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RED STAR

PLATFORM FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTIONARIES

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*Fight Against Corruption Means
Fight Against Ruling Sysetem*

*Approach Towards Building
Revolutionary Cultural Front*

*Fifty Years Since the Murder of
Patrice Lumumba*

*Food Security Act: Universalisation
Vs. Targeted Approach*

Swami, Sangh and Terror Links

Make February 27 All India Convention and Feb. 28 Parliament March Great Success

THE rainbow combination of ruling parties at centre and states, ranging from Congress, BJP to regional parties and CPI (M) with their dedication to neo-liberal policies has made the Indian Republic stinking with scams and price-rise. In every sphere, the UPA government has enslaved the country to imperialist dictates, pauperizing people and devastating the country. Its 'development' means boom to land mafia and real estate business along with unprecedented plunder of natural resources. All hard won democratic rights and welfare policies are taken away, leading tens of thousands of peasants and others to commit suicide every year. At the same time the 2-G spectrum like scams, with scamsters stashing away billions of rupees in foreign banks, are flourishing. The opening up of retail and wholesale trade to corporate houses and MNCs and the 'future trade' have made hoarding and black-marketing legal, sky-rocketing prices of all essential commodities.

Six decades after the Constitution was adopted and the Republic was declared, the whole ruling system has become out-rightly reactionary, anti-people. As Congress-led UPA to all parties sharing power are competing to impose the neo-liberal policies, scams are proliferating and prices of essential commodities are soaring. When increasing number of people are resisting displacement, price rise and loot of natural resources, they are brutally suppressed unleashing state terror and imposing black laws like AFSPA and UAPA. Even sedition charges are imposed. It is in this context the DPF is launched to unite the revolutionary left

and democratic forces to struggle against the anti-people ruling system, with the perspective of a people's alternative, projecting pro-people, pro-nature development orientation.

This year's budget is going to be presented when the financial sector, the military and foreign affairs are more closely linked to IMF-World Bank-WTO and MNCs at the behest of US imperialists. All controls on pricing mechanism are taken away. 51% FDI is being allowed in banks and retail trade. Out dated US, French nuclear technology and plants are imported, creating more environmental disaster. It benefits only the crisis ridden economies of these imperialists. It will only be a budget which further enslave the country and pauperize the masses. It will only save the scamsters and create conditions for more scams. So it is the responsibility of all patriotic, democratic and revolutionary left forces to get united and raise their voice against the UPA govt. and the ruling system as a whole.

It is in this context DPF is organizing the All India Convention to project this people's alternative on 27th February at Ambedkar Bhavan (Jhandewalan, New Delhi) and mobilizing for the Parliament March on 28th February. We appeal to all progressive forces to join this effort and make people's resistance to the neo-liberal policies stronger than ever. ●

**Democratic People's Front : CPI(ML), PCC-CPI(ML),
Marxist-Leninist Committee (AP), New Socialist
Movement (Gujarat), Bahujan Vam Manch**

Settle Telengana Question Immediately

THE Telengana question is created by the anti-people and chauvinist policies pursued by the consecutive governments in the state and the failure of the central government in getting the agreements arrived at when first Andhra and then Andhra Pradesh was constituted in the 1950s. In spite of prolonged struggles the state government as well as the central government failed to fulfill the demands of the people in the Telengana region. As a result of this the present situation is created when the people of the region have intensified their agitation for a separate state.

In this situation, as recommended by the Sri Krishna Commission, there are only two possibilities to settle the problem; either continue with the present Andhra Pradesh with constitutional guarantees and regional councils to settle the problems faced by the people of Telengana with the agreement of all affected sections and political parties;

or, to form separate Telengana state with Hyderabad as its capital. Though almost a month has passed after the Report was presented, by not taking any action to settle the matter, the central and the state governments. are persisting in their policy of prolonging any decision on such burning problems created by themselves. In this way they are only dividing the people further, when they are confronting critical issues like price rise, crisis in the agricultural sector leading peasants to suicide etc. caused by the neo-liberal policies.

CPI(M.L) demand the settlement of Telengana question without further delay based on the recommendations of the Sri Krishna Commission Report and taking into consideration the aspirations of people of Telengana. ●

Hyderabad
17-01-2011

K. N.Ramachandran,
General Secretary, CPI(M.L)

Fight Against Corruption Meanss Fight Against Ruling Sysetem

RALLYING to the call of the Party Central Committee all the state committees organized a vigorous campaign and various programs including public meetings, demonstrations in front of central and state government offices and burning of effigies at hundreds of places focused against scams and scamsters on 26 January when the government leaders were raising the tri color or organizing other programs celebrating ***their republic which is stinking***. It was a good beginning for the struggle against the political leaders, bureaucrats, Corporate bosses and other mafias who are indulging in wanton loot of the country's wealth. While organizing it, it was explained how this reactionary system which is entirely focused on profit and easy money making is responsible for this state of affairs under which corruption is becoming rampant in all fields So the focus of the struggle against scams and scamsters was the entire ruling system itself.

It is becoming clearer day by day that from ministers to bureaucrats to even lower level employees, corruption has becoming rampant. It has become a 'culture' today. Contrary to what was few years back the corrupt are not looked down in the society as a result. Like Rajiv Gandhi was defended by his party in spite of the , *Bofors scam*, today the villains of multi billion scams like Raja or Yaddiurappa are defended by their own parties. The dispute between Congree and BJP is only about who is more corrupt. The so called Panchayat raj and decentralization have not taken power to the people. They have only decentralized the corrupt practices and scams, big or small. Even the elections whether to parliament or panchayats, all have become rampantly corrupt. Purchasing these so called people's representatives also have become usual practice.

As a result, when every thing can be purchased with a proper 'price', it is the poor who are once again deprived of what is even due to them. While the elites thrive, the poor become poorer deprived of every thing. In this situation, only by struggling against the ruling system which is thriving with corruption what is due to them and democratic values can be saved. It is a struggle to purify the whole system itself But past experiences have proved that this system based on private property and profit is beyond rectification. What is possible is the very overthrowing of this ruling system itself. Even a reduction in this rampant corruption is possible only if the scamsters, the mafias recognize that they cannot escape people's wrath and physical attacks. As the judiciary itself is corrupt and the investigating agencies are working under the control of the parties in power, only if people come out on the streets and enforce their verdict, the scamsters can be taught a lesson.

In this situation, starting from campaigns to effigy burnings and other exposures, the struggle against scams and scamsters, for compelling the government to confiscate the huge sums they have stashed away in foreign banks, should advanceto direct actions. Only in this way the struggle can be developed to link with other struggles to overthrow the very ruling system itself. Let us advance the struggles in this direction in the coming days. ●

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Tunisian Revolt Against Neo-Liberal Regime

VERY FEW outside Tunisia, an apparently sleepy country ruled for long by trusted compradors of the imperialist forces with royal background, and even the ruling elite there themselves must have expected such a thing as what is happening there now. But contrary to their expectations, the setting to fire of his own body by an unemployed university graduate has become a spark. The 23 years old fascist dictatorship is thrown out, with the ruler fleeing the country. With the support of the imperialist masters soon an interim government was formed to confuse the people and to weaken the movement. But the people know that some of the notorious criminals who fleeced the country and made the workers and all streams of people suffer are still in power, are still the rulers. Now the second wave of revolt has broken out to get these bastards kicked out.

In the second wave of revolts more sections of the oppressed

masses as well as the middle classes have started joining the street rallies and revolts. Besides these struggles have started spreading to other countries, especially to the Arab countries in the region of North Africa and West Asia and even to countries like Albania. In coming days it is bound to spread to more areas and these struggles are bound to become broader and deeper as the objective situation created by the neo liberal policies is becoming more and more unbearable for the vast masses.

The communist forces have many things to learn from these upheavals. Contrary to what is propagated by the imperialists and their lackeys, the neo liberal policies have become increasingly barbaric and reactionary. They have made life miserable for more and more sections. And as the state has withdrawn from all welfare policies and looking after only law and order, which means making the state more and more brutal and suppressive, a stage is reached when they have no other option but to resist by coming out in the streets demanding the overthrow of the heinous ruling system and those on the top perpetuating this anti people rule. The objective situation for the outbreak of mass uprisings and revolts are becoming increasingly favourable.

Within India also, when the ruling Congress led UPA and opposition BJP are colluding in shadow boxing raising questions like raising tri colour at Lal Chowk in Sri Nagar and who is more scam prone between the two, in order to divert attention from the central issues like price rise, under employment and mega scams caused by the neo liberal policies and from the fact that people have started dying due to price rise, it is high time that the revolutionary left forces should develop their capability to organize street battles, in capturing the godowns where essential goods are hoarded and in distributing them to the people. Let the developments in Tunisia be an eye opener. ●

Raising Tri color at Lal Chowk: A BJP Drama

THE attempt of BJP to organize a multi million drama at Punjab – Jammu border in the name of a march to Lal Chowk at Srinagar to raise the Tricolor there was a well orchestrated move to once again emphasise its brand of nationalism and patriotism which is nothing but most vulgar form of chauvinism and religious fundamentalism. On the occasion of the Republic day extravaganza organized at people's expense at Delhi, the ruling party, Congress, was trying to divert people's attention from its own bundles of super scams including the unprecedented price rise. The attempt of BJP was to steel the

show by fanning its own brand of chauvinistic moves to divert attention from its own bundles of scams personified by the Yaddiurappas.

Ranging from the UPA at center and the National Conference in J & K and other ruling class parties on their side to the BJP and other arch communal, chauvinist parties on the other side all were trying to reap benefit out of this campaign which is repeated almost every year on the occasion of the Republic day. What is consciously concealed is that on all basic issues all of them are united. For example, none of them are for withdrawing the army and the brutal AFSPA from J & K, or for a political settlement of the question taking the opinion of the people of the state in to consideration. All of them are united in attacking those who raise this demand with threats of blasphemy. Similarly they are united in imposing the neo-liberal policies causing unprecedented price rise and miseries to the masses. All of them have numerous scamsters in their fold and are trying to save them. All of them are also united in continuing the neo-colonial servitude to the imperialists, especially the US imperialists. So the BJP drama was nothing but a part of their musical chair game to prepare the ground for lifting themselves to the 'gaddi' replacing the UPA. They are also part of the villains who have made this republic stinking. ●

Towards Ninth Party Congress

K.N. Ramachandran

THE MEETING of the Central Committee of the Party has decided to hold the Ninth Congress of the Communist Party in India, which is the Second Congress of the CPI(ML) after its 1st Congress in 1970. This is a significant decision as far as the communist movement in this country is concerned. The CC's decision is to hold the Congress with a rally on 7th November, the October Revolution Day, and the Congress from 8th to 12th November.

The communist movement in the country has a chequered history. Though the communist groups started emerging from 1920s under the influence of the October Revolution, the first all India level Conference was held only in 1925 end. Still it could not come forward with a Programme of the People's Democratic Revolution it had professed and a path of revolution analyzing the colonial situation then, even though the Communist International had put forward proposals regarding the stage of revolution in countries like India, the character of the bourgeoisie leading the anti-colonial movements in these countries, the necessity for the communist party to pursue an independent revolutionary line and the general orientation of the path of revolution to be pursued.

The First Congress of the CPI was held in 1943 at Mumbai (Bombay). Even then it could not present a programme for Indian revolution in the Congress. On the whole the Congress took a rightist line, refusing to assert independent left positions capable of establishing the leadership of the working class and its party in the anti colonial movement, in spite of the significant advancements made at the organizational line. The basic mistake of the leadership was its erroneous evaluation of the class character of the big bourgeoisie, which was comprador, collaborating with the imperialists. It failed to make a Marxist-Leninist evaluation of the transfer of power which took place in 1947 as part of the 'decolonisation' tactics of the imperialist camp which was changing its direct colonization policy after the Second World War in to neo colonization. As a result, the leadership hailed the transfer of power and acted as an appendage of the Congress leadership.

The class collaborationist approach of the leadership was rejected by the Party rank and file. The 2nd Congress which took place in 1948 at Kolkata saw the removal of the general secretary P.C. Joshi not only from the Party leadership, but even from its primary membership. But the new leadership with B.T. Ranadive as the general secretary, after enthusiastic burial of the hitherto right deviation put forward a left adventurist line for the overthrow of the Indian state, calling for the completion of the stages of democratic and socialist revolutions together. This adventurist move without even trying to prepare the party for it politically and organizationally soon ended with a major collapse at all levels.

In May 1950 Ranadive met the same fate of Joshi. The CC was reorganized with Rajeswar Rao as general secretary. But the faction ridden CC could not meet even once. While the faction led by Rajeswar Rao tried to pursue the 'Chinese Path' as advocated by the 'Andhra Letter' without trying for an analysis of the Indian situation, those who were loyal to Joshi line were putting forward

a rightist orientation. In this situation it was decided to send a four member delegation comprising Rajeswar Rao and Basavapunniah from the PB and Ajay Ghosh and S.A. Dange opposed to its positions. They held discussion with CPSU leadership including Stalin. Based on these discussions, for the first time a Party Programme was drafted along with a Policy Statement and Tactical Line, which rejected the mechanical implementation of either the Russian or the Chinese lines and called for developing the path of revolution in India according to the concrete conditions here. In 1951 an enlarged meeting adopted these documents and replaced Rajeswar Rao with Ajay Ghosh as general secretary. Though for the first time the Programme called for a revolutionary path according to Indian condition and provided a tactical line to advance this programmatic approach, it was soon thrown to the waste paper basket. When the general elections were declared by 1951 end, following a meeting with Prime Minister Nehru, the leadership decided to withdraw Telengana struggle and to dissolve all party fractions active in the armed forces units. Though in the 1952 elections people supported the Party greatly and it became the main opposition to the Congress rule, and various mass movements were taking place all over the country, the leadership was already moving towards the high way of revisionism.

The 3rd Congress held in 1953 at Madurai (Tamil Nadu) strengthened the revisionist orientation of the leadership further. The influence of parliamentarism was also intensifying. The usurpation of power by the capitalist roaders led by Krushchov in the Soviet Union soon after the death of Stalin further consolidated the revisionist line of the leadership which fully upheld whatever was advocated by the Soviet revisionists. By the time of the 1956 Amritsar Fourth Congress, the leadership had started propagating this line openly. As a result, when the Party succeeded to

form its ministry in Kerala after the 1957 general elections, instead of pursuing the Leninist line of utilizing parliamentary work to promote the class struggle in all fields, it was announced that the Party led government in the state will utilize the government to 'bring relief the people'. But in spite of it the Nehru government had no hesitation to dismiss it in the name of a 'liberation struggle' launched by it mobilizing all religious, caste, and revanchist forces. Still the party leadership went on surrendering to the revisionist line paving the way for intensification of the inner party struggle which started coming out in the open by the time of the 5th Congress at Palakkad (Kerala).

The 6th Congress in 1961 at Vijayawada (AP) saw the inner party struggle coming out openly, with the Nehru government trying hard to foment it by strengthening its relations with the Soviet government which was openly embracing the capitalist path, and utilizing the border conflict with China to start imprisoning those who were opposed to the CPI leadership. In spite of the patch up tried in the following years the conflict between the CPI leadership which had embraced the line of class compromise and those opposed to it went on intensifying and in 1964 the split took place with 32 CC members walking out.

Though the Tenali Conference led to the formation of the CPI(M) and later to the 7th Congress at Kolkata, except claiming to uphold the 1951 line, the Programme adopted in it was in the main a 'centrist' one both in its approach to the national and international situation and regarding the development of the path of revolution in India. Though it evaluated that the big bourgeoisie is having dual character – of collaborating with imperialism and opposition to imperialism, it did not state which of it is primary in the concrete conditions of India. It refused to denounce the Soviet revisionist line out-rightly and in effect

followed the line of peaceful transition of the Soviet revisionists. As a result, inner party struggle started in it soon after the 7th Congress. By the time of the 1967 general elections, like the CPI, the CPI(M) leadership also had reached the path of parliamentary cretinism, of forming any type of opportunist united fronts to share power within the existing system.

When the CPI(M) led governments were formed in West Bengal and Kerala after the elections, they refused to distribute land to the tiller policy or pursue any policy which help the development of class struggle. It was in this situation, the communist revolutionaries in North Bengal leading the Kisan Sabha launched the Naxalbari Uprising with 'land to the tiller' slogan. While waging this struggle they declared that only by overthrowing the ruling system such slogans can be realized. The CPI(M) led government suppressed the uprising brutally with the help of the Congress government at centre. The communist revolutionaries came out of CPI(M) and formed the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries(AICCCR) and advanced to the formation of CPI(M.L) in 1969. It was an excellent opportunity to reorganize the communist party on revolutionary lines, as the Naxalbari Uprising and the formation of the CPI(M.L) had created immense enthusiasm among the revolutionary classes and sections. But by that time the left adventurist line had come to dominating position in the Chinese Communist Party and in the government there. In the name of Mao Tsetung Thought(MTT), the CPI(M.L) leadership mechanically followed whatever was coming out from China as the only revolutionary path and soon became victim of left adventurism, of the 'annihilation line', leading to the disintegration of the Party under brutal suppression by the central and state governments. Once again the setback was caused due to the failure of the leadership to make a concrete analysis of the changes which were taking place internationally and in India, and to develop the revolutionary line accordingly.

During the last four decades the CPI and CPI(M) have degenerated to social democratic positions, even implementing the neo liberal policies wherever they are in power forming opportunist alliances. They are communists only in name but are following the very same policies of the comprador ruling classes, waving the red flag to cheat the left masses. On the other hand, CPI(ML) Liberation like forces, though they claim to uphold the heritage of the great struggle against the Soviet revisionist line and its accomplices in India, and have organized a number of 'party congresses', have reached the position of 'peaceful transition' like the followers of Krushchov's line. Their ambition is to form a grand unity with CPI and CPI(M) like forces. As a part of this, they are forming electoral alliance with these parties also. On the other extreme, through another party 'congress', the CPI(Maoist) formed in 2004 is clinging to the anarchist line of armed struggle as the only form of struggle based on 'squad politics' mechanically repeating that the Indian condition is a copy of the pre revolutionary Chinese situation. Abandoning the path of concrete analysis of concrete situation, and refusing to take lessons from the hitherto positive and negative experiences, all these forces have already moved away from the Marxist-Leninist path or are in that process. These developments have made the reorganization and building of the communist party in our country as a powerful force capable of overthrowing the reactionary ruling system a difficult one. But the responsibility of the communist revolutionaries is not get disheartened by them. On the contrary, with redoubled energy they should strive hard to develop both theory and practice of revolution and move forward.

It is in this situation, in continuation to the progress already made in analyzing the transformation of colonial plunder to neo colonial one after the Second World War by the US led imperialist camp, and the efforts made to unravel the basic reasons for the severe setbacks suffered by the international

communist movement after reaching a peak in 1950s, we have already succeeded to present a scientific analysis of the character of Indian state and a path of revolution to complete the People's Democratic Revolution in the 2009 Bhopal All India Conference. The CC has decided to complete the study of *Imperialism in its neo colonial phase* based on Lenin's epochal work, *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism*. Similarly it has decided to put forward an analysis of the ideological challenges faced by the communist movement including the weaknesses in developing the proletarian democracy transcending the levels of bourgeois parliamentary system and linked with it the weaknesses in the 'socialism that was in actual practice' in the erstwhile socialist countries in developing a development perspective fundamentally different from that of the imperialist system. Similarly the concept of democratic centralism and putting in to practice Lenin's slogan "all power to the soviets" calls for further studies so that the political power that is captured by the working class and its allies do not get transformed in to power wielded by the party and later party bureaucracy. Based on these studies the Party Program has to be developed.

Connected with these, another fundamental question which calls for in depth studies is how the cardinal importance of the slogan "workers of the world unite" put forward by Marx and Engels and its later development as "workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite" by Lenin got diluted, leading to nationalism becoming dominant in place of internationalism in the ICM. If it was necessary to dissolve the Comintern in 1943, why no effort was made to reorganize it later? It is based on the serious studies taken up to reassert the paramount importance of internationalism that the revolutionary parties at international level have now succeeded to organize the International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organisations (ICOR), however weak it may be presently compared to the tasks in front of it. When the international character of production is becoming more intensified and in spite of their inter imperialist contradictions, the imperialists of all hues are joining hand more firmly against the working class and the oppressed masses, if any force professing the name of Marxism is not giving importance to proletarian internationalism and not working

to realize it, it is a serious deviation. That after the 2009 Bhopal Conference the Party could take up so many studies, intensify the building of the Party and the class and mass organizations at all India level and take up so many tasks at national and international level shows that the whole organization is geared up for these revolutionary tasks.

The CC has taken up the task of convening the 9th Congress initiating the summing up of the hitherto experience of the Indian communist movement and putting forward the draft Party Program with all the seriousness they demand. The CC has appeals to all Party members, friends and sympathizers to get fully involved in this great task with full vigour. Besides it is the task of the Party to try to get all progressive forces also involved in it. With this view, as we did before the Bhopal Conference, all the draft documents will be made available to forces outside the Party for their comments and criticisms. Let us work hard from this moment onwards to make this Party Congress, the Congress of unity of all the revolutionary communists in the country. ●

Resolutions of CC, CPI(ML)

Fight Against Unprecedented Price Rise

AN unprecedented rise in prices of all essential commodities has severely affected the socio economic life of the vast masses of people in the country. In spite of it the so called main stream parties who share power at the center and in the states are remaining silent. The present situation is created by huge plunder of the natural resources by the corporate and the MNCs, growing dominance of big capital in the agricultural sector from production to procurement and supply, including speculation in the food market at the level of both spot and future trading. These are direct outcome of the policies pursued by the government at centre under neo liberal policies during last two decades and are responsible for the present unprecedented price rise. While the Congress led UPA government refuse to reverse the policies responsible for the price rise, the BJP led opposition and the CPI(M) led Left Front are not ready to wage any serious struggle against this. The decision of the central cabinet, in spite of the ever intensifying price rise to allow 51% FDI in retail trade is sure to further worsen the situation.

In this situation it is absolutely clear that the price rise can be checked and reversed only if the neo liberal policies leading to it are reversed. But it is also

clear that the government is not ready for it. In this situation militant struggles are required capable of compelling the government to change its policies and forcing the corporates and MNCs in the retail sector to stop their hoarding and black marketing. Past history teaches that only by resorting to capture of the godowns and distribution of the hoarded essential commodities in them such a situation can be created.

The Central Committee of the CPI(ML) which met at Chennai from 13 to 15, January, calls on the working class, peasantry and other sections of people who are severely affected by the price rise to come out on the

streets and participate in militant direct action to compel the government to reverse the reactionary policies responsible for it. We demand that the govt. take urgent action to bring down the prices of all essential commodities.

Stop Scams, Convict the Scamsters

THE spiralling corruption leading to mega scams haunting the country are an integral part of the neo liberal globalization policies implemented by the consecutive central governments at the behest of the imperialist forces, especially the US imperialists. Since the neo liberal policies themselves are rooted in corruption, the scams can be fought only with the reversal of these policies. As corruption and scams are inherent in part of the ruling system, the campaign against them should focus on exposing the ruling system itself. The campaign and struggle against intensifying corruption should be waged as part of the political struggle to throw out the ruling system itself.

The CC of CPI(M.L) appeals to the masses of people to rally for uncompromising struggles for compelling the central and state governments to reverse the neo liberal policies, to take severe action against the scams and scamsters and to confiscate all the amount stashed away in the foreign banks by them.

Stop Corporatisation of Agricultural Sector

WHEN the country is going through an unprecedented crisis in the agricultural sector as a result of imposition of the neo liberal policies, the UPA government is further opening up the entire sector again for further corporatization to unprecedented levels. In the name of *Second Green Revolution*, multinational corporate agri-business monopolies who are custodians of the latest agricultural technologies including the GM seeds and products

are allowed to transform the agricultural sector in to their captive field. And the peasants are turned in to contract farmers. As the cultivation of Bt cotton was imposed, the peasants were deprived of their right over their seeds and the cost of the agricultural inputs went on increasing, hundreds of thousands of peasants have committed suicide especially in the Vidarbha region. The neo colonial dependency of the peasantry over the agri-business MNCs like Monsanto, Kargil etc are increasing day by day as a result.

The new wave of corporatization and commercialization of agriculture implemented by the centre and the state governments with the backing of all ruling class parties who are sharing power at all levels have led to worsening of the food crisis, ecological crisis and above all to the concentration of agriculture land in the hands of corporate forces. The CC of CPI(M.L) demands that the neo liberal agricultural policies which are propping up the corporatization of agriculture should be stopped. It calls upon all democratic forces to rise up and wage relentless struggles to compel the government to reverse the anti people reactionary policies.

Stop Suspension of Oil Import from Iran

ALMOST 80% of India's petroleum needs are met through imports. Out of this a substantial part is still coming from Iran. But under pressure exerted by the US imperialists who have imposed a ban on economic relations with that country, the UPA government is on the verge of stopping oil imports from that country. This is in continuation to the cancellation of the Iran- Pakistan- India oil pipe deal, again, under pressure from the US imperialists. As a part of this policy for appeasement of the US masters, recently the Reserve Bank of India had all on a sudden withdrawn the foreign exchange facility made available for import of oil from Iran. This act of the UPA government may create yet another oil scarcity and to sky rocketing of the oil prices again, with its harmful consequences.

The CC of the CPI(M.L) condemns this heinous move on the part of the UPA government which is intensifying the neo colonial slavery of the country. It appeals to all progressive and democratic sections to come forward to expose and oppose the UPA government's servitude to the US imperialists at the cost of people's interests

Stop imposing sedition charges against political civil right activists, Release all political prisoners.

PRESENTLY along with the intensification of the reactionary neo liberal policies, hundreds of adivasis, activists of mass movements, other oppressed sections and intellectuals who are waging struggles against displacement, anti people policies and for democratic rights are called anti nationals and imprisoned for long periods without trial or sentenced for life imprisonment by the orders of kangaroo courts under provisions of black acts or sedition charges. At the same time, the political leaders, bureaucrats, land mafias and the corporate houses indulging in or abetting scams, selling the country's interests to the imperialists and stashing away fabulous sums in foreign banks are not anti nationals. But Dr. Binayak Sen like people raising their voice for democratic rights of the oppressed masses can be sent to jails under sedition charges. This is part of the state terror imposed on the masses to perpetuate the anti-national, anti-people neo-liberal policies.

The CC of CPI(M.L) severely condemns the imprisonment of hundreds under false charges in various states and demand their release. It appeals to all progressive democratic forces to raise their voice against the black laws and sedition charges and for the release of all political prisoners. ●

Approach Towards Building Revolutionary Cultural Front

(Note: Recognizing the significance of the work in the domain of culture or broadly, in the field of superstructure including culture, religion, caste, philosophy and all aspects linked to these, the Central Committee of the Party has adopted this approach paper after discussion at various levels for discussion inside the Party and outside among progressive sections involved in these fields. Cultural forums are already functioning in some of the states. In other states also they can be formed now based on the orientation provided in this paper. A thorough discussion on it should be initiated in these forums soon. After that a meeting of the cultural activists at all India level shall take up in depth discussion before finalizing it. At a time when the imperialist camp and its lackeys have launched a heinous and ruthless campaign based on reactionary ideas they are propagating in order to prepare ground for perpetuating their hegemony in all fields including that of ideas and culture, and when the revolutionary cultural movement is either weak or non-existent, it is one of the paramount responsibilities of the cultural activists, writers, creative artists and intellectuals to take initiative for building a powerful cultural movement with all India influence. This *Approach Paper* is published to help the discussion on it on a wider level involving broad sections of the progressive forces — **Red Star**)

Introduction

1. As a manifestation of the superstructure, culture being the aggregate of all the material and non-material values produced by a society includes language, arts, literature, religion, education, sports, laws, customs, entertainment, advertisement, media, cinema and so on. It is a complex system of institutions and values through which the ruling classes enforce their hegemony over the ruled. Regarding the inter relationship between material production and culture on the one hand, and the ideological hegemony exercised by the ruling classes through the cultural superstructure on the other, Marx and Engels opine: “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch, the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations; dominant material relations, grasped as ideas: hence of the relations which made the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things, consciousness and therefore think. In so far therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an historical epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and *regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age*; thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch.” (German Ideology, Moscow 1976, p. 67). In a class society, culture, therefore, constitutes the

ideological formation that advances the interests of the ruling classes. However, this hegemony of the ruling classes is not merely enforced by the state. A complex system of social and cultural institutions such as the family, community, religion, ethnicity, caste, curriculum, art, literature and so on also perform their role so as to subserve the ruling class interest. The so called ‘common culture’ conveyed through this network of cultural institutions is a myth as it is nothing but the class dominated values propped up by the ruling classes.

2. At the same time, as a concomitant of class struggle, every class society will have another stream of culture known as ‘people’s culture’ that arises from the culture of the oppressed and toiling masses that opposes such culture of the ruling classes. Culture thus also becomes the arena of class struggle. Though every period generates a specific cultural ethos or cultural milieu suited to the prevailing mode of production and political-economic system, even after that mode of production ceases, culture continues to overlap in the subsequent historical epochs. Thus culture of a particular epoch goes on radiating its positive and negative impact in the subsequent stages too. In the specific context of India, for instance, even after the transformation of the mode of production from ‘colonial’ to ‘neo-colonial’, cultural institutions and values specific to the colonial-feudal period still continue to subscribe to the requirements of the ruling classes. Consequently, all pre-capitalist including feudal and even tribal cultures coexist and merge with the dominant neo-colonial culture having its wider and deeper ramifications of hitherto unknown levels.

Culture under Neo-colonisation

3. In the post WW II period when imperialism has transformed old colonial forms of world plunder to neo-colonisation led by USA, and where finance capital and role of market have assumed unprecedented significance, culture has assumed a specificity and dimension quite unparalleled in the entire history of human kind. As part of neo-colonisation, finance capital which is the embodiment of world reaction has evolved and implemented new class strategies of exploitation and oppression in the cultural realm just as in the case of economic and political fields. New forms of neo-colonial plunder devised by giant MNCs who have achieved enormous concentration of wealth, assets and profits through their control over bulk of world's production and distribution of goods and services have also led to the creation of a global market which is quite unparalleled in the entire history of capitalism. The growth of this global market for goods and services and the success of finance capital during the neo-colonial period very much depend on the 'homogenization' of popular taste irrespective of regional or local diversities. This necessitated a cultural hegemony whose essence is a 'consumer culture' with the production and popularization of a whole set of neo-colonial 'cultural products' and concepts and global familiarization of them. This resulted in a commodification of culture such that production of culture and capitalist commodity production became fully integrated.

4. During the quarter century of Keynesian welfare capitalism that immediately follows WW II, this imperialist cultural offensive was compelled to assume more subtle and camouflaged forms on account of the then prevailing progressive political and ideological global trends backed by the existence of socialist and national liberation movements.



Apparent forms of bourgeois democratic culture are also visible during this period. However, with the global setbacks suffered by progressive forces since the seventies coupled with the severe crisis that confronted finance capital, imperialism decided to remove the Keynesian mask and embraced neo-liberalism since the eighties which was transplanted to neo-colonial countries through imperialist globalization since the nineties. Neo-liberalism

through liberalization, privatization and downsizing and roll back of the erstwhile 'welfare state' while allowed finance capital to bounce back with intensified vigour on the one hand, also unleashed an ideological-political offensive against socialist and democratic forces at a global level on the other. Of crucial significance was the launching of a whole set of postmodern and post-Marxist ideologies that questioned the whole epistemological foundations of 'modernity' and 'enlightenment' thereby spreading a basic distrust of all 'meta-narratives' in the history of humankind. Both postmodernism and post-Marxism put forward a theoretical orientation that is marked by pessimism after denouncing the historical role of the working class and denying the primacy of political struggles.

5. An indispensable part of this neoliberal ideological offensive has been the conceptualization of the so called 'discourse' on culture that assumes a centrality and significance never previously attained. A natural corollary of the tremendous growth of finance capital, its free flow across the globe and the internationalization of speculation today is the unprecedented commercialization of culture that is taking place. As a result, the line of demarcation between culture and economy no longer exists. Here culture is used not for developing the creativity of the people nor does it act as an appeal to their aesthetics. On the contrary, neoliberal culture seeks to divert people's attention from the heinous designs of speculative finance capital and from the actual realities of daily life. Consequently, it tries to disrupt the energy of the people and their struggle to change and improve their miserable existence. Postmodernism in particular, through its theory of 'deconstruction' and idea of 'cultural politics' always try to disorient people after fragmentizing their thoughts and localizing their struggles. Post-modernist distrust of 'meta-narratives' and emphasis on 'local narratives' are a clear manifestation of this. Presently imperialist culture along with its various fascist manifestations and post-modernist incarnations is waging continuous onslaughts on all progressive cultural values built up through hard struggles in the course of prolonged renaissance movements, proletarian struggles and national liberation movements. The so called apolitical media and entertainment culture are propagating images and values that are often downright anti-women, sexist, racist, consumerist, authoritarian, militaristic, and imperialist. Along with this, remnants of feudal and decadent cultural values are also cultivated and put in to service of the neo-liberal system of exploitation. Arguing science, class politics, secularism, etc., as 'reductionist', postmodernism stubbornly puts forward religion, ethnicity, caste, etc., as the preferred cohesion and 'identity' for the oppressed. In this way, religious fundamentalism, obscurantism, revivalism, racism, casteism, and so on is encouraged more than

ever. As a result of this neoliberal cultural offensive, the revolutionary cultural movement built up during many decades of revolutionary advance of the international working class movement and national liberation struggles, is today facing a serious setback. With the usurpation of power by the revisionist and reformist forces in the erstwhile socialist countries and their consequent degeneration to the capitalist path, the working class movement and the struggle of the oppressed peoples of the world have suffered serious setbacks in all fields, including culture.

History of Attempts for Building Progressive Cultural Movement

6. In India, the first efforts to fight the dominant culture and assert the people's culture may be traced back to the regional resistance movements and the religious-linguistic reformative movements like Bhakti movement that evolved in various parts of the country right from pre-colonial times onward. However, it was during the political struggles against the British colonialists that such cultural aspirations found consolidation as a multinational stream incorporating different regional specificities. The Indian renaissance thus emerged though initially led by the English educated middle class, right from the early 19th century onward galvanized the Indian society as a whole and enthused the anti-feudal anti-colonial struggles all over the sub continent. In several parts of the country, this cultural initiative was a definite challenge to the feudal-caste traditions and discriminations. But due to the historical limitations of the classes that happened to lead this epochal movement the positive strains of renaissance, in the main, became subservient to colonial needs and the religious reformative trends, ultimately ending up in revivalism. At the same time, the contributions of the renaissance movement in creating the soil ready for the emergence and growth of the national liberation struggles and later the left movement cannot be ignored.

7. With the dawn of the 20th century, the advent of socialist ideas and the development of working class struggles all over the world enthused Indian people with a new awareness of political power and people's culture. This awareness that the people make their own history and culture was the result of their exposition to a new world view and their active participation in collective actions to realize that world view. October Revolution leading to the birth of Soviet Union was a turning point in this regard. The experience of the two world wars along with the ascendancy of fascism led the Indian people to join hands with the international community in its fight against fascism and colonialism. The 1930s saw the launch of the organized working class movement along with the birth and phenomenal growth of organizations like the 'Revolutionary Writers' Association" and IPTA. This period corresponds to the anti-feudal anti-colonial struggles such as Thebhaga, Telengana, Punnapra-Vayalar etc. on the political front. This glorious period of popular struggles in politics and culture led by the working class, youth and cultural movements in India inverted the traditional hierarchy of Indian society and brought the common people to the centre stage of culture, literature and art.

8. The transfer of power in 1947 and transformation from colonial to neo-colonial mode coupled with the imperialist engineered communal divide of the country had its negative impacts in the political and cultural life of the people. The ideological-political setbacks suffered by the international communist movement (ICM) due to its failure to concretely evaluate the class content of the transformation from colonialism to neo-colonialism was a major factor that contributed to this. Similarly, capitalist restoration in Soviet Union and the setbacks to socialist ideology both internationally and in our country also led to the enfeeblement of progressive cultural movement along with the weakening of

working class positions. The class collaborationist political lines that held sway in left movement left the toiling masses defenceless and impelled them to be adaptive to the dominant class ideology and culture. Working class consciousness was yielding place to alien philosophies and aspirations gradually. With the degeneration of the leadership of the CPI and later the CPI (M) to revisionism and neo-revisionism and later to social democracy, they dragged down the cultural movements also to compromising positions.

9. In exposing the dangers inherent in the capitalist restoration which became a reality with the advent of Krushchovite leadership in Soviet Union, the Great Debate of sixties and then the Cultural Revolution which broke out in China played a major role. The Cultural Revolution put forward the relevance and importance of uninterrupted waging of class struggle in cultural superstructure along with the struggle to transform the production relations. It upheld the banner of class struggle and proletarian standpoint in all fields of social life. These experiences reaffirmed that the goal of the people's cultural movement should be to stand firmly on the side of the broad revolutionary masses including the proletariat, the peasantry and the middle classes who are subjected to exploitation and suppression, holding high the banner of class struggle in the cultural front.

10. In India this revolutionary upsurge against the revisionist line found expression politically and ideologically in the agrarian upsurge of Naxalbari which meaningfully punctuated the history of India in the ensuing decades and upturned the popular consciousness to unprecedented levels. It gave the political impetus for the fight against revisionism and neo-revisionism. It had its impact on the cultural movement all over the country. It unleashed new thinking regarding

caste and gender relations. Starting from Naxalbari, many new initiatives in the field of culture and in literary and artist fields came up in many regions. The Dalit Panther movement of poets and writers in Maharashtra, the *Nagna Kavi movement* in Andhra, *Bandaya movement* in Karnataka, the People's Cultural Forum in Kerala and many other such movements are examples. But it had its weaknesses also. The idol breaking of pioneer cultural figures had a crippling effect on the cultural movement. Since feudalism was one-sidedly evaluated as the main enemy, the perspective of the cultural movement could not go often beyond sectarian positions.

11. As the sectarian line dominated the communist revolutionary movement soon after the Naxalbari uprising, the cultural impetus generated by it could not be carried forward. The movements got fragmented, with the cultural movement also facing setbacks and many of the writers, poets, playwrights and painters who had joined it degenerated to revisionist and reformist positions. Some of them became exponents of New Social Movements inspired by post-Marxist like reformist ideas and even NGO adherents. In spite of all this, in continuation to the struggles against sectarian line and following the adoption of mass line by many of the communist revolutionary forces, progressive cultural movements started sprouting up in many states. Different cultural groups started emerging either affiliated to some political organization or the other, or even independently.

12. It was in this situation, in continuation to the experience of the People's Cultural Forum of Kerala of late 1970s and early 1980s, cultural fronts were initiated in few states. For some time united cultural initiatives were organized under the banner of AILRC also. But the sectarian approach of the cultural forums of AP like Revolutionary Writers Association

(RWA) and Jana Natya Mandli (JNM) proved that without waging uncompromising struggle against the social democratic, right opportunist influence on the one hand and sectarian trends on the other, a revolutionary people's cultural movement involving masses of the people cannot be built up to wage unrelenting struggle against the new forms of cultural invasion launched by the camp of imperialists and reaction.

13. With this understanding and with a view to coordinate all progressive streams of cultural activities of our country and to develop in into a new stage to challenge effectively the onslaught of imperialism and other reactionary forces in the cultural front, three successive All India Cultural Camps were organized. The first was at Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh in October, 1996, followed by the second at Kannur in Kerala in March 1997 and the third at Lucknow in UP in October 1997. A good number of left cultural activists and writers along with party activists from different states actively participated in the deliberations in these camps. By the time of the third camp, the participants came to an agreement for drafting an Approach Paper for launching an All India People's Cultural Movement. But these tasks could not be carried forward as the Leading Committee formed at Lucknow was soon beset with sectarian ills. It was proved that this committee was not capable of uniting the cultural activists, writers, artists and revolutionary intelligentsia at all India level with a broad based, democratic approach. As a result, the objective evolved through the precious work done at the three camps went unfulfilled.

14. Compared to the second half of 1990s when these camps were organized and the necessity for building a broad based All India People's Cultural Front was enthusiastically adopted, a decade and more later the cultural invasion that perpetuates neo-colonial slavery in all fields has taken more vicious and barbaric forms. So in line with the valiant struggle waged by the Marxist-Leninist forces against the degeneration, weakening and splintering of the left forces, along with the objective of rebuilding the party based on intensive efforts to develop the ideological-political-organisational line corresponding to the concrete conditions of today, it is necessary that the initiative for launching the people's cultural front should be re-started. Only by bringing together the cultural activists, writers, artists and revolutionary intelligentsia the problems confronted by the people's cultural movement can be analysed and answers found. It is all the more necessary as there is no active all India cultural movement at present capable of taking up this task.

Approach towards Building All India Cultural Movement

15. The struggle in the field of culture has assumed unprecedented importance and seriousness under neo-colonialism more particularly in the period of neo-liberalism since 1990s. Under the all embracing hegemony of finance capital, culture also goes through the process of commodification and commercialization as it happens to everything else in the society. In the realm of ideas and practice, imperialist servitude and reactionary values are being propped up. The strangle hold of finance capital in all spheres like polity, economy and culture strengthen the hegemony of imperialists and comprador ruling classes over our society. The realm of culture is used to manipulate people's consciousness in order to replace the legacy of the glorious struggles waged by the people for their emancipation by an apolitical consumer culture, the hallmark of which is uncritical acceptance of the neo-colonial values. Culture serves as the basis for reproduction and perpetuation of this reactionary value system.

16. The importance of building up revolutionary cultural front is being discussed when unlike the feudal days the capitalist system has brought a sort of democratization of culture, making it accessible for the masses also. Under

neo colonialism this scope has further widened. That is the 'culture' no more remains the domain of the high and mighty only. From cinema to literature from music to art the 'culture' reaches the masses more than ever. The media, especially the electronic media has intensified these possibilities. The imperialist culture also tries to propagate that more than ones birth, it is the ability that counts. Similarly it tries to project the culture as above politics or as non class. This is making the cultural onslaught under neo colonialism more nefarious. This aspect needs deeper study in order to counter this onslaught made in more subtle forms.

17. The contemporary cultural scene in India presents an admixture of values ranging from the most sophisticated neo-colonial market fetishism on the one hand and the most primitive reactionary tribalism such as Khap panchayat led 'honour killings' and pre-capitalist traditionalism on the other, encompassing in between myriads of postmodern, post-Marxist or seemingly radical strains of populist thoughts and expressions, the whole gamut being ideologically dominated by imperialism and its native comprador agents. It would be totally erroneous to assume that the culture of globalisation is anti-traditional. On the contrary, it tries to co-opt all traditional forms into its format. . The neo-colonial 'culture industry' while beaming its 'cultural products' through the media market not only contaminates the people's consciousness and subjugate them to a ghastly cultural invasion, but also produces pulp varieties of Indian myths and epics that cater to the most heinous and expedient political interests of the present. The global market sponsored 'pop culture' also embraces even traditional Indian music and art forms. Such cooption is an indispensable component of cultural homogenization which is essential for manipulating public taste in the interest of neo-colonial market. At another extreme 'cultural elitism' as an inaccessible realm for common people is also encouraged. All these trends are diametrically opposed to the concept of the people's culture. They should be exposed and struggled against as part of the over all struggles aiming at the basic democratization of the society.

18. The intelligentsia which had kept the fire of resistance and rebellion against the existing systems burning throughout history is all the more complacent with the imperialist prognosis of the 'end of history' and 'the death of ideologies'. They do not express any desire in changing the world for better. Even more progressive sections among them are lured by the ideological rejection of universal enlightenment values such as equality, freedom, reason, progress and scientific thinking as totalitarian designs and have degenerated to the ideology of fragmentalism and "identity politics" which are the ideological base of the New Social Movements (NSMs) and NGOs. Without even making an enquiry into how the "local narratives" are shaped by imperialist finance capital, several of them have become exponents of a 'localized' and 'fragmentary' culture. Both NSMs and NGOs got added respectability under neo-liberalism as they reject the concept of revolutionary transformation of the whole society through class struggle, but claim themselves to be agents of change in particular realms such as religion, caste, race, gender, nationality, ecology, etc.

19. Another variant of post-modern cultural offensive is its unholy nexus with all decadent religions, sects, castes and similar other narrow "identities" with all their superstitions and rituals. Postmodernists here in line with their disgust towards all democratic ideas argue that secularism is an alien and therefore undesirable concept for India. In the specific case of India, this has given rise to the concept of "cultural nationalism" which on the basis of its evaluation of culture as static, ossified and frozen in the past tries to superimpose the imagined glories of antiquity on the stark realities of the present thereby mystifying the whole process of historical development. In a similar vein, erstwhile progressive

ideas such as "annihilation of caste" are replaced by casteism, caste fundamentalism and caste-based vote bank politics. It is based on the ideological strains of 'cultural nationalism' and 'identity politics' with the intellectual and financial backing from imperialist centres, religious fundamentalism, revivalism and caste identities of various hues thrive in the country with disastrous consequences, disrupting the fighting unity of the people against their enemies. Recently World Bank has identified "multiculturalism" as an expanding area of its project funding on culture.

20. The elitist education system is the conduit for enforcing the ruling class ideology among the people. The Macaulay education which aimed at building up an elite class who though "Indian in colour" was "British in taste", is continued unabated in the neo-colonial period too. Since the comprador ruling class has developed as a junior partner of imperialism in the latter's decaying stage, it is lacking the vigour and vitality of the earlier capitalism. It denies the essence and method of science to the people, though it is eager to make use of the economic and technological applications of science. Instead of using education as a vehicle for spreading the scientific temper, democratic and secular culture, the Indian state on account of its class character, is utilizing it as a medium for inculcating reactionary, obscurantist and neo-colonial values. Comprador intellectuals associated with centres of higher and professional education and research through various ways manipulate public opinion in the country and neo-colonial exploitation is getting legitimized in the cultural and intellectual plane. The movement should have to target these agents and expose their role in contaminating the popular consciousness in favour of the global exploiters.

21. The cultural movement that

swears to become part of people's democratic revolution should be broad based and should serve the larger sections of the toiling classes. All the new developments in science and technology including that in the realms of transportation, communication and information are now firmly controlled in the interest of finance capital and most often the tendency is to take every stream of knowledge to an irrational and superstitious level. Together with this, people's cultural achievements in everything ranging from science to art and literature are suffocated, vulgarized, and commodified to serve neo-colonial interests. The sensationalist and popular culture mediated through the print and electronic media, both controlled by giant financial-corporate powers also serves the same purpose.

22. The task before the revolutionary forces is to resist this neo-colonial culture that spreads all round decay and degeneration on the one hand, and dominates the culture of the whole society suppressing the real culture created and has become part of the life of the majority of the people, on the other. Instead, the progressive stream of culture, the culture of resistance and rebellion, that is the product of class struggles, that is latent in society and people's lives, and that is being silenced by the authoritarian culture, is to be identified and nurtured. This people's culture after identifying its various elements should be built up as a counter culture against the reactionary neo-colonial culture of individualism, consumerism, casteism, communalism, criminality, alcoholism, male chauvinism, sexual anarchy and so on cultivated by finance capital in vulgar forms. Vigorous and uncompromising struggles against these reactionary trends are to be taken up as a continuing process.

An inalienable component of this relentless cultural struggle, which form part of the ideological-political-organisational advancement towards

People's Democracy is to seek valuable lessons from all erstwhile progressive, anti-fascist, democratic and renaissance movements as well as to revive their legacy according to concrete conditions of today. The legacy of RWA and IPTA like movements that contributed very much to enrich the concept of people's culture in forms and content in its heydays should be carefully studied and assimilated.

23. A cultural movement cannot suggest or uphold a unique school of art or theory of aesthetics or form of literature for all times to come. Art and literature by the very nature of their genesis is the expression of human freedom and can always remain so. What makes an art progressive or reactionary is the ideology that underlies its creation. It is improper to simply suggest that the existing forms of art should be discarded or some new forms should be created. All new forms and innovations in the field of culture may soon be co-opted by imperialist culture. Suffice it to say that in terms of form creative innovations are needed, while in terms of content peoples' real life should be brought to the agenda. At the same time, it is a fact that every creative assertion to promote people's art forms will impart blows to the dominant ruling class culture. A revolutionary cultural movement through its cultural intervention and conscientization of the people should unravel the real political and ideological meaning of art and literary creations including fiction and cinema. Hence a cultural movement that strives for the democratization of society should uphold the art that goes ahead as a leading light to help this task in the given historical period.

24. The revolutionary struggle to resist imperialist culture and establish a people's culture should reject all discriminations based on religion, caste, race, gender, nationality and language. Such a culture shall have a revolutionary democratic content and an international approach. The absolutism of "identity politics" that treats each social issue in an isolated and disaggregated manner that breeds parochial and sectarian interests should be exposed. Every area of social activity certainly needs intervention according to the specificities there. They can however ultimately be resolved only as part of overthrowing the entire system of exploitation and oppression.

24. Today, workers, peasants, adivasis, dalits, women and all oppressed sections are rising up against imperialist globalization and various neo-colonial projects throughout the length and breadth of the country. Culture being a living process, these and other struggles by people also bear the imprint of a revolutionary culture though in a rudimentary form. A revolutionary cultural movement should be capable of nurturing this people's culture based on the rich experiences of past, progressive cultural initiatives. Though there are efforts to move along revolutionary cultural activities, they end up as localized, issue-based and ad-hoc attempts. Since they are confined to immediate slogans, the ideological-political aspects associated with the development of an all India cultural forum are seldom addressed by them. On account of sectarian hang-over, many among the revolutionary ranks do not recognize the cardinal importance of a revolutionary cultural offensive at all India level. Even the ideological-political lessons of Cultural Revolution are not properly assimilated. Taking all these factors in to consideration, the tasks in front of the cultural front and its link with revolutionary political struggle are to be emphasized.

25. This task can be fulfilled only by building up an all India cultural forum which is capable of ideologically and organizationally leading the cultural movement on the one hand and taking up tasks at state and regional levels as per concrete conditions through creative innovations on the other. With such a revolutionary initiative the neo-colonial cultural onslaught should be resisted with the firm resolve to strive for people's democratic culture. ●

Fifty Years Since the Murder of Patrice Lumumba

[The assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the great national liberation leader of the Congolese people who became a symbol of the uncompromising anti imperialist leaders of the whole world is one of the most heinous acts of the imperialists led by the US imperialists for pushing forward their neo colonization. While the comprador leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Nasser, Tito compromised, and the Soviet revisionists were acting as apologists of neo colonialism, the US led imperialist camp could go ahead with their pernicious neo colonial policies resorting to barbarous methods as revealed in Congo. The cold blooded murders and the ruthless plunder of the people and their natural resources by the imperialists and their lackeys should intensify the hatred towards them among all forces of national liberation and revolution. This edited version of this write up from the WSWS website reveals the extent to which the imperialists and their lackeys are prepared to go in a ruthless and pre planned manner to eliminate all those who are dedicated to fight against them. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Lumumba's martyrdom let us pledge once again to intensify our all out struggle to throw out imperialism from all over the world for ever — **Red Star**]

FIFTY YEARS ago on January 17, Patrice Lumumba, the leader of the anti-colonial struggle in the Congo and its first democratically-elected prime minister, was removed from prison and murdered in the dark of night by a firing squad acting with the approval of the United States and Belgium. He was 35. Lumumba and two of his associates, Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito, were tied to trees and gunned down one by one. Weeks later, when questions surfaced over the official version of Lumumba's death that he had been killed by enraged villagers after attempting to escape the Belgians returned, exhumed the bodies, hacked them up, dissolved them in acid, keeping as souvenirs Lumumba's teeth and bullets removed from his body.

Belgium, which ruled the Congo until 1960, and the US have never been able to wash away the blood from this grisly crime. There was little doubt at the time, and even less now, that Washington was the primary force behind Lumumba's execution. The killing exposed not only the savagery and hypocrisy of US imperialism. It illustrated the hollowness of so-called independence for the African nations, whose absurd boundaries and indeed very existence as modern political entities had resulted from the predations of the European powers.

Though not a socialist, Lumumba's demand that the Congo should control its own extensive mineral wealth proved to be his death sentence. The credibility of all the other newly-independent African nations was lessened by his murder; thereafter in every decision the continent's leaders would have to reckon with

Lumumba's fate. Nowhere is the failure of formal national independence better expressed than in the Congo. Lumumba's former aide, Joseph Mobutu, assumed power in separate CIA-backed coups in 1960, when he removed Lumumba from power, and in 1965. A US proxy in the struggle against liberation movements in southern Africa, Mobutu ruled the Congo, which he renamed Zaire, as a kleptocracy, looting an estimated \$5 billion before his removal in 1997 at the hands of invading Rwandan and Ugandan forces. The spilling over into the Congo of the Rwandan crisis of the 1990s itself the legacy of the European-drawn borders in the region cost as many as 5 million lives over the in the White House

The Democratic Republic of the Congo's substantial working class and its tribal populations live in dire poverty. Average life expectancy is but 46 years. Out of every 1,000 live births, 114 Congolese babies will not live to see their first birthday; 195 will not live to the age of five. What little infrastructure exists is in a deplorable state. Sitting atop this multiethnic and multilingual country of 70 million souls is a tiny layer of multimillionaires who derive their wealth through connections to what is still ranked as one of the world's most corrupt governments, and through the export

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of the Congo's mineral wealth, uranium, copper, gold, tin, cobalt, diamonds, manganese, zinc for the benefit of European and US corporations.

The rise of Patrice Lumumba

Patrice Lumumba was raised in a mud brick house without electricity in the Congolese region of Kasai. He learned to read and write at Catholic and Protestant mission schools, impressing his teachers and positioning himself for a job as postal clerk in Stanleyville (now Kisangani), which he assumed in 1954. It was here that Lumumba entered political life, working to form a labor union and joining the Belgian Liberal Party. In 1957, Lumumba took a job as a sales manager at a brewery in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa), and soon thereafter founded, with other nationalists, the Movement National Congolais (MNC). The MNC agitated for independence from Belgium and sought to unite the sprawling country's many different tribal groups.

Lumumba quickly established himself as the leading Congolese nationalist, and in spite of his support for the Belgian Liberals, was considered by the authorities to be a dangerous radical. He was known for his eloquence, and by all accounts was a man of courage and conviction. Perhaps because he could not be bought off, like many African leaders, colonial authorities ordered Lumumba arrested and imprisoned in October of 1959 for "inciting riots" in Stanleyville. While in prison he was tortured. In spite of the repression, it appeared an auspicious time for nationalist movements. In the aftermath of World War II, a revolutionary upsurge of the colonial peoples took shape first in Asia and then spread to Africa. The old colonial powers—Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, and Portugal—either attempted to crush the anti-colonial movements, as France failed to do in Vietnam and Algeria, or else manipulated formal

independence to preserve their interests, as Britain did through the communal partition of South Asia.

With its control over the Congo slipping and mindful of the disaster gripping its neighbor France in Algeria, Belgium agreed at conference held in Brussels beginning January 18, 1960, to recognize the independence of its prized imperial possession. This was to take place at the end of June, after national elections to be held in May. The Belgians were compelled to release Lumumba from prison to attend the conference because his party had gained the most votes in local elections held in December, 1959. In one year less a day, he would be gunned down by Belgian assassins. Lumumba emerged from the May 11-25 elections, much to the chagrin of the Belgians, as the only truly national figure in Congolese politics. While not winning a majority, the MNC won far more votes and seats in parliament than any other party, and with it the right to form the government. Lumumba was selected as prime minister, while Joseph Kasa-Vubu, the leader of a tribally-based party, was placed in the lesser role of president.

At a ceremony granting formal independence on June 30, King Baudouin of Belgium delivered a patronizing speech lecturing the Congolese on the virtues of maintaining existing colonial structures and presenting the period of Belgian rule as entirely beneficial to the native population. In fact, between 1885 and 1908 as many as eight million Congolese died in the system of forced labour and political terror under the personal rule of Baudouin's grandfather, King Leopold.

In his speech, Lumumba enraged the Belgian delegation by openly challenging the king. He said of independence that "no Congolese worthy of the name will ever be able to forget that it was by fighting that it has been won, a day-to-day fight, an ardent and idealistic fight, a fight in which we were spared neither privation nor suffering, and for which we gave our strength and our blood. We are proud of this struggle, of tears, of fire, and of blood, to the depths of our being, for it was a noble and just struggle, and indispensable to put an end to the humiliating slavery which was imposed upon us by force."

"We have known harassing work, exacted in exchange for salaries which did not permit us to eat enough to drive away hunger, to clothe ourselves, or to house ourselves decently, or to raise our children as creatures dear to us... We have known ironies, insults, blows that we endured morning, noon and night, because we are negroes.... We have seen our lands seized in the name of allegedly legal laws, which in fact recognized only that might is right.... We will never forget the massacres where so many perished, the cells into which those who refused to submit to a regime of oppression and exploitation were thrown."

The destruction of Patrice Lumumba

In the same speech, Lumumba declared that the Democratic Republic of the Congo was now "the equal" of Belgium. Only in terms of vote-counting at the United Nations could such a statement be true. All significant capital, especially the mining industry, remained in the hands of Europeans. In all of the Congo, there were only 30 black college graduates, no black military officers, and only a few black managers in the civil service. This was the result of a deliberate Belgian policy to keep the population in a state of dependence.

Mindful of the lack of trained African officers, Lumumba decided immediately after he assumed office to leave the new national army in the charge of Belgians, enraging Congolese soldiers. The Belgian commander of the Leopoldville regiment, Emile Janssens, provoked the African soldiers, gathering them and writing on a placard, "After independence = before independence." Lumumba made matters worse by granting raises to all government employees except for the military officers. By July 5, the army was in open revolt across the country,

with Europeans fleeing in droves. Belgium seized on the supposed threat to the settlers to recommence military operations in the nation, in open violation of the one week-old country's sovereignty. To deal with the disaster, Lumumba determined to reorganize the military as the Armee Nationale Congolaise. He made the fateful decision of placing his secretary, Joseph Mobutu, in charge of the new force.

What Lumumba didn't know was that Mobutu was a paid Belgian agent, and that as early as the 1960 Brussels conference he had been spotted by US diplomats as a figure to be promoted. Of potential "assets" in the Congo, the US ambassador to Belgium, William Burden, noted, "One name kept coming up. But it wasn't on anyone's list because he wasn't an official delegation member, he was Lumumba's secretary. But everyone agreed that this was ... a man with great potential."

Within days of Lumumba's inauguration, Moise Tshombe declared Katanga province independent and immediately received the backing of Belgium and its force of 6,000 soldiers stationed there. Katanga was rich in copper, uranium, tin, zinc and cobalt mineral wealth dominated by the Belgian mining concern Union Miniere. Soon another secessionist movement developed in another mineral-rich province, Kasai, where a former associate of Lumumba, Albert Kalonji, declared a new nation that he dubbed "Mining State." The marionettes in the Congo and in Belgium, a third rate and rapidly declining imperialist power, could not act without the backing of the US.

As continues to be the case in matters of foreign policy today, the *New York Times* played a critical role in articulating the government line and preparing opinion for the elimination of Lumumba. Even during the election, its pages were given over to a campaign maligning the young nationalist. In a series of articles, the *Times* repeatedly referred to Lumumba as a "dictator," a "ruler," and a "messiah," and nearly every report mentioned that he was "once convicted of embezzlement" as a postal clerk. The *Times* also published unsubstantiated allegations that Lumumba had committed election fraud and had received \$200,000 from the Belgian Communist Party.

In an August 18 meeting of the National Security Council, US President Dwight Eisenhower told Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) chief Allen Dulles that Lumumba must be "eliminated" so that the Congo would not become "another Cuba." On August 24, CIA head Allen Dulles cabled station chief Larry Devlin, authorizing the "removal" of Lumumba, up to and including his assassination. This information did not come to light until 2001. It had been revealed to a US Senate Committee by Robert Johnson, who took notes at the meeting. "There was a stunned silence for about 15 seconds, and the meeting continued," Johnson recalled in secret testimony given to the Church Committee in 1975. The CIA first followed through on the Eisenhower order with an abortive plot to poison Lumumba.

Assassination plans were also afoot in Belgium. Count Harold d'Aspremont Lynden, then minister for African affairs, sent a telegram to Belgian officials in the Congo in October stating, "The main aim to pursue in the interests of the Congo, Katanga and Belgium is clearly Lumumba's definitive elimination." And Britain, fearful for its substantial interests in neighbouring Rhodesia, also endorsed assassination. A British Foreign Office document from September 1960 notes the opinion of a top ranking official, who later became the head of MI5, that, "I see only two possible solutions to the [Lumumba] problem. The first is the simple one of ensuring [his] removal from the scene by killing him." With the US, Belgium, and Britain moving against him and his hold on power disintegrating, Lumumba turned for support to the USSR, receiving Soviet

defense minister Georgi Zhukov in Leopoldville on August 26. The Soviet Union supplied Lumumba with a limited amount of aid and "advisors." This support only clinched his demise.

On September 5, President Kasa-Vubu ordered that Lumumba be removed from office, but this extra-constitutional order failed when Lumumba won two separate votes of confidence in parliament. Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba then each issued separate orders to Mobutu, as head of the loyal military, to arrest the other. On September 14, Mobutu, acting with CIA backing, placed Lumumba under house arrest in Leopoldville. Two days later, he carried out a full coup, suspending both parliament and the constitution.

The UN under General Secretary Dag Hammarskjöld actively collaborated in bringing down Lumumba. UN "peacekeepers," who Lumumba had naively invited into the crisis, refused to allow loyal Congolese soldiers use of its airplanes for transport, in effect siding with Katanga and other secessionist movements, and after Lumumba's vote of confidence the UN shut down the capital's only radio station so his parliamentary victory could not be broadcast to the population. The UN also blocked Soviet planes supporting Lumumba from using its airfields. On November 22, 1960, the UN General Assembly voted to recognize the delegation of Kasa-Vubu and military strongman Joseph Mobutu, refusing to allow delegates loyal to the democratically-elected Lumumba.

On November 27, Lumumba

Sakhav
Organ of Kerala State
Committee of CPI(ML)

"Sakhav"
Hashmi Lane
Pachalam PO
Kochi - 12, Kerala

escaped from house arrest and attempted to flee to his political stronghold of Stanleyville. He was captured on December 1 by Mobutu's forces. En route to his prison from Leopoldville airport, Lumumba was put on display in the back of a truck, hands tied and crowds were invited to taunt him. Bound in front of Mobutu, Lumumba was forced to eat a copy of a speech he had given asserting he was the rightful prime minister of the Congo. Mobutu announced that the deposed nationalist leader would be tried as a rebel. He was then sent off to a military garrison 86 miles from Leopoldville in Thysville. There it is said that Lumumba nearly won the prison guards to his side.

With much of the population still in support of Lumumba, Count d'Aspremont ordered him transferred from Thysville to the renegade Katanga province and certain death at the hands of Tshombe. The move was first cleared with the CIA. During the January 17 flight to Katanga, Lumumba, Mpolo, and Okite were beaten so badly the pilot complained the plane was in danger of crashing. Later in the day the three were executed. The murder still haunts the US and Belgium. A parliamentary investigation in Belgium in 2001 acknowledged that Baudouin and colonial authorities desired Lumumba's death and were aware that he would be killed upon his rendition to Katanga, but it stopped short of admitting responsibility.

Though the US role in the coup and assassination is well-documented, there has never been any official acknowledgment. Frank Carlucci, a prominent Republican with close relations with the Bush political dynasty, who would later rise to defense secretary in the Reagan administration, worked as a covert CIA operative in the Congo under cover of a diplomatic assignment. Carlucci successfully sued to block *Lumumba*, a film released in 2001, from mentioning his name in the decision to kill the Congolese leader. ●

On Inflation of Food Prices

P.J. James

COMMERCIALISATION and corporatisation of agriculture coupled with unprecedented upsurge in speculation in both staple and non-staple items of food are leading to a gallop in world food prices. Rising food prices, which have shot up 25% on an average at a global level in the year 2010, have precipitated food riots and political upheavals in least developed countries like Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Mozambique and Yemen in recent weeks and more than a dozen countries are on the verge of riots. World's poor who are compelled to devote their entire income for food, are finding it difficult to maintain even the required minimum calorific intake in the context of rising prices and inflation. In several countries, being wintertime, rising food prices are forcing families to live without adequate heat, medications, and nourishment, with devastating consequences for the health of children and the elderly.

According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, the food price index has now broken the previous record set in 2008, when food prices nearly doubled over the course of 18 months as governments have slashed food subsidies to the poor as part of neo-liberal austerity policies. Though ruling class pundits attribute the sharp rise in food prices to crop failures on account of recent natural disasters such as droughts in Argentina and Russia, and floods in Brazil and Australia which are major food producers, food prices have started surging even much before them.

Of course, cost of producing food is going up due to increased energy prices which also raise costs of harvesting and transportation. Rise in crude oil prices has substantially contributed to increased prices of industrial fertilizers. At the same time, recent food supply shortages in America are mainly attributable to the diversion of vast areas of food and animal feed crops for bio-fuels, especially, corn which is used for ethanol production. Following unprecedented rise in food prices, several countries have banned export of food grains. For instance, Russia recently extended its export ban on food grain till July 2011.

But the major factor behind the sudden price rise of food in the recent period is the neoliberal policies of decontrol and deregulation in global food market such that agribusiness corporate giants have established their total domination over the unregulated world market in food commodities. In the context of the alarming situation, last week, the Commodity Futures Trading Committee in America has put forward certain proposals setting limits on speculation in food items, only to hood wink the masses. In fact, reports are pouring in regarding the suspicious financing of speculation and futures trading in food by leading transnational financial corporations like J P Morgan, Chase Manhattan, HSBC, etc. While global food prices are soaring, Cargill, the biggest world trader in food products has experienced a tripling of its profits during 2009. It is now an accepted fact that the biggest bailout that transferred trillions of dollars of public money into speculative finance corporations in America, Europe and elsewhere are being driven to speculation in food grains. In India, for instance, on account of deregulation in banking, lakhs of crores worth bank deposits are channelled into the hands of speculators, hoarders, futures traders while peasantry is totally

denied accessibility to bank credits. Ambani (Reliance), the biggest Indian speculator who is ranked among the largest ten financial magnates in the world, had already invested Rs. 25000 crores in food grain speculation alone. Thus, following the abandonment of Keynesian state intervention and elimination of PDS and price controls on food, private speculative financiers with immense funds at their disposal have identified speculation in food as the most lucrative area of super profit. Today the food grain market everywhere is exclusively monopolized by a handful of speculative giants. Evaluating the whole scenario, UN World Food Program Director Josette Sheeran said: “We are seeing a new face of hunger in which people are being priced out of the food market.”

Even in a country like India where production of food does not exhibit any reduction in recent years, food prices are sky-rocketing on account of the government’s dismantling of PDS and public procurement on the one hand and throwing open the food grain market to private speculators, hoarders and black marketers on the other. Along with this, the Manmohan government kept the Essential Commodities Act in abeyance and promulgated the Futures Trading Act at the behest of speculative monopolies. The abolition of Administered Price Mechanism in petroleum products has further fuelled food prices. And, under the new policy of corporatisation and commercialization of agriculture led by agribusiness MNCs such as Monsanto, food crops are replaced by cash crops. Vast areas of the country where food crops are cultivated are also transformed into bio-fuel cultivation. The unprecedented rise in the price of onion in recent times has been the direct outcome of government’s twisting of

export-import policies to the benefit of monopoly trading houses. For, during the last quarter of 2010, the government was even subsidizing exporters for the large-scale export of onion from the country at throwaway prices, which within a short time led to an acute scarcity of it. When this resulted in a sky-rocketing of onion prices in the country, Manmohan gov. began heavy subsidization of importers for the tariff-free import of onion into the country. Thus every price fluctuation is a godsend opportunity for speculators to reap monopoly profits. During times of low price peasants are the losers while high prices make consumers at the receiving end. In brief, it is the traitorous neo-liberal policies of the state at the service of speculative finance capital that leads to unprecedented food inflation nowadays. ●

AIKKS Calls for Intensification of Land Struggles

THE Central Committee meeting of the All India Krantikari Kisan Sabha held at Chennai on 16th January has decided to intensify the struggle for land based on “land to the tiller” slogan in selected areas in different states. The committee called for establishing the class line of landless – poor peasants and agricultural workers and to mobilize them in land struggle while struggling against the tendency of going behind the class line of agricultural bourgeoisie and rich peasants, as done by many groups which are calling themselves revolutionary groups. The CC called for building the organization by pursuing membership campaign and organizing and strengthening the committees at various levels wherever possible before launching the land capture movement.

Intensive campaign should be organized against corporatization of agriculture and against the GM seeds. Wherever GM seeds are tested and against Monsanto, Kargil like MNCs engaged in the propagation and sale of these seeds agitations should be organized.

Already housing right struggles are taking place at Bhubaneswar, Raichur like urban areas, These struggles should be expanded to more areas and the organizational work should be taken up among the millions of houseless people in the urban areas whose number is increasing day by day. These urban struggles should be linked with the land struggles in the rural areas for land.

In order to achieve political and organizational centralization the CC decided to publish a tri-monthly organ, “Revolt” soon.

The CC of AIKKS adopted following resolutions for campaign at all India level:

1. Expose and fight against corporatization of agriculture.
2. Intensify struggle against land concentration in the hands of corporate houses, real estate owners, land mafias and other agencies.
3. Launch struggle for capturing land and their distribution to landless based on land to the tiller slogan.
4. Oppose cultivation of GM seeds till they are fully tested and found harmless.
5. Fight against state suppression against adivasis and peasantry struggling against displacement and other neo liberal policies.
6. Struggle for procurement of the agricultural products by the government, for strengthening of the public distribution system of all essential items and for urgent action against price rise.
7. Expose and fight against scams and scamsters.
8. Fight against micro finance corporations. ●

LOOMTEX Engineering Pvt. Ltd., one of the major jute mills of the North 24 Paraganas district in West Bengal, may have earned the dubious distinction of slapping murder, attempt to murder and Arms Act cases against the same workers of the same union at least thrice in as many years. The 4000-odd workers of Loomtex Engineering Private Limited in general, and the activists of the Loomtex Engineering Private Limited Sangrami Mazdoor Union (affiliated to TUCI) in particular, are facing a vicious and unceasing attack by the mill management. In a record of sorts, the very same activists who were framed with trumped up charges of murder by the management in 2008 have again been victimized with cases of attempt to murder and Arms Act. Their guilt lies in the fact that they have been agitating for the rights of Loomtex workers and demanding PF and gratuity dues.

In 2010, after months of fierce struggle, the owner and management of Loomtex came to an agreement with all the unions of the mill, including the Sangrami Mazdoor Union, that they would pay gratuity to 780 retired workers by the end of the year, update all PF accounts and also pay 3 years of STL dues. However, the management reneged on its promise and paid gratuity to only around 200 workers by the end of the year. PF accounts too were not updated. This led to a fresh movement, spearheaded by the Sangrami Mazdoor Union, to bring pressure on the management to

Loomtex Workers Face Attempt to Murder Charges for Claiming Their Dues

clear all dues as soon as possible. The management responded with renewed malevolence. On January 14, 2011, seven office bearers of the Sangrami Mazdoor Union were summarily dismissed from service. They included the General Secretary, Secretary, Assistant Secretaries and Cashier. Not only that, the management in a show of unrelenting vindictiveness also lodged FIRs against all of them – accusing them of attempting to murder members of the management and rampaging about the factory with arms! Funnily enough, most of the accused workers were not even on duty at the time they were supposed to have gone on this killing and marauding spree.

As has been mentioned, this is the second time in as many years that these same workers have faced criminal charges in court for having the temerity to question the impunity with which the management has been defalcating PF and gratuity funds for the last 20 years or more. For the General Secretary of the union, Shyam Sundar Shaw, it is the third time in as many years that a criminal case was slapped for inspiring the workers to fight for their rightful dues. In the autumn of 2007, he had been charged with a dacoity case for exposing the management's offer of a bribe to him in exchange of withdrawing from the workers' struggle. The case, for which he had to spend a fortnight in jail, was subsequently dismissed.

When, on 14th January, the workers gheraoed the management to protest against the unfair dismissal of their colleagues, the management responded by calling in the police who brutally lathi-charged the peacefully demonstrating workers within the mill premises. Two workers, who had gone to speak to the management on behalf of all the workers, were also arrested and severely beaten up. But although, thanks to the workers' pressure and subsequent administration's intervention, they were released later on the same day, fresh charges of attempt to murder were brought against them after they were released! This, despite the fact that the administration – present at the time of the gherao – confirmed that the workers had observed total peace and shown no inclination to violence during the whole time. Here it would also be pertinent to point out that the management of Loomtex has been consistently violating all High Court orders, refusing to pay gratuity to retired workers and making retired workers work at half the rate as that in other mills.

Whereas people in other parts of the state have to face physical and social violence for their political choice, in Titagarh workers are framed with criminal charges if they so much as raise their voices for their rightful dues! Strangely enough, the CPI(M) and the Trinamool Congress, who are apparently at loggerheads over everything, have maintained a grim silence on the Loomtex issue and neither party has stepped in to speak on behalf of the besieged workers. It is absolutely clear that these two apparently sworn enemies are perfect allies when it comes to protecting mill owners and attacking struggling workers.

However, despite these deplorable strong arm tactics of the management, the workers of Loomtex are rigid on their demand of immediate payment of gratuity dues, settlement of PF accounts and the like. If the management does not immediately drop the false charges brought against the workers, reinstate them in service and take concrete measures to meet the workers' demand, it will undoubtedly result in an escalation of tension and militant agitation. ●

Communist Canvas

Bengali Theoretical Tri-monthly

Uttaran

**Monthly Organ of W. Bengal
State Committee of CPI(ML)**

**Shankar Das
257, Nandan Kanan South
Rahara
Kolkatta
West Bengal - 700 118**

Food Security Act: Universalisation Vs. Targeted Approach

Sachin Jain

THE targeted approach in a country that provides subsidies and exemptions of Rs 418,000 crore to industry the government is constantly reducing the entitlements of the poor. India's first national budget after Independence was of Rs 200 crore. In 60 years, it has grown to Rs 10,00,000 crore. But alas, poverty and starvation continue to thrive as relentlessly as before. We can't in any seriousness say that the trickle-down theory of economic development has put food on the plates of millions of our hungry brethren. Every night, around 420 million people go to sleep on an empty stomach.

The important point is that while our budget grew 5,000 times its inaugural size, food production grew by a measly 400% over the same period. In rural India today, 23 crore people are under-nourished, and 50% of children fall victim to malnutrition. Every third Indian in the age-group 15-49 years is feeble-bodied. The government is presently grappling with the target of 22.8 crore tonnes of grain production; it needs to reach a target of 25-26 crore tonnes by the year 2015. The situation is so grim that today every fourth malnourished global citizen is an Indian.

Seventy per cent of children under the age of 5 are anaemic; likewise more than 75% of children in 11 of our 19 states. India as a country may have progressed, but her children have not gained anything. Let us consider some important facts.

In 1972-73, per capita per month grain consumption was 15.3 kg; it has since gone down to 12.22 kg. Average per capita consumption was 11.920 kg in 2005-06; it fell by about 2%, to 11.685 kg per person in 2006-07.

While countless Indian citizens are condemned to sleep on empty stomachs, crores of tonnes of foodgrain rot in the country's godowns. India has the capacity to store 415 lakh tonnes of grain in its godowns, yet 190 lakh tonnes are stored outside under thin plastic sheets. Speedy distribution of this grain could feed many hungry Indians. Despite instructions from the Supreme Court to distribute 35 kg of foodgrain per person, only 20-25 kg per capita is being distributed. This shortfall can be addressed by proper utilisation of grain rotting out in the open. Only lack of political and administrative will can be blamed for such debilitating ennu.

Should food security legislation take the targeted approach or one aimed at universalisation of food security? If food security is considered an integral part of the fundamental right to life, how can the targeted approach even be considered? When exclusion and caste/class/gender discrimination have been key to social, political and economic structures, how can any targeted approach address the hunger and food insecurity situation in our country today?

In the present regime of economic, centralised and corporative capitalist development, the state considers expenditure on food subsidies an unproductive

investment. Some argue that we have developed at a pace of 6-8% a year, so most people do not require state assistance for their food requirements.

The Planning Commission of India has taken the stand that it will only prescribe the formula for a targeted National Food Security Act, in which 37.2% of families (estimated by the Tendulkar Committee) living below the poverty line will be entitled to subsidised foodgrain. The report recommends that families spending less than Rs 446.68 or Rs 14.88/day in rural areas, and Rs 578.8 or 19.29/day in urban areas, will be considered 'poor'.

We need to understand that a targeted approach excludes the most marginalised from receiving basic entitlements and is fertile grounds for huge corruption in programmes like the public distribution system (PDS).

The root of starvation and food vulnerability

From the very beginning it has been taken for granted that industrialisation is the only panacea for development. Our economic policies were so designed that agriculture was categorised as 'unskilled labour'. Urban areas and industrial enterprises received huge government subsidies, at the cost of agriculture. As a consequence, small farmers and rural labour suffered the inevitable impoverishment.

The Green Revolution, sponsored by big industry, was imposed on India. Under the regime, 'improved' seeds were produced that survived only on a strong dose of chemicals, fertilisers and pesticides. During a study on wheat production in five states, including Madhya Pradesh, it was revealed that the average cost of production per hectare, which was Rs 561 in the decade 1981-1990, has risen to a whopping Rs 7,673.70.

As a result, traditional farming suffered an untimely demise; agri-

culture became a 'for markets, (controlled), by markets' enterprise. Small farmers got trapped in debt, and easily cultivable and nutritious coarse pulses and oilseeds became unpopular. Modern, mechanised forms of farming made a huge population of rural labour redundant.

Now there is the scourge of a Second Green Revolution in the form of contract farming and 'industrial-farming'. In this age of biofuel, cane, corn and other such produce are being intensively cultivated for fuel purposes only. Agriculture is being controlled by MNCs and large corporations. How can food security be guaranteed by grabbing natural resources like water and land from small, vulnerable farmers for the purpose of handing them over to big industries?

We need a universalised National Food Security Act

It is ironical that the Tendulkar Committee tried to give a rationale for empty stomachs. Accordingly, rural folk can survive on an intake of 1,999 calories, while their urban counterparts need 1,770 calories. These conclusions do not match those of ICMR, which stipulates 2,400 and 2,100 calories respectively for our rural and urban populace. In fact, hard and intensive labour requires a minimum intake of 3,400-3,800 calories.

Keeping this in mind, there is an urgent need for universalisation of the Food Security Act. Only then can we begin to think about solving the daunting problem of hunger. The government has accepted the findings of the Tendulkar Committee, formed by the Planning Commission, that 37.2% of our population is below the poverty line (BPL), meaning that almost two-fifths of Indians are forced to go hungry. A study conducted by Arjun Sengupta, Utsa Patnaik and the National Nutritional Monitoring Bureau concludes that 75-78% of our people do not receive adequate food and nutrition.

The poverty line defines and sets the boundaries of deprivation whereby dalits, tribals, single destitute women, the elderly, children, and the disabled subsist on the margins of deprivation. These are fertile conditions for corruption to thrive in, and an environment of non-accountability wherein even people's basic survival rights are trampled on.

The Government of India has so far been unwilling to reform the public distribution system, and avoids acknowledging the fact that it has been unable to deliver hungry Indians their entitlements. Being extremely vulnerable, people living below the poverty line are unjustly exploited by the forces of an open market. In this depressing scenario, legal guarantee through a universal regime of food security is the only way out. Such a regime will challenge the lethargy of non-accountability and bring about an equity-based social framework wherein agriculture and natural resources receive due attention.

A comprehensive Food Security Bill

The present crisis of food insecurity is due to the consistent exploitation and negligence of agriculture and the rural sector. Even in this age of breakneck urbanisation, two-thirds of our population depend on agriculture whereas its total contribution to India's GDP is a dismal 17%. At the other end of the spectrum, private enterprises that are a minuscule 1%, stake their claim to one-third of our GDP. Real food security can only be achieved through an entirely new form of polity.

Poverty estimates in India

Since the 1970s, poverty studies in India have been based on 'poverty line' expenditure levels. This has been defined as the observed level of expenditure per capita per month on all goods and services, the food expenditure component of which provides an energy intake of 2,400 calories per capita in rural areas, and 2,100 calories per capita in urban areas. Rural energy norms were set higher owing to the hard physical labour most rural workers undertake, compared to the lighter work done by a greater proportion of urban workers. The actual observed average calorie intake in rural India was also higher than that of urban India, from the 1950s to the 1990s, after which, from 1999-2000, the position was reversed.

All those spending amounts below the poverty line are considered poor. While Dandekar and Rath (1971) adopted a uniform nutrition norm of 2,250 calories per head, the Taskforce on Projections of Minimum Needs and Effective Consumption Demand, constituted by the Planning Commission in 1979, did not find the uniform calorie norm suitable and suggested different norms for rural and urban areas.

Using the census data of 1982, the population was divided into 16 groups defined by age, gender and activity, with recommended calorie intakes varying from 300 calories for children below 1 year, to 3,800 calories for a young man doing heavy work. The average norm was derived as a weighted average: 2,435 and 2,095 calories per person respectively for rural and urban areas, rounded down to 2,400 and up to 2,100. These nutrition norms have since been the accepted basis for poverty studies in India.

This is a minimalist definition of poverty, however, since no spending norms are set for essential non-food items such as fuel (for cooking and lighting), clothing, shelter, transport, medical care or education. A household observed to be above the so-called poverty level expenditure satisfies only the nutritional norm and may not be able to access adequate amounts of other necessary goods and services from its non-food expenditure.

The database for estimating poverty has been the National Sample Survey Rounds on Consumer Expenditure, which take the household as the sampling unit and carry out large sample surveys every five years, with smaller samples being canvassed in the intervening years. These reports present the distribution of people and average expenditure by monthly per capita expenditure groups; they also present the calorie intake per capita per diem by expenditure groups, though the latter tabulations have been released after a considerable time lag, in the past. They also note the quantities of food items actually purchased by sample households (as well as farm-produced food items retained for consumption by farmers). These are valued at the prevailing prices, and added to expenditure on non-food items to give the total monthly per capita expenditure ('Poverty and Neo-Liberalism in India' by Utsa Patnaik, http://www.macrosan.org/the/Poverty/jan07/pov060107Poverty_Neo-liberalismhtm. Accessed on December 9, 2008).

In accordance with the poverty estimates for 2004-5, the Planning Commission noted that poverty in India was dropping. It says the URP-Consumption distribution data of the 61st round yields a poverty ratio of 28.3% in rural areas, 25.7% in urban areas and 27.5% for the country as a whole, in 2004-5. India's countrywide poverty line is worked out from the expenditure class-wise distribution of people (based on URP consumption, that is, consumption data collected from a 30-day recall period for all items) and the poverty ratio at the all-India level. These estimates have already been challenged by civil society; the Tendulkar Committee showed a significant 10% increase in the figures.

The Planning Commission estimates that in Madhya Pradesh, a rural family spending Rs 327.78 per person per month would be considered poor, while the cost for any urban family would be Rs 570.15. In other words, a person spending anything more than Rs 11 every day in a village, or Rs 19 in an urban area, would not be identified as poor and would not be eligible for relief under poverty eradication programmes. At a country level, the poverty line represents the expenditure level of Rs 356.30 in rural areas and Rs 538.60 in urban areas, per person per month.

Challenges within BPL

Whether non-accountability stems from or is a cause of corruption is debatable. Non-accountability and corruption, while different, are inter-related. It is like the eternal question of which came first: the chicken or the egg. It seems that non-accountability has been shaped in such a manner as to protect corruption.

Corruption does not merely refer to cases of government officials skimming off money for their own benefit. It includes cases where systems do not work well and ordinary people are left with no option but to offer bribes for medicines or any licences they may need.

State-patronised corruption can be seen in situations where the state takes a negative view of marginalised and deprived sections of society and adopts growth-based development policies by sheltering private and corporate sectors and squeezing public resources to provide benefit to them. These policies have little to do with welfare or equality. As a result, 100 corporate families (in a country of 27 crore families) now control 25% of India's GDP.

Corruption also arises when a public administration official or agent (there should be no agents involved; a public official can deal with funds meant for public use) ceases to behave according to the rules he/she has been appointed to follow. We need to take it further from the individual official, however. What

happens when operations are implemented on erroneous policies? For instance, an official may behave in accordance with the rules, but he/she may be acting on the wrong policies. This is almost state-patronised corruption, as the state endeavours to curb the voices of people, in certain cases snatching resources and opportunities from them through bad policies or their unlawful implementation.

While making development policy, the state is to a large extent influenced by rich and powerful sections of society and misuses its power and authority to serve these particular sections. This attitude has lost it the faith of the common man.

Not only does the state offer tax rebates, exemptions and subsidies to the corporate sector, without balancing the interests of poorer sections of society, it is also constantly reducing people's entitlements. And the poor are further weakened by loopholes in the governance system, which is why they get no justice in the courts, claims for their names to be incorporated in the BPL list are not settled, stolen property is never recovered, complaints against public officials are not recorded...

A classic example of government favouring a particular section of society is its outrageous tax policy in which more than half the owed taxes are waived through exemptions and subsidies. In 2008-09, the central government's total 'tax revenue forgone' was Rs 418,095 crore — about 69% of total tax collection. Of this, waived corporate income tax amounted to Rs 68,914 crore; personal income tax: Rs 39,553 crore; customs: Rs 225,752 crore; and excise: Rs 128,293 crore. Likewise, in 2006-07, Rs 239,712 crore (50.89%), and in 2007-2008, Rs 278,644 crore (48.16%) of the central government's tax revenue was 'forgone'.

As seen above, exempted customs duty makes up a large

proportion of forgone tax (in many cases, import duties are less than the minimum demanded by the WTO). 'Liberalised' imports have thus not only destroyed domestic production, they have been paid for at the expense of social sector spending. Equally outrageous is that of the remaining taxes levied, a large proportion is never collected; Rs 90,255.88 crore in 2005-6, and Rs 99,293.04 crore in 2006-7, to be exact.

Despite claims of a high growth rate, poverty in India has increased. The rich have become richer, and the poor poorer, due to the favours bestowed upon one particular section of society that benefits from the country's economic policies. In the recent financial year, the government provided subsidies and exemptions to the industrial and corporate sector to the tune of Rs 418,000 crore. This sector contributes just 22% to employment, compared to agriculture which provides employment to 67% of the population.

The widening gap between the rich and the poor is also reflected in the BPL status awarded by the government. It was not by mistake that a lower level of expenditure for fixing the BPL line was used. To keep BPL numbers low, calorie intake at the official poverty line was 2,170 calories in 1977-78, 2,060 calories in 1983, 1,980 calories in 1993-94, and 1,820 calories in 2004-05. The present BPL calorie norm permits people to consume just 1,820 calories, whereas to consume the desired norm of 2,400/2,100 calories, the cutoff line for determining BPL status should have been around Rs 700 in rural areas and Rs 1,000 in urban areas. Thus, a large number of rural residents with consumption in the range of Rs 360-Rs 700 have been deprived of BPL status ('Identification of BPL Households in Rural Poor', Dr N C Saxena Committee report, p. 4-7).

According to the NSSO survey (2004-05, based on the consumption of Rs 356/person/day), 28.3% of families in rural India will be considered

poor. If calorie norms are followed, 79.8% of families will count as poor and hungry, deprived of essential commodities and services and falling short of the prescribed 2,400 calories per day.

It is important to note here that a number of exclusionary tools have been incorporated into the estimation methodology itself. For instance, during poverty estimation, locally available produce from forests or agriculture retained for consumption by farmers and tribals are valued at the prevailing prices and added to expenditure on non-food items to give the total monthly per capita expenditure. However, the cost of items and services such as housing, healthcare and education are counted at the lowest price without taking into account current rates of inflation.

Field reports indicate that state governments were unable to follow the BPL numbers decided by the central government and Planning Commission during the identification of families at the village level, as a large section was actually in need and demanding subsidised services and commodities like food, healthcare and housing. State governments were thus politically compelled to cross the ceiling set by the central government. Despite this, the central government continues its rigid stance, making no moves to increase allocations towards poverty alleviation programmes and subsidies. The draft law on the right to food will only cover BPL families decided by the central, not state, government.

In essence, the definitions of poverty are fabricated. They have not been designed honestly to provide protection to the most marginalised but to reduce the government's responsibility towards deprived sections of society and utilise state resources to benefit the corporate sector and capitalist political ideologies. Just as warfare strategies disrupt enemy food supplies to weaken soldiers, a majority of India's people are kept hungry so that they are not in a position to fight for their social, economic and political rights. In such a situation, civil society groups are forced to divert their efforts from larger issues to small, general issues like the public distribution system, old-age pension and small scheme-based benefits instead of the fundamental causes of hunger and deprivation.

Why the poverty line should be abolished

Although the Government of India is desperate to push the concept of BPL in all poverty and food-related programmes, the National Advisory Council (NAC) has recommended the use of BPL as an entitlement criterion. This shows that the Indian state is in no mood to apply the universalisation approach to its food and welfare programmes, despite there being evidence that the targeted approach has been a fundamental cause of corruption and exclusion in the last 13 years, since 1997. Instead of marking out families that are below the poverty line (BPL) and above the poverty line (APL), the public distribution system should be strengthened to provide foodgrain to each and every citizen of India. ●

ICOR Documents

[Founding Conference Documents and List of Participants of the International Co-ordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organisations (ICOR) in English and Hindi.]

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Withdraw Bills Aimed at Commercialisation and Corporatisation of Higher Education

[ON BEHALF of the All India Forum for Right to Education (AIF-RTE) an Online Petition to the Prime Minister regarding higher education and a signature campaign on university and college campuses is being launched across the country. The petition is concerned with the crisis that the Indian higher (including professional) education is undergoing as a result of the rapid pace of the neo-liberal assaults. Public funding is steadily being withdrawn. Public-private partnership (PPP), foreign direct investment (FDI) and Foreign Universities are all part of the deeper malaise. Unregulated fee hikes are raising the cost of education beyond the economic capacity of even the middle class and increasingly forcing the parents to sell their property in order to afford higher education for their children.

In its latest move, the central government placed four Bills in the Parliament in May 2010, including one on facilitating the establishment of Foreign Educational Institutions in India. At least two more Bills in the same vein are ready to be placed. These Bills seem to be pre-requisites for bringing higher education under the WTO-GATS regime. Indeed, these policy shifts call for a nation-wide public protest and reconstruction of the higher education policy to ensure equal opportunity for quality education to the widest possible sections of society as per the Constitution.

AIF-RTE staged a *dharna* on 26th July 2010 outside the gate of the Ministry of HRD in New Delhi and presented a Memorandum on these issues to the Prime Minister but to no avail. On the same day, it also presented a Memorandum to the Chairperson, Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on HRD with request that an AIF-RTE delegation be allowed to explain our stand to the Committee but we have not received any response so far. We are publishing the petition to prime minister, which is endorsed by the CPI(ML) — *Red Star*]

WE the undersigned express our anguish at your government's policies of steady withdrawal of State funding of education at all levels including Higher and Professional Education and the consequent rise in privatization and commercialization. Ironically, even the limited public funds made available for education are being siphoned off to corporate capital (including foreign) through Public Private Partnership (PPP). The strategy includes provision of direct and indirect subsidies, tax exemptions and low interest loans to corporate houses (through the proposed Education Finance Corporation Ltd.). The existing regulatory structure in higher education is being demolished altogether in order to allow unregulated fee hikes, as is already becoming evident in school education as a result of the farcical Right to Education Act.

The latest move is to bring in Foreign Universities and FDI – a move clearly designed to 'bail-out' the fund-starved universities of North America, Europe and Australia. Such 'reforms' are aimed at converting Indian higher education into a highly lucrative 'market' (estimated at US \$ 50 billion by 2015). The privately-borne high cost of education puts a premium on courses that are directly linked to the requirements of domestic and international markets. Disciplines and areas of critical research that are foundational for dynamic, creative and transformative higher education will inevitably suffer a decline.

Such neo-liberal changes have thrived by destroying campus democracy, thereby reducing universities and colleges to play the role of social control rather than social transformation.

At the root of these policies is the neo-liberal conception of education as a 'private good' and a tradable commodity. This is in sharp contrast to the Constitutional vision of education as a means of promoting equal opportunity, social justice and an economic system that does not result in "concentration of wealth and means of production".

It is no body's case that radical transformation in higher education is not overdue. The post- independence policies resulted in restricting access (now hardly 12% of the relevant age group), inequality of opportunity, generally sub-standard institutions (with notable exceptions) and, more importantly, in uncoupling education from the needs of society, afflicted by impoverishment, disparities and questionable development model.

However, the State has apparently decided not to pursue this unfinished task for which India needs at this juncture a fully publicly funded plan to radically transform the character of the existing 500 plus universities and 25,000 colleges along with several-fold increase in the number of educational institutions in all disciplines, including professional areas. Ignoring this option, the UPA government has introduced in the Parliament the following four Bills with a view to intensify its neo-liberal assault:

- i) The Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill, 2010.
- ii) The Educational Tribunals Bill, 2010.
- iii) The Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Educational Institutions and Universities Bill, 2010.

iv) The National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill, 2010.

At least two more Bills in the same vein, including one on establishing a National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) for facilitating over-centralised and unaccountable single-window clearance for private/foreign universities and another on the corporatised 'innovative' universities, are in the offing. These Bills are evidently pre-requisites for bringing higher education under the WTO-GATS regime and aimed at by-passing the legislative, judicial and executive processes that constitute the foundation of democracy as per the Constitution.

None of the above policy shifts have been preceded by public consultation. The only consultations that the govt. has apparently relied upon are those it held with India Inc.

We, therefore, demand that:

1. the above-named neo-liberal Bills in the Parliament are withdrawn forthwith;
2. public debates and consultations are organized before any legislative shifts are made;
3. campus democracy be safeguarded in order to enable the universities and colleges to function as spaces for free, fearless and critical academic pursuits;
4. the FDI and PPP policy be replaced by adequate public funding of education from pre-primary to higher education;
5. all provisions facilitating and legitimizing trade in education be eliminated;
6. the government's "offer" of higher education before WTO-GATS must be withdrawn immediately, lest it becomes irreversible after the completion of the Doha Rounds; and
7. the higher education policy be reconstructed such that entirely free

Swami, Sangh and Terror Links

Ram Puniyani

INVESTIGATING acts of terrorism have multiple complex issues as things are mired in secrecy. To add to the problem is the mindset of investigating authorities and those in power. The acts of terror, which have been inflicted on the country, have been mainly attributed to the "Jehadi Terror" and mostly the theory which has been guiding the police authorities has been to work on this understanding. The result has been; immediately after the attacks of terror the investigating authorities, right from day one, have been naming some Muslim groups, situated across the border, the infamous word of 'cross border terrorism' became a sort of buzz word. The link of those from across the border were easy enough to be sewed up with the local Muslim youth and according to the police some Muslims have been caught, arrested, 'they have confessed' to their crime, and the puzzle is solved, has been the oft repeated line from last few years.

Contrary to the common sense even when the terror attack took place in Muslim majority area, at times when Muslims congregate at particular times, the police very 'competently' would go in to arrest few Muslim youth and start building up their case implicating them in the act of terror. Those in political power, even in non-BJP states, and at center kept quietly approving this biased investigation and any doubts raised by social activists, victims of the police arrests were brushed aside.

The first major crack in this pattern occurred when in the aftermath of Malegaon blast, Maharashtra ATS chief Hemant Karkare meticulously showed the connection of Sadhvi Pragma Singh Thakur and many others from the Hindutva combine, associated with one or the other offshoot of RSS or inspired by the RSS ideology of Hindu nation, trained in the communal ideology of looking at people through the prism of their religion, and religion alone. Karkare's efforts brought out enough skeletons from the cupboard of Hindutva stable and somewhere the stubborn police and the political authorities also started looking the other way leading to the plethora of organizations, broadly known as Sangh parivar. It is also a matter of great concern that same Hemant Karkare started being abused by Hindutva elements, intimidation and threat to his life began.

Incidentally Karkare was killed on the fateful night of 26/11 Mumbai terror attack. Karkar's efforts did initiate a process of bringing the terror investigation on proper track. There were many a top RSS functionaries like Indresh Kumar, many an associates, the major one being Swami Aseemanand of VHP, Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram who started being investigated. Swami Aseemanand was known for his work in Adivasi areas in Dangs, where he whipped up the anti-Christian hysteria leading to anti Christian violence in the district. Same Aseemanand

and quality education with equal opportunity for all sections of society is ensured, the transformative role of education is re-established and, at the same time, equitable and just social development in a democratic, decentralized, plural and participative mode is pursued as the central aim, as required by Constitution. ●

went on to organize a Shabri Kumbh in the area, for this Kumbh intimidation of Adivasis was in the air, they were terrorized to attend Kumbh and some were subjected to 'Ghar Vapasi', (return home, conversion to Hinduism). The highlight of the Kumbh was that the top RSS and associates leadership attended it along with the Swami. This Kumbh was also a sign of times, the part of anti Minority agenda of the Sangh.

Swami Aseemanand is in news again for having confessed to the metropolitan magistrate on 18th December 2010 about his and his colleague's involvement in the acts of terror. As per him while the Jihad attack on Akshardham temple in 2002 created the feeling of revenge, this got crystallised after the terrorist attack on Sankat mochan temple in Varanasi in 2006. After this tragic incident the Swami contacted the others from associated organizations and in a well planned move organized the terror attacks. Swami stated "We held a meeting at the Valsad residence of Bharat Bhai (Bharat Riteshwar) in June 2006. We planned to carry out blasts at places of worship for Muslims. Sandeep Dange, Bharat Bhai, Sadhvi Pragya, Sunil Joshi, Lokesh Sharma (arrested for Ajmer dargah blast), Ramji Kalsangra and one Amit attended the meeting. We decided to bomb Malegaon, Ajmer dargah, Mecca Masjid and the Samjhauta Express train. Joshi took the responsibility of doing a reconnaissance of all these place." (Times of India, 13 Jan 2011)

Now the detailed police investigation showed the involvement of Hindutva combine from Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur (ex- ABVP activist), Lt Col Prasad Shrikant Purohit, and Ret. Major. Upadhyay (was chief of BJP's ex-serviceman's cell In Mumbai), Swami Dayanand Pandey (RSS connection, mentor of Abhinav Bharat), Indresh Kumar (Member of RSS National executive) Sunil Joshi (RSS Prachark(later killed), Devender Gupta (RSS pracharak with Abhinav Bharat), Ramchndra Kalsangra and Sandeep Pandey and many others.

The confessions of swami have made many a points very clear. The first is that, right from the Nanded blast which took place in the house of RSS worker Rajkondawar, in which two Bajrang Dal workers died, the social activist raised the issue of involvement of Hindutva elements. On Nanded issue, a citizens committee also investigated the blast and raised serious issues related to the direction of investigation. Later in most of the blasts in Pabhani, Beed, Jalna another places in Maharashtra same pattern was observed. Social activists kept drawing the attention of Government and media, but their voices remained unheard for a long time. In addition to the attitude of police, the political leadership, even in non BJP states and at Center refused to take cognizance of the pattern of the blasts and the glaring fallacies in the line of investigation.

Large section of media kept quiet and underplayed the involvement of Hindutva elements. While most of the incidents did find the front page banner headlines about the involvement of Muslims, so called Jihadi groups, the voices of victims challenging the police version, and the findings of social activists were hardly any news, tucked in the back pages, presented in a subdued manner, if at all. During the whole process a large section of Muslim youth were tortured and many of them had to give up their education and professional carriers due to the line of investigation and the treatment from the state which was meted out to them. On the top of this whole process the social thinking was cultivated to believe in the theory of 'All Terrorists are Muslims'. Even today many a Muslim youth are behind the bars for the acts of terror, which as per Swami's confession were planned and executed by Hindutva elements. Will Government take urgent steps to set right the ongoing injustice to the innocent youth who have been implicated due to the non professional and biased conduct of the state? The demand for their release and suitable compensation being given to them has to

be taken up by the government in the right earnest.

What is to be done with the fountainhead of this ideology of Hate, the organization to which most of the groups owe allegiance, to which some of these are directly associated. the RSS? Many of those involved have been directly associated with RSS, others indirectly and RSS can very conveniently say that it has nothing to do with them. For RSS disowning any of its activists is a very easy job. It is not legally responsible for the associated organizations, as they are autonomous on paper. Those who have been directly a part of RSS have been expelled and disowned. RSS chief has said that RSS has no place for those indulging in violence. Legally RSS cannot be and should not be taken to task as RSS has kept its structure so fluid that it can get all the violence done, while keeping its shirt clean from the blood stains.

The demand for banning RSS has no meaning. It was banned in the wake of Gandhi murder, during the emergency and after the demolition of Babri Masjid. Banning organizations does not help. The point is to take up the battle at ideological plane, at social and political level. And that is a challenging task as RSS has been consistently spreading its ideology through various conduits and lately school books and large section of media has been the major vehicle of spread of its ideology. Its ideology is being given the religious veneer by the ilk of Swami Aseemanand, Laxmananand and other saints who are using the language of religion to propagate their political ideology and agenda.

All those who stand for a democratic society with the concept of Human rights need to come together and take multiple programs to combat the religion based nationalism, and politics laced in the language of religion, which is the major cause of the terrorism, as practiced by the likes of Osama bin laden or Aseemanand. ●

Tunisia in revolt

THE people of Tunisia want an end to the reactionary regime which plundered them for decades. They want a revolutionary change in their country. The unemployed university graduate M. Buaziz set his body on fire and turned into a spark which started a social movement and uprisings in North Africa, first of all in Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt and even in Albania. This revolutionary revolt of the peoples of the region has caused panic in the ranks of the governments of the capitalist bourgeoisie and the reactionary-fascist regimes in the Middle East, in North Africa and the world. The people's revolt in Tunisia, which is continuing since December 17, has overthrown the 23-years-long dictatorship; the reactionary government led by Zeynel Abidin Ben Ali and made him flee from the country. The people of Tunisia wants change by a revolution. The political future of the country will depend on the situation of the inner and foreign dynamics, the political balance of power and the party and forces leading the social uprising.

Among the reasons for the uprising in Tunisia is not only political repression, but also hikes in prices of petrol and food, unemployment (55% of the university graduates are unemployed), hunger and poverty. It is a reaction against the delayed economic and social consequences of the capitalist neo-liberal politics in the region. Recently, the region witnessed actions against hikes in bread prices and through documents published by wikileaks, the wealth of the Tunisian dynasty and the secret relations with the US were revealed.

Ben Ali and members of the Tunisian government - devoted stooges of EU and US imperialists - are the exclusive owners of the capital deposited at Swiss banks, the earnings from tourism and tons of gold. US imperialism collaborated with Tunisia in the colonialist wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and other regions. Secretly detained people have been

kept in secret tracts of Tunisian prisons. The Tunisian secret service participated together with US torture specialists in interrogation at the air base Bagram in Afghanistan. Ben Ali, who was forced to leave the country, took the road of imperialist support and continuing the old regime in a new way in accordance with the imperialist politics. He announced new elections, freedom of press and release of political prisoners. However, these concessions were not enough in order to put out the fire.

The people demand the resignation of the interim-government. The General Workers Union of Tunisia (UGTT) called for general strike demanding resignation of the interim-government. Tunisia experiences a political transition period. Many political and social forces, actors of the process, facts and subjects will play a role. Nationalists, Islamists, left parties and forces, among them also the Communist Workers Party of Tunisia and the Movement of Change take part in the uprising and are demanding a new constitution. In the current situation we can name it a spontaneous movement.

Under the united leadership of progressive forces the process may develop towards a democratic power. The opposition in Tunisia is developing in two main lines. On one hand the parties and organisations trying to find a compromise with the old regime and on the other hand the peoples committees, trade unions and progressive-revolutionary forces. The counterrevolutionary forces are still shooting at the people and creating chaos. Against that, the workers, labourers and oppressed are organising themselves all over the country in peoples committees and are carrying out actions of self-defence and attack against those provocative forces. The bourgeois opposition tries, supported by the imperialists, to find a compromise with the regime. The peoples committees, trade unions and the revolutionary opposition are trying to change the situation, to guaranty the side-products of revolution and are making efforts to build the political pendant of the revolutionary revolt.

The revolt has shown that the ground for regional revolutions in the time of imperialist globalisation is today stronger than before and points out the need of political and mass organisation at regional level. The revolt is a reaction of protest against the social consequences of the neoliberal politics of the capitalist crisis. At the Arabic peninsula and in North Africa a revolutionary wave is developing. This wave of actions is caused by objective class interests. The

The Marxist Leninist

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present situation shows that in the Islamic countries, always equated with reaction by the capitalist bourgeoisie and its ideologists, dynamics for the struggle for freedom and socialism are strong. The revolt is a revolutionary uprising of the people against the evils and illnesses of capitalism and private property and the imperialist Greater Middle East Project. The revolt shows once again that the political subjects and leadership of the proletariat and the oppressed masses is of significant importance for the success of change.

The peoples and the proletariat of the world, their communist, revolutionary and progressive parties should follow the example of the revolutionary uprising of the Tunisian people against the capitalist system and reaction and they should consider and defend it as part of their own revolutionary action. They are face to face with the historical and political duty to spread this uprising, this fire.

Anti-Government Protests Spread to Northern Africa and Middle East

AS THOUSANDS continue to demonstrate in Tunisia against the interim “national unity” government, anti-government protests are spreading to Algeria, Yemen and Jordan. State forces in Algeria and Yemen responded to the protests with deadly force. The Associated Press reported that more than a dozen people were killed in Algeria on 22nd January when police blocked a march on the parliament building in the capital city, Algiers. Some 300 people intending to march from the city’s Place de la Concorde to parliament were quickly blockaded by police armed with batons, tear gas and other weapons. Mounting public anger over unemployment and rising costs sparked protests in Algeria earlier this month that left five people dead and more than 800 injured. In the past two weeks, eight people have set themselves on fire in the country to protest unemployment, poverty, social inequality and government corruption.

The same basic conditions of unemployment and political repression that sparked the mass protests in Tunisia, forcing long-time dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to flee to Saudi Arabia, are fuelling the demonstrations in neighbouring countries in the Maghreb and further to the east. In all of these countries, former colonies of Western imperialism and de facto economic colonies of the same powers today, mass unemployment among the youth is the most explosive social factor propelling the unrest. In Algeria, 15 million of the population of 36 million is under the age of 30.

Yemen is the poorest country in the Arab world. Almost half of its population of 23 million lives on \$2 a day or less. Demonstrations held 22nd and 23rd January against the 32-year-old regime of President Ali Abdullah Saleh were the first such political actions in the regime’s history. Some 2,500 demonstrated Saturday at the University of Sanaa. Police fired tear gas at the protesters and arrested around 30 of them. Protests also occurred in the southern port city of Aden. Police there fired on demonstrators, injuring four, and detained 22 others. Military forces responded brutally to two similar protests a day earlier in four cities in the nearby southern province of Lahj, firing mortar shells that killed one woman. Following sporadic expressions of discontent, including the self-immolation of an unemployed youth in the southern province of Baidah, the Yemeni government had announced reforms, including a limit on presidential terms. The protests rejected the proposals as token measures. At Sanaa University, protesters held signs declaring, “Leave before you are forced to leave.”

In Jordan, more than 5,000 people rallied on 21st in the capital city Amman and other cities after weekly prayers to protest against the regime’s economic policies, demanding “bread and freedom” and the resignation of the

government.”(Prime Minister Samir Rifai, out, out! People of Jordan will not bow!” protesters chanted as they marched from the Al-Hussein mosque in central Amman to the municipal building. Police said some 4,000 took part in the peaceful protest in Amman, organized by the Muslim Brotherhood and its political arm, the Islamic Action Front. Another 1,400 people demonstrated in other parts of Jordan, mainly the northern cities of Zarqa and Irbid. The official poverty rate in Jordan is 25 percent. Officially, unemployment stands at 14 percent, but other estimates put the jobless figure as high as 30 percent.

In Tunisia, thousands protested on both 22nd and 23rd, the second and third days of an official period of mourning for those killed by Ben Ali’s police. Demonstrators in Tunis on 22nd demanding the resignation of interim Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi and other former cronies of the deposed dictator were joined by hundreds of police, who demanded higher wages and the right to form a union. On 23rd, thousands of anti-government protesters rallied outside the offices of Prime Minister, demanding that he resign. They broke through security cordons to reach the doors of the building. The crowd included hundreds who had come from the country’s impoverished interior in what was called a “Caravan of Liberation.” Many in the caravan were from Sidi Bouzid, the bleak town where the anti-government uprising was sparked a month ago by the self-immolation of an unemployed college graduate. “We have come to bring down the rest of the dictatorship,” said Mohammed Layani, an elderly man who was part of the caravan. Civil servants are also refusing to work and are holding workplace protests in opposition to the interim govt. ●

Long live the revolutionary revolt of the Tunisian people!

Long live the international solidarity of proletariat and peoples!

Statement Of ICOR About The People's Uprising in Tunisia

1) On Friday 17 December 2010, a young unemployed graduate of 26 years, Mohamed Bouazizi, committed self-immolation. He sacrificed himself after the local police of Sidi Bouzid confiscated his sole means of support, which was a cart to sell fruit and vegetables from it. This was the start for a national uprising having its provisional turning point on Friday 14 January 2011 with the escape of the dictator Ben Ali to Saudi Arabia. The uprising was against hunger, misery and unemployment which is particularly hitting the youth and against the undemocratic Ben Ali regime.

2) All over the country, street demonstrations, meetings and strikes have spontaneously broken out protesting against the regime of Ben Ali under the leadership of local revolutionary working class activists. The protesters are demanding bread, work for the young and the right to live in dignity.

3) Faced with this revolt of the exploited and youth deprived of a future, the ruling class has responded with a hail of bullets in which more than 100 people lost their lives.

4) Faced with this carnage, the bourgeoisies of the "democratic" countries have not raised a finger to condemn the barbarity of the regime and demand that the repression stops. Instead, various imperialist and comprador governments are complicit in this carnage! Even the bourgeois media is releasing only an incomplete and distorted picture about the crimes of Ben Ali.

5) After the bloody weekend of 8 and 9 January 2011, the French state was still openly offering support to this ruthless dictator. The French foreign minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie, in her speech to the National Assembly on 12 January 2011, offered to lend a hand to Tunisia's security forces: "We contend that the savoir-faire of our security forces, which is recognized throughout the world, would make it possible to resolve the security situation in this country."

6) This bloody terror of the state could not prevent the masses any more to fight for democratic conditions. Meetings and demonstrations of solidarity developed throughout the country: at Sfax, Kairouan, Thala, Bizerte, Sousse, Meknessi, Souk, Jedid, Ben Gardane, Medenine, Siliana... Despite the repression, despite the absence of freedom of expression, demonstrators brandished placards reading: "Today, we are no longer afraid!"

7) The forces of repression have greeted the protests

with a hail of bullets. On 24 December 2010, a young demonstrator of 18, Mohamed Ammari, was killed by police bullets. Another, Chawki Hidri, was seriously wounded and died on the first of January 2011. At Kasserine, Thala and Regueb, the repression on demonstrations turned into a massacre. Cold-blooded the police fired into the crowd killing more than 25 people. Through Friday, 14 January 2011 the provisional list of deaths by bullets exceeded 90 killed!

8) From 3 January 2011, schoolchildren mobilized themselves and used mobile phones and the internet, notably Facebook and Twitter, to call for a general strike of all pupils. They demonstrated on 3 and 4 January 2011 and were joined by unemployed graduates at Thala. The young demonstrators were faced with truncheons and tear gas. During the course of these confrontations the seat of government was invaded and the centre of the party in power was set on fire. The call for a national strike of pupils, relayed through the internet, was followed in several towns. At Tunis, Sfax, Sidi Bouzid, Bizerte, Grombalia, Jbeniana, Sousse, schoolchildren joined up with the unemployed. Meetings of solidarity also took place in Hammamet and Kasserine.

9) On 27 and 28 December 2010 lawyers joined in the movement of solidarity with the population of Sidi Bouzid. Faced with the repression meted out to them, arrests and being beaten up, the lawyers called for a general strike on 6 January 2011. Strike movements also affected journalists in Tunis and teachers in Bizerte.

10) A total blackout of information was organized. In the region of Sidi Bouzid, several localities were placed under a curfew and the army was mobilized. At Menzel Bouzaiane, the wounded could not be transported to hospital and the population lacked provisions. Schools were used as lodgings by police reinforcements.

11) In order to try to restore calm, Ben Ali gave a public declaration. He promised to create 300,000 jobs in 2011-12 and to free all the demonstrators except those who had committed acts of vandalism. He dismissed his interior minister using him as a scapegoat and at the same time denounced the "orchestrated" politics of a minority of "extremists" and "terrorists". They were trying to harm the interests of the country.

12) The anger of working class and oppressed people grew to such heights by Friday, 14 January 2011 that everybody was in the streets of Tunis. The demonstrators

started to walk towards the Interior Ministry and the Palace of the dictator Ben Ali, who escaped to Saudi Arabia.

13) The protests succeeded in chasing the dictator Ben Ali, but his party and his staff tried to hoodwink the masses. The Prime Minister Mahamed Ganoushi put Fouad Lambazae the president of the second chamber of parliament in the place of Ben Ali, and formed a government which promises elections after two months. But the masses have rejected this manipulation and have started to form their popular committees in each town and in each village. They have striked every day against this government.

14) ICOR supports the struggle of working class and oppressed masses in Tunisia. It supports the right of the people to be able to decide their own political and economic future.

15) ICOR supports the demand of the people's movement for withdrawal of the government and demands the formation of a democratic government by the people. Already councils are being set up in every village, town and city. ICOR supports such councils as a form of a direct democracy.

16) ICOR also notes that there is a compromising trend,

led by some opposition parties. They want to strike a compromise by changing the persons in power while leaving the exploitative system and policies without any change. ICOR supports the struggle of the local, regional and other people's councils against this trend.

17) The struggle of the working class and oppressed people of Tunisia is a beacon to other countries in the Arab world and even outside it. It shows how people can overcome a dictatorial regime and determine their own future. ICOR calls upon all its members to support this attempt of the people in every manner possible.

In solidarity with the working class and oppressed masses of Tunisia and the Maghrib,

In solidarity with the youth, wherever they struggle against hunger and unemployment,

In solidarity with the struggle for a democratic people's power in Tunisia!

International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organizations (ICOR)

23 January 2011

AIRWO's Condemns Police Harassment

ON 23rd January, 2011, at around 10.30 in the night, a team of policemen headed by the SDPO and IC, Khardah P.S. (North 24 Paraganas), entered the house of AIRWO central executive committee member Shikha Sen Roy and instituted an unlawful search and interrogation. Shikha Sen Roy's 'guilt' lies in the fact that her husband is the jailed Maoist leader, ex West Bengal state secretary of the Maoists, Somen (Himadri Sen Roy). The police neither had any lady officer or constable accompanying them, nor did they produce a search warrant.

The police are perfectly aware that despite her matrimonial relation with Somen, Shikha is a member of the local citizens' organization Nagarik Adhikar Raksha Committee and also an activist of the All India Revolutionary Women's Organisation (AIRWO), having recently played a very active role in the just concluded national conference of the AIRWO in Kolkata last month. In a show of brazen chauvinism and insensitivity, the police grilled her with questions about who visited her house and who smoked cigarettes in the house and what company she kept.

AIRWO strongly condemns the unwarranted police harassment faced by Shikha Sen Roy based on the presumption that she could be subjected to wrongful interrogation and harassment on account of her matrimonial position. This dastardly act of the police is an example of gross violation of democracy and fundamental right to life

and liberty that every Indian citizen is supposed to enjoy. It also gives the lie to the judicial tenet that a man is innocent till proved guilty, and convicts not just the accused (Somen) but also his wife without a trial. AIRWO also demands a probe into how a team of policemen could have the authority to descend on Shikha Sen Roy in the late hours of the evening in the absence of a lady officer, and how they could search her home and grill her without producing any authorized document for the purpose.

AIRWO registers its protest against police harassment of its leader and declares that any such further act by the police will compel it to resort to tumultuous agitation.

Sharmistha Choudhury, General Secretary (AIRWO)

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Varga Porattam (Tamil monthly)

House No. - 43/21, Ponmana Chemmal Street,
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IN THE October NATO summit in Lisbon, and from many other platforms Obama administration and its allies, confronting widespread antiwar sentiment at home, are attempting to dupe the public by claiming that the US/NATO combat role in Afghanistan will end by 2014, with troop withdrawals to begin next year. Behind closed doors, however, the talk is not of an end to the war, but rather of an open-ended, neo-colonial occupation. For example, after noting that Afghan President Hamid Karzai expected to assume full responsibility for his country's security by the end of 2014, leader of one of the countries involved in Afghanistan, the Australian prime minister bluntly spelt out that the "transition process" would not mean the end to the Australian military presence in Afghanistan.

According to her the international community, that means the imperialist countries, will remain engaged in Afghanistan beyond 2014. And Australia will remain engaged. There will still be a role for training and other defence cooperation. The civilian-led aid and development effort will continue. This support, training and development task to continue in some form through this decade at least. Her repeated references to the "new international strategy" highlight the fact that this is the Obama administration's plan. And if Australia, with its current, modest troop numbers of 1,550, intends to remain for another 10 years, then the US and its closest allies are preparing for a large military presence in Afghanistan into the indefinite future.

Australian prime minister, Gillard justified the ongoing occupation by declaring Afghanistan must "never again become a safe haven for terrorists". However, the intensifying US-led war is not directed against Al Qaeda—according to the CIA, it numbers no more than 50 in Afghanistan—but against the "Taliban". The "enemy" are Afghans,

Another decade of neo-colonial war in Afghanistan

predominantly Pashtun tribesmen, who are bitterly hostile to the continued foreign military presence that has wreaked death and destruction on the civilian population for more than nine years. Suppressing "terrorism" means a never-ending neo-colonial war against the Afghan people.

Washington's "war on terrorism" was only a pretext for advancing US ambitions for dominance in the energy-rich regions of the West and Central Asia. The US strategy was drawn up well in advance of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington. The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and the subjugation of Iraq in 2003 were part of broader plans for refashioning this region and establishing a greater US presence in Central Asia. Now focused on the challenge posed by rising imperialist China, the Obama administration is not going to relinquish US footholds in Iraq or Afghanistan that could prove very useful in the future. His troop "surge" in Afghanistan, like that in Iraq, is aimed at securing a permanent US presence, including military bases, while ensuring the puppet Karzai regime and its army take on the lion's share of fighting to suppress the anti-occupation resistance.

But in executing this plan, US is facing problems from some of its allies. For example, Canada has announced that it will be pulling its 2,800 soldiers out of Afghanistan by next year. Italy has set a deadline of 2014 for the complete withdrawal of its 3,300 troops. Only very few forces like Australia is standing unequivocally on the US side, despite overwhelming domestic opposition to the war, in a bid to ensure full US support as Australia shores up its own strategic position in the South West Pacific.

US has been at pains to stress the advances being made through the troop surge. In the *Washington Post* for instance, US officials claimed that the aggressive military campaign in recent months has killed or captured hundreds of Taliban leaders and more than 3,000 fighters, forcing some insurgent groups to consider negotiations with the Karzai government. They spoke of "pockets of security" in former Taliban strongholds where schools have been reopened and bazaars are bustling.

The slaughter of Taliban leaders and fighters, particularly in the current offensive around the southern city of Kandahar, is largely the result of intensified special Forces operations. Like the reign of terror from aerial bombing, these assassination squads are notorious for killing civilians, thus adding to the bitterness and hatred among Afghans toward the occupation of their country and the corrupt puppet regime in Kabul. The so-called pockets of security in the south—the product of the expansion in foreign troop numbers to 150,000—are paralleled by reports of escalating insurgent attacks in the country's north.

The optimistic note being sounded by the Obama administration and its camp followers cannot hide the fact that nine years of war have proven to be an unmitigated disaster for the Afghan people. According to very conservative UN estimates, at least 14,000 civilian deaths are directly attributable to the military conflict. The military occupation is propping up a venal regime in Kabul that is notorious for corruption and ballot rigging. The majority of the population is

Letter from Pakistan

The War within Islam

I AM sharing with you some lines that I have just written for family and friends who are warning me: Whatever one might think of Governor Salman Taseer's (Punjab governor) politics, he was killed this Wednesday for what was certainly the best act of his life: trying to save the life of an illiterate, poor, peasant Christian woman.

But rose petals are being showered upon his murderer. He is being called a ghazi, lawyers are demonstrating spontaneously for his release, clerics refused to perform his funeral rites. Most shockingly, the interior minister - his political colleague and the ultimate coward - has said that he too would kill a blasphemer with his own hands.

Pakistan once had a violent, rabidly religious lunatic fringe. This fringe has morphed into a majority. The liberals are now the fringe. We are now a nation of butchers and primitive savages. Europe's Dark Ages have descended upon us.

Sane people are being terrified into silence. After the assassination, FM-99 (Urdu) called me for an interview. The producer tearfully told me (offline) that she couldn't find a single religious scholar ready to condemn Taseer's murder. She said even ordinary people like me are in short supply.

I am deeply depressed today. So depressed that I can barely type these lines. Yesterday a TV program on blasphemy (Samaa, hosted by Asma Shirazi) was broadcast (it'll be rebroadcast today). Asma had pleaded that I participate. So I did - knowing fully well what was up ahead. But I could not bear to watch the broadcast and turned it off after a few minutes.

My opponents were Farid Paracha (spokesman, Jamaat-e-Islami) and Maulana Sialvi (Sunni Tehreek, a Barelvi and supposed moderate). There were around 100 students in the audience, drawn from colleges across Pindi and Islamabad. Even as the mullahs frothed and screamed around me (and at me), I managed to say the obvious: that the culture of religious extremism was resulting in a bloodbath in which the majority of victims are Muslims; that non-Muslims were fleeing Pakistan; that the self-appointed "*thaikaydars*" of Islam in Pakistan were deliberately ignoring the case of other Muslim countries like Indonesia which do not have the death penalty for blasphemy; that debating the details of Blasphemy Law 295-C did not constitute blasphemy; that American Muslims were very far from being the objects of persecution; that harping on drone attacks was an irrelevancy to the present discussion on blasphemy.

The response? Not a single clap for me. Thunderous applause whenever my opponents called for death for blasphemers. And loud cheers for Qadri, the murderer. When I directly addressed Sialvi and said he had Salman Taseer's

still mired in poverty and lacks access to elementary services such as electricity, education and health care.

This situation demands that all anti-imperialist, democratic forces should demand that the Afghan people must have the right to decide their future without any foreign intervention. For this the demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all foreign troops and the payment of tens of billions of dollars in war reparations should be raised, exposing the criminal occupation of Afghanistan by the US led forces. ●

blood on his hand, he exclaimed "How I wish I did!" (*kaash ke main hota!*).

Islamofascism is a reality. This country is destined to drown in blood from civil war. I wish people would stop writing rubbish about Pakistan having an image problem. It's the truth that's really the problem.

Am I afraid? Yes, I'd be crazy not to be. And never more than at the present time. The battle for sanity has been lost. Many friends have written to me to leave Pakistan. How can I? One must keep fighting as long as possible. It is what we owe to future generations. ●

Pervez, 18 January 2011

(Editor's Note: Perhaps the RSS and other Hindu fascist organizations may be extremely happy with what is happening in Pakistan. But it is a warning for all democratic forces. If decades of Islamic fundamentalism could lead Pakistan to such a dangerous situation, the same or worse condition may be created in India if the all brands of religious fundamentalists, especially the Hindu fundamentalists are allowed to go ahead with the venomous religious fascist propaganda and activities here. Pakistan is the best, that is the worst, example of how religious fundamentalists and the religious establishment as a whole, functioning with enormous funding from the imperialist centers and from the comprador rulers are working overtime to divide the people, to de-politicise the people, that is to enslave them to reactionary and communal propaganda, so that the neo colonization can go ahead without any hindrance. It is happening all over the world. It can happen in India faster if the danger is not recognized and actively resisted.

Let us express solidarity with friends like Pervez resisting the religious fascists in Pakistan. In this fight we should join hands with him and all those who are on one side of the fence. – *Red Star.*)

First National Conference of AIRWO Successfully held

THE All India Revolutionary Women's Organisation (AIRWO) successfully concluded its first national conference in Kolkata on December 27-28, 2010. On December 27 Kolkata remained witness to a militant rally of 2000-odd women from nearly 10 states around the country. Comrades from Germany also marched with the rally to the accompaniment of revolutionary songs and greetings. The rally which marched from College Square to Esplanade held high the banner of women's liberation and called for the overthrow of the rule of private property and patriarchy.

A public meeting was hosted at Esplanade at the end of the rally. It was addressed by representatives from Orissa, Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Germany. There were cultural performances by teams from Karnataka, Orissa and Maharashtra as well. Comrades Sonja, Ulya and Niko from Germany addressed the meeting and also rendered a few revolutionary songs in both German as well as English.

The delegate session of the conference was held on December 28 and attended by AIRWO delegates from Bengal, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, as well as sororal delegates from Courage (Germany), Anya Nari (Bengal) and Nari Nirjatan Pratirodh Mancha (Bengal). The day began with the hoisting of the red flag. Comrade Shikha Sen Roy welcomed all delegates on behalf of West Bengal committee and presented the background against which the conference was being held. Comrade KN Ramachandran, general secretary of the CPI(ML), presented the inaugural speech in which he pointed out that private property and the present monogamous family as an economic unit of society form the bedrock of women's exploitation and the revolutionary women's movement must work towards the abolition of both. He recounted how the AIRWO had been

formed in February 2010 at a meeting at Chennai attended by 25-30 women, and how today it had spread to over 10 states and was in a process of constant growth. The inaugural speech impressed on the audience the impact created by AIRWO and inspired all to work indefatigably for its expansion and development.

This was followed by greetings from the sororal delegates from Germany. They spoke about the forthcoming world conference of rank and file women in Caracas, Venezuela in March 2011— to commemorate the completion of the 100th year of the International Women's Day — and emphasized the importance of such an international event to build an alliance of women's movements across the globe in the pursuit of a world free from gender inequality.

Next, the draft programme of the AIRWO was presented by the national convenor and a vigorous discussion ensued. Various points were thoroughly debated and suggestions and proposed amendments poured in from the delegates. Sororal delegates, too, took an active part in the discussion and came up with many valuable suggestions for the enrichment of the programme. Rupa Aich, from the Bengali journal *Anya Nari (Different Woman)*, suggested that the question of sexuality be incorporated with the importance it deserves. She raised the question of the failure of the communist movement to adequately deal with the question of women's liberation and underscored the challenge faced by communist revolutionaries today. Comrade Samyukta from Orissa, herself a domestic worker, suggested that the question of domestic workers' rights be incorporated in the programme as the vast majority of domestic workers in the country were women. Comrade Riya Chakrabarty from Bengal pointed out that the question of microfinance and self help groups affected a huge section of rural women today. Loans provided by such institutions

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(kannada Monthly)

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Banglore, Karnataka - 560021

at exorbitant rates of interest often drove women to suicide. But providing as it did an illusion of economic self-reliance for women, it had managed to draw thousands of women into its fold, thus derailing the women's movement. Several other points were also deliberated upon and all this contributed immensely to the improvement and enrichment of the draft programme. In her reply address, the convenor addressed each suggestion and the conference voted for the incorporation of most of the proposals.

The draft constitution of the AIRWO was presented by Comrade Usha on behalf of the central committee and this session also saw a furious exchange of ideas. Some comrades suggested that the name of the organization be changed to include not all women, but only working women. However, this suggestion was rejected as the majority of the conference pointed out that the aim is not to draw only working women but also thousands of other women comprising homemakers, providers of unpaid and unrecognized labour and so on. Another very important suggestion, which was accepted by the conference, involved changing the colour of the AIRWO flag. Previously, the colour of the flag was white and it had AIRWO inscribed in red. But the conference agreed that this had to be reversed with the flag being red and AIRWO in white. The conference was emphatic that the organization is a revolutionary one and so the colour of its flag too

should be red – the colour of revolution. The proceedings were interspersed with songs and other cultural performances in different languages.

After the deliberations on the draft programme and constitution, it was time for the election of the central committee. A 25-member central committee was elected by the conference with Comrade Urmila as the President, Comrade Prameela as the vice-president, Comrade Sharmistha as the general secretary, and Comrades Usha, Shikha and Omana as the secretaries.

In the final session, representatives from various class-mass organizations like RYFI, TUCI, AIRSO and AIKKS addressed the conference. Speaking on behalf of the West Bengal state organizing committee of the CPI(ML), state secretary Comrade Alik Chakraborty pointed out how worker and youth volunteers from the state organization had worked tirelessly to make the two-day conference a success. Their participation illustrated the very living bond between the working class movement and the struggle for women's liberation.

The conference ended with the singing of the International in as many languages as were spoken by the delegates. The hall rang out with the militant notes of the famous song as the promise to work for the emancipation of all womankind became etched in every heart.

Kerala: Public Meeting Against Corruption

UNDER the auspices of the CPI (ML) District Committee, a public meeting was held at Trissur on January 8, 2011 against corruption which has become a corollary of neoliberal policies pursued since the beginning of 1990s. The meeting was inaugurated by Com K N Ramachandran, general secretary, CPI(ML). In his speech Com. KN explained how corruption emanates from the comprador rule run by political-bureaucratic-corporate-mafia nexus and appealed for a massive people's movement demanding the prosecution of all scammers and confiscation of all their properties. The meeting was held as part of the month-long campaign against corruption being undertaken by the CPI(ML) state committee as per the decisions of the party Central Committee. Com Rajesh Appatt, district secretary, CPI(ML) presided over the meeting and Com. P N Provint, state secretary spoke on the occasion.

Anti-Endosulfan Struggle

EVEN THOUGH endosulfan is banned by several countries, at the behest of agribusiness interests Manmohan

government is producing and marketing it. Hence the RYFI has started an indefinite relay hunger strike in front of the HIL Kochi, a public sector unit, which is one of the leading producers of endosulfan along with MNCs. The struggle that began on November 19, 2010 was converted into an indefinite relay hunger strike.

A meeting of the Struggle Aid Committee including noted environmentalists evaluated that since the use of the pesticide is already banned and as almost 90 percent of the endosulfan produced in India is by MNCs such as Bayer and Excel in Gujarat, the struggle has to be taken up at a higher political level and should be directed against the central government policies propping up agribusiness interests at the all India level. It is also linked with the struggle for a pro-people, pro-environment development policy. With this perspective, a People's Convention was held at the High court Junction, Kochi and resolved to provisionally end the indefinite hunger strike and carry on the struggle in alliance with environmental activists and democrats. The Convention was inaugurated by Com P J James, central Committee member CPI(ML) and presided over by Dr. G. Sadasivan Nair, chairman, struggle aid committee. Noted environmental expert, Dr. C M Joy, N M Pearson, left intellectual, senior advocate K Madhusoodanan, comrades, PN Provint, TC Subrahmanyam and M K Dasan spoke in the Convention.

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