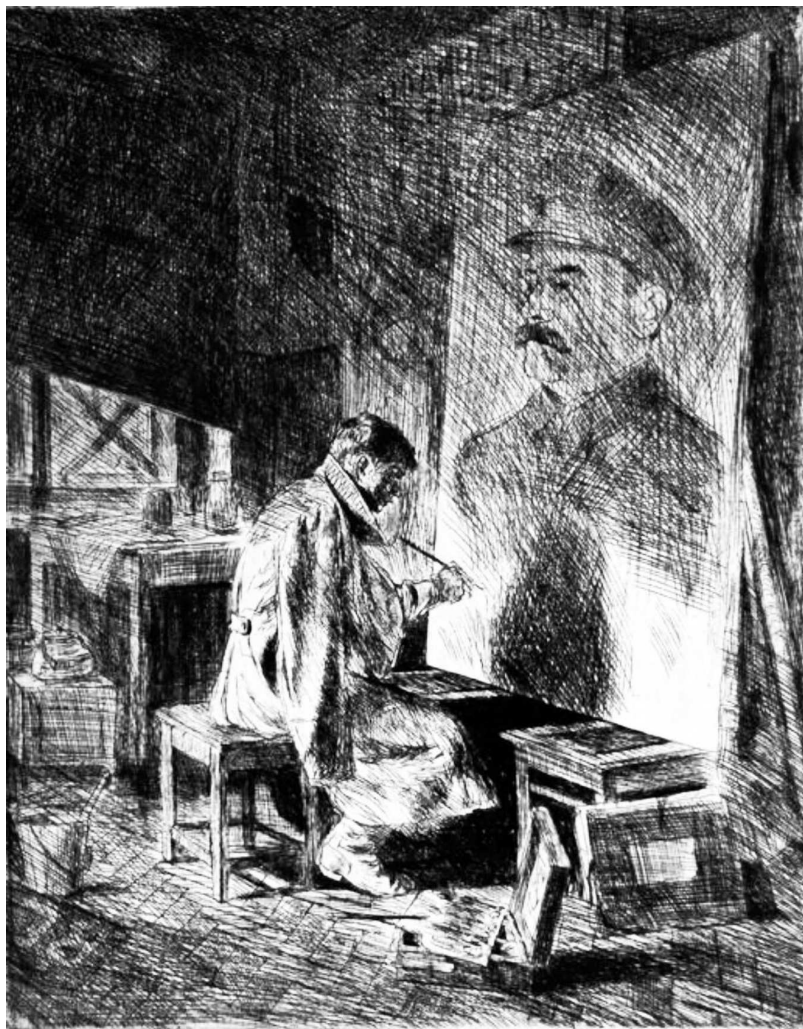
¹⁰ *World News and Views*, Issue 11, March 14, 1953

¹¹ From the article "For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy!" by Locken, sent to the newspaper

- ¹² From Finlay Hart's speech at the plenum of the Executive Committee in February 1953.
- ¹³ *World News and Views*, Issue 9, October 10, 1953
- ¹⁴ *World News and Views*, Issue 9, February 29, 1953
- ¹⁵ From the article by John Gollan in *World News and Views*, Issue 39, October 3, 1953
- ¹⁶ F. Welsh's article in *World News and Views*, Issue 14, 1952
- ¹⁷ The article of K. and B. Thomas in *Worlds News and Views*, Issue 11, March 15, 1952
- ¹⁸ *World News and Views*, Issue 45, November 15, 1952
- ¹⁹ See *World News and Views*, Issue 20, May 23, 1953, Bennett's article "The Party and *Daily Worker*", based on his report at the Executive Committee plenum on May 10, 1953.
- ²⁰ See Harry Pollitt's Report at the XXII Congress of CPGB.
- ²¹ *Communist Review*, October 1953
- ²² From the materials of the conference of the Lancashire District Organisation, held from February 28 to March 1, 1953. The materials of the conference are published separately as a brochure entitled "Lancashire and Cheshire are Looking to the Future"



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