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Fight back Massive Hike in Fuel Prices

The massive hike in fuel prices is yet another attack on the masses of the country. The huge amount that is being extracted from the consumers, of Rs. 7,600 crores, amounts to a robbery of Rs. 400 per year from every family in the country. The major burden of this hike has fallen on the poorest with a 50% hike in kerosene. While the lightest burden is on the rich with a mere 9% increase in the price of petrol. A 17% increase in diesel prices will effect all commodities as freight rates will go up. In addition, due to this hike, already buses, trains, autos, taxis, etc., have begun increasing their rates. The 18% increase in the price of an LPG cylinder will chiefly hit the middle classes. In other words, all the basic necessities of life will get more expensive, affecting the poor and middle-classes the maximum. As basic necessities form a small fraction of the expenditure of the rich (most of which goes on luxuries) they will be the least affected by this price hike. Even prior to this hike, in the wholesale price index for all commodities, the fuel, oil, lubricant group witnessed an increase of 30%, while that of manufactured commodities saw a marginal increase. Now this will increase even further.

The chart in the next column gives a picture of the present hike.

	Rupees per Litre			
	Old Rate	Present Hike	New Rate	Percentage Increase
Kerosene	5.55	2.81	8.36	50.2%
LPG (Rs. Per cylinder)	196.55	36.2	232.75	18.4%
Diesel	14.04	2.5	16.54	17.4%
Petrol	26.07	2.38	28.45	9.1%
Aviation Fuel	17.22	3.6	20.82	20.3%

With this hike the 'official' inflation rate which was a mere 3% last year is expected to jump from the present 6% to 10% in the current year. During this year the price of kerosene (the poor man's fuel) has risen by roughly 300% from Rs. 3/- litre to nearly Rs. 9 per litre. Besides, the price hike will particularly hit the agriculturist as the production costs of fertilisers will rise and irrigation costs will increase due to increased expenditure on diesel. Industrial growth will also slow-down as costs will go up, and people's purchasing power will decline further.

The reason for the big hike in taxes is blamed on the rise in international costs of fuel. We are told, ad nauseum by the media, that international crude oil prices have increased three fold from a low of \$10 per barrel in December '98 to over \$30 a barrel today. They do not say that the average cost per barrel last year (1999-2000) was \$18 a barrel. And they do not explain why fuel prices in India did not drop when international prices fell so low in December '98. Besides, they hide the fact that with the higher cost of fuel the government has made windfall gains through higher tax collections (customs and excise duties) and the Indian oil companies have made gigantic profits as their oil is purchased by the government at international rates and not according to their actual cost of production. Besides, by allowing the

In this issue

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Putin as Chief Russian Arms Dealer | 3 |
| 2. On States Reorganisation | 6 |
| 3. Interview | 9 |
| 4. Reports from Bihar | 11 |
| 5. Militant Actions paralyse Europe | 14 |
| 6. People's war in Nepal | 18 |
| 7. Palestine — For a New Intifada | 19 |
| 8. Electricity Bill, 2000 | 21 |
| 9. Disaster of Health Care in India | 26 |

rupee to depreciate by as much as 6% in the last few months, this one factor alone has led to a big increase in costs of crude oil imports. So with the rise in price of present crude costs all have made massive gains which has to be paid for by the Indian consumer. The oil producers and distributors (foreign and Indian) have made gigantic profits, the government has increased its tax collections beyond imagination; but the people are made to suffer. Besides, a major component of fuel price to the consumer is tax and not the cost of the fuel. This tax continues to rise with the increasing cost of fuel.

So, the reason for this massive hike in fuel cost are due to the pro-imperialist policies of the government and not just the rise in international prices of crude oil. The first reason is the sabotage of indigenous production and increasing dependence on imports; the second is the removal of subsidies and increasing taxation on the common man, at the dictates of the IMF/World Bank.

Killing Indigenous Production

While indigenous production of crude oil grew at the rate of 9% annually during the 1980s, during the 1990s it not only stagnated, but even dropped. Dictated by the structural adjustment programme of the imperialists, India was made to depend on imported crude, and increased indigenous production was suddenly brought to a stop. Crude production actually fell from 35.3 million tonnes (mt) in 1995-96 to 33 mt in 1998-99. At present it is around 32 mt which barely meets 30% of the country's needs of 102 mt.

It is therefore not surprising that the import bill for crude oil has been skyrocketing during the past decade from \$ 6 billion in 1990/91 to an estimated \$19 billion (Rs. 80,000 crores) in the current year. While in 1996/97 it comprised 26% of the total import bill, in the current year it will increase enormously. In the first five months of the current financial year (April-August) the trade deficit increased by 9% to \$ 4.3 billion, compared to \$3.9 billion in the same period last year. Due to these high oil imports the current account deficit is likely to leap to unmanageable amounts this year. The following chart indicates this growth in the oil import bill :

Oil Import Bill in billion \$	
1974-75	1.5
1980-81	6.7
1990-91	6.0
1996-97	10.0
1999-2000	13.0
2000-2001 (projected)	19.0

Besides, even the small quantity produced

indigenously by ONGC and OIL India, is paid for according to international rates. **The government pays for domestic crude at the rate of 80% of the global price of crude oil. The actual cost of production of indigenous crude is \$7 per barrel. So, with global prices over \$30 per barrel, the government is paying the oil companies a massive \$ 24 per barrel which is over three times the average cost — giving these government owned companies windfall profits.**

The government could easily have balanced the high cost of foreign crude with the low cost of indigenous production and thereby protected the consumer from the massive price rise. But, on the contrary, the government and its oil companies, sought instead to make windfall profits by charging artificially high rates to the ONGC and OIL India — at the consumer's expense.

Massive Taxation — A Major Cause for High Prices

Even before this price hike, in the final cost of most petroleum products over 50% constitutes tax. For example in Mumbai 52% of the retail price of diesel is accounted for by taxes. The sales tax on diesel in Mumbai is 34% (in Delhi 12%). This is in addition to the 25% customs duty and 16% excise duty. Similarly on petrol excise duty was 32%, customs duty 25% and sales tax in Mumbai is 27%. In Delhi the price of petrol rose by Rs. 2 per litre in January this year as sales tax was hiked from 12 to 20%. Even on an item like kerosene the government charges an excise duty of 8%.

So, while purchasing diesel/petrol the major cost we pay for is taxes and not the cost of the fuel. For all the media's big hype on the 'big' subsidy on LPG, diesel and kerosene, it ignores the fact that the existing taxation, far exceeds the subsidy. The tax content in the final cost is clear from the following table :

	Diesel (Mumbai) per litre	Petrol (Delhi) per litre
Basic Cost	6.60	12.50
Central Taxes	4.25	8.00
Sales Tax (states)	4.50	4.30
Dist. and Commission	1.56	1.30

Due to this huge taxation, with the increase in prices, the government's collection from taxes on petroleum products in the current year are expected to exceed its target of Rs. 25,000 crores by a massive Rs. 10,000 crores. This extra profit to the government is alone able to wipe out a major portion of the so-called oil pool deficit without increasing a single paise on fuel prices. To hide this reality, the government has now reduced nominally the

(Continued on page 5)

Putin, as Chief Russian Arms Dealer

— Arvind

The same Maurya Sheraton, the same photo pose before the Taj Mahal, a similar address to the joint session of parliament it was a feeble attempt to mimick the chief superpower bandit, Clinton. This ex-KGB spymaster, after taking power, is seeking a more assertive imperialist role, after the debacle of the Yeltsin years. Yet, this lame imperialist chieftain, presiding over a mafia-type economy at home, has just witnessed its last toe-hold in East Europe — Yugoslavia — begin its drift away from its clutches. With India, while the Soviet legacy of the past lingers on, specifically in the sphere of armaments, general relations with Russia has been at a low key. A common problem faced in Chechnya and Kashmir by the two rulers, was, of course, a bond that helped sustain relations.

But, below the bonhomie of the 17 agreements signed, the trust of the earlier Soviet period did not exist. With the Indian rulers licking the feet of the almighty superpower, a bankrupt Russia, was small fry, and Putin chiefly focussed on major arms deals and nuclear collaboration. Russia got what it wanted : gigantic sale of weapons and assurances of extensive nuclear collaboration. The Indian rulers, as usual, got the crumbs: big kickbacks and assurances that Russia would once again buy Indian tea and tobacco, which are in a state of crisis.

Let us view the significance of Putin's visit, on India within the backdrop of the changing geo-political alliances in the sub-continent, Afghanistan and Central Asia.

A Weak Political Tie-Up

The much acclaimed Indo-Russian Strategic Partnership signed by Vajpayee and Putin, had more rhetoric than essence. Though it covered vast areas of politics, economics, defence, science and technology, and culture, it was more a declaration of vague intentions rather than concrete steps at collaboration. Unlike Clinton's Vision Statement, wherein each clause was linked to a direct follow up, here the follow up was only in the sphere of arms deals, nuclear collaboration and coordination in the fight against terrorism emanating from Afghanistan. But even while signing this statement, both parties went out of their way to state that this 'new partnership' was "*not directed against any other state or group of states*".

On most international issues Putin was careful to keep its views on line with that of the other imperialist powers.

On Kashmir it called for a negotiated settlement with Pakistan, it gave vague support to India's membership to the UN Security Council and demanded that India sign the CTBT.

There was a joint document on closer cooperation on tackling the Taliban and it was decided to establish a Joint Working Group on Afghanistan (India has already set up similar groups with the USA and Iran).

Putin sought to somewhat retrieve the relations between the two countries, that had considerably weakened after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the decline of Russia as an imperialist superpower. Though some agreements were signed in 1993/94, Russia was too pre-occupied saving its crumbling economy and protecting its backyard from an American/EU/NATO political offensive, to bother much about India.

In fact, in January 1993 a new Friendship treaty was signed, but at that time the Russians clearly said that this was qualitatively different from the 1971 one. And again, in June '94, two more agreements were signed, but both lacked teeth. The first was a "*Declaration on the Further Development and Intensification of Cooperation between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation*"; the second was the "*Moscow Declaration on the Protection of the Interests of Pluralistic States*." Though the present agreement on "*strategic partnership*" is similar to those earlier three, the arms and nuclear agreements will, no doubt, to some extent, continue to make India's defence dependent on Russia.

Gigantic Military Deals

India and Russia signed an agreement to establish "*an inter-ministerial commission on military-technical cooperation*" and signed three major defence deals. The *inter-governmental commission on defence* has been set up to control and coordinate all aspects of military hardware exchanges between the two sides.

In the first two defence deals India, will acquire 320 of the Russian T-90 tanks and manufacture 150 SU-30 MK1 fighter jets at the HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd) in a combined deal worth \$3 billion (Rs. 14,000 crores). The proposed 'indigenously' built 150 Sukois would be in addition to the 50 acquired by Delhi (only 10 delivered so far) in a deal worth more than \$1.4 billion signed in 1996. These deals were struck after months of haggling by the two sides over the price of the tanks and fighters. With Russia's defence industry in the doldrums, this huge agreement came as a boon to it.

Besides this, after years of negotiations, Russia finally made India take its outdated aircraft carrier, Admiral Gorshkov. This is lying as junk with the Russians and is to be dumped on India supposedly free of cost. Ofcourse, in this agreement, Russia will undertake its modernisation, at a massive cost. India also will have to buy 40 MIG-29K planes, Sea Harriers, and also KA-28 and KA-31 early warning helicopters.

The Russians have also stated that weapons deals with India, worth \$5 billion to \$7 billion, are in the pipeline, including air defence systems, rockets and conventional artillery, more aircraft, cruise missiles and other arms.

Besides these arms deals, enormous emphasis was put on long-term collaboration in the nuclear field. Obviously the Russians want to pass on the Chernobyl experience to India !! Top atomic energy officials signed a Memorandum of Understanding on intensifying bilateral cooperation in the peaceful use of the atomic energy. Russia has plans in partaking in 50% of India's numerous new nuclear energy projects. Russia stated that international restrictions would not interfere with Indo-Russian nuclear cooperation, whether India signed the CTBT or not. To emphasise the enormous significance of this area of collaboration to Russia, Putin paid a high profile visit to the BARC (Bhabha Atomic Research Centre) in Mumbai. This nuclear collaboration by-passes the restrictions imposed by the US, after the Pokhran nuclear explosion.

Though India has, of late, diversified its arms purchases, involving Israel, South Africa, France and Britain, the size of these agreements indicates that, dependence on Russia will continue. Though earlier purchases have proved to be sub-standard, the kickbacks from Russia being high. India continues its purchases from Russia.

Declining Economic Links

Putin addressed a gathering of CEOs of India's comprador bourgeoisie in a bid to increase bilateral trade and once again enter the core sector of the economy. But with Russia low on both capital and technology, it had little to offer. India's main focus was on trade. The drop of export since the Soviet days, has adversely affected many commodities in India, like tea and tobacco.

Since 1990, bilateral trade with Russia has dropped from \$5 billion to barely \$1 billion. In addition to this, half-a-billion dollars of trade survives on the outstanding rupee-ruble debt, which will evaporate when most of this debt is crased by 2003.

At present (1999-2000), India's exports to Russia is

only 2.5% of total exports; while imports from Russia are a mere 1.3% of total imports.

Earlier, on September 12, in a bid to boost trade between the two countries, India, Russia and Iran signed an agreement on an international north-south corridor, which will facilitate faster and smoother transport of goods between the two countries — along the corridor connecting India through the sea route to Iran and then via the Caspian Sea to Russia and beyond.

Russia's Geo-political Interests

India has not been high on Russia's agenda except to dump its huge stock of military hardware. Putin has indicated his foreign policy priorities by visiting Europe and East Asia first, before coming to the sub-continent.

But what shocked the Indian ruling elite most, was the fact that just a few days prior to Putin's India visit, a special presidential envoy visited Pakistan. This is the first time in decades that such a high-level visit of a Russian to Pakistan has taken place — and that too on the eve of Putin's visit to India. It was an open slap in the face, which the Indian rulers tried to play down, blinded as they were by the huge kick-backs in the offing. And as though this was not enough, to rub salt in the wounds, the Special Envoy announced in Islamabad (September 27), that Pakistan had invited Putin, and that the Russian leader had accepted the offer to visit their country. And, two days before Putin's departure for India, the Russian media reported, at length, that the Special Envoy's visit to Pakistan was not just about taking up the issue of 'terrorism' (in Central Asia), but the first step towards a serious dialogue with Pakistan.

The process of dialogue had, in fact, begun a month earlier, after the meeting between Putin and Musharraf on the sidelines of the UN Millennium Summit. This was followed by a visit of Pakistan's Intelligence Chief to Moscow. The Special Envoy, while in Pakistan, met Foreign Minister, Sattar, Interior Minister, Haider, and ISI chief Lt.General Mahamood Ahmed.

Obviously, Russia seeks to keep its options open in its relations with countries in the sub-continent, specifically given India's recent close alliance with the US. Besides, Russia hopes to 'engage' Pakistan to help rein in the Taliban's support to islamic insurgencies in Central Asia which are threatening to take on menacing proportions. Specifically, with the Taliban's major victories against General Masood's Northern Alliance this summer, and the continuing guerrilla strikes in Chechnya, Russia feels increasingly threatened.

The Taliban now controls 90% of Afghanistan as increasingly more commanders of the Northern Alliance

have been surrendering. Moscow has been actively propping up the Northern Alliance, seeing it as a buffer between the Taliban areas and Tajikistan and the rest of Central Asia. Russia has lately formed a military alliance with 5 CIS countries to fight the danger of Islamic insurgencies and the threat of Taliban forces entering Tajikistan.

The entire situation is in a flux. While, on the one hand, Russia seeks to use India as part of the anti-Islamic axis to pressurise Afghanistan and sustain its long-standing ties with the country; on the other, it cannot fully trust India, and so seeks to engage Pakistan, to prevent Islamic support to insurgencies in Central Asia.

(Continuation from page 2)

tax on fuel. Here too, the excise duty on kerosene has not been touched but that on petrol has been reduced by half — from 32% to 16%.

From this it is very clear that the fuel cost, comprises only a small proportion of the total cost paid by the consumer. The government must immediately reduce its tax on basic necessities, including fuel and increase that on luxuries. It is, in fact, doing exactly the opposite. It gives huge tax concessions to the Information Technology sector, tax holidays for export business, reduction in taxes on cars, fridges, washing machines, etc., and numerous other tax reliefs to big business. But it is increasing taxation and raising the prices on basic necessities like kerosene, diesel, LPG, electricity, water, health, etc. This is the major reason for the present price hike, not just the rise in prices of global crude oil.

Arise and Fight back the Attacks on People's Living Standards

The present hike in fuel prices is part of the so-called 'economic reforms' being pursued by the BJP-led government and supported by all the parties at the central and state levels. The opposition to this hike by the alliance partners and the opposition parties is the biggest hoax of the day. All vigorously support the 'economic reforms'. For example, Naidu, while himself increasing all charges (electricity, water, etc) enormously, is making a pretense of opposing this hike. In fact he has already raised the bus fares in view of the hike in diesel costs; yet continues to make noises against the hike. The Trinamul Congress for all its threats has never once voiced its opposition to 'economic reforms'. In fact, its intention is to implement it even more wholeheartedly than the CPI(M) in West Bengal. Its mock opposition is merely with an eye on the assembly elections, due next year, and to gain more ministerial posts for its elements.

Even if there is a nominal rollback to appease alliance

As far as the people of all these countries go, they have little to gain from all these political games. Russian arms will be used against the people of India, and against India's neighbours; in order to crush the people's movements and facilitate India's hegemony in South Asia. Also, the Russian and Indian leaders' political manoeuvrings, is aimed at crushing by force the national aspirations of the people of Kashmir, Chechenya, Central Asian Republics, etc. These 17 agreements between Russia and India is a deal between gangsters and criminals of both countries. The peoples of Russia and India must jointly oppose such deals, as part of the worldwide joint struggles against imperialism and all reaction. □

partners the burden on the masses will continue to be unbearable. In fact, a few days before the hike, the petroleum minister, Ram Naik, stated that they intended to raise Rs. 5,500 crores through the hike. In actual fact they have raised Rs. 7,580 crores. That gives a huge Rs. 2,000 crores extra for a roll back in case the alliance partners make too much noise. And with this possibility in mind, the Congress (I) and other opposition parties are also making much noise, seeking cheap credibility expecting a possible rollback. Ofcourse, with or without the rollback they will all soon be silent, thinking that they have successfully fooled the masses through mock opposition. Yet, even a Rs. 5,500 crores hike is itself a massive burden on the backs of an already impoverished people.

But the masses are no longer fooled so easily and in such a cheap way. Though there is disgust for these parliamentary manipulators, there is, as yet no force to rally them. **The people must rise as a storm to oppose this price hike and paralyse the administration until it concedes its demands. Besides, the struggle must go beyond this immediate hike, to oppose the very policies of 'economic reforms' which is at the root cause for this increasing burden on the people. If not fought back, the government and ruling classes will continue increasing the burden on the people, will continue slashing welfare schemes, will continue reducing subsidies to the poor... and will make an already miserable existence even more intolerable. The time has come to strike back.**

And to do so, the people must first free themselves from the influence of the parliamentary trash, who at best put up mock opposition, and fight the rulers in a revolutionary way. It is only through revolutionary struggles that effective blows can be struck at the rulers and the hike in the prices of fuel and other necessities reversed.

— Kamlesh (20-10-2000)

Take the Struggle for Separate States Forward !

Establish People's Control over Land, Forest and Industry !

— Rakesh

On November 1, 2000 the three new states of Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh are finally coming into being. After decades of long struggles by the people of these states a partial victory has been achieved. After continuous opposition for years, by all ruling class parties, they had to finally bow before the wishes of the people. Power, ofcourse, will pass into the hands of local semi-feudal and comprador elements. Already the political sharks of these regions have been fighting for the booty that is to come their way.

Ever since the passage of the three Bills there has been a mad scramble for the potential loot : fights for the capital city of the new state and the huge contracts associated with it; fights over location of the high courts; fights for the Chief Minister and other ministerial posts; fights over the appointments of top bureaucrats it has been a maniacal dog-eat-dog competition, each trying to extract the maximum benefit for oneself. The welfare of the people in these most poverty stricken regions is the last thing on their mind.

Regional imbalances resulted due to state governments giving particular areas priority and neglecting these regions. Besides this, various historical, economic and socio-cultural factors, gave these regions

a certain homogeneity and identity of their own. This was sharpened by their decades-long struggles against the state, whereby people shared a common suffering, with a bond built through unitedly facing the police brutalities, arrests, tortures and even killings. The martyrdom of their comrades-in-arms cemented their resolve and aspirations for a separate state.

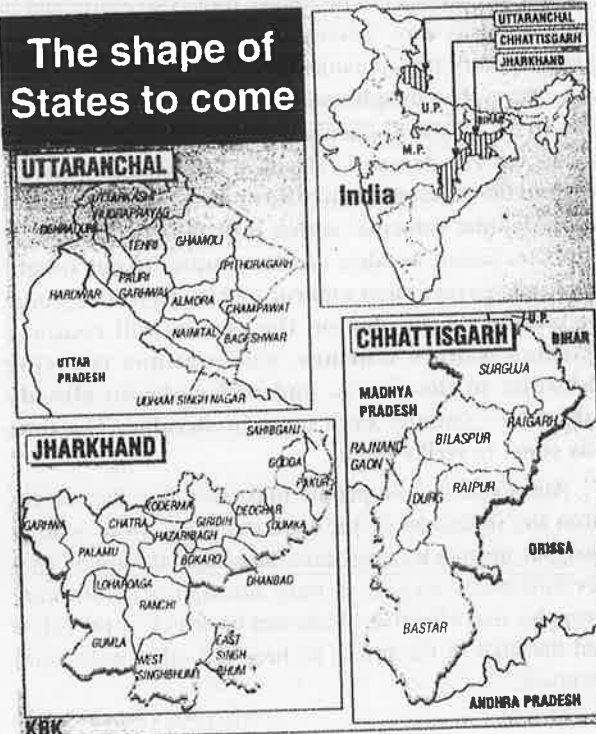
Yet, though such movements are part of the democratic struggles of the people, it must be remembered that under the existing unitary political structure, with its fake federalism, the existing states are defacto municipalities of the Centre, with negligible fiscal, political and socio-cultural authority of their own. What is worse, even the nominal powers that exist, are sought to be further undermined by the BJP, which is working towards a monolithic Centre, with its Hindu Rashtra concept. While the demand for separate states stems out of a desire for the de-centralisation of power: the BJP, while supporting small states on the one hand, is making frantic efforts to curb the powers of the states still further, by increasing the centralisation of fiscal, political and socio-cultural power in the hands of the Centre. (See Box)

Genuine decentralisation can be achieved only through the devolution of power in the hands of the people, who assert their control over the land, forests and industry of their region. So quite naturally, the new states will give little to the vast oppressed masses; those to gain will be the ruling elite of the region, with a few crumbs thrown to a tiny section of the petty-bourgeoisie. So, the struggle will have to be carried forward to achieve the real devolution of power in the hands of the people. The plight of the masses will in no way change, with the establishment of these separate states, with the imperialists and compradors continuing to rob their vast natural resources, and the landlords, contractors, moneylenders, etc., continuing their ruthless exploitation. The new rulers of these states, will be nothing but the local agents to facilitate the continuing loot of the people of these three states. The acute poverty of the masses will continue.

In this brief article let us take a quick glance at these three new states.

Uttaranchal

This hill region comprises about 10% of the areas of UP, with a population under one crore, out of UP's 16 crores. Though it has a high level of literacy (about 70%),



it has been kept in a state of backwardness by successive governments at Lucknow.

So, for example, the economy of Uttaranchal experienced a growth rate of only 2.4% per annum in the Seventh Plan compared to 4.3% for UP as a whole. The real per capita domestic output for this region in fact declined from Rs. 1,304 in 1984/85 to Rs. 1,014 in 1991/92. The number of registered job seekers has risen from 89,000 in 1981 to 2.5 lakhs in 1991. Employment in the organised sector was a mere 4% (1991) and unemployment is at about 70%.

The neglect of this region can also be seen from the fact that the central assistance to the total plan expenditure of Uttaranchal declined from 51% in the 5th Plan to a mere 28.8% in the ongoing plan. Besides Udham Singh Nagar, no other district has seen development, either in agriculture or industry. Cultivable land is just 9% of the total, and subsistence farming is the norm. The region has served merely as a tourist backwater, with its numerous religious centres, giving UP an annual revenue of Rs. 1,900 crores annually from tourism.

But, the present Bill that has been passed is treacherous. While, with one hand, it grants a separate state; with the other, it takes away much of its basic powers. Two clauses are particularly detrimental to the new State.

First, it is the only Bill of its type which mentions, in the statement of objects and reasons, that the land ceiling act of the mother state (UP) will apply to the new State. This is obviously to protect the interests of the huge landlords in Udham Singh Nagar.

Second, Sections 79 and 83 of the Bill virtually leaves Uttaranchal with a begging bowl. The sections abrogate the rights of the proposed Uttarakhand over water resources, that were expected to be the mainstay of their economy. As per the said sections of the Uttaranchal Bill, the sole rights over the waters of the Ganga, Yamuna, Sharda and their tributaries would vest with a 'Ganga-Yamuna-Sharda Jal Board.' The Board will be headed by representatives from UP, Punjab, Delhi, H.P, Haryana and Rajasthan. Not only hydro-electricity and irrigation, but even fishing, boating and watermills would be at the mercy of the Board !!

The people of Uttaranchal have been opposing the Tehri dam for its disastrous impact on the people and ecology of the region. The people's lives are being corrupted to cater to the pleasures of the elite as a big tourist centre. All this will continue unless the people continue and intensify their fight against the new rulers. The people of Uttarakhand will gain nothing unless they take full control of the vast water resources of the state and assert their authority over its land and forests, by

smashing the authority of the landlords, contractors, forest mafia, and the political touts that serve them.

Jharkhand

The Jharkhand now carved out of Bihar will comprise of 18 districts, though the earlier movement had been for 26 districts, encompassing also districts from neighbouring states. It comprises 46% of the area of the original Bihar state. In the new state the population of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes will be roughly 47%. In this bifurcation, all the major heavy industries, three-fourths of the power, Tata Steel and Engineering, three national coal companies, the Bokaro Steel Plant and the Fertiliser Corporation will go to Jharkhand. With the creation of Jharkhand, the truncated Bihar will suffer a revenue loss of Rs. 1,500 crore annually.

In spite of this vast natural wealth, the people of Jharkhand are one of the poorest in the country. Barely 7% of their land is irrigated.

Though the area comprises only 2.5% of the country it produces 25% of its minerals — including 100% of its copper, 52% of its mica, 58% of its coal, 38% of its bauxite and a big proportion of its iron ore, manganese, gypsum and uranium.

The movement for a separate state of Jharkhand is one of the oldest and most militant of such movements in the country. The tribals, particularly the Santhals of this region, have a long and glorious history of rebellions, from the early British times. Tribal rebellions which began as early as 1789 was followed by the "Bhumij" rebellion in 1812-13, the "Koe-revolts" that took place in 1818, 1820 and 1832, the great Santhal rebellion of 1835-36 and 1855-57, the Chowar rebellion of 1898-99 and the rebellion led by Birsa Munda in 1895-1900. All these rebellions were directed at both the British and also the feudal lords. The demand for 'Jharkhand' was first raised by the Adivasi Maha Sabha as far back as 1938. In 1950 the 'Jharkhand Party' was formed which demanded a separate state. In 1952 the Jharkhand Party, which contested the elections, won 32 seats and became the chief opposition party in the Bihar assembly. When these leaders capitulated to the Congress, the Jharkhand movement continued, fighting bitter battles with the jotedars, police and para-military forces. Many became martyrs in these heroic struggles.

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) which came to the forefront with militant struggles in 1973, later capitulated. Earlier they had said that 'Not by vote, but by the bow, Jharkhand will be achieved.' But in the mid-1970s they supported Indira Gandhi's 20-point programme during the Emergency. Since their infatuation with electoral politics they have turned into the worst

opportunists selling themselves to various ruling-class parties. Utilising the discontent of the masses with these opportunist leaders, the BJP made big inroads into Jharkhand having now a near majority in the new state. It gave mock support for a separate state, with its call for a so-called 'Vananchal'. The RJD has changed its position a number of times, with its sole goal being, to keep power in Bihar. It makes little difference to the masses of Jharkhand, whether the new government is made up of the criminal parties of the centre or the local opportunists. The loot of Jharkhand will continue.

Chhattisgarh

Chhattisgarh comprises 16 districts of Madhya Pradesh. It yields 30% of its revenue, generates 40% of its power, but has been allocated just 28% of development and plan expenditure. It is rich in natural resources. Forest produce earnings of the government alone come to Rs. 300 crores. It is rich in mineral wealth, having vast deposits of iron ore, coal, bauxite etc. Of late, large diamond deposits have been found in the region.

The demand for a separate Chhattisgarh state has been constantly opposed by both the BJP and Congress (I). It was only after they were routed in the elections due to their anti-Chhattisgarh stand that they changed their tune.

The BJP, for example, began to espouse the cause of statehood only after it lost all the 11 Lok Sabha seats from the region in the 1991 elections. After supporting statehood it gained 6 seats in 1996 and a further two once Vajpayee promised statehood.

The Digvijay Singh government passed this resolution in 1993, but prior to that, it too did not see the need for a separate Chhattisgarh, though it was in power in both the State and at the Centre. V.C. Shukla, who claims the crown for Chhattisgarh, floated his Chhattisgarh Rajya Sangharsh Morcha only in May '99 when the achievement of the demand seemed imminent.

The CPI(ML)[People's War], which has a large presence in the present Chhattisgarh, in a statement issued on August 10, has welcomed the formation of the new state, but, with reservations. The statement said that Bastar should not be included, but should be given the status of an autonomous state. It stated that the tribals of Bastar have got their own lifestyle, culture and customs, that are totally different from the rest of Chhattisgarh.

The tribals of Bastar, once exploited by the rulers of Madhya Pradesh will now be exploited by the new rulers of Chhattisgarh. The imperialists and compradors will continue to rob Bastar of its rich natural resources — forest produce, iron ore, bauxite, etc. For example, the Bailladilla mines with its rich deposits of iron-ore is being

looted by the Japanese imperialists with the local government acting as their agents. This will continue, only some agents will change. Also, Bastar has the largest market in Asia for minor forest produce, all of which have been cornered by the Madhya Pradesh government, and the contractor-agent-mafia. This loot too will continue. The brutal repression of the tribals by the Central and MP governments will continue, with the involvement of the new government of Chhattisgarh. The same central parties will become the new rulers of Chhattisgarh. There will be no change, either in the lives of the people of Bastar or of Chhattisgarh.

Also the statement expressed serious concern over the neglect of the Chhattisgarhi language in the Bill. It demanded that Chhattisgarhi and not Hindi be declared the official language of the new state, as more than one crore people speak it.

Advance Struggle for Devolution of Real People's Power

Out of numerous demands of statehood, only three have been granted. The rulers see these as a test-case on which to decide their future course of action. The demands for a separate Telangana (from AP), Vidarbha (from Maharashtra), Kodagu (from Karnataka), Gorkhaland and Kamtapur (from West Bengal), Bodoland (from Assam), Bundelkhand (from UP) and some others, are still pending. Unless fierce struggles are waged in these states, separate statehood is unlikely.

In two of the new states formed — Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh — the revolutionary forces have a major presence amongst the oppressed masses of the region. The people of the new states must demand an immediate stop to the repression on these movements, withdrawal of all the central forces, and the release of the hundreds of political prisoners in their jails. Besides, as both states have a large tribal population, the people must demand that the new governments must immediately set up Autonomous Councils under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution.

Finally, the struggle in these states must be further advanced, to gain real devolution of power in the hands of the people. Real democracy can be achieved by smashing the power now being usurped by the local semi-feudal and comprador elements and establishing a new people's power, from the village level upwards. It is only when the land, forest and other natural resources are brought under the control of the people, that genuine democracy and decentralisation of power can take place. And such a process will be a first step towards the setting up of a voluntary union of people's republics of India.

Interview

Confrontation between two revolutionary parties has become a matter of concern to all revolutionary forces of India and abroad. Here we are publishing an exclusive interview with Sraban, Bihar State Committee secretary of CPI(ML)[P.W] regarding the said clashes.

PM: *It is stated by MCC leadership that they gave a call to stop clashes unilaterally. But, according to them, CPI (ML) [PW] did not response positively. What is your comment?*

Sraban: It is nothing but a blunt lie. It is a diplomatic play and political trick. We did our best to stop clashes with MCC. For that purpose we released a press statement on 3.3.2000, published leaflet on 15.3.2000 and issued circular addressing to all party members. In these statement, leaflet and circular we warmly and heartily welcomed this declaration of MCC and called upon cadres and people to intensify revolutionary armed struggle. That was also the demand of the situation. In that leaflet we also assured the leadership of MCC that we would endeavour our best to convince our cadres to avoid even provocation from the other side. It was also stated that it would give a new life to the ongoing armed struggle directed against the exploiting classes and their protector state. Moreover, it was also appealed to MCC leaders to forget all allegations and counter-allegations. We expected that the declaration would be put into practice if that was not a diplomatic play or political tricks. In this respect we like to draw your attention to the fact that just after merger the CC (P) of united PW declared to stop clashes unilaterally in August '98 and invited MCC to have bilateral talks to solve the problems. In response to our proposal they intensified armed attacks and extend it to the adjacent areas of West Bengal. Crossing the border of Bihar their squad attacked one of our West Bengal State committee member at Belpahari of Midnapore district. Moreover, they did not response to our invitation for bilateral talks for last two years. & never come to the table for discussion. They continuously put forward this or that reasons to avoid bilateral talks. In fact, we had some doubt whether MCC leadership would follow their own declaration or not. Same was the position of the people under our influence.

PM: *But what was the basis of your doubt?*

Sraban: First, you do not find any self-critical attitude in their statement of declaration rather they repeated their allegations against us. Further, it was stated that in response to an appeal made by some international and national revolutionary organisations they issued that statement. You please go through that very statement and you will find that there was no change in their old approach.

Secondly, they did not withdraw their old policy of "Wipe out" people's war.

Thirdly, though they released press statement and leaflet to stop clashes unilaterally, they have been continuing to propagate that it was we who were totally responsible for those clashes.

Fourthly, in spite of so many joint statements and declaration for stopping clashes, except one occasion, they

repeatedly violated those agreements in a planned way. But, they never accepted their fault; rather they put blame on us. In this respect the leadership of MCC really created historical record.

These are not all; there some more reasons which led us to have doubt about the implementation of their statement.

PM: *But MCC firmly put allegation against you that even after their declaration you have attacked them. Is it not a fact?*

Sraban: It is really interesting. You please note, MCC leaders always tell firmly — even if it is a lie! They, in order to cover their wrongdoing, develop an exceptional efficiency to put allegation on their opposition. This is one of their characteristics. This time also the fact is just the opposite to their allegation. Our doubt transformed into reality and it took only seven months. On 19th August 2000, MCC kidnapped from Karkatta railway station two of our cadres Raghunath Rajwara and Com. Ganori Chowdhury and one of our sympathisers Com. Naresh Mehata. The MCC squad brutally murdered Ganori Chowdhury in front of two others who were seriously injured at a nearby hilly place of Kuthi village, PS: Bishrampur, Palamau. Earlier, on 20-3-2000 martyr Com. Ganori was injured when armed squad of MCC attacked our squad and killed Com. Ramashish (Secretary, Bishrampur - Chattarpur Area Committee) and Com. Shivkumar, a squad member at Belhara village, PS: Bishrampur, Palamau. On that occasion MCC showed mercy to Com. Ganori and threatened that he would be killed if he continued his political activities as a member of CPI (ML) [PW]. As, he did not follow their dictum he was killed by MCC. After this gruesome incident MCC released a press statement stating that this incident was not in accordance with their declaration and expressed their sorrow. However, it is interesting to note that in the statement itself they mentioned the source of information was news paper, and further it was apprehended that the incident might have been in retaliation to murder of Nandu Pashwan of Latheya village, PS: Chattarpur, Palamau. Though Bishrampur is situated far from the place where Nandu Pashwan was killed, they commented that it was owing to anger and remonstrations of the local people and cadres. This is no doubt a wonderful plea to justify their heinous act. Their barefaced leaders tried to cover their crime confounding the people. If not so, how did they say that the incident took place due to anger and remonstrations of local cadres and people? Do they consider Chattarpur and Bishrampur are in the same locality? Further, you see, the incident of Nandu Pashwan took place on March 2000. Why did not they claim Nandu Pashwan as their cadre before this incident? Do you consider this self-criticism as sincere one? If it is so, why did they keep silence and did not express, sorrow after these

two incidents? On August 15, 2000 Kalim Mian, one of our sympathisers, was killed by MCC squad at Dhawadh village, PS: Lesligunj, Palamau. Kalim Mian's brother was also killed in 1997. On that very month of this year Evamul Ansari, sympathiser was killed and looted his house at Ramghar village, PS: Chanpur, Palamau by them. Let us state another incident to understand how sincere they are in following their own statement! On 10 September 2000 the armed squad of MCC attacked Baria village, PS: Nabinagar, Aurangabad to kill Com. Satyandra. They did not find him, so the squad led by MCC did another heroic act! They abused his father, wife and threatened to kill Satyandra if he would continue with PW. They did not forget to loot their households and to destroy a portion of their house before living the village. Inhabitants of that village were so terrorised that they took shelter to village Dhobdhiahs. The squad also went to that village in search of Com. Satyandra. When the villagers at Dhobdhiah protested, they were beaten black and blue by the MCC squad.

Their fraternal campaign has been continuing! On 18th October 2000, MCC squad attacked Parikha Yadav and fired at him while he was inside the bus. However, he managed to escape. Again, on 29.10.2000, the MCC squad did another heroic act of massacre. On that very day when the people of six-seven villages gheraoed and killed the notorious lumpen Amerika Singh of Dorakhurd village, the MCC squad entered into the Bhikhi-palwa village PS: Chattarpur, Palamau and kidnapped more than 15 supporters. They killed 5 of them, cut off hands of 2 sympathisers and 7 houses were set in fire.

Now, let me state the incident of Nandu Pashwan. This incident took place at village Tathya, PS: Chattarpur, Palamau. We were organising the people of that village for a long span of time and most of the villagers were our supporters. During, this long period there was no such political activities of MCC in this area. The villagers have confidence on our organisation and whenever they face any problem they used to solve those problems with the help of our organisation. This time, when our squad entered into that area some of the villagers of Lathya reported that Anil and Sunil, nephews of Nandu Pashwan who are leading lumpen life demanded money from the contractor who got the order for construction of a road. As the contractor refused to pay money these lumpens terrorised the contractor and compelled him to stop construction. When the villagers opposed their dadagiri, they (hoondlums) put the transformer under lock and key causing much problem to villagers who could not use electricity. Hence, our squad took initiative to organise "Jana Adalat" (People's Court). When one of the squad members went nearer to Nandu's house in relation to the "Jana Adalat" activities Anil, Sunil, Nandu and their family members, especially Sunil began to use abusive words, attacked the squad members with conventional weapons and tried to snatch their arms. At that time another, squad member who was on sentry duty heard the noise and rushed to the spot to save the squad members. He opened fire for self-defence. Accidentally, it hurt

Nandu Pashwan and he died. This was the incident. In this context, we like to comment that we had no intention to kill Nandu Pashwan. The incident took place where we have good political influence and previously Nandu Pashwan had no political relation with MCC. It might be that after the above-cited incident the family members of Nandu Pashwan took shelter to MCC organisation, as it is a general phenomena now-a-days.

PM: I like to cite following portion of MCC's statement published in Frontier dated 23-10-2000, for your comment: "MCC actually took the decision to stop all kinds of retaliatory activities after the first week of Oct., '99 or more precisely after October 10, though PW killed some of our supporters and one or two members of our Krantikari Kisan Committee such as Prabhu Yadav (Vill. Kesochalk, PS: Mussouri, Dist: Patna) on October 5, '99, Karu Yadav, Sanjoy Yadav and Ram Parvesh Yadav (vill. Bhanpore, PS: Bhagabanganj, Dist: Patna) on November 24, '99 Naresh Yadav (Vill. Madhokhar, PS: Chainpur, Dist: Palamau) on December 10, '99. We did not take any retaliatory steps."

Sraban: But, why did they not declare their pious intention on that date or within a week? What was the mystery behind that? They published their declaration on January 7th. In that declaration also, they did not mention that they stopped their retaliatory activities since October 10. In response to their declaration, we published ours statement on March 15, 2000. Since March 15, 2000, we do confirm you that, there have been not a single incident of retaliation even if there have been enough provocation. Consequently, MCC leadership, who like to continue their attacks on us, have to face an awkward situation and to continue their attacks on us they planfully prepare a plea to overcome this situation. First they have to prove that we have not stopped the act of retaliation, and then they can continue their 'Jihad' against us. Hence, they published this story of their declaration of stopping clashes even prior to October 10, which is unknown to all.

Now about the incidents cited above. About Bhajor village, PS: Bhagabanganj, Patna, we can firmly state that on that very date, there was no such incident which claimed 3 lives but as far our information, there have been no such named persons. On the contrary we have the information that one Ghachu Yadav alias Ramanand Yadav was annihilated by our squad prior to MCC's declaration. The people of that village were fighting against him on the land issue for a long time. Ramanand first joined in "Liberation" to save himself from the wrath of the people. When people under the leadership of erstwhile PU defeated "Liberation" he joined MCC. Once he invited MCC squad to kill one of our comrades. But, that was exposed, and there was clash between our squad and that of MCC. However, in spite of their indiscriminate firing, we could save our comrades. After that incident, according to decision he was annihilated. We also like to inform you that long before Rajeswar Yadav and Bijoy Yadav of that village were annihilated by us for their anti-people reactionary activities. Prabhu Yadav, Vill. Kesochalk.

(Continued on page 31)

Reports from Bihar

(1) Ranbir Sena faces stiff resistance

— by Puneet

The Karpi and Arwal blocks in Jehanabad district are the worst affected by the Ranbir Sena (RS) phenomenon. Bathe, Shankarbigha, Akopur, Katesar Nala—all these massacres by the RS took place in these areas. Many retaliatory actions by the PW have also taken place in this area. Recently Arwal has been made into a separate police district due to the strong presence of the PW in this area. This new district includes Karpi.

Apprehending more retaliatory actions by the PW, some new police stations have been set up and many police camps have been set up in those villages which are considered to be the strongholds of the RS. In Arwal block (now Mehendia P.S.) there is a village, Sarouti, the native village of martyr comrade Dinkar. This has been a strong centre of the PW. More than 10 years back, people seized 85 acres of land belonging to the absentee landlords of Akopur village. At that time a police camp was set up there to protect that land from the naxalites. After a few years of struggle the people won and that land has been distributed among the landless and the poor peasants, and since a long time, people have been cultivating that land. A pond has also been seized here. It should be noted that Sarouti, Akopur, Chauram and nearby villages are notorious for the feudal excesses of the landlords belonging to the Bhumihar caste and the reactionaries. After an intense class struggle these forces were suppressed and as soon as the RS appeared on the shoulders of the police forces, they quickly joined their ranks. One Shyam Sharma of Akopur village, who is also a landlord, organised a massacre (of 'Liberation' sympathisers) in his own village. This was the first massacre by the RS in this area. In this massacre 3 people were killed.

On 17 August, Shyam Sharma, 35, was annihilated near Surya Mandir (Sun Temple) of village Etwan around 6 pm as he was coming to his village in a hired jeep. Shyam Sharma was also involved in the Bathe, Belkhara and Miyanpur massacres. He was one of the notorious organisers of the RS in this area and a hated enemy of the people.

* * *

Ganiyari, in Karpi block, is a village of reactionaries belonging to the Bhumihar caste. This village is near Pariyari, the native village of martyr comrade Srikant. Before the RS phenomenon, this village was not active. A strong and intense class struggle had preceded the RS

phenomenon in this area and these reactionaries had been suppressed and had started surrendering. But after the coming up of the RS, they stopped surrendering and joined their ranks.

One Jitendra, alias Mantu alias Gaubodhan Sharma, 23, joined the RS in 1997 itself. He was one of the main gunmen in the western zone of Jehanabad. Very established in his gang for his brutality, he was a real terror. He was involved in butchering people in the Bathe, Shankarbigha and Miyanpur massacres. On 22 June he killed one PW sympathiser, Lalan Manjhi of Azadnagar village, contiguous to Ganiyari.

On 17th September, he was annihilated at Shantipur bazaar at around 10.45 am. Many reactionaries went for his last rites. In this action, three ordinary people also were injured accidentally. The local Party committee of the PW gave Rs. 800 for the treatment of Pankaj Pandit, who was more serious.

* * *

According to the newspapers, on 3 October, in Barheta village of Kinjar police station (Jehanabad), an office-bearer of the Rashtravati Kisan Mahasangh, an outfit of the RS and ex-mukhiya, Lala Sharma was annihilated by the PW in broad daylight. In retaliation the goons of the RS killed three sympathisers of the PW of this village including an old woman of 60 years. Situated on Jehanabad-Arwal main road, this village of reactionaries and landlords belonging to the Bhumihar caste, is quite notorious. More than seven years back the PW had seized 5 rifles from the reactionaries of this village. A strong struggle for wage-hikes had also been waged here and won. An economic blockade had also been imposed on some of the reactionaries who surrendered later. The reactionaries of Barheta were maintaining links with the RS long before the outfit crossed the river Sone and came to Jehanabad. The people have been struggling against these reactionaries for a very long time. In this area this is a notable achievement in the struggle against the RS.

(2) 'Liberation' Intensifies Attacks on PW

(a) Nine armed goons of 'Liberation' annihilated

— by Batpurev Batchulaan

Punpun area of Patna district has a history of revolutionary struggles. These struggles were led by the old CPI (ML) and then by the CPI (ML) (Liberation) under the leadership of comrade Jouhar. Of late, as the

Liberation group plunged into parliamentarism, their tactics also changed to suit their electoral needs. As they gave up the strategy of protracted people's war, the need to establish people's authority, abolishing feudal authority is no longer on their agenda.

In Bihar, everyone knows that the parliamentary parties exploit the caste sentiments to consolidate their vote bank. The Liberation group is no exception.

What they do practically is that they keep people divided on caste lines and exploit the caste sentiment in the name of class struggle, in order to gather votes. In the name of fighting the landlords, they target even the poor and middle peasants of a particular dominant cast apparently to reap the advantages of caste antagonisms in the elections. They did this in Bhojpur and they have been doing this in every area including Punpun. As they left armed struggle, their squads (they do not maintain regular squads) degenerated into armed gangs. Every parliamentary party unofficially maintains armed gangs in Bihar.

'Liberation' is maintaining such gangs officially in the name of revolution. This is the only difference. Their policy has been to wage 'political struggle' against the landlords, reactionaries and the state, and to wage 'armed struggle' against the PW. Phrase-mongering against the RS(Ranbir Sena) is their main form of struggle against the RS. No doubt, their armed attacks on the activists of the PW and its mass organizations has appeased the state and in turn the state allows them to maintain these gangs. This has been the character of these "Sarkari Naxalites" in the battlefield of Bihar. Thus, they are playing a true revisionist role of serving ruling class interests, in the garb of being a communist party.

In the last two years, they have killed more than twenty activists/sympathisers of the PW and its mass organizations in Patna district and the nearby Jehanabad block.

Recently, the PW has entered the Punpun area, winning over a section of the poor and middle peasants belonging to the Kurmi caste and a section of the dalits. This has, obviously, challenged the 'rangdari' of the armed goons of the Liberation in this area. People, both the dalits and peasants of the Kurmi and Yadav castes, are joining the PW. Obviously upset by these developments, the Liberation group has resorted to the killing of innocent sympathisers of the PW.

The recent incident of early October should be seen in this context. Previously the banks of river Punpun were auctioned by the government. Many years back the auction system was eliminated after struggle. After the abolition of the government auction, Liberation began to auction the banks and the local leaders and sympathisers

of the Liberation used to take these river banks on contract. Giving contracts (of a fixed amount) to its lower committees has been an important part of Liberation's financial policy. Upper committees give contracts to lower committees and it does not matter how much the lower committees collect and in what manner. This has generated a core of corrupt activists in this group who collect money from ordinary people for the use of the river banks.

On second October, three peasants (sympathisers of PW), of the nearby village Baraipur, were loading their onions on a boat. One important leader of Liberation, Nagi Paswan — he was a candidate for the assembly elections during the last elections — ordered his men to loot the onions. Immediately the onions were looted and the only reason for this was that they were sympathisers of the PW. People of this village Baraipur protested against this.

In reaction, the armed goons of the Liberation attacked the unarmed people. These unarmed people then fled to save their lives and entered village Karai in the Masauri police station area.

The goons surrounded this village and started firing. Hearing the gun shots, an armed squad of the PW, which had taken shelter in a village two miles away from village Karai, came running there along with members of the GRD. As they reached the spot, an intense encounter began. In this encounter nine of the goons were killed and the PW squad seized six weapons — 4 countrymade guns, 1 DBBL, 1.3006 mouzer.

One of the members of the GRD, Comrade Sanjay, was martyred during the encounter.

Panicking by the expansion of the PW in their old 'Jagir', the Liberation group has resorted to senseless killings of activists and sympathisers of the PW. However, people in that area, despite the attacks by Liberation are welcoming the PW and resisting the 'rangdari' of Liberation. The incident of October 2, has been a major achievement against the Liberation group in this area.

Liberation will certainly try to give it a caste colour in order to fan caste sentiments. The PW, on its part, is trying to consolidate peasant-labour unity in this area, to eradicate the goondagardi of the Liberation group and to establish people's authority.

(b) Once Again Liberation Group Rides High on the Crest of Slander and Assault

— by Devi Shankar

On 10 August, in a high school in Imamganj (Jehanabad), a revolutionary peasant organisation, the MKSP(Mazdoor Kissan Sangrami Parishad), held a people's court to punish 18 year old Ravinder Kumar

who was responsible for teasing and beating a girl student. Nearly 500 people attended this adalat and a punishment of 20 'dumkos'(sticks) was decided for Ravinder Kumar, as eve-teasing had become his habit.

Since the girl in the picture was from the Bhumihar caste and the boy from a backward caste (Koeri), some lumpen elements of the backward caste instigated the father of the boy, Rajinder Singh to protest against the punishment. Suddenly on 17th August this lumpen group gave a call for an Imamganj bandh and blocked the roads. There was also a police lathicharge on these people. All of a sudden on 18th August, the Liberation group began to speak in the language of this lumpen group and started a slander campaign against the People's War saying that the PW was hands in glove with the Ranbir Sena and police! (Just because the girl concerned belonged to the Bhumihar caste.) AISA (Liberation's student front) activists then closed a primary school adjacent to this school as a mark of protest against the jan adalat. The police again resorted to a lathicharge and firing which resulted in the cold blooded murder of three students. The PW and MKSP condemned this police brutality. This however was of no significance for the Liberation whose General Secretary, Deepankar Bhattacharya, went to the extent of ridiculing 'jan adalats'. (He even forgot that they themselves conduct jan adalats!) This entire incident was nothing but fishing in troubled waters by the Liberation.

Not content with a mere slander campaign, the CPI(ML) (Liberation) is also brandishing its guns on the PW. In Dhurki in Garwah district, they attacked a squad of the PW. In Masauri in Patna district, they killed two sympathisers and an activist of the PW. Krishna Devi was shot dead in her own house just because her husband happened to be a sympathiser of the PW. She was 40 years old. Another sympathiser Tuntun was killed on his way home. However the most disgusting incident was the killing of 22 year old, polio stricken Vinay Kumar who was an activist of the BNS (Bharat Naujawan Sabha). This incident took place on 22 July. After this, the Bihar secretary of the Liberation Group, Ram Jatan Sharma, said that "the state government has failed to curb extremism in Bihar."

Vinay Kumar (22 years) a state committee member of the BNS (Bharat Naujawan Sabha) was killed on 22 July by the goondas of the CPI(ML)(Liberation). Vinay was shot dead in Masauri in Patna district. Despite being seriously afflicted by polio, Vinay was an active member of the BNS and had been elected as a state committee member recently.

All these incidents show once again that the rusted guns of Liberation have found a new lease of life and

now their battle is no longer with the state or the class enemies but with the revolutionaries.

(3) Is MCC really sincere in its declaration of 'unilateral ceasefire' against PW ?

— by Devi Shankar

On 19th August 2000, three activists of the PW, Ganauri Malah, Raghunath Rajwar (Sadhuji) and Naresh Ram had gone to the Karkatta station in Bishrampur as Sadhuji had to catch a train which was scheduled to leave at 7.30 am. All of a sudden three armed members of the MCC came and took away the PW activists without any provocation. They were beaten mercilessly and not even Sadhuji was spared who is both old in years and an old activist. Ganauri Malah was killed after his throat was slit with a sharp weapon. This entire operation was led by Hansraj. (Hansraj was an ex-member of the Party Unity who had corruption charges against him. When the Party issued a show cause notice against him, he fled the organisation along with his arms and went and joined the MCC.)

On getting to know of the incident, the PW squad in Japla went to Bishrampur, where a MCC squad had taken shelter and a fierce encounter ensued. The MCC was forced to retreat in a hurry and one squad member of the PW was injured.

Later, a press statement was issued on behalf of the Bengal-Bihar special area committee of the MCC expressing its regret over the incident. It may be remembered that in January the MCC had issued a statement declaring a unilateral ceasefire against the PW.

However even after this 'self-critical' statement, in Nabinagar (Aurangabad), they threatened the wife, father and other family members of Satyendar Singh, the commander and incharge of a local guerrilla squad of the PW. The family was threatened with dire consequences if Satyendar Singh did not leave the PW.

Again in September, an LGS member of PW was arrested by the MCC as he was going to his village Konwai in Panki after receiving treatment. Later the MCC released him but said that Konwai was their area and the violence would continue despite the declaration of ceasefire by the leadership of the MCC.

After these spate of incidents, one cannot help agreeing with a statement given by the Koel-Kaimur zonal committee of the PW which says that either the MCC is not sincere in its declaration of 'ceasefire' or else it has lost its grip over its cadres. □



Militant Actions Paralyse Europe

— Shafi

The first fortnight of September witnessed a virtual paralysis of Europe. Massive people's actions, against the fuel price-hike by the various governments of Europe, brought life to a stand-still.

Truckers, farmers, fishermen, small businessmen and ordinary citizens joined together in numerous blockades of Europe's oil depots against the hike in petrol/diesel prices. Strikes ruled many highways as protests reached to Spain, Germany, Ireland, Poland and the Czech Republic — from the Baltic port of Gdansk, Poland, to the Spanish coast. Though the EU ministers agreed against any roll-back, a number of governments were forced to give concessions. The British and German governments took the most aggressive posture against the strikers.

The strikes began in France and soon spread to entire Europe, with the most militant actions being in Britain. In Italy, fearing violent protests, the government withdrew its proposed hike.

France

From August 31st, fishermen had a 3-day blockade of French ports that resulted in the shutting down of the Channel Tunnel to vehicles. From September 4th, truckers blocked exits from the Euro tunnel in Calais and also major highways. Truck drivers blocked Nice port on the French Riviera. They blockaded 60 out of the country's major oil refineries and depots. Protesters also disrupted high speed train services from Bordeaux in the south west, setting fire to palettes and hay-bales, on a stretch of track, thereby forcing dozens of trains to be delayed, before the lines were cleared. By September 12th the French government, to diffuse the discontent, granted minor tax cuts of 15% to the protesting truckers and farmers. But, even though some withdrew the blockade others vowed to carry on. There continued to be scattered protests by driving-school owners, ambulance drivers and shop-keepers, who put up road blocks even after the truckers called off their blockade.

Britain

Britain faced the worst fuel crisis in 25 years. Truckers and farmers blockaded all the refineries and fuel depots of Britain. By September 12 about half of Britain's 13,000 petrol pumps went dry. There was a nationwide panic. Rubbish went uncollected, hospitals cancelled non-emergency services and super markets said food stuffs may not reach their stores. Post offices stopped delivering

mail. By September 15, more than 150 schools closed and foodstuffs began running out at the supermarket stores. Stores began issuing lay-off notices to their staff. Trains were also cancelled for lack of fuel. There was a powerful unity of truckers, small businessmen, farmers unions, motorists, etc.

On September 12, Prime Minister Blair, rushed back to London to discuss invoking an Emergency. Within three days he called three press conferences, issuing threats to the protesters. Though the government has been making windfall profits on the sale of petrol he refused any roll back whatsoever. In London, on September 13, scores of trucks were stopped by the police as the drivers tried to converge on parliament. Invoking its Emergency powers the government called out the Army, and under heavy police escort, 80 military tankers transported some petrol/diesel to the pumps. Finally, bowing to government threats the blockade was lifted.

The so-called Labour government thereby proved its rightest credentials to big business. It proved that it could out do the Conservatives in its reactionary essence and in its anti-people pro-big business policies. Though Britain is the only EU country that produces the bulk of its own fuel (off-shore oil and gas) and has the cheapest crude oil, its petrol is one of the most expensive in Europe, due to a 76% tax. In fact, the rise in international prices of crude oil, has given the British government extra profits estimated at \$5.7 billion per year. Yet, it was not prepared to reduce the tax !!

Belgium

On September 8, the main freight federation held a protest march in Brussels. The largest protests were on September 14 in Brussels, where truckers, tour-bus operators, and taxi drivers brought the city to a virtual halt, by parking their vehicles across streets and driving slowly. They brought traffic to a stand-still and forced business and schools to close. They parked vehicles across city boulevards, motorways and frontier crossings into Germany, France and Netherlands causing traffic chaos. Hundreds of petrol pumps went dry as oil depots and refineries were halted by blockades. Truckers barricaded the largest refinery in South Belgium, near Charleroi. They also blockaded the main Antwerp port and brought it to a standstill.

Spain

An estimated one lakh farmers drove tractors through Madrid and dozens of other Spanish cities, warning of

more aggressive action, if there was no agreement to compensate them for the higher cost of fuel. One of the biggest demonstrations was in Serville, where about 4,000 tractors blockaded all the main access routes to the city. Protests and demonstrations spread to 34 provinces of the country. In Barcelona, fishermen who staged a port blockade, warned of more protests. An oil-consumer's group, representing farmers, truckers, fishermen and lorry drivers, called for a boycott of the main petrol company, Repsol.

Germany

Blockades spread throughout the country. On September 15, truckers, with horns blowing, drove at snails pace through Hanover and other towns, paralysing traffic. Also, 3000 trucks, taxis and buses, blowing horns in unison, circled Hamburg's inner-ring road. In spite of the inconvenience caused to the public, an opinion poll showed 70% of the people supported the actions. But, the 'socialist' Interior Minister, threatened that he would use federal border patrol officers to clear any 'illegal' blockades. Also, the German government viciously attacked other European governments who had caved into the demand for fuel tax cuts.

Scandinavian Countries

Angry truckers and farmers in Sweden, blocked transit to harbours, rail terminals and fuel depots. Gothenburg's port was paralysed. Rail freight terminals were blocked in the capital city of Stockholm, and also in Malmoe, Sweden's third biggest city.

In Finland, the government announced a cut in road taxes for truckers, after they began sporadic blockades of highways. Norwegian truckers threatened strikes. Though Norway is the second largest oil exporting country in the world, its prices are the highest in Europe. In Denmark, about 1,100 truckers threatened action if talks with the government failed.

Around Europe

In the Netherlands truckers paralysed highways with roadblocks for nearly a week. After initially refusing any subsidy to truckers, the Dutch government agreed to give taxi, bus, and trucking companies, some \$300 million to compensate for high fuel prices.

In Ireland, most of the country's fishermen tethered their boats in a 24-hour work stoppage. In Hungary, truckers threatened protests but the government agreed to postpone a 6% increase in excise taxes. Even in Israel truckers launched a slowdown and paralysed roads to Tel Aviv, Israel's main commercial centre; to demand a roll back in the 13% rise in diesel and petrol prices.

The EU Rulers Gang-up

The rulers of the various European countries, blamed the hike in fuel prices on the rise in the international prices of crude oil. But this hoax was soon blown by the masses who showed that the bulk of the fuel prices comprised taxes and not the cost of the fuel. In fact in the major European countries, in the total cost of the fuel, the percentage of tax varies from 65% to 76%. The tax content in the fuel prices is 70% in Norway, 76% in UK, 70% in France, 69% in Germany, 66% in Belgium, 65% in the Netherlands, 64% in Italy, 66% in Sweden, 66% in Finland and 58% in Spain. The price varies from \$2.8 per gallon in Spain to \$ 4.3 in Norway. This is a method by which the rulers of these countries squeeze the maximum out of the masses through a high tax on this basic necessity.

Also, the governments have justified high taxes on environmental grounds, to supposedly discourage consumption of fuel. This is yet another hoax promoted by the Greens Party and the social democrats, to justify the exploitation of the masses through a high tax burden. With the existing lifestyles set by the bourgeois system, it is absurd to think that fuel consumption will go down. For example, a bad and expensive public transport system encourages families to use private cars. So, it is not surprising that global consumption has steadily increased from 60 million barrels per day (bpd) to 69 million bpd in 1995 and about 75 million bpd in 2000.

On September 9, the EU finance ministers held a special emergency meeting in France. At this meeting a decision was arrived to jointly reject tax cuts. The EU clearly came out as an association of big business against the people of Europe. But the militant actions and the fear of greater militancy, forced many governments to announce minor concessions. Most of the concessions announced were targeted at particular striking sections and not for the masses at large. But as these movements are mostly spontaneous and seeped in economism they withdrew their struggles, notwithstanding the fact that the increased burden will still have to be borne by the masses at large..... though some sections got some relief.

The simmering discontent is bound to explode in the future. But it is only a genuine proletarian party, that can lead this discontent in a revolutionary direction, away from compromise and capitulation. And even if a compromise must be struck, it must benefit the masses at large, not just the most vocal section amongst them. No doubt, the lessons of these past struggles, will create the seeds of a new revolutionary awakening. What the present struggles have shown is the ease at which the rulers of mighty Europe can be brought to their knees, in the face of united militant actions by its people. □

Seeing the

— by Chi Ping

Chairman Mao has always taught us to try to find the essential or main aspects of a problem. We must learn to use this scientific approach in sizing up a situation, analysing a problem or discussing our work.

Criticizing people who go against this approach, Chairman Mao pointed out in July 1955: **“The way these comrades look at problems is wrong. They do not look at the essential or main aspects but emphasize the non-essential or minor ones. It should be pointed out that these non-essential or minor aspects must not be overlooked and must be dealt with one by one. But they should not be taken as the essential or main aspects, or we will lose our bearings.”** (*On the Question of Agricultural Co-operation.*)

In estimating a situation, we must try to grasp its essence and mainstream before we can size it up correctly. We must, as Chairman Mao has said, **“apply the Marxist-Leninist method in analysing a political situation and appraising the class forces, instead of making a subjective analysis and appraisal.”** (*On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party.*) Only by correctly assessing the relative strength of the different classes in society and the trend of their development can the essence of a situation be ascertained in a maze of complicated phenomena.

During the various historical periods of the Chinese revolution Chairman Mao always distinguished between the principal and the secondary contradictions of each period by scientifically analysing the balance of class forces and the trend of their development at the time. On this basis, he charted the correct strategy for struggle for the Party and steered the Chinese revolution ahead victoriously.

The same is true for all Communist Party members and revolutionaries. Only when we correctly assess a situation from its essence can we obtain a deep understanding of the Party's line, principles and policies and steadfastly carry them out; only in this way can we remain level-headed and retain a high revolutionary enthusiasm and persist in the correct political orientation.

To Marxists, all kinds of contradictions in the social life of a class society are, in the last analysis, class contradictions. Such contradictions and struggle motivate the advance of society. Chairman Mao has said: **“Classes struggle, some classes triumph, others are eliminated. Such is history, such is the history of civilization for thousands of years.”** (*Cast Away Illusions, Prepare for Struggle.*) Classes, class contradictions and class struggle continue in socialist society, which moves forward in

contradictory struggle.

Since China entered the period of socialist revolution, the principal contradiction has been that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The existence and development of this principal contradiction decides or influences the existence and development of other contradictions. Reflected in the Party, this contradiction is manifested in the struggle between a Marxist-Leninist line and an opportunist one. The reason why the Party's basic line is so important is that it scientifically analyses the principal contradiction in the stage of socialist revolution and points out the principles and methods for its solution.

To view a situation correctly, we should analyse social phenomena in the basic context of the struggle between the two classes, two roads and two lines. This is our most fundamental starting point. In socialist society, the proletariat constantly gains in strength while the bourgeoisie weakens and the Marxist-Leninist line repeatedly repulses the revisionist line in the course of this struggle. Hence the advance of society and history. Therefore, we can see a situation clearly from its essence only by grasping this fundamental starting point.

Chairman Mao has noted: **“The correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line decides everything.”** When the line is correct, the proletarian revolutionary cause will spurt forward. This has been amply proven by the 23-year history of the People's Republic of China. Guided by Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line, we have experienced during this period a number of big struggles, including both class struggle in society and line struggle within the Party. Each struggle ended with the strength of the reactionary exploiting classes seriously weakened and the proletariat and revolutionary people growing stronger through the tempering they received. Thus the revolution goes forward. Such struggles, carried out ceaselessly, will eventually enable us to accomplish our great historic task—that of finally eliminating the system of exploitation and the exploiting classes.

An entirely different situation has been known to appear in the international communist movement when the line is incorrect, as in the Soviet Union. There, the revisionist renegade clique has usurped Party leadership and state power, betrayed the revolutionary principles of Marxism-Leninism and followed a revisionist line. The result is that the dictatorship of the proletariat has been replaced by the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, socialism has been replaced by social-imperialism and fascism,

Essence of Problems

revolution is undermined and history retrogresses. However, this is a temporary phenomenon. In the end, Marxism-Leninism will certainly defeat revisionism and the proletariat will defeat the bourgeoisie. This general trend of historical development can never be changed.

Foster the Growth of New Things

The proletariat through the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution has further enlarged its positions in the superstructure, including all spheres of culture, the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes suffered harsh blows. In literature and education and other realms where the bourgeoisie had long been entrenched a profound revolution has taken place, with the proletariat taking over these ideological positions.

As Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line and principles and policies are carried out in all spheres of the superstructure, large numbers of socialist new things have emerged. These include the creation and popularization of model revolutionary theatrical works, enrolment of worker-peasant-soldier students in universities and colleges, settling of educated city youth in the countryside, participation of cadres in productive labour, development of co-operative medical services and emergence of "barefoot doctors" in the rural areas, shifting of medical workers to the countryside. All these have a common class nature: they are advantageous to the proletariat and detrimental to the bourgeoisie and benefit socialism while harming capitalism. Although some are still in an imperfect state, lack adequate experience or are passing, or have yet to pass the test of various struggles, they possess, nonetheless, immense viability and have an illimitable future. They show the direction of our advance and the rapid progress of the socialist revolution. As Chairman Mao has said: **"It is always so in the world, the new displacing the old, the old being superseded by the new, the old being eliminated to make way for the new, and the new emerging out of the old."** (*On Contradiction*.) To actively protect new-emerging things, enthusiastically foster their growth and correctly sum up experience and lessons is to persist in revolution and in progress.

Distinguishing Between Principal And Secondary Aspects

In class society, class struggle is **"always the great motive force of historical progress."** (Engels: *International Socialism and Italian Socialism*.) Such noteworthy changes in favour of the proletariat in the

balance of class forces have an important bearing on the overall situation of socialist revolution and socialist construction. Their powerful influence is felt in every field, on every front and by every part of the overall situation. Historical experience proves that a major class or line struggle never fails to bring a leap in the various fields of revolution and construction.

In viewing the situation on different fronts or in different fields or in considering a partial situation, the overall situation of the class struggle must not be forgotten, and neither should the essential and main aspects. Concrete analysis should also be made of the minor or secondary aspects. The principal and the secondary aspects form a unity of opposites. The secondary aspects reveal the new contradictions arising in the progress of things, and they will remind us to solve the problems and thus bring about sounder development of the main aspects.

As socialist revolution moves ahead, the victories we win by no means indicate the end of class struggle. These victories can be consolidated and developed only by persisting in continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

To be able to see the essential and main aspects of things correctly, we must firmly adhere to a proletarian stand. Chairman Mao has pointed out: **"Our stand is that of the proletariat and of the masses. For members of the Communist Party, this means keeping to the stand of the Party, keeping to Party spirit and Party policy."** (*Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*.) This is our fundamental point of departure in approaching all problems. Only in this way can we firmly keep in mind the great historic task of the proletariat, correctly recognize the objective laws of class struggle, grasp the trend of social development, observe at all times what conforms to the maximum interests of the masses and to the advance of society and vice versa, and thus analyse and judge the situation correctly.

Any one who keeps to the stand of an individual or a small clique of that of the proletariat will see problems through prejudiced eyes, he will fail to correctly analyse class contradictions and class struggles and thus see the situation in an incorrect light. It is imperative, therefore, that we carry out Chairman Mao's instruction to **"read and study seriously and have a good grasp of Marxism,"** consciously remould our world outlook and keep firmly to the proletarian stand through constant tempering.

— From *Peking Review* No. 19, May 11, 1973

Nepal

People's War— Marching Ahead

— Vikas Kaur

Military actions carried out in the course of implementing the transitional plan, shows that the CPN (Maoist) have qualitatively strengthened their ability in the military field. The latest actions carried out in all the three regions, and particularly in that of Dolpa, in the Western region, manifests this.

On Sunday September 24, Maoist guerrillas completely destroyed the total reactionary state apparatus in Dolpa district, the biggest in geographical area, for the first time since the launching of the people's war in Nepal. The district headquarters of Dolpa district was seized by the guerrilla forces in a battle that lasted from 1.00 a.m. to 6.00 a.m. Eleven policemen breathed their last at the spot, and more than three dozen were seriously injured. Three of those injured died, while under treatment. Also Maoist guerrillas attacked a jail where 17 prisoners were freed. Apart from this, guerrillas blasted and destroyed the District Administration and Land Reform Office. In addition, the guerrillas captured the office of the Nepal Bank Limited in the district, and seized all the property, worth around sixty million rupees. **As a consequence of these actions, the whole of Dolpa district has turned into a desert for the reactionaries, and a revolutionary red base for the Maoist revolutionaries of Nepal.**

Besides this, Maoist guerrillas successfully accomplished three more military actions within a week. On September 27 a raid on a police post at Bhorle Tar in the Lamjung district, of the central region, gave a large cache of arms and ammunition to the guerrillas. The police post was reduced to ash. Eight policemen died on the spot and three were seriously injured. In addition to this, guerrillas attacked the nearby Agricultural Development Bank and seized all its property. The Maoists also carried out two more military actions, one on a police post and another on a bank. Both these were

in the eastern region. Though successful, detailed information is still awaited.

These military actions have completely demoralised the police force in Nepal. The Inspector General of Police, Achyut Krishna Kharel, the highest-ranking police officer in the force, has left on two months 'leave'. Government-controlled, Radio Nepal, also announced that some high-ranking police officers have fled their offices and are not available anywhere in the country. Though the army has not yet been deployed, the training and arms supplied by the Royal Army has failed to defeat the Maoist guerrillas. Also all the 'reform packages' implemented by the government in the Maoist affected areas, have all been battered down. Now, all these programmes prepared by the Girija government for the Maoist affected areas have been cancelled. An emergency meeting of the Nepalese cabinet was held that aimed to find the way out in tackling the revolutionary forces. Many politicians complained that the initiative of the entire Nepalese politics has gone into the hands of the Maoist revolutionaries.

The government, rife with internal dissents, are in a state of chaos. The frequent cabinet meetings of all the parliamentary parties, aimed at arriving at a national consensus against the Maoist people's war, have not yet materialised. The reactionaries, though they realise the direct threat to their system, have not yet been able to come to a unanimous position on the problem. On the contrary, the contradictions amongst them are further sharpening, particularly within the ruling party itself. It is not that they do not want to resolve this problem unanimously; they are unable to do so, due to the development of the people's war by leaps and bounds, and more particularly, because of the maturity of the CPN(Maoist) in applying MLM correctly in utilising the contradictions among the reactionaries.

Philippines — NPA Raids Laguna PNP Station

The Melito Clor command of the NPA successfully raided the PNP municipal station in the town of Sta. Maria, Laguna at 1-45 pm last August 6. Seized in the 7-minute raid were nine rifles and six handguns.

The chief of police, Senior Inspector Benito Mozo, was wounded in the arm when he tried to wrestle the gun of one of the NPA fighters. First aid was applied to his wound afterwards. The other police officers, who immediately surrendered, were not harmed. Two civilians caught inside the station were led out unharmed.

To set the record straight, confiscated from the precinct were six M-16 rifles, one M-14 rifle, two pistolized carbine rifles, one .45 cal pistol, one 9-mm pistol, four .38 cal revolvers, almost 1,200 assorted bullets, seven rifle grenades, one radio base, one radio tranceiver, one computer CPU and police intelligence files.

Palestine

For A New Intifada

— Shafi

Patience has its limits. Finally the Middle East has exploded once again. The draconian fangs of the Zionists are yet again crudely exposed, camouflaged earlier by 'peace talks'. They have come out with their naked brutality. Over the last three weeks from September 28, 120 Palestinians have been killed and 4,000 injured. Of those killed 26 were below 20 years, and of the injured, 1000 were children.

Years of fake 'peace talks' by the US stooge Yasser Arafat, has tried the patience of the Palestinian people. The fraudulent 'Palestinian Authority' with its illusory powers, was another blow to the discerning Palestinians. And the final straw that broke all illusions of a settlement came with the failure of the Camp David talks where Arafat was closeted with the two international gangsters Bill Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, for a full 14 days. A full fortnight of secret negotiations, with not even an appearance of a settlement, raised Palestinian's anger not only against the Zionists, but their puppet leader, Arafat. The only 'power' Arafat had, as head of the Palestinian Authority, was to police the Palestinians and prevent them from violent actions against the Zionists. This dangerous conspiracy, hatched by the US-Zionist fascists, of using Palestinians to kill Palestinians, is now on the verge of collapse. In the present upsurge even the Palestinian police, have once again turned their guns on the Israelis. The prisons, housing Palestinian rebels, have been forced open, and the fighters are once again amongst the people, having broken Arafat's chains.

The Spark

The spark for the present conflagration was ignited on September 28, when that notorious butcher, Ariel Sharon, paid a visit to Jerusalem's holiest site, the Al-aqsa mosque compound, which also houses the Jewish Temple Mount.

Sharon, the chairman of the opposition Likud party, is Israel's most notorious butcher, having the blood of thousands of Arabs on his hand, since the past 50 years. In the early 1950s, as head of the infamous Unit 101, it was he who led the massacre of innocent women and children. Since then, he has been personally involved in a series of massacres and butcheries.

Hundreds of demonstrators protested against Sharon's provocative visit to the compound that contains two of Islam's most venerated mosques. This was the spark that ignited the conflagration. The Israeli police viciously attacked the demonstrators (which included Palestinian

police) injuring 30. With this, Palestinian youth came out with fiery attacks on Israeli forces throughout the West Bank, Gaza Strip and in Jerusalem. With years of rage bottled up, they mounted reckless charges against a fully armed Israeli army. Using stones, rocks, sling-shots and petrol bombs, wave-upon-wave of young Palestinians launched attacks against Israeli forces. They took control of the religious site on the town of Nablus (West Bank) forcing the Israeli army out. Palestinian gunmen, in fact, intensified shooting attacks on Israeli positions after hearing of Barak's 48-hour ultimatum to end the conflagration.

In Lebanon, Palestinian refugees marched to the border with Israel, and many were mowed down by enemy guns. In retaliation, the pro-Iran Hizbollah guerrillas attacked Israeli positions and captured three Israeli soldiers. Later, they also captured an Israeli army colonel, linked with Israeli intelligence. This action threw the Israelis into a panic.

Israel responded with a brutality that far exceeded the level of the struggle. They rushed commandos to the north and their bombers, gun-ships, artillery and naval units shelled Hizbollah targets. Their tanks and bulldozers destroyed buildings in the Gaza strip. Israeli tanks shot with machine guns on Palestinian positions on the West Bank. Israel sealed off the entire Gaza strip and ringed the Palestinian towns with tanks. International crossing points between the Gaza Strip and Egypt and between the West Bank and Jordan were blockaded. In effect, Palestinians were put into separate geographical boxes with Israeli military helicopters hovering overhead.

In addition Israeli helicopter gun-ships fired rockets on select Palestinian targets in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A Palestinian TV station, that was propagating the Palestinian view, was completely destroyed. Also, Israeli helicopters hit Palestinian targets near Arafat's headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah and in Gaza city, hours after Palestinians lynched two Israeli soldiers.

Worldwide Outburst

There was an outburst throughout the world in support for the Palestinian cause and against Israeli brutality. All the Arab and muslim countries saw militant and violent protests against Israeli and US targets. So strong were people's feelings, that even Arab governments were forced to make anti-Israeli statements.

Also, many clashes took place in other countries of the world. In South Africa, a protest rally broke out into

violence. Demonstrators, chanting anti-Israeli, anti-US slogans, burnt Israeli and American flags, smashed a McDonald's outlet, destroyed a number of cars and set one on fire. In Sydney, in Australia, a group of men broke from a 2,500-strong crowd of protesters and tried to storm the US consulate. In Paris demonstrators set fire to a Jewish school and synagogue. In London, militant demonstrations were held and a Jew was stabbed in broad daylight, in front of hundreds of people.

What frightened the US the most was the daring bomb attack on the warship USS Cole at the port of Aden in Yemen. In this attack 17 US military sailors were killed and 22 seriously injured. This was followed by an attempt to blow up the British embassy in Yemen. So panic-stricken are the Americans that they immediately ordered the closure of 37 of the Embassies and Consulates in various countries, particularly those in West Asia, the Persian Gulf and North Africa.

Farcical Summit

The Summit called by Clinton in Egypt, was a farce from the start. It comprised US puppets from Egypt and Jordan; it played down the participation of Russia, in case they make inroads into the volatile situation; it was held with Palestine under a virtual state of siege; and was attended by UN secretary general Kofi Annan, who had spent his time attempting to free the Israeli soldiers from the control of the Hizbollah. Prior to this the US Security Council called for an 'objective inquiry' into the events but stopped short of accepting the Palestinian demand for an International Commission. Israel rejected both calls, while the US abstained from the Security Council vote which was passed 14-0.

The summit ended with a vague verbal call for a ceasefire, with no written agreement. It is obvious the situation has gone well beyond any fake 'peace talks' and Arafat's acrobatics may no longer be able to fool the Palestinian people.

Though Israeli and Palestinian security chiefs have since been meeting to work out the modalities for enforcing and monitoring the ceasefire, clashes continue throughout the region. As we go to the press over two hundred Palestinians have been killed and 7,000 injured

in bitter battles. Besides, militant groups like the Hamas and Islamic Jihad, have declared that the summit understanding is not applicable to them and that they will go on with the struggle.

Indian Hypocrisy

The Indian rulers, in a vague statement, drafted along the US standpoint, called for peace in the region. It mentioned not a word against Israeli brutality. Such a neutral position by both the US and Indian governments amounts to a de-facto support to Israel. While the US openly backs Israel, and seeks to utilise their influence on Arafat to broker a pro-Israeli agreement; the Indian rulers have, for the first time, given up their 'pro-Arab' stand, and joined the Zionists. It is not surprising therefore, that Jaswant Singh's much publicised three-day visit to Saudi Arabia was cancelled by the Saudi Arabian government at the last moment. Later, in typical BJP-style double speak, they supported a UN resolution, together with 92 others condemning Israel's excessive use of force.

US-Israeli Gangsters Isolated

Today, the US-Israeli gangsters stand more isolated than ever before.

Of late, country after country have openly flouted the UN air embargo on Iraq. The widely attended Arab Summit on Palestinian events called for limited action against Israel, but fell short of the Arab people's demand to break off all ties with Israel.

The people of the world have come out in open opposition; the other imperialist powers are silent on events in the Middle East, hoping to increase their inroads into the region; and even the most pro-US third world rulers are afraid to come out in open support of the US and the Zionists. But, in the final analysis it is only the people's force that will be able to smash these international gangsters. The Palestinians would need a new intifada, replacing sling-shots and stones, with guns and bullets; and replacing open suicidal attacks with guerrilla warfare. Death to the Zionists and their US backers is the clarion call of the world's oppressed people, specifically those in the Arab countries, and Palestine.

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A 'Swadeshi' Sale Deed of Indian Economy to Imperialist Masters

– Sumit

After cyber puppet, Chandra Babu, the 'Swadeshi' Indian government has presented to its people yet another imperialist recruit the once Gandhian-turned Swadeshi, P.R. Kumaramangalam. With him dead another puppet will replace him. Popularly known as 'Ranga', Kumaramangalam was an active trade union leader, shared the leftist leanings of his family, and came out forcefully and publicly against the economic reforms of the imperialists, stamping them as being responsible for the 'distortion and corruption' in Indian politics. The denouncement of this 'ranga' (drama) was his resignation as Parliamentary Affairs Minister of the Narasimha Rao's government in 1993, to become a staunch 'swadeshi' by joining the BJP.

Being guided by his new masters, Kumaramangalam relenting his antagonist stand against economic reforms, now advocated the need of no less than Rs. 2 lakh crores for the additional generation of 50,000MW of power during the Ninth Plan Period, to be met through private sector investment. And since the private sector was not coming forward with investment as it was wary of the regulations in vogue, especially the tariff structure, the swadeshi-branded Power Minister pleaded that *'Unless existing regulations are changed and the tariff structure is made more viable and enforceable, the much needed fillip to the power sector may not come through. My priority therefore is to bring the policy changes through legislation in the matter of tariffs by bringing into existence a tariff commission'* (Powerline, Apr. '98).

So with the aim of promoting *"the much needed fillip to the power sector by the private investors"*, Ranga unprecedentedly engaged an economic research institute. (the National Council of Applied Economic Research) to undertake preparations for the proposed Electricity Bill, 2000. Philosophized and engineered by the client's brief, the research institute fulfilled their contractual obligation and presented the draft bill for the proposed legislation to the Ministry of Power *"intended to accelerate the reforms necessary to ensure a healthy power industry in India."*

The sole strategy of the reform, sought to be legitimised by this Bill, aims at dismemberment of the Electricity Boards under the state sector, winding them up and making distress sales to private operators. The power sector is intended to be made free for all, answerable to none, and the role of the State reduced

to that of a helpless spectator. This may be an easy way out for the government but it leaves a host of serious questions unanswered. The salient features of the Bill, are summarised below :

(1) The restructuring and modernisation of this industry is now inevitable if the goal of providing universal access to reliable and affordable electricity is to be achieved in the foreseeable future.

(2) States may keep SEBs or may privatise them. In any case, SEBs will have to act as a business organisation.

(3) Transmission Companies under the Companies Act, 1956 in vogue, will be reconstituted through public and private investment for evacuation and transmission of power from different Generating Companies.

(4) Transmission companies will enter into agreement with Area Distributor/Distributor/Subsidiary/Associate/Purchaser/Retailer for transmission and distribution of power. The latter may also enter into sub-contract with any individual or group of individuals for distribution of power to the end consumers.

(5) An Electricity Regulatory Commission (Centre/State) will take policy decisions regarding fixing of tariff/fuel surcharge/cess, taking the reasonable profit element, at every level, into consideration.

(6) Before dismemberment of the SEBs, the respective States will constitute 'Corporations' (Generation / Transmission/ Distribution) registered under the Companies Act, 1956. TRANSCO will come up as the main company.

(7) After the unbundling of the SEBs, all their assets will vest with the State Government., and the state government in turn will hand over the assets to the respective stake holders in accordance with the sale deeds. The liabilities of the erstwhile SEBs including the terminal benefits of their employees will be met from the sale value of the assets thus received by the government.

(8) The respective state governments will transfer the employees of the erstwhile SEBs, under the different companies, as per terms mentioned in the transfer scheme. Steps will however be taken to see that the posts held and the pay enjoyed by the employees may not be less favourable. After transfer to the new employer, employment will be regulated by the Regulations of the stake holders. **However, employees are not entitled to prefer any suit against the Government/Stake Holder/**

SEB for any relief or compensation for such transfer in any court.

(9) The consumers will have to enter into fresh agreement, with the distributor of power, at their own cost.

(10) One of the functions and duties of the Electricity Regulatory Commission (Centre/State) is to promote, encourage and assist private investment in the electricity industry. Disputes arising out of the decision of the Regulatory Commission can only be raised in the Division Bench of the High Courts.

(11) The government (Centre/state) will arrange the acquisition of land for the private investors in such a manner as if the land will be required to meet the exigencies of the government.

(12) The government will arrange subvention (subsidy) to the investors, from the exchequer, either as aid and/or loan and also act as guarantor for any market loan and interest there of, taken by the investors.

(13) The new power projects are eligible for a five-year tax holiday.

(14) Duties on the import of equipment for the power project had been reduced considerably initially and currently they are zero.

The proposed legislation would, it appears, satisfy only one interest, that of the profit-seeking investor. That seems to be the only purpose served by the Electricity Bill, 2000.

Be it mentioned in this connection that Notifications have been amended from time to time, in tune with the demands of the foreign investors. For example, in the matter of Capital cost for power plants, the principal notification was issued in March, 1992, amended twice in 1994, twice in 1995 and four times in the first half of 1997.

Prior to the present legislation, the Electricity (Supply) Act, 1948 was amended in 1991 to facilitate the setting up of private generating stations. In 1998, the Electricity Act, 1910 was amended for enabling private investment in the transmission sector. In the same year, the Electricity Regulatory Commissions Act, 1998 was enacted to provide for Regulatory Commissions at the Centre and in the States for tariff-setting and regulation of the electricity industry. So far six States, namely Orissa, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have enacted their respective laws to provide for the setting up of separate corporate entities for the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity in place of the existing SEBs. Some other States are actively considering similar measures.

Consequences of Reforms Carried out So Far

The National Working Group on Power, headed by N.S. Vasant, former Chairman, Punjab State Electricity Board, reviewed the whole situation. The Working Group has stated that *"it is distressing that the reforms are being carried out in spite of negative results verging on disaster"*. Their study report has collated the following results :

(i) The Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB), so far a profit making Board, is now expected to end up making a loss of over Rs. 1,700 crores in the year 1999-2000. In Maharashtra, Enron's Dabhol Power Corporation (DPC) tariff is Rs. 4.76 per unit (Fuel cost ranges between Rs. 2 to 2.25 per unit and capacity charges are about Rs. 1.60) as against an average generation cost of Rs. 0.32 per unit from MSEB's hydro-electric stations, Rs. 1.25 from the thermal stations and around Rs. 1.40 from the NTPC. The MSEB is forced to close down its own generation, and purchase costlier power; it cannot reduce the PLF of the DPC since the LNG (liquid natural gas) contract has already been made for 22% PLF. With the completion of DPC (Phase I & II) not only would MSEB, but even the state of Maharashtra would become bankrupt since the DPC is covered by guarantees and counter guarantees. At this rate, MSEB and the Government of Maharashtra, in due course, may be forced to start selling its assets/power houses to Enron (as happened in Uttar Pradesh and Orissa against the arrears of NTPC).

(ii) In Orissa the losses of GENCO (the generation part of the erstwhile SEB) were Rs. 294.99 crores in 1996-97 against Rs. 230.65 incurred by the parent OSEB in 1995-96. Supply to the rural areas has been stopped. AES (an American investor in GENCO) has come up with the claim of enhancing tariffs three times, or else the AES should be compensated to the tune of Rs. 300 crores for damages during the cyclone, since the company was in the process of arranging an insurance cover when the super cyclone hit Orissa.

After four years of reform in the power sector in Orissa under the gaze of the World Bank, the Bank's Country Director, Edwin Lim wrote to Orissa's Chief Secretary to rescue GRIDCO (the transmission company) from the debt-servicing burden, and sought assistance from the Government of India. The centre promptly complied with a financial-restructuring package of Rs. 2,715 crores, lest the set-back should send negative signals to other reforming states such as Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.

Preparatory to privatisation of the four distribution zones of Orissa, their accounts were separated from those of GRIDCO and four companies were incorporated. The four distribution companies together had liabilities of over Rs. 2,000 crores. But the Bank suggested that GRIDCO transfer only part of these liabilities and take on itself the rest. This was in order to make the distribution companies attractive to prospective buyers. In 1999, 51 per cent of the shares of the Distribution companies (DISTCOs) were sold to the highest bidder. The Regulatory Commission allowed retail tariffs to be fixed in a way that would cover the cost of bulk power purchases by the DISTCOs from the GRIDCO, plus a 16 per cent return on the investments made in the purchase of the companies, with an allowance for transmission and distribution losses (ranging to 50 per cent, against an internationally accepted norm of 7 per cent).

(iii) The Haryana State Electricity Board has since been unbundled and corporatised, firstly by separating generation and transmission. Later, transmission has been divided into four distribution companies and a transmission company. International agencies, other than the World Bank, have chipped in with \$400 million. They included OECF (Japan), KfW (Germany) and DFID (UK). Technical assistance are being provided as a grant, and not a loan, by the international agencies like DFID, USEA, USAID and CIDA. DFID will focus on regulatory commission, corporatisation, financial restructuring, distribution, privatisation and a broad-based execution of the 'reform'. It will also provide a communication strategy and personal management. CIDA will help provide expansion and planning.

(iv) The Government of Madhya Pradesh is learnt to have accepted the recommendation of the Tata Rao Committee towards restructuring of the Madhya Pradesh State Electricity Board. Multinational companies like Daewoo Power, Power Gen, GBL Power, Pench Power, STI, Guna and Shree Maheshwar Hydrel are some of the agencies operating on the generation side, in the state. A consortium of the KEC International and Crompton Greaves has been awarded with the charge of the transmission system. A new 600 KM long 400 KV double circuit line would be developed by this consortium on a build-own-transfer basis.

(v) The generation part of the state-owned power sector in Tripura has been handed over to a private investor NEEPCO.

(vi) The Kerala Government has since drawn up a package of reforms.

The transmission and distribution losses, which was a major plank of the reforms, have gone soaring in the

'reformed' states : This will be evident from the following table :

State	Transmission & Distribution Loss (per centum)	
	Pre-reform	Post-reform
Orissa	23	51
Andhra Pradesh	25	45
Haryana	32	40
Rajasthan	26	43

(Source : Ministry of Power, Government of India – Presentation on Power Sector Reforms)

The draft of the Bill was presented to the conference of the Chief Ministers and Power Ministers on 26th February, 2000. The problems identified by the conference were :

- (i) outstanding dues of the SEBs
- (ii) inability of the governments (Centre/State) to provide budgetary support, due to fiscal deficits
- (iii) unsustainability of cross-subsidies by the industry

Primary factors identified for these ills were :

- (i) theft of electricity
- (ii) technical losses in transmission and distribution, and
- (iii) poor operational efficiency of 50% of the thermal plants in the State sector

To any rational person, it would be obvious that the solution to none of these problems lie in drastic legislative and structural changes of the industry. The root cause of the poor financial health of SEBs is not on account of extant laws, but due to its violation by the governments. The problems of outstanding dues and partially even the poor operational performance is a consequence of the massive corruption and willful violation by the state governments of Sec.59 of the Electricity (Supply) Act, 1948 which statutorily require the state governments to assure SEBs a minimum rate of return of 3% on their invested capital.

As far as theft is concerned, the problem is not inadequate legislation to deal with criminals, but the lack of will to enforce the law. Much of the theft is by big industry and rural elite linked to the politicians.

The basic objectives of the proposed legislation are therefore :

- (i) to enforce the unbundling of the vertically integrated SEBs in order to facilitate the privatisation of the generation, transmission and distribution components and also to facilitate the multinationals to replace a public

sector monopoly with a private monopoly (e.g. AES Orissa). It is ironical that vertically integrated private power sector companies like CESC, Tata Electric Company etc., have been kept undisturbed.

(ii) to create institutions that have no accountability to the legislature, yet regulate to guarantee big profits on a highly capital intensive industry (wherein a single paise increase in tariffs implies an additional annual revenue of Rs. 70,000 per MW at 80% PLF).

(iii) to create a 'half slave and half free' sector wherein the Regulators (State/Centre) would control the tariffs of the public funded institutions, but the tariffs for the private sector (particularly the foreign funded sector) would be dictated by power purchase agreements and would be outside the purview of the Regulators.

(iv) to ensure that the state is demobilised and the entire fund requirement in this core sector industry, is based on, and controlled by, international finance capital.

(v) to maximise private profit by ensuring the elimination of ceiling on profits.

(vi) to provide this essential public service only to those who can pay, thereby threatening the power supply to rural areas and the farm sector and the urban poor.

(vii) to enable multinational corporations to take over, on their own terms, the assets of the SEBs.

Can Bengal Lag Behind ?

As far as 'reforms' in the power sector is concerned, West Bengal under the governance of the Left Front government is the pioneer, far to speak to speak of lagging behind. **It may be recalled that when the objective of privatising the power sector to make room for the imperialists was in its embryonic form, the West Bengal government mutilated two supply stations of the WBSEB and formed the Singur-Haripal Rural Electricity Co-operative Ltd., in the year 1980.** In 1987 the government floated a company in the name of the "Power Development Corporation Ltd." and handed over Kolaghat Thermal Power Project, a 210X6MW project under construction by WBSEB, to it. Further dismemberment of the WBSEB was done by the Lavpur RE Cooperative Societies Ltd., in the district of Birbhum, and by the Sagardwip Rural Energy Development Cooperative Society Ltd. in 24-Parganas (South). In 1999 yet another company was constituted by the government in the name of the West Bengal Rural Energy Development Corporation Ltd., essentially a power distribution company, whose objective, in the long term, is to supply 'power on demand' in the rural areas. In the meantime, the WBSEB, vide its circular, intimated to all concerned that the government had decided to bring

the thermal power stations under the WBPDC in phases. to function as separate business units. Be it mentioned that both WBPDC and WBREDCL are registered under the Companies Act, 1956 having their own Memorandum of Associations and Memorandum of Articles. The REDCL will purchase power at rates and terms set by the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). While the management of these two companies are corporatised, the works of distribution of power, line maintenance, new connections, fuse calls, meter reading and billing, collection etc., will be done contractually. The government preaches that such steps in the power sector is not privatisation, but is an attempt at restructuring, since the SEB is not able to cope with the burden of responsibility as it stands at present. Over and above this, the SEB is reeling under a debt trap, and has reduced itself to insolvency and hence no financial institution is coming up to help with a rescue package by giving loans etc. In its propaganda, the government is audacious enough to suppress the following salient points :

(i) Despite constraints imposed by the government and interference from the political level, the SEB did extremely well upto the major part of the seventies. But the government has seldom permitted the autonomy provided for SEB in the statutes. The SEB is compelled to shoulder the blame of mis-management, inefficiency and deterioration in the quality of service.

(ii) The WBSEB has been reduced to the status of mere trader in place of producer. It is compelled to meet the power demand of the State through purchases from outside agencies, the quantum of which is more than double its own generation.

(iii) There is a direction from the State government to the WBSEB for guaranteed off-take at the rate of 80% PLF from other outside agencies. As a result the WBSEB has to hike up or tone down its own generation, resulting in seriously effecting its own per capital production cost.

(iv) Both the Central and State governments have large unpaid bills, kept as arrears due to the WBSEB for their consumption of power. This is more than 30% of SEB's total revenue.

(v) No financial help or subsidy is borne by the government for the supply of power and maintenance of the system with regard to the Kutir Jyoti and Lokdeep projects.

(vi) Theft of energy, which ranges from 7-8%, tells upon the financial health of the WBSEB. Such theft takes place under the political patronage of the party in power. It may be recalled that a 1% loss of energy means 450 MW loss of power.

(vii) The state government is totally indifferent to the WBSEB taking action for realising energy bills from some big companies. This amount ranges upto Rs. 1,000 crores.

Some lessons and tasks confronting the workers/employees working in the Public Sector power industries

The Electricity Bill 2000 is being brought into being superseding a host of acts passed earlier, such as the Electricity Act 1910, and the Electric Supply Act (1948). The net result of the proposed Act consists in the unbundling of the huge public sector power enterprises, i.e., State Electricity Boards (SEBs).

The aim of Electricity Bill 2000 is supposedly to "provide universal access to reliable and affordable electricity." In the preface to the Bill, it was recognised that immediately after the transfer of power, "nationalisation was considered essential at that time for extending power utility to the vast rural and economically backward regions across the country." But it has, in the same breath, been pointed out that the SEBs now "began to face serious difficulties over the years owing to their inability to recover costs and inefficiencies arising out of their unwieldy structure." Hence an all-India meet of Chief Ministers of various states, in the year 1996, recognised the widening gap between demand and supply, and identified the need for corporatisation and restructuring of the SEBs (i.e., privatisation), and even abolishing the Boards altogether, and decided enactment of laws towards this end by their respective legislatures. Accordingly, some six states have enacted their respective laws to provide for the splitting of the Boards and creation of separate entities for generation, transmission and distribution of power. West Bengal's Left Front Government has also made up its mind to privatise and corporatise the power industry step by step and not in a hurry partly due to employees's pressure, and partly due to the fact that the West Bengal Government has already taken steps in that direction through the creation of the power development corporations. This was long before the BJP even thought of it.

Now about avowed aims regarding the universal access to reliable and affordable electricity. The aforesaid social aims would have to be drastically curtailed as each of the three components—production, transmission and distribution — would be run separately and according to market and commercial policies of profits and business viability. It may further be noted that after passing through at least three power purchasing agreements (PPA) ensuring a lucrative amount of guaranteed returns (profits), the consumers will ultimately receive electricity at enormously inflated prices. So it may be safe to

conclude that the common people, particularly the rural folk, getting power, to light up the dark recesses of their huts, would remain a pipe dream. Further, it is assumed that privatisation and the opening up of the power industries to the big comprador capitalists and imperialist TNCs would throw up a 'level playing field' for competition which would supposedly bring down costs. But the reality is that with the massive capital involved, and the hi-tech schemes envisaged, it is the multinationals that will dominate this sector. **So, what would result, is a switch from state monopoly to the monopoly of the TNCs.**

An example of sorts is the meter-reading and billing of the thousands of consumers in the urban as well as rural areas through private cooperatives and panchayats respectively. These two bodies, in their turn, would be forced, out of business principles, to hand over such operations to the enterprises with 'expertise' to complete the tasks quicker than indigenous agencies.

So, as a result of this privatisation of electric power, the cost to the consumer will go up three to five fold and lakhs of employees will lose their jobs. While the bulk of the profits will get siphoned off abroad by the TNCs. In all ways it will be an outright disaster for the country.

The foregoing plans of the governments, demands a dogged struggle by the power workers unitedly, not only for their immediate demands, but against privatisation, and to reorganise the existing public utilities to ensure both viability and the fulfillment of social aims. From the nature of restructuring of the power industries in the matrix of capitalist globalisation, it is obvious that a major section of the workforce, including the better-paid engineers, are arrayed against this privatisation, simply for their existence. The earlier struggle of the UP power workers showed this. Add also to this, the strength, of a sizable section belonging to the contract, casual and daily-rated workers, whose numbers are swelling day by day. In the power sector itself, if united, there is a mighty force arrayed against the perpetrators of these evil policies.

But, the struggle cannot be confined only to the employees of the power sector. Every single consumer of electricity in this country will be badly hit. The worst to be hit will be the rural masses and the urban poor and middle classes.

A militant struggle by all these forces can definitely stall the process of privatisation of power. And a more determined struggle, to kick the imperialists out of our country, and smash their lackeys within, is the only guarantee for reversing the process of privatisation in total. □

Fifty-three Years of 'Independence' and Our Health

— Dr. Siddhartha Gupta

In the modern world, besides food, clothing and shelter, education and health are the two essentials of life. Hence development of humanity is not possible without these fundamental necessities. A man can survive for some days even without food, but without medical treatment during an emergency, survival is impossible.

But in this class divided society, the ruling class has robbed the toiling mass of their right to health and access to essential medical treatment. They treat it as a 'privilege' for a small section of people, rather than a fundamental human right.

With the propagation of science, the last century has witnessed spectacular achievements in modern medicine which were beyond one's imagination a few decades back. The discovery of detailed human anatomy and physiology upto the molecular level, the invention of 'miracle' drugs, the improvement of surgery and anaesthesia, the application of sophisticated technologies in diagnostics, organ transplantation or genetic engineering have brought revolutionary changes. Totally fatal cases can now be saved, which were unthinkable even a few years back.

But due to extreme social inequalities, the ghastly exploitation of our working folk by the ruling classes, and the tightening grip of imperialism, more than 80% of the world population is yet to get any benefits of science. They continue to live in endless pain and misery and fail to get even two square meals a day. When, on the one hand, thousands of millions of dollars are being spent to explore any evidence of life on Mars, thousands of human lives on earth do perish every day like insects and hornets.

The Indian Scenario

Our 'Saare Jahan Se Achha' motherland spends Rs. 30 to 35 crores a day on the Kargil war. It does not hesitate to invest millions of dollars for 'Sankhya Vahini' — the information highway. But it also occupies the first place as the land of the highest number of starving, diseased, homeless and illiterate people.

Out of the one billion population, no less than 300 million goes to bed every day, without a night meal. Yet huge amounts of food grains is spoiled in the godowns, at the will of the imperialist bosses. More than 60% of people are without any primary health care. Above 35% of the rural population is without safe drinking water and village women have to walk 5 to 10 kms a day on an average to get drinking water for their family in the summer months. Proper sanitation is a joke for 60% of Indians.

India also tops the list of killer and disabling diseases

as can be seen in the following table :

Tuberculosis (TB)	Total identified patients 1.5 crores (half of the total world cases) New cases : 25 lakhs per year Death : 5 lakh cases per year
Diarrhoeal diseases in 'under five' children	50 lakh cases a year with 15 lakh deaths (highest in the world)
Malaria	10 lakh cases and 50,000 deaths a year
Leprosy	Total 40 lakh cases (1/3 rd of the total world cases)
Blindness	Total cases 35 lakhs (world's highest) Most of them are due to Vit A deficiency and non-operated cataract New cases each year : 40,000
Viral/Bacterial Pneumonia	15 lakh deaths a year
Infectious Sexual diseases	50 lakh total patients
Anaemia in Pregnancy	70% of pregnant women
Protein energy malnutrition in children	50% of total children
Other deficiency diseases	20 crores

The infant mortality rate (73 out of 1000 live births) and perinatal mortality rate (44.2 out of 1000) are alarmingly high. So far as the human development indices are concerned, India occupies 134th position out of 170 countries whereas the position of Sri Lanka is 96 and that of Pakistan is 118.

A Short History of Health System Development

In ancient and mediaeval times health was never considered as a state responsibility but as a personal or familial concern.

From the 14th and 15th century, the European countries took control over the oceans with their developed naval forces. The history is well known that, how they spread like cancer over Asia, Africa and Latin America to establish their colonies. Unbelievable amounts of wealth looted from these colonies served as the fuel of the Industrial Revolution in Europe.

Thus in Europe big industries were established and the industrial proletariat also emerged as a class. Like all fields of science, medical science also started developing. Modern medicine freed itself from age old unscientific practices, quackery, witchcraft and myths. Europe inherited the allopathic medicine from ancient Greece and gave it a new shape, which became capable of saving the lives of even terminally ill patients.

But at the same time it became so expensive that it went out of reach of the working class.

The expectation of the common people to share the benefits of modern treatment became a part of their struggles against social inequalities. The demand for state sponsored free treatment became popular.

But the ruling classes were not ready to oblige. They preferred to keep health care reserved as another costly purchasable commodity.

During this time, in 1917, the Russian Revolution occurred which, like in all other fields of life, left its permanent imprint also on the sphere of health care.

The Soviet Union became the first country in the world, which recognised people's right to health at state expense. The socialist government, in spite of all odds, built up a wonderful network of primary and higher health care in the vast country, for all its citizens.

The workers of the capitalist, feudal and semi-feudal countries were greatly inspired by the revolution in Russia. They also started to claim a right to free health care.

The crisis of capitalism gave birth to two world wars in Europe over a span of 30 years. After the second world war, China freed itself from the shackles of exploitation. Socialism was established in East European countries. Freedom struggles intensified in the former colonies and semi-colonies of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

World capitalism was shaken by the fear of socialism, which was spreading like a prairie fire. Hence it changed its tactics. It gave sham independence to former colonies, only to transfer them into semi-colonies. To stop communism, it adopted the economic model of a 'welfare state' or capitalism with a human face. The aim was to show that the solutions are already within the framework of capitalism and that there is no need to opt for communism.

As a panacea for the agitating people, the West European countries and the USA introduced free or highly subsidised medical care for its people. It was not a gift of mercy, but a trophy won by the people by protracted battles. The money needed to run the free services was drained from the colonies of the third world.

Whereas in India the imperialists solicit for abolition

of minimum state run health care facilities, in their own countries they provide free national health care service or state financed health insurance. The amount of free services varies from 60% (in the USA) to 100% (in Canada). (Though in the USA there is a two tier system for the rich and poor, still it is much better than what we get here)

Recently, in the face of the deep economic crisis, most countries tried to withdraw some of the facilities. They have managed to withdraw some in the US, but have been unsuccessful in Europe due to the resistance of the working class.

Health Care after 'Independence'

In British India, the Englishmen had no intention to build up a well organised health system to cater for their subjects. They only established some medical colleges to produce some doctors trained in European medicine and qualified to treat the British officers, army and the Indian Jamindars and comprador bourgeoisie.

The indigenous medical systems, like Ayurveda, Yunani etc., reached a dead end resulting in unscientific practices, due to utter neglect and lack of research and development. A few charitable hospitals and missionary centres were opened, while the rest of the urban and rural folk were left to their destiny.

The transfer of power in 1947, converted India into a semi-colonial and semi-feudal state where the British legacy was maintained and the interests of the imperialists and their running dogs were well protected.

But the new rulers could not ignore the aspirations and expectations of the people, due to the vast popular upsurge against colonial rule with thousands of martyrs laying down their lives. The Nehru-Patel-Gandhi axis were afraid that unless some of the popular demands were fulfilled, the Indians would quickly identify this sham independence and opt for socialism. One such popular demand was 'Free health and medical service by the state'.

But, most cunningly the constitution-makers did not include the right to health in the list of fundamental rights. They rather included it in the optional 'suggestive' part of the constitution which means that one cannot charge the government in the court of law for not providing health to the people. Where even the 'fundamental rights' are grossly violated every now and then, one can well imagine what would be the fate of their 'right to health'.

In spite of that, due to public pressure, the governments were forced to set up health centres, hospitals etc., in urban and rural areas where free treatment by doctors, some free medicines, facility for indoor admission, operations etc., were available. Though grossly inadequate and fragile, some network was established. In 1949-50, it

was decided that about 23,000 health centres would be established in the country. Initially a health centre for each 10,000 people was fixed as a target. As time passed the target was lowered and lowered. For example, the proportion was reduced to a centre for every 40,000 people, then for every 1 lakh people and so on. Ultimately, there remained no target at all. Till 1996, only 14,000 (about 60%) of the proposed centres have been established. Yet, how many of them are actually in running condition is difficult to say.

Since its inception, the health budget was grossly inadequate and in comparison to the foreign debt service, defence or central expenses, it was ridiculously trivial. With each new 'five year plan' the health budget has reduced further to reach its nadir at 1.67% in the eighth plan. In comparison to the other countries (even some Asian countries) it is negligible. Let us go through the following charts to realise the horrible situation.

Budgetary Allocation in different sectors (as percentage of total)	
Foreign Debt Service	32%
Defence (Pre-Kargil)	18%
Central Planning	16%
Education	2.5%
Health	1.67%

Health Budget as % of Total Budget	
Five Year Plans	% Health Budget
First	3.85%
Second	3.3%
Third	2.4%
Fourth	2.14%
Fifth	2.04%
Sixth	1.98%
Seventh	1.82%
Eighth	1.67%

Health Budget in other countries as % of total budget	
Countries	Health Budget
USA	13.8%
UK	15.2%
China	12.7%
Sri Lanka	4.7%
Philippines	3.1%

Still, the introduction of a three tier system of primary health care, the initiation of a National Health Programmes (for Tuberculosis, Malaria, Diarrhoeal diseases, Blindness) etc., could offer some relief to the people. Infectious diseases were controlled to some extent and health parameters like infant mortality rate, maternal

mortality rate, crude death rate etc., were lowered and life expectancy was raised.

New Economic Policy's Impact on Health Care

The so-called 'mixed economy', which was actually a semi-colonial and semi-feudal model to protect the interest of the imperialist bosses and their lackeys like Tata, Birla, Ambani etc., the feudal lords, bureaucrats and corrupt politicians, led India to a state of complete economic collapse and bankruptcy.

This crisis forced the rulers to shed off their mask of humanity, and withdraw even the small benevolent services which they gave.

Health is the first sector to face the axe : the national health programmes are being wound up, health care service is being gradually withdrawn, a moratorium on the establishment of new centres at states expense, a ban on the recruitment of health workers, the stoppage of the supply of life saving drugs and the introduction of 'users fees' at all levels. As a result killer diseases like Tuberculosis, Malaria, Kala Azar, Pneumonia, etc., are increasing at a rapid pace. Diseases which were suppressed to some extent have bounced back (like Asiatic Cholera, Dengue) and long forgotten diseases like Plague have reappeared to cause havoc. The health parameters are deteriorating day by day.

In a nutshell the effects can be described as —

- (i) Withdrawal of free health service by the state
- (ii) Privatisation of the health sector, with medical service becoming a 'commodity'
- (iii) Rural people suffer the most due to their poor power to pay
- (iv) Health business is flourishing rapidly (as it is a commodity which is always urgent and beyond the scope of bargaining) which attracts TNCs to loot us in the name of providing modern health care

The New Economic Policies have got a disastrous impact on health care in India. The World Bank has dictated the following policies for health care:

- (1) Withdrawal of the state's contribution to health and medical treatment by massive budgetary curtailment
- (2) Introduction of 'users fee' (i.e., payments) at all levels i.e., OPDs, Indoor and Diagnostics (from Primary Health Centres to state hospitals)
- (3) Moratorium on the establishment of new health centres
- (4) Gradual abolition of expensive 'curative' treatment in primary and secondary levels and emphasis on so-called 'prevention' in the form of propaganda only.

(5) Rampant privatisation and patronisation of health oriented business

(6) Introduction of contractual service in place of permanent service for medical and paramedical staff, including teachers in medical colleges

Since free medical treatment is expensive (as it requires the engagement of doctors and paramedical staff, supply of medicine, diagnostic facilities etc.), the World Bank-IMF solicit for its gradual shrinkage in the name of giving emphasis on preventive measures. But preventive and curative services are mutually complementary and not an alternative to each other.

The 'new policy' gives maximum emphasis on vaccination — knowing fully well that the vast majority of killer diseases are not preventable by it. Even the vaccine against tuberculosis (BCG) is only partially effective. (See box on polio)

Family planning (actually birth control and medical termination of pregnancy) is another pet project of the imperialists in the third world countries. They want to project 'population explosion' as the sole cause of poverty in these countries. This is a tactic adopted by the rulers to divert our attention from the horrible loot of wealth from these countries. Even today, with equal distribution of the foodgrains produced, India can support a population of 1.25 billion. Consumption wise, a US citizen consumes 200 times more than that of an average Indian. But the imperialists put all emphasis on 'Birth Control' and as a result the budget on family planning swells from 0.14 crore in the First Five year Plan to 6500 crores in the 8th Plan. An Indian woman is also denied the right over her own body.

The other priority sectors, according to the World Bank-IMF nexus are :

- (i) Consciousness about nutrition and balanced diet — in absence of any 'diet' at all.
- (ii) School Health Programme — In the background of 80 to 90% dropouts at the primary and secondary level.
- (iii) Propaganda against Tobacco, Alcohol, Drugs (Narcotics) and AIDS — which are not at all the major health problems of India.
- (iv) Upgradation of a hygienic atmosphere in houses — where more than 40% of the urban population lives in dingy slums or on footpaths.

The mode of propaganda and consciousness building through telecasting, banners, etc., in the backdrop of overwhelming poverty and illiteracy, is a practical joke.

Privatisation

Privatisation is another key word of the new policy. Even at present 75% of health care is a purchasable

commodity and in the hands of private companies. 61% of all health setups in the country (in 1996) are private in comparison to 16% previously (1976). Only 7% of doctors are employed by the state in 1995-96 compared to 35% in 1975-76. Above 60% of the total expenses in the health care sector comes from the pockets of the patients and their relatives whereas the states' contribution is less than 30%.

The MNCs, TNCs and their local touts are not satisfied even with this. They want 'total privatisation' and a full market economy in this field.

At present health care is one of the biggest industries in the world worth \$2.8 trillion (Rs. 1175,00,000 crores). In India the total business is worth Rs. 73,000 crores with a growth rate of Rs. 8,000 crores a year (13%). The total money circulating in this sector is more than the total turnover of 12 top companies including Hindustan Lever, ITC & Reliance.

The business includes private hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres, diagnostic instruments and reagents; health insurance (particularly after privatisation of the Insurance sector); medical software; medical architecture; consultancy services etc. The largest single aspect of this is the business of pharmaceuticals (medicines) worth Rs. 12,000 crores.

The WTO and New Patent Act

Our discussion will remain incomplete without a mention of the new patent act which is likely to hit a death blow particularly to local pharmaceutical industry and raise the price of medicine to a exorbitantly high levels.

The new patent act is an integral part of the WTO agreement. It will change the fundamental rules of the older act. The changes are as follows :

- (i) Product patents to replace process patents — which will prevent research and development in the medicinal field and also prevent inventions of the same product by a cheaper method, which could lower the cost of medicine.
- (ii) Patent for 20 years in place of 5 years — which will help the TNC giants loot the people ruthlessly and charge whatever price they want.
- (iii) Abolition of the 'Licence of Right' act — by which the government could cancel patents of a life saving drug, if the patent holder company fails to produce the same in the country within a stipulated period.
- (iv) The domain of patent has been extended to include all biological products, plants, microbes, seeds, and even human genomes. The patenting of 'Neem' and 'Haldi' by the US companies are glaring examples. The take over of indigenous and

herbal medicines by the TNCs, will now be facilitated.

As a result of this, the cost of medicine will increase many fold and the government will loose all control even on the price of life saving drugs. Transnationals, which already control 90% of the Indian drug industry and siphon thousands of crores of dollars to their headquarters, will be benefited further. And the poor people will die of diseases with even the simplest medicines going beyond their reach.

Conclusion

The health sector in India is a part of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal system which serves not the people, but the interests of the foreign multinationals and their brown-skinned agents like Tata, Birla, Goenka or Ambani. The mafias, politicians of all parliamentary parties, bootleggers, criminals, bureaucrats and media barons do their best to serve their bosses and get a share of the cake drain so that the ringmasters can the Indian people smoothly and more effectively. The police, paramilitary and military forces, fed on the money

of taxpayers, are ruthlessly suppressing all genuine and justified demands of the common man. **With health care getting more and more elitist, only 10% of our population will have access to proper health care, while 90% will be pushed to a slow, tortuous death from disease. And with hygiene also being defacto privatised (witness the spurt in mineral waters, and private water purification systems) and the government's abdication of all responsibility, disease will spread hundred fold. The gainers will be the pharmaceutical companies, private hospitals, manufacturers of hygiene systems and health equipment and the health insurance companies.**

The socio-political structure of India is rotten to its core. Naturally the structure of health care cannot be anything better, as it is part and parcel of the whole system.

Minor modifications within the framework of parliamentary policies, as advocated by the vote mongering parties, are no solution. The whole system is to be uprooted and thrown away by revolution. There is no other short cut way to better health and a better life. □

Pulse Polio Campaign — A Criminal Conspiracy Against Our People

The gigantic publicity and enormous expense for the WHO (World Health Organisation) sponsored Pulse Polio Campaign (PPC) is not only a gigantic fraud but a treacherous and dangerous scheme against the people (that too children) of our country, by the Indian rulers. Promoted and pushed by both BJP and opposition parties, when in power, the PPC is yet another example of how our rulers dance to the dictates of the imperialists even if it endangers an entire new generation.

The fact is that the Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) has been banned in the US. And it is these drops, which are being given to our children, at a huge cost of Rs. 2,000 crore to the Indian exchequer. In the West, ever since the disease was eradicated (in 1975), the dozen-odd new cases every year have been caused by the vaccine itself. That is why the WHO has recommended the use of injectable polio vaccine (IPV) for the developed countries, but the OPV is suggested for the under-developed countries. After the West started discarding OPV in 1995, the WHO — through the UNICEF — has been trying to find new markets in the poorer countries. As part of this process, they launched the PPC throughout the world, including India.

Unlike the IPV which is a dead virus, the OPV is a live, weakened virus. Sometimes, the weak virus may mutate and become "neuro-virulent", causing what is called vaccine associated paralytic polio. Besides, the OPV is often ineffective, as it requires to be stored between minus 2 and minus 8 degrees Celsius. Any break in these "cold-chain conditions" due to improper administration or cold-storage facilities renders it ineffective. In India where the bulk of the vaccines have be given in the distant rural areas and slums, and administered by lakhs of ordinary people, what percentage of the vaccines have maintained these stringent cold-storage conditions? Yet again, though the OPV is much cheaper than the IPV (Rs. 3 compared to Rs. 450) it requires five doses. Missing a single dose will reduce its effectivity. After all this, it is not surprising that in 1999, India had 60% of the total polio cases reported in the world. In fact, Dr. Indir Nath of the AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences) has said that she has seen a rise in the number of "immunised" polio victims in recent years.

But the history of this treachery and betrayal goes back even earlier. As part of the immunisation programme, a Rs. 70 crore IPV manufacturing unit was planned in 1988, at Guragaon, near Delhi. But, two years later, in an unexpected volte face, the unit was wound up in favour of imported OPV from America, France and Russia. This switch was done under instructions from the WHO to the Health Ministry, obviously after the negative impact of the OPV, came to be known in the West by the late 1980s. So, in India our rulers wound up a planned IPV project, for the unreliable OPV, merely in order to please their imperialist masters.

PS: Mussouri, Patna was associated with "Liberation". Afterwards, he joined peasant mass organisation led by PU and became an influential member of local organisation. But he was expelled from the organisation due to corrupt and indiscipline activities. Since, then he maintained relation with Massouri PS and MCC. He secretly took part in MCC squad to attack our squad and people. When this was revealed he was annihilated.

PM: *What is your assessment on MCC's methods and approach?*

Sraban: We think this is not only a problem of approach and method of work but also of outlook. Their very approach, method and planning, reflect their dogmatic outlook and sectarian method of work. In fact, due to their dogmatic outlook, they cannot take into account all aspects of a matter and even if they take into account all aspects they fail to understand which one is principal, say for example, when they put forward Dalalchak - Baghora mass massacre as an ideal method to suppress the reactionaries, we differed from them. But, MCC could not accept that. It is very natural that, in between two fraternal organisations, there are some differences of opinion, which generally resolve through ideological struggle and development of concrete class struggle. But, what method did MCC leadership adopt? They disregarded these methods and began to consider erstwhile PU as an organisation, which would adopt rightist policies and apprehended that we would participate in election in future. Hence, they adopted a policy in their '91-'92 Bihar - Bengal Special Conference which led to such slogan as "isolate PU leaders and win over the cadres". On the basis of this slogan they adopted such policies and methods of work to deal us which intended to "uproot PU". In fact they initiated these policies and put those into practice right from '89. What are these policies and methods? For this purpose they prepared a centralised plan to expand their area of activities engulfing PU's areas of activities by any means. And to achieve quick result they adopted following policies —

1) Abandon the line of Class struggle in the areas of PU and basing on the reactionaries unite criminals and those degenerated elements who were expelled by PU to form an Morcha against us.

2) Instead of political campaign they resorted to military means; adopted feudal method instead of democratic method to wipe out PU. They adopted most brutal methods to terrorise the people.

3) To substantiate their military campaign they xxx to blatant lies and slanders.

PM: *For what purpose MCC resorted to this diplomatic play and political tricks?*

Sraban: They resorted to this policy, as they were pressurised by international and national revolutionary organisations to whom it was revealed that even if unified PW, since August '98, restrained themselves from all provocations of MCC leadership and stopped clashes. It resulted in considerable losses due to indiscriminate and continuous attacks of MCC. The repeated refusal of MCC to have discussion for solving the problems has also drawn attention of all concerned. Consequently MCC earned bad name and was gradually becoming isolated from camp and the revolutionary people. They were rather compelled to adopt this policy to save their face and to fool both the camp and people. Whereas, they continued their attacks on PW for the purpose of wiping out. Hence we do like to mention that this is nothing but a part of their overall conspiracy against us. At present, very revolutionary character of MCC is a questionable one to the revolutionary cadres and people.

Once again, we like to ask MCC leadership to avoid diplomatic and political tricks; stop military activities against revolutionaries; and solve problems through political - ideological struggles and through bilateral discussions; avoid those sectarian activities for their narrow interest of the cost of interest of revolution, otherwise for that unfortunate atmosphere which will come into being, they will be held responsible. □

NEWS FLASH

SHAME!

The AP police, in plain clothes, have murdered the senior leader of civil rights movement in Andhra Pradesh, T. Purushotham in the broad daylight on 23rd Nov. 2000, at 12 noon in Hyderabad near Konark cinema theatre. He was attacked by four people from behind, who came in a unmarked Tata Sumo with axes, talwars and sickles. He tried to escape but they caught hold of him and first wounded him with sickles and then beheaded him with axes. T. Purushotham is the present State Joint Secretary of Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee, APCLC and a practicing advocate.

The Chief Minister Chandra Babu Naidu and the Director General of Police of the state, H. J. Dora are directly responsible for this open daylight murder by the state. By tomorrow we may hear the Green Tigers or Kathula Sammaiah or any other police-sponsored renegades, claiming the responsibility for the murder of the senior rights activist. But, in real sense it is the Chief Minister and the DGP who are directly responsible for this cold-blooded murder in a plan to wipe out civil and democratic movement from the state. Earlier in the last 3 years, the police in plain clothes attempted on Purushotham's life. He escaped narrowly with severe injuries. He recently shifted to Hyderabad from his home district Mahaboobnagar, after he has been entrusted with the main responsible in the Statelevel civil rights activities by APCLC.

People's March condemns this heinous act of murdering T. Purushotham.

Red Salutes to Singareni* Martyrs !

Comrade Sreenu

Comrade Kusnapalli Yellaiah (Sreenu, Surendar) was born in a poor worker's family in the village of Kasireddypalli of Bellampalli mandal of Adilabad district. When he was studying in the 9th standard, he came into party contact and joined in the Radical Youth League of the village. He was arrested in August, 1994 when he was putting up posters in Bellampalli town. Though he knew the appointment of the organiser, the next day, he didn't reveal a single word to the police inspite of severe torture.

As he completed the 10th standard and joined in the Intermediate, he took responsibilities for the student organisation. As the police's surveillance intensified, he became a full time organiser in the party from March 1996 and built many village units in the Bellampalli rural area. As repression became severe, he was shifted to the Chennur and Mangi squads and worked there as a squad member upto October 1997. After that he was made a member of the Mini Guerrilla Squad (MGS) of Madaram (Singareni Area). He played an important role in annihilating the cruel Sirpur MLA, Palvai Purushottam Rao and his body guards. In January 2000, he was promoted as central organiser of the Bellampalli area with a 1+1 squad formation. He built many party units amongst Bellampalli workers.

On April 17, Com. Sreenu and his fellow comrade Kiran were in a shelter in Dugnepalli village of Bellampalli rural area. On a tip off, the police surrounded the house and blocked the house from outside by locking the outside latch. As there was no other way to escape from the house, the two comrades decided to fight the police upto the last breath. The two guerrillas challenged the police to open the doors and fight straight if they had the guts. Though the police tried to lure them, through a hand mike, saying that they would be given a good reward if they surrendered, the comrades answered them with their weapons. The police didn't dare open the door of the house, but instead made a hole in the house wall and filled the room with tear gas. The two comrades were martyred with the poisonous gas. Even then the police feared to enter the room directly after their death. They opened the door hurling grenades and with auto-fire.

* Singareni is the working-class coal miners belt of North Telangana

— Our North Telangana Correspondent

Comrade Kiran

Comrade Rasakatla Rajkumar (Kiran, Subhash) hails from the Budidhagadda basti (slum) of Bellampalli town. He was a son of a poor worker. He came into PW party contact when he was studying in the 10th and started working in the RSU. He participated in many student struggles. After completing the 10th standard, because of his father's death, he joined his father's job as a Singareni worker. Meanwhile, as he got exposed to the police, he gave up his job and came as a full timer into the party and was sent to a squad. In view of his low political consciousness, he again returned to his house and joined his job. After some time he realised his mistake and put a proposal to work as a full timer. The PW party asked him to work in the Bellampalli town while living in his house. As he attended a camp in the forest for a month, the police suspected him and raided his house frequently. As repression increased he left his job and again came as a full timer and was sent to a squad in January 1999 and became a Party Member. In January 2000, he was sent as a squad member to the Mini Guerrilla Squad of Bellampalli area in which Comrade Sreenu was the commander. On April 17, Com. Kiran was martyred along with Com. Sreenu while fighting the police in Dugnepalli village.

Comrade Sagar

Com. Nakka Posham (Sagar, Mallesh) was born in a poor dalit family of Sivvaram village in Chennur area of Adilabad district. He was inspired by his predecessors who had been working in his village. He was in party contact since 1997. He was recruited as a full timer and was sent to the Chennur squad in December 1998. He worked there for six months and was transferred to the Indravelli Local Guerrilla Squad. In view of the Singareni movement's requirements, he was sent to the Indaram MGS in November 1999. He never backtracked although he encountered several police firings. He was always very close to the people and patiently understood their problems. He also attended several camps as part of his protection duties. On 17th June, 2000 when Com. Sagar and Com. Jaya were taking shelter in Ramaraopet village. on a tip off, 100 police of Godavarikhani and Jaipur. surrounded the house and indiscriminately fired with auto weapons. The two comrades fought the police until their last breath and were martyred in the battle.